



PATRISTIC
STUDIES

EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND ANCIENT ASTROLOGY

TIM HEGEDUS

Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology explores a variety of responses to astrology, the most popular form of divination among early Christians in Greco-Roman antiquity. After a brief overview of ancient astrological theory and a survey of polemical responses to it, this book documents instances in which early Christian writers and communities incorporated astrology positively into their beliefs and practices. This study is of interest to students of early Christianity and of Greco-Roman religion and to those concerned with interfaith relations or with issues of Christian unity and diversity. It is particularly recommended for use in courses on the history of Christianity and on the religions of Greco-Roman antiquity.

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ISBN 978-0-8204-7257-7



9 780820 472577

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology

“In the first four centuries of its growth within the Roman Empire, Christianity had to contend with astrology both as a culturally entrenched way of thinking about ‘the heavens’ and as a respected mode of foretelling the future. This book shows how different Christian thinkers confronted this challenge to their claims to a master narrative of salvation and how, in some instances, they effected uneasy compromises with astrological thought. Tim Hegedus is to be commended for making this clash of cultural systems accessible both to theologians and historians of Christianity and to historians of classical antiquity. His explications of the sources are wide-ranging and lucid.”

*Roger Beck, Professor Emeritus of Classics and Study of Religion,
University of Toronto*

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*Kevin Coyle, Professor of Patristics and Early Christian History,
Saint Paul University (Ottawa)*

Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology



PATRISTIC
STUDIES

Gerald Bray
General Editor

Vol. 6



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hegedus, Tim.

Early Christianity and ancient astrology / Tim Hegedus.

p. cm. — (Patristic studies; vol. 6)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Astrology. 2. Theology, Doctrinal—History—Early church, ca. 30–600.

I. Title. II. Series: Patristic studies (Peter Lang Publishing); v. 6.

BR115.A82 H44 261.5'13—dc22 2004022838

ISBN 978-0-8204-7257-7

ISSN 1094-6217

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Bibliothek.**

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the “Deutsche Nationalbibliografie”; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de/>.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council of Library Resources.



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29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to my teachers at the Centre for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto, especially Roger Beck, who supervised the original form of this work as a doctoral dissertation. I have learned much from Roger's knowledge of the religions of classical antiquity and their intersection with Greco-Roman astrology, as well as from his generous humanity and wisdom. I am also deeply grateful to Timothy D. Barnes and Joanne McWilliam. I appreciate the scholarship, friendship and encouragement of these and other teachers at the University of Toronto.

In the course of my research I have also benefitted from the wisdom and advice of numerous scholars and friends. I am grateful to Peter C. Erb (who personally exemplifies "fides quaerens intellectum"), Robert Kelly (for very generous assistance with the intricacies of *Nota Bene*), J. Kevin Coyle, Harold Remus, David Reimer, F. Stanley Jones, Alannah Hegedus, Paul Hegedus, Nicola Gargano, Francesca Ventola, Tina Marshall, William Arnal, Stephan Dobson, David Ross, Silke Force, Peter Buckley, Gerard Baribeau, Erwin Buck, Oscar Cole Arnal, David Jacobsen, Daniel Maoz, Monika Wiesner and the late John Neeb. As well, I have appreciated the helpful editorial assistance of Heidi Burns and the editorial staff at Peter Lang and I am grateful to the general editor of the *Patristic Studies* series, Gerald Bray. Naturally, any errors and omissions in this work are my own.

The original research for this book was supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and from the University of Toronto.

Earlier drafts of portions of this work have been presented to the Eastern Region of the American Academy of Religion (Toronto, April 18, 1998), the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies (Ottawa, May 30, 1998), the Religious Rivalries Seminar of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies (Edmonton, May 25, 2000), and the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, UK, August 18–23, 2003). I appreciate the many helpful comments and suggestions that I received at these conferences.

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Tim Hegedus, "Astral Motifs in Revelation 12," *Consensus* 26/2 (2000): 13–27. Used by permission of the publisher.

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Tim Hegedus, “Some Astrological Motifs in the Book of Revelation,” in Richard Ascough, ed. *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna* (Waterloo, ON, 2004), 157–184. Reprinted by permission of Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

List of Abbreviations

- ABD David Noel Freedman et al., ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York, 1992.
- ACW *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*. Westminster, MD/New York, 1946–.
- ANF Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*; American reprint of the Edinburgh ed., rev. and chronologically arranged; with brief prefaces and occasional notes by A. Cleveland Coxe. New York, 1908.
- ANRW Hildegard Temporini, ed. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*. Berlin, 1972–.
- BA *Bibliothèque Augustinienne*. 3e éd. Paris, 1976–.
- BDB F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907.
- Bouché-Leclercq
A. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'Astrologie Grecque*. Paris, 1899.
- CCAG *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*. Bruxelles, 1900–.
- CCL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*. Turnholt, 1953–.
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regia Borussicae Editum*. Berlin, 1863–1974.
- CIMRM
M.J. Vermaseren, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*. The Hague, 1956–60.
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna, 1866–.

- CTh *Codex Theodosianus. Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges novellae ad Theodosianum Pertinentes*, ed. Th. Mommsen and Paulus M. Meyer. Berlin, 1905.
- DACL F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*. Paris, 1920–53.
- EEC Everett Ferguson et al., ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. 2nd ed. New York, 1997.
- GNO W. Jaeger et al., ed. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*. Leiden, 1952–96.
- GCS *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, Leipzig, 1897–/ Berlin, 2001–.
- HE *Historia Ecclesiastica*
- Hefele-Leclercq
Charles Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles d'après les Documents Originaux*, trans. of second German ed. by H. Leclercq. Paris, 1907–52.
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- ILCV E. Diehl, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*. Berlin, 1961.
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- JRS *Journal of Roman Studies*
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
- KJV King James Version
- Lampe G. W. H. Lampe, ed. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford, 1961–68.
- LCL *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA, 1911–.

- LSJ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, rev. Henry Stuart Jones. 9th ed. Oxford, 1940.
- LTP *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*
- OCD Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, ed., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3d ed. Oxford, 1996.
- OTP James Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Garden City, NY, 1983–87.
- PG J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*. Paris, 1857–1912.
- PL J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina*. Paris, 1844–55.
- PLRE A.H.M. Jones et al., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. vol. 1. Cambridge, 1971; J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. vol. 2–3. Cambridge, 1980–92.
- PLS A.-G. Hamman, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina. Supplementum*. Paris, 1958–74.
- POxy *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London, 1898–.
- RAC *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt*. Stuttgart, 1950–.
- RE *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart, 1893–1978.
- RB *Revue Biblique*
- REA *Revue des Études Anciennes*
- REL *Revue des Études Latines*

RSV Revised Standard Version

SC *Sources Chrétiennes*. Paris, 1942–.

TDNT Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, 1964–76.

TU *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*. Berlin, 1882–.

VC *Vigiliae Christianae*

ZNW *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

1. Introduction

Astrological beliefs and practices are a recurring feature of many religious traditions, past and present. In ancient Greco-Roman religion and culture, astrology was arguably the most popular form of divination; one recent scholar has described astrology as “the most important and widespread Hellenistic system of piety.”¹ Many astrological texts have come down to us from the Greco-Roman period from writers such as Manilius, Ptolemy, Vettius Valens and Firmicus Maternus, whose writings display great diversity, complexity and sophistication. Moreover, a large and diverse variety of sources demonstrate the connection between astrology and religion in Greco-Roman antiquity.²

Of course, the modern distinction between “astrology” and “astronomy” did not hold in antiquity.³ While numerous scholars have approached the study of Greco-Roman astrology from the perspective of the history of science, one scholar who repeatedly emphasized the religious nature of ancient astrology was the great historian of religions, Franz Cumont;⁴ however, his writings focus primarily on Greco-Roman polytheistic religion and refer to Christian views of astrology only in passing.⁵ It is of course true that many early Christian writers attacked astrology; however (to anticipate the argument of this book) it is inaccurate to depict early Christian attitudes to astrology entirely in terms of polemical or apologetic refutation.⁶ The purpose of the present work is to provide a comprehensive study of the relationship between early Christianity and astrology which shows the diversity of attitudes toward astrology in early Christianity: aside from polemical texts (surveyed in Part A) evidence for positive views among Christians shall be considered (in Part B) in order to arrive, insofar as possible, at an accurate historical picture of this relationship.⁷

Greco-Roman Astrology: A Brief Outline

In his classic study *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, A.J. Festugière describes Greco-Roman astrology as an amalgamation of philosophical doctrine with classical mythological themes and the learned methods of ancient science.⁸

The philosophical aspect of astrology to which Festugière refers is the doctrine of cosmic sympathy, according to which everything in the cosmos is seen as interconnected within one universal chain of action and reaction. All of creation is an interdependent unity, in which everything interacts either pos-

itively (sympathetically) or negatively (antipathetically).⁹ This fundamental belief in the “sympathy” of all creation was connected with the notion of the reciprocal relation of the heavens and the earth.

C'est ainsi que le soleil, les planètes et les constellations, tous les astres dont la matière est un feu qui brûle éternellement sans se consumer jamais, se nourrissent des vapeurs issues du monde sublunaire; inversement, les astres ne cessent d'agir sur le monde sublunaire par les énergies qu'ils projettent, soit sur l'ensemble de ce monde, soit sur telle partie ou même tel individu singulier.¹⁰

The belief that the earth influences the stars by means of the “nourishment” of its “vapours” had been advanced by the pre-Socratic philosophers Thales, Parmenides, and Heraclitus.¹¹ The reverse influence of the heavenly bodies upon the earth is of course evident in the effect of the sun on plant and animal life, the lunar effect on the tides, and the fact that the rising and setting of stars accompany the changes of the seasons.¹² The doctrine of cosmic sympathy was based not only on observation of such “natural” phenomena but also, in religious contexts, on divine revelation.¹³ It is well known that the doctrine of cosmic sympathy was particularly associated with the ancient Stoics;¹⁴ the Orphics and Pythagoreans also tended to the same worldview,¹⁵ as did people who did not belong to any philosophical school.¹⁶ The doctrine of cosmic sympathy also lay behind the commonplace metaphor of humanity as a “little world” (μικρὸς κόσμος), which was developed further by means of word play on the meaning of κόσμος (i.e. humanity as κόσμου κόσμος, “ornament of the world” or “world of the world”). Festugière adds that belief in cosmic sympathy possessed dogmatic value for astrology from antiquity up until the Renaissance.¹⁷ Bouché-Leclercq emphasizes the primary significance of the doctrine of cosmic sympathy for Greco-Roman astrology, describing it as “l'aliment inépuisable” and “[la] forteresse centrale de l'astrologie.”¹⁸ Indeed, astrology took the correspondence between κόσμος and ἄνθρωπος not as symbolism or imagery but as literal truth: this is most evident in that branch of astrology known as melothesia, in which the heavenly bodies were assigned influence over the parts of the human body.¹⁹

The second, mythological component of astrology to which Festugière refers is the identification of the planets and the stars as animate, living beings. In this way, the relationship between the heavens and the earth was construed as personal.

Le langage même manifeste ce tour d'esprit: les planètes se lèvent et se couchent, se voient, s'entendent, commandent, obéissent, paraissent hilares ou sombres, sont maîtresses de maison, etc.,—sans compter toutes les épithètes dont on les affuble pour dénoter leur attitude à l'égard des hommes.²⁰

Moreover, the identification of the planets with Olympian gods entailed their association with the characteristic traits of the gods as they were depicted in Greco-Roman mythology.²¹ Thus, for example, in keeping with the traditional mythological view of Zeus/Jupiter as the “father of the gods” the planet that bore his name was regarded as benevolent and beneficial in astrology.²² Other considerations than mythology also affected the characteristics that the astrologers attributed to the planets. For example, the association of Kronos/Saturn with old age was influenced by the planet's pale colour and slow movement, as well as the mythological account of Kronos (the father of the Olympian gods) and word play of Κρόνος with Χρόνος, “time”; such notions, as well as Saturn's location as the farthest planet from the earth, led astrologers to ascribe to it primacy among the planets.²³ The planets were classified as “beneficent” and “maleficent”: Jupiter, Venus and the Moon were declared to be beneficent, Saturn and Mars were maleficent, and the Sun and Mercury were mixed.²⁴ In Ptolemaic astrology, such categorization was explained using the four Aristotelian elemental qualities, hot, cold, wet and dry (*Tetrabiblos* 1.5).²⁵ (Augustine notes that since Saturn was maleficent people tended to avoid its name and called it “the old man”; indeed, he relates that the Carthaginians preferred to call the name of one of their streets “vicus senis” [the street of the old man] rather than “vicus Saturni” [*On the Harmony of the Gospels* 1.23.36].²⁶) Astrologers also divided the planets into “feminine” and “masculine”. In Ptolemaic astrology this was decided on the basis of the elemental quality that was believed to be predominant in each planet. Following the so-called “Chaldean” order of the planets, in which the sun occupies the middle position,²⁷ the planets higher than the sun (Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) are less humid than the lower planets (Venus, Mercury and the Moon): since a planet was pronounced feminine based on the predominance of humidity, the planets higher than the sun were regarded as masculine and the lower planets as feminine, with the exception of Mercury which was classed as both (i.e. hermaphroditic). This “physical gender” of the planets was modified by their relative position to the sun and/or the horizon, which accounted for their “cosmic gender” (*Tetrabiblos* 1.6).²⁸ The planets were also classified as diurnal and nocturnal (*Tetrabiblos* 1.7).²⁹ The signs of the

zodiac, i.e. the 12 figures applied to 12 constellations which were allotted 12 equal portions (each 30 degrees) of the circle of the ecliptic, were similarly regarded as animate beings endowed with particular characteristics that usually derived from ancient mythology, as well as other sources.³⁰ For example, the following rather naive influences were ascribed to Aries the Ram: since it is the first in the usual order of the signs, Aries corresponds to the human head in the system of zodiacal melothesia; since the ram produces wool, those born under the sign of the Ram are destined to work with wool; since the ram is shorn of its wool and then grows it back, those born under Aries will experience sudden losses and recoveries of fortune (cf. the perilous adventures recounted in the myth of the Golden Fleece) and live in hope (note that the sign of Aries ascends rapidly).³¹ The signs of the zodiac were categorized as human or animal, fertile or sterile, whole or mutilated, simple or double,³² male and female.³³ In each quarter of the zodiac, the first sign (= the cardinal points) was termed the “leading” (tropical) sign, followed in turn by a “solid” and a “composite” (or “biform”) sign (*Tetrabiblos* 1.11).³⁴

The influences of the planets were affected by their location *vis-à-vis* the zodiacal signs. For example, each planet “rules” over a diurnal and a nocturnal “house,” aside from the sun and moon which rule over the same house both day and night: the influence of the planets was increased and made more positive when it was located in its house.³⁵ As well, each planet had its “exaltation” in one of the signs or a particular degree of a sign, and its “depression” in the diametrically opposite position of the zodiac; being in its exaltation had a beneficent effect on a planet, while being in its depression had a maleficent effect.³⁶ The planets were also affected by their location with respect to the four triangles (or “triplicities,” τριγωνα) into which the zodiac was divided.³⁷ Smaller parts of the zodiacal signs, such as the “terms” (ὄρια)³⁸ and the decans,³⁹ were also allotted to the planets. The 36 decans, each located at 10 degrees of the ecliptic, were combined with the planetary system in various ways by ancient astrological authors (though Ptolemy does not mention them). Since the decans had originally been divine “guardians of time” (χρονοκράτορες) in ancient Egypt⁴⁰ it is not surprising that they are regarded as astral powers (located above the zodiac) in the hermetic literature.⁴¹

Finally, by the learned methods of astrology Festugière is referring in particular to the astrological doctrine of “aspects,” i.e. the angular relationships (opposition, square, trine and sextile) that could be established between the zodiacal signs (*Tetrabiblos* 1.13).⁴² Festugière claims that this methodological

aspect of astrology “a fait considérer cet art divinatoire comme une science” and reflects “comment la logique grecque a pénétré dans ce domaine comme en tant d’autres.”⁴³ However, it is questionable whether our modern understanding of science is so readily applicable to forms of knowledge in the ancient world; as a more recent scholar has put it: “To speak of ‘astrology’ during the Roman period as a ‘pseudo-Science’ is misleading and anachronistic...”⁴⁴ It is instructive that in the introduction to book 1 of the *Tetrabiblos* Ptolemy classifies both what we today would term astronomy (i.e. the topic of his earlier work, the *Almagest*) as well as astrology (the subject of his present work) as “means of prediction through astronomy” (literally “preparing the predictive end by means of astronomy,” τῶν τὸ δι’ ἀστρονομίας προγνώστικὸν τέλος παρασκευαζόντων). He also describes the approach he is going to take in the *Tetrabiblos* as “philosophical”: “we shall now give an account of the second...method in a properly philosophical way” (κατὰ τὸν ἀρμόζοντα φιλοσοφία τρόπον).⁴⁵ Such statements must be considered if we are to understand Greco-Roman astrology first and foremost in terms of its ancient context; only then is it proper to ask how Ptolemy’s own conceptions and vocabulary relate to the modern understanding of science.

For our present purposes the central feature of this third aspect of astrology which Festugière points out is not so much astrology’s status as a “science” as the fact that astrology functioned as a type of divination in ancient society. The bringing about of a “completed event” (ἀποτέλεσμα) was precisely the object of astrological divination (ἀποτελεσματικὴ τέχνη).⁴⁶ Ptolemy divides predictive astrology into two main divisions, general or “catholic” astrology and genethliology, of which the former is more universal, and hence prior to and more significant than, the latter.⁴⁷

Since, then, prognostication by astrological means is divided into two great and principal parts, and since the first and more universal is that which relates to whole races, countries, and cities, which is called general, and the second and more specific is that which relates to individuals, which is called genethliological, we believe it fitting to treat first of the general division, because such matters are naturally swayed by greater and more powerful causes than are particular events. And since weaker natures always yield to the stronger, and the particular always falls under the general, it would by all means be necessary for those who propose an inquiry about a single individual long before to have comprehended the more general considerations (*Tetrabiblos* 2.1).⁴⁸

Similarly in *Tetrabiblos* 3.1 Ptolemy states that the theory of catholic events (τῆς περὶ τὰ καθ' ὅλου συμπτώματα θεωρίας) “comes first and for the most part has power to control the predictions which concern the special nature of any individual.”⁴⁹ Indeed, Ptolemy only comes to his discussion of genethliology in *Tetrabiblos* book 3, after he has treated catholic astrology in book 2. He refers the catholic astrological influences to the effect of the stars upon particular sections or zones of the earth, and catholic influences on cities can also be determined (*Tetrabiblos* 2.3⁵⁰). The catholic astrological influences on countries and cities are further discussed under four headings: what place is affected (τὸ τοπικόν); the time and duration of the event (τὸ χρονικόν); with what classes (e.g. plants, animals or humans, dwellings, crops, rivers, etc.) the signs are concerned (τὸ γενικόν); and τὸ εἰδικόν, the specific quality of the event itself (*Tetrabiblos* 2.4).⁵¹ Alongside of catholic astrology and genethliology, the third type of divination by astrology in the ancient world was “katarchic” astrology, which was concerned with forecasting whether or not a particular moment was favourable for a specific undertaking. It is possible that some devotees were guided by astrology in their most particular, mundane activities. Juvenal (*Satire* 6.577–81) satirically portrays the woman who will not travel one mile, or apply cream to her itchy eye, or take food while lying in bed, without consulting her astrologer.⁵² According to Ammianus Marcellinus’ description of the nobility in the fourth century, they

neither appear in public nor eat breakfast nor think that they can cautiously take a bath, until the ephemerides have been carefully consulted and they have learned, for example, where the planet Mercury is, or what degree of the sign of Cancer the moon occupies as it travels through the heavens (*Histories* 28.4.24).⁵³

Augustine too refers to days that were chosen as especially appropriate for planting vines and trees, for sowing crops, training and breeding cattle; he also mentions that people consulted astrologers about the horoscopes of their pets and farm animals (*City of God* 5.7).⁵⁴ Yet when he asks: “Who asks an astrologer when to sit down, when to take a walk, when or what to eat for breakfast?” (*City of God* 5.3) it is clearly a rhetorical question.⁵⁵ Despite Cumont’s assertion that “il n’y aura plus d’affaire grande ou petite qu’on veuille entreprendre sans consulter l’astrologue,” it is rather difficult to know the true extent to which astrologers would have been consulted with regard to the daily activities of their clients.⁵⁶ Genethliology was in effect a subset of katarchic astrology: the latter recognized many starting points (ἀρχαί), while genethliology deals primarily with the chronological beginning of an individu-

al's life (cf. *Tetrabiblos* 3.1). Bouché-Leclercq expresses the common sense view that genethliology was developed out of katarthic astrology, which was presumably earlier since it was closest to the prediction by celestial omens that had been practiced by the Babylonians.⁵⁷

Greco-Roman Astrology and Early Christianity

Several elements of Greco-Roman astrology presented significant problems and challenges for early Christianity.

First of all, astrology (especially katarthic astrology and genethliology, with their focus on the individual) was arguably the most popular type of divination in the ancient world.⁵⁸ According to Bouché-Leclercq, astrology first gained popularity among the Roman aristocracy during the first century B.C.E. Cicero still claimed that he had no use for “astrologers from the circus,”⁵⁹ but attitudes were already rapidly changing during his lifetime. Among the influential exponents of astrology at that time was Nigidius Figulus. Bouché-Leclercq claims that astrology's popularity among the aristocracy entailed a new level of respectability during this time, which led astrologers to exchange the traditional term “Chaldaei” for the more illustrious title of “mathematici,” originally used in the Pythagorean schools.⁶⁰ Astrology thus found itself on a new social footing,

le terrain sur lequel elle allait s'asseoir et prospérer, une société riche, lettrée, ayant atteint sans le dépasser ce degré de scepticisme où les vieilles croyances qui s'en vont laissent la place libre aux nouveautés qui arrivent. C'est la Grèce qui fournit les astrologues; les romains, habitués de longue date au rôle de disciples, les admirent, les consultent et les payent.⁶¹

The appeal of astrology continued among the upper classes and spread beyond them as well. Indeed, during the imperial period, as A.D. Nock has observed, “for the plain man it acquired an axiomatic validity which it retained everywhere till the seventeenth century, and which for some it still has.”⁶² The frequent references to astrology in literature written during the reign of Augustus and his successors shows that astrology continued to be in vogue during the early principate: authors such as Horace, Vergil, Ovid and Manilius must have presumed that their audiences would have understood the astrological allusions in their works.⁶³ The belief arose that the apotheosis of Julius Caesar had been signalled by the appearance of a comet at his funerary games.⁶⁴ The meaning of that event was extended to the sponsor of those games, Octavian,⁶⁵

who further exploited astrology for propagandistic purposes: according to Suetonius,⁶⁶ Augustus “reluctantly” allowed himself to be recognized by the astrologer Theogenes, and was so impressed that he had the image of Capricorn, the sign of his conception horoscope, imprinted on his coinage.⁶⁷ Near the end of his life, Augustus also forbade consultations with astrologers in private, and all attempts (public or private) to ascertain a person’s death. Astrology offered a temptation to those with ambitions to imperial power, who might therefore seek after knowledge of the emperor’s allotted life-span. As Tertullian writes: “Who has any need to enquire about the health of the emperor, except those who think or hope something against it, or have hope or expectation after it?” (*Apology* 35.13)⁶⁸ This was the primary issue which prompted the emperors to evict astrologers from Rome on numerous occasions and to enact legislation against them.⁶⁹ The motivation behind such episodes of imperial opposition was clearly political rather than religious: “the laws restricted particular applications of these systems that could pose a social or political threat.”⁷⁰ Of course, outbreaks of official opposition only increased its public appeal: Juvenal wrote:

For nowadays no astrologer has credit unless he has been imprisoned in some distant camp, with chains clanking on either arm; none believe in his powers unless he has been condemned and all but put to death, having just contrived to get deported to a Cyclad, or to escape at last from the diminutive Seriphos (*Satires* 6.560–64).⁷¹

Indirectly, opposition to astrology further demonstrates the ongoing popularity that astrology had within ancient Roman society.⁷²

In spite of official opposition the practice of astrology continued in Roman society. The profession of astrologer no doubt included learned and sophisticated practitioners as well as insincere charlatans.⁷³ We may presume that astrologers advertised their services publicly⁷⁴ and charged fees from their clients.⁷⁵ In Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 2.12–14 a practitioner of katar-chic astrology named Diophanes is offered a hundred denarii in payment for his services.⁷⁶ However, it is hard to know how typical such a payment would have been. Tacitus refers to an astrologer, Pammanes, who received payment for his services but the amount is not specified (*Annals* 16.14). There may have been a range of fees so that rich and poor were able to gain access to astrologers’ services. Juvenal describes women of humble rank going to have their fortune told at the Circus Maximus: “Plebeian destinies are determined

in the Circus or on the rampart.”⁷⁷ He contrasts these with wealthy women who “will pay for answers from a Phrygian or Indian augur well skilled in the stars and the heavens”.⁷⁸

Even after the imperial establishment of Christianity in the fourth century astrology continued to be popular in Roman society. Some members of the aristocracy maintained an interest in astrology. One example was the addressee of Firmicus Maternus’ *Mathesis*, Fl. Lollianus Mavortius, who was designated ordinary consul for 338 (1 Proem. 8).⁷⁹ According to Ausonius, *Parentalia* 4.17–22, Ausonius’ grandfather, Caecilius Argicius Arborius, had practiced astrology (tu caeli numeros et conscia sidera fati callebas) and prepared Ausonius’ horoscope.⁸⁰ Augustine also mentions that the proconsul Helvius Vindicianus had been a devotee of astrology in his youth (*Confessions* 4.3.5, 7.6.8).⁸¹ We may assume that astrology maintained its appeal beyond the aristocracy among the wider population during the fourth century. Astrology also continued to evoke imperial opposition during this period. In two laws of Constantius directed against various divinatory practices (CTh 9.16.4 of 357 and 9.16.6 of 358) the consultation of astrologers (mathematici) is specifically forbidden; the later law specifically mentions that anyone from the court of the emperor, or of the Caesar (i.e. Julian), caught practicing such things would not be exempt from punishment.⁸² Two further laws were directed specifically against astrology. CTh 9.16.8, issued by Valentinian, ordered all consultation of astrologers to cease whether conducted in public or privately, by day or by night; the sentence for this offence, capital punishment, was applied to both parties in the consultation, the astrologer as well as the client, since “it is no less criminal to learn forbidden things than to teach them.”⁸³ As well, a law of Honorius (CTh 9.16.12 of 409) ordered astrologers to be expelled not only from Rome but all cities unless they abjured their belief and handed over their books to be burned under the eyes of Christian bishops, never to return to their previous error.⁸⁴ According to Bouché-Leclercq, even during the fourth century such legislation was still primarily motivated by fear of attempts to ascertain the life-span of the emperor; the terms of the law of Honorius indicate that this concern was reinforced by the specifically religious convictions of the Christian emperors.⁸⁵

The on-going public appeal of astrology is the background against which must be seen the repeated complaints of early Christian writers that church members were in the habit of consulting astrologers.⁸⁶ As we shall see, this was a theological as well as a pastoral problem for the leaders of the early church. The exhortations of early church leaders against consulting

astrologers no doubt reflects a sense of competition between the church leaders themselves and the practitioners of astrology. In many ways astrology represented a religious rival to Christianity in Greco-Roman society. Unlike those modern scholars who have approached ancient astrology as a “science,” Franz Cumont especially emphasized its numerous religious aspects, including theology, worship and cultic ritual, mysticism, ethics and eschatology.⁸⁷ Astrology retained much of the older Greek and Roman religious tradition in many of the attributes, and the very nomenclature, of the planets and the constellations. It allowed scope for the many intermediate spiritual beings between humanity and God that were emphasized in such religious systems as Gnosticism and neoplatonism.⁸⁸ In astrological texts, astrology was seen as of divine origin: according to Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.40ff. it was a body of knowledge revealed to ancient kings and priests, while Vettius Valens affirms astrology to be a holy and divine gift to humanity.⁸⁹ Astrology also had authoritative, sacred writings (treatises attributed to legendary figures such as Nechepso, Petosiris and Hermes Trismegistus⁹⁰) and certainly astrologers were regarded as religious professionals in their own right.⁹¹ One of the traditional terms for astrologers, Magi, originally referred to a priestly caste of ancient Persia, and the term still carried (exotic) sacerdotal connotations in the Greco-Roman world.⁹² An association between astrologers (“hour watchers,” ὠροσκόποι and ὠρολόγοι) and the Egyptian priesthood is suggested by the hermetic literature,⁹³ Porphyry,⁹⁴ and Clement of Alexandria.⁹⁵ Other Egyptian texts of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods also demonstrate that Egyptian priests possessed knowledge of Greco-Roman astrology.⁹⁶ The discovery of ostraka and papyri containing astrological texts at Egyptian temples, and depictions of the zodiac on temple ceilings, indicate that Egyptian temples were a primary location for astrological activity during the Hellenistic as well as the Roman period.⁹⁷

The pre-eminent portrayal of ancient astrology in religious terms is found in the *Mathesis* of Firmicus Maternus.⁹⁸ For example, he describes the astrological doctrines which he is imparting in his book as akin to initiation into the mystery religions: “Do not entrust the secrets of this religion to people’s erring desires; for it is not right to initiate the degenerate minds of human beings into the divine rites” (*Mathesis* 2.30.14).⁹⁹ In *Mathesis* 7.1.1–3 he refers to the astrologer’s “oath”: just as Orpheus, Plato and Porphyry had required an oath of secrecy from their initiates, so Firmicus asks the addressee of this work, Lollianus Mavortius, to swear that he will not divulge these doctrines to profane or ignorant ears.¹⁰⁰ In *Mathesis* 2.30.1 the astrologer is portrayed as one who is in daily contact with the gods:

Form yourself according to the image and likeness of divinity, so that you may always be adorned with the proclamation of goodness. It is necessary for him who daily speaks about the gods or with the gods to shape and furnish his mind so that he always approaches the imitation of divinity.¹⁰¹

Firmicus also enjoins astrologers to keep away from “the enticement of shows, for the priest of the gods must be separate and apart from depraved attractions of pleasures.” (*Mathesis* 2.30.12);¹⁰² of course, such expectations were also paralleled among the early Christians. *Mathesis* 2.30.1–15 details Firmicus’ view of the life and training of the professional astrologer, with emphasis on expected moral virtues (modesty, uprightness, sobriety, temperance, abstaining from love of money) (2.30.2) as well as domestic virtues such as keeping a wife at home, having many sincere friends, abstaining from quarrels, being constantly available to the public, dealing with others in peace, loyalty, honesty, etc. (2.30.8–11); these virtues are remarkably reminiscent of the expectations of early Christian clergy and bishops detailed in the Pastoral letters of the New Testament. For Firmicus, astrologers are comparable to priests:

Try your hardest with your training and intent to outdo the training and intent of worthy priests; for it is necessary for the priest of Sol and Luna and the other gods, through whom everything on earth is ruled, to always instruct his mind in such a way that he might be acknowledged worthy of such great rites by the testimonies of all humankind (*Mathesis* 2.30.2).¹⁰³

Then, after warning that an astrologer is not to respond to those who would enquire about the life of the emperor (2.30.4–7), he adds that “this is alien from the purpose of a priest.”¹⁰⁴ If astrologers are priests, they must be descended from a long line of priesthood: thus in 8.5.1 Firmicus refers to the legendary Egyptian founders of astrology, Petosiris and Nechepso, as “those divine men and priests of the most holy religion” of astrology.¹⁰⁵ Of course, one of the stock arguments against astrology in the ancient world was that by subsuming everything to fate it dissuades people from religious worship. However, Firmicus affirms instead that astrology actually promotes worship of the gods and piety since it teaches that our actions are ruled by the divine motion of the stars:

For we make the gods to be feared and worshipped; we show their godhead and majesty when we say that all our acts are ruled by their divine setting in motion.

Let us therefore worship the gods, whose origin has joined itself to us through the perennial setting in motion of the stars; and let the human race look up at their majesty with the constant veneration of a suppliant. Let us in supplication call upon the gods and devoutly fulfill our vows to their godhead, so that when the divinity of our mind has been strengthened we may resist in some measure the violent decrees of the stars and their powers.¹⁰⁶

(Of course, the implicit logical contradiction of fate in the last clause is ignored by the ardent Firmicus.) Especially in light of its religious aspects, it is understandable that astrology had to be taken seriously by the early church as a rival for the allegiance of its constituents.

Among the particular problems that astrology posed for the early Christians was the cosmology that was assumed in the practice of astrology in the ancient world. It is hard to distinguish between how much of this cosmology was integral to astrology and how much of it reflects aspects of Greco-Roman culture in general. Nevertheless, cosmological themes became the focus of much early Christian discussion of astrology. For example, the doctrine of cosmic sympathy seemed to leave no room for the Biblical view of a divine creator who was external to the universe. As well, the notion of fate which was inherent in many forms of astrology was opposed to Christian views of divine providence and human free will.¹⁰⁷ Especially for the sake of Christian morality many early Christian writers felt obliged to assert a clear defense of human free will: if our actions are the result of fate, then that undermines the Christian view that people are responsible before God for their moral behaviour. Moreover, if fate predestines everything that occurs, then why should one bother to pray that things might change? Finally, astrology was very often connected with belief in the divinity of the planets and the stars. It is understandable that this belief, which was the theology proper of Greco-Roman astrology, was seen as incompatible with the Christian view of a transcendent God. Of course, one example of this was the worship of the sun as divine; however, that is a vast subject that merits a study of its own and so will be excluded from the focus of the present research.

Notes

1. Luther H. Martin, "The Pagan Religious Background," in *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to A.D. 600*, ed. Ian Hazlett (Nashville, 1991), 59.
2. See Wilhelm and Hans Georg Gundel, *Astrologumena: Die Astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1966), 303–39 et passim.

3. Wolfgang Hübner, *Die Begriffe "Astrologie" und "Astronomie" in der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1989), 10–22 and 7n5.
4. A current example of this approach is the work of Roger Beck of the University of Toronto who in numerous publications has demonstrated the central role of astrology within the Roman mystery cult of Mithras.
5. Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans* (New York, 1912; repr. 1960), xii–xvi, 10–21, 58–110 et passim; Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain*, 4e édition (Paris, 1929), 158ff.
6. Kocku von Stuckrad, *Das Ringen um die Astrologie: Jüdische und christliche Beiträge zum antiken Zeitverständnis* (Berlin, 2000), 767.
7. The need for such a study was already noted by W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 333. Two important studies of Christian anti-astrological polemic, David Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté dans l'Antiquité Grecque* (Louvain, 1945) and Utto Riedinger, *Die Heilige Schrift im Kampf der griechischen Kirche gegen die Astrologie von Origenes bis Johannes von Damaskos* (Innsbruck, 1956), arbitrarily focus on Greek Christian writers and largely ignore the rest of early Christian literature. The recent study of Stuckrad, *Ringens*, omits much of the early Christian evidence discussed in the present work.
8. vol. 1, *L'Astrologie et les Sciences Occultes* (Paris, 1950), 89.
9. Roger Beck, "Thus Spake Not Zarathustra: Zoroastrian Pseudepigrapha of the Greco-Roman World," in Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1991), 497; Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London, 1994), 103–04. Examples in astrology are polarities such as planetary exaltations and depressions, or favourable and unfavourable aspects (e.g. trine versus square).
10. Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 90. (It is thus that the sun, the planets and the constellations, all the stars whose substance is a fire which burns eternally without ever being consumed, are nourished from vapours which spring from the sublunar world; conversely, the stars do not cease to act upon the sublunar world by the energies that they project, either on the whole of this world or on some part or even some single individual.)
11. Bouché-Leclercq, 75.
12. *Ibid.*, 74. According to Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 90n1 such natural correlations were primary: "on a passé de faits individuels à la συμπάθεια τῶν ὅλων, non inverse-

- ment.”
13. Bouché-Leclercq, 73.
 14. See Michael Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley, 1978), 169–176 (the notion of πνεῦμα applied to the cosmos as a whole).
 15. Franz Boll, Carl Bezold and Wilhelm Gundel, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung* 6th ed. (Darmstadt, 1974), 77–78.
 16. Festugière, *Revelation*, vol. 1, 91: “les gens simplement cultivés qui n’adhèrent à aucune école.”
 17. *Ibid.*, 90.
 18. Bouché-Leclercq, 76–77 (the inexhaustible nourishment, the central fortress of astrology).
 19. Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 92.
 20. *Ibid.*, 95. (The very language manifests this turn of mind: the planets rise and fall, see each other, hear each other, command, obey, appear hilarious or melancholy, are housekeepers, etc., —not to mention all the epithets with which they are decked out in order to denote their attitude toward human beings.) On the signs as “commanding” and “obeying”, and as “seeing” each other, see *Tetrabiblos* 1. 14–15 (p. 74–77 Robbins) and Bouché-Leclercq, 159–164.
 21. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 161. See the description of the planetary characteristics in Bouché-Leclercq, 88–101. Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 111–113 draws associations with Mesopotamian and Egyptian deities as well.
 22. Bouché-Leclercq, 97.
 23. *Ibid.*, 94–95; Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 96–97. Both authors note the contradictory picture of Saturn in ancient astrology: the picture of Saturn as an old man hardly accords with his common association with fecundity and generation. On Saturn and old age (γεροντική ηλικία), the last of the “seven ages of life,” see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 4.10 (p. 446–447 Robbins).
 24. Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 96.
 25. p. 38–39 Robbins. See Bouché-Leclercq, 101. In general the moon and the sun were not classified in this way, but in this passage Ptolemy regards the moon as beneficent

and the sun as another neutral planet.

26. mathematicos vel genethliacos...qui Saturnum...maleficum deum inter alia sidera constituerunt, quae opinio tantum contra illos in animis humanis praevaluit ut nec nominare illum velint, senem potius quam Saturnum appellantes, tam timida superstitione, ut iam Carthaginenses paene vico suo nomen mutaverint ‘vicum senis’ crebrius quam ‘vicum Saturni’ appellantes (CSEL 43, 35.14–21).
27. See Bouché-Leclercq, 107–110.
28. p. 40–41 Robbins. See the discussion in Bouché-Leclercq, 102–03 and Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 107.
29. p. 42–43 Robbins. See Bouché-Leclercq, 103–04.
30. See the description of the zodiacal signs in Bouché-Leclercq, 130–149. The mythological connotations of all the signs referred to by Manilius are conveniently summarized on p. xxiv–xxx of G.P. Goold’s introduction to his edition of the *Astronomica* (LCL).
31. Bouché-Leclercq, 131–32. Cf. the correlations, inaccurately termed divination by “metoposcopy,” in Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 4.15.3–27.2 (p. 110–115 Marcovich).
32. Bouché-Leclercq, 149–151.
33. *Ibid.*, 154–55.
34. p. 64–69 Robbins. See Bouché-Leclercq, 152–53.
35. See Bouché-Leclercq, 182–192; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 96.
36. Bouché-Leclercq, 192–199; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 96–97.
37. Bouché-Leclercq, 199–206.
38. *Ibid.*, 206–215; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 97.
39. Bouché-Leclercq, 215–237; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 20, 97; O. Neugebauer, “The Egyptian ‘Decans’,” *Vistas in Astronomy* 1 (1955): 47–51, repr. *Astronomy and History: Selected Essays* (New York, 1983), 205–209.
40. Bouché-Leclercq, 219–221.

41. Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 115–121; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 28–29.
42. p. 72–75 Robbins. See Bouché-Leclercq, 165–77; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 99–102.
43. *Révélation*, vol. 1, 99 (made this divinatory art to be considered as a science and reflects how Greek logic penetrated into this area as in so many others). Of course, such a notion of “Greek logic” reflects scholarly assumptions that were fatally undermined by E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951).
44. James H. Charlesworth, “Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues,” *HTR* 70 (1977): 199n57. On the social construction of “scientific” views of astrology see Tamsyn Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 1–17, 27–33.
45. p. 2 Robbins (LCL).
46. Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 101.
47. “...Astrologie...die in das καθολικόν und das γενεθλιαλογικόν zerfällt, von denen jenes wichtiger, weil umfassender, ist als dieses...” (Franz Boll, *Studien über Claudius Ptolemäus: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie und Astrologie* [Leipzig, 1894], 121).
48. Εἰς δύο τοίνυν τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα μέρη διαιρουμένου τοῦ δι’ ἀστρονομίας προγνωστικοῦ, καὶ πρώτου μὲν ὄντος καὶ γενικωτέρου τοῦ καθ’ ὅλα ἔθνη καὶ χώρας καὶ πόλεις λαμβανομένου, ὃ καλεῖται καθολικόν, δευτέρου δὲ καὶ εἰδικωτέρου τοῦ καθ’ ἓνα ἕκαστον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ καλεῖται γενεθλιαλογικόν, προσήκειν ἡγοῦμεθα περὶ τοῦ καθολικοῦ πρώτον ποιήσασθαι τὸν λόγον, ἐπειδὴ περ ταῦτα μὲν κατὰ μείζους καὶ ἰσχυροτέρας αἰτίας τρέπεσθαι ἐπέφυκε μᾶλλον τῶν μερικῶς ἀποτελουμένων. ὑποπιπτουσῶν δὲ αἰεὶ τῶν ἀσθενεστέρων φύσεων ταῖς δυνατωτέραις καὶ τῶν κατὰ μέρος ταῖς καθ’ ὅλου, παντάπασιν ἀναγκαῖον ἂν εἴη τοῖς προαιρουμένοις περὶ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου σκοπεῖν πολὺ πρότερον περὶ τῶν ὀλοσχερεστέρων περιειληφέναι (p. 116–119 trans. Robbins [LCL]).
49. ὡς προηγουμένης καὶ τὰ πολλὰ κατακρατεῖν δυναμένης τῶν περὶ ἓνα ἕκαστον τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ ἴδιον τῆς φύσεως ἀποτελουμένων) and that the “universal conditions are greater and independent, and particular ones not similarly so” (ἡ μὲν καθολικὴ περίστασις μείζων τε καὶ αὐτοτελής, ἡ δ’ ἐπὶ μέρους οὐχ ὁμοίως (p. 220–221 trans. Robbins). Cf. *Tetrabiblos* 1.3: ὑποπιπτούσης αἰεὶ τῆς βραχυτέρας αἰτίας τῇ μείζονι καὶ ἰσχυρωτέρῃ (the lesser cause always yields to the greater and the

stronger) (p. 24–25 Robbins). According to Bouché-Leclercq, 582 “la prédominance du général sur le particulier, du tout sur partie” appeared as “une vérité de sens commun.”

50. These are discussed at the end of 2.3; see p. 158–161 Robbins (LCL). The influences on cities are determined from the horoscope cast for each city’s foundation, or if the time of foundation is unknown the horoscope of the founder or first ruler of the city may be used. For a Christian response to such astrological doctrine see Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Fate* (p. 52.20–23, 53.23–54.5 McDonough).
51. Boll, *Studien*, 121; Boll writes that “dieses letzte Kapitel [i.e. τὸ εἰδικόν] ist natürlich das umfangreichste” which Ptolemy himself does not say. The categories themselves are Aristotelian (Robbins ed., 160n2).
52. ad primum lapidem vectari cum placet, hora/ sumitur ex libro; si prurit frictus ocelli/ angulus, inspecta genesi collyria poscit;/ aegra licet iaceat, capiendo nulla videtur/ aptior hora cibo nisi quam dederit Petosiris (p. 130 Ramsay [LCL]).
53. Multi...nec in publicum prodeunt nec prandent nec lavari arbitrantur se cautius posse, antequam ephemeride scrupulose sciscitata didicerint, ubi sit verbi gratia signum Mercurii, vel quotam Cancris sideris partem polum discurrens obtineat luna (p. 152 Rolfe [LCL]).
54. ...eligunt dies accommodatos ponendis vitibus vel arboribus vel segetibus, alios dies pecoribus vel domandis vel admittendis maribus.... Solent tamen homines ad temptandam peritiam mathematicorum adferre ad eos constellationes mutorum animalium, quorum ortus propter hanc explorationem domi suae diligenter observant.... Audent etiam dicere quale pecus, utrum aptum lanitio, an vectationi, an aratro, an custodiae domus. Nam et ad canina fata temptantur et cum magnis admirantium clamoribus ista respondent (CCL 47, p. 134.14–16, 26–35.35).
55. quis enim consulat quando sedeat, quando deambulet, quando vel quid prandeat? (CCL 47, p. 131.23–24)
56. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 154 (there would be no great or small business which would be undertaken without consulting an astrologer). Apparently, Cumont was taking Juvenal literally. Prudentius also indulges in sarcasm when he refers in *Against Symmachus* 2.450–60 to taking astrological readings for every building and wall, its stones and roof timbers, even the moment when the tree was cut down for the roof (CCL 126, p. 227).
57. Bouché-Leclercq, 45–51, 83.

58. Martin, "Pagan Religious Background," 59.
59. *De Divinatione* 1.58.132: de circo astrologos (p. 335.1 Pease). On the other hand, Cicero puts the astrological notions of the influences of Jupiter and Mars into the mouth of the elder Scipio in *Republic* 6.17 (Bouché-Leclercq, 548).
60. Bouché-Leclercq, 545–46.
61. *Ibid.*, 546 (the ground on which it would be based and prosper, a rich, literate society which attained without moving beyond that degree of scepticism where the old beliefs which departed allowed free room for novelties to come. It was Greece which provided astrologers; the Romans, long used to the role of disciples, admired, consulted and payed them.)
62. *Conversion* (Oxford, 1933), 100. The widespread appeal of astrology during the imperial period was also noted by Adolf Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, 4th edition, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1924), 328–329n3.
63. Bouché-Leclercq, 550. On astrology under the early principate see the detailed survey in Frederick H. Cramer, *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics* (Philadelphia, 1954), 81–146.
64. Suetonius, *Julius* 88. See John T. Ramsay and A. Lewis Licht, *The Comet of 44 B.C. and Caesar's Funeral Games* (Atlanta, 1997).
65. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.843–54.
66. *Augustus* 94.12; see Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 40.
67. His birth horoscope was in Libra. The literary evidence for Augustus' horoscopes and proposed explanations are presented in Tamsyn Barton, "Augustus and Capricorn: Astrological Polyvalency and Imperial Rhetoric," *JRS* 85 (1995): 34–38.
68. Cui autem opus est perscrutari super Caesaris salute, nisi a quo aliquid adversus illam cogitatur vel optatur, aut post illam speratur et sustinetur? (CCL 1, p. 147.62–65) Just prior to this, in 35.12 he affirms that Christians do not make use of such demonic arts as astrology by which people try to gain knowledge of the emperor's life.
69. Bouché-Leclercq, 560–62, 565–67. Between 33 B.C.E. and 93 C.E astrologers were evicted some ten times from Rome or Italy, and possibly once more under Marcus Aurelius (Ramsey Macmullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* [Cambridge, MA,

1966], 132-33).

70. J.B. Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford, 1995), 240. See also MacMullen, *Enemies*, 129–34.
71. inde fides artis, sonuit si dextera ferro/ laevaue, si longe castrorum in carcere mansit./ nemo mathematicus genium indemnatus habebit./ sed qui paene perit, cui vix in Cyclada mitti/ contigit et parva tandem caruisse Seripho (p. 128–29 Ramsay [LCL]).
72. As MacMullen, *Enemies*, 141 notes, this was “a world quite dedicated to astral fatalism. Had it been otherwise, the rapid development of the treason law to embrace divination could not have taken place....”
73. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 153–54.
74. Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 254, citing the third century C.E. jurist Ulpian.
75. On the financial aspect of astrology see Bouché-Leclercq, 569n2 (extravagant fees paid by Vettius Valens to his instructors in astrology).
76. p. 82–88 Hanson (LCL).
77. *Satires* 6.582–583, 588: Si mediocris erit, spatium lustrabit utrimque/ metarum...plebeium in circo positum est et in aggere fatum (p. 130–131 Ramsay). On astrologers at the Circus, see Pease’s note on the phrase “de circo astrologos” in Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.58.132 (p. 335): “We are probably to imagine these quacks as chiefly haunting the arcades around the outside of the Circus, one of the most disreputable parts of the city.”
78. *Satires* 6.585–86: divitibus responsa dabit Phryx augur, et Indus/ conductus, dabit astrorum mundique peritus (p. 130–31 Ramsay).
79. T.D. Barnes, “Two Senators under Constantine,” *JRS* 64 (1975): 40; repr. *Early Christianity and the Roman Empire* (London, 1984).
80. p. 28–29 Green.
81. Even in the fifth century the aristocrat Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Clermont in Gaul and son-in-law of the emperor Avitus, refers to friends of his who were devotees of astrology (Letter preceding *Ode* 22; *Letters* 8.11.9–13; in the latter Sidonius’ criticism of astrology is surprisingly muted). On Sidonius Apollinaris see PLRE, vol. 2, 115–118.

82. aliquid horum simile exercens in comitatu meo vel Caesaris fuerit deprehensus praesidio dignitatis cruciatus et tormenta non fugiat (p. 461.7–8 Mommsen).
83. Cesset mathematicorum tractatus. Nam si qui publice aut privatim in die noctuque deprehensus fuerit in cohibito errore versari, capitali sententia feriat uterque. Neque enim culpa dissimilis est prohibita discere quam docere (p. 462.1–5 Mommsen). Mommsen dates this edict to 370 or 373.
84. Mathematicos, nisi parati sint codicibus erroris proprii sub oculis episcoporum incendio concrematis catholicae religionis cultui fidem tradere numquam ad errorem praeteritum redituri, non solum urbe Roma, sed etiam omnibus civitatibus pelli decernimus. Quod si hoc non fecerint et contra clementiae nostrae salubre constitutum in civitatibus fuerint deprehensi vel secreta erroris sui et professionis insinuerint, deportationis poenam excipiant (p. 463.1–7 Mommsen).
85. Bouché-Leclercq, 567.
86. Boll, Bezold and Gundel, *Stern Glaube*, 184–85; W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 336.
87. On the religious characteristics of astrology see Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, xii–xvi, 10–21, 58–110 et passim, and Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 158ff.
88. Bouché-Leclercq, 604–05n2.
89. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 158.
90. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 152 terms these “oeuvres nébuleuses et abstruses qui devinrent en quelque sorte les livres saints de la foi...en puissance des étoiles.” The book of Nechepso opened with a nocturnal divine revelation brought by a heavenly voice (Bouché-Leclercq, 576–77n1).
91. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, 82.
92. See the discussion of Greek views of the Persian Magi in Beck, “Thus Spake Not Zarathustra,” 511–21.
93. Franz Cumont, *L’Égypte des Astrologues* (Brussels, 1937; repr. 1982), 124–25.
94. *De Abstinencia* 4.8. The text is found in Pieter W. van der Horst, *Chaeremon* (Leiden, 1984), 20–22. This report, attributed to the philosopher Chaeremon by Porphyry, reflects an idealized description of Egyptian clergy (*ibid.*, x and 56n1); nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt that, as the text indicates, the functions of

the priests and ὀρολόγοι overlapped.

95. *Stromateis* 6.4 depicts the ὀροσκόπος holding a clock and palm in his hand and the astrological teachings of Hermes Trismegistus always in his mouth (p. 448.30–449.6 Stählin [GCS]). On the Egyptian background to this term and attachment to it of astrological associations in the Greco-Roman period see Jacco Dieleman, “Stars and the Egyptian Priesthood in the Graeco-Roman Period,” in Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler, ed., *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Late Antique World* (University Park, PA, 2003), 138–145.
96. Dieleman, “Stars and the Egyptian Priesthood,” 137–153.
97. Alexander Jones, “The Place of Astronomy in Roman Egypt,” in T.D. Barnes, ed. *The Sciences in Greco-Roman Society* (Edmonton, 1994), 39–41, 44–45, 47–48. Jones’ discussion (p. 42–43) of the evidence from Porphyry and Clement is more nuanced than that of Cumont.
98. It is usually believed that Firmicus wrote the *Mathesis* prior to his conversion to Christianity because of the polemical attitude to Greco-Roman polytheism shown in his later work *On the Error of the Pagan Religions*; thus, e.g., Stuckrad, *Ringens*, 776 compares Firmicus’ conversion from astrology to that of Augustine. However, it is worth noting that Firmicus retained a surprisingly positive view of astral themes in his later work despite its general hostility to other aspects of Greco-Roman religion; see: Carl Weyman, “L’Astrologie dans le *De Errore* de Firmicus,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses* 3 (1898): 383–384; Albert Becker, “Julius Firmicus Maternus und Pseudo-Quintilian,” *Philologus* 61, n.s. 15 (1902): 476–478; Lynn Thorndike, “A Roman Astrologer as a Historical Source: Julius Firmicus Maternus,” *Classical Philology* 8 (1913): 418–419; G. Heuten, “‘Primus in orbe deos fecit timor’,” *Latomus* 1 (1937): 7; and the comments of Clarence A. Forbes in his ACW translation of *The Error of the Pagan Religions* (New York, 1970), 7, 19–20, 190n316.
99. Nec errantibus animi cupiditatibus religionis istius arcana committas; non enim oportet perditas mentes hominum divinis initiari caerimoniis (vol. 1, p. 88 Kroll–Skutsch). Earlier, Vettius Valens had expressed a similar view (Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 159; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 59).
100. ne haec veneranda commenta profanis vel inperitis auribus intimentur, sed his quos animus incorruptus ad rectum vivendi ordinem casto ac pudico praesidio mentis ornavit, quorum illibata fides, quorum manus ab omni sunt facinorum scelere separatae, integris pudicis sobriis ac modestis, ut puro mentis splendore decoratis integra se scientia divinationis insinuet (vol. 2, p. 208–09 Kroll–Skutsch–Ziegler).

101. ad imaginem te divinitatis similitudinemque forma, ut sis semper praeconio bonitatis ornatus. Oportet enim eum, qui cotidie de diis vel cum diis loquitur, animum suum ita formare atque instruere, ut ad imitationem divinitatis semper accedat (vol. 1, p. 85.8–13 Kroll–Skutsch).
102. Secerne te ab spectaculorum semper illecebris, ne quis te fautorem alicuius esse partis existimet; antistes enim deorum separatus et alienus esse debet a pravis illecebris voluptatum (vol. 1, p. 88 Kroll–Skutsch).
103. Dato operam, ut instituto ac proposito tuo bonorum institutum ac propositum vincas sacerdotum; antistitem enim Solis ac Lunae et ceterorum deorum, per quos terrena omnia gubernantur, sic oportet animum suum semper instruere, ut dignus esse tantis caerimoniis omnium hominum testimoniis comprobetur (vol. 1, p. 85.19–25 Kroll–Skutsch).
104. quod alienum est a proposito sacerdotis (vol. 1, p. 87.7 Kroll–Skutsch).
105. divini illi viri et sanctissimae religionis antistites, Petosiris et Nechepso (vol. 2, p. 294.15–17 Kroll–Skutsch–Ziegler).
106. Nos enim timeri deos, nos coli facimus, nos numen eorum maiestatemque monstramus, cum omnes actus nostros divinis eorum dicimus agitationibus gubernari. Colamus itaque deos, quorum se nobis origo stellarum perenni agitatione coniunxit, et maiestatem eorum gens humana supplici semper veneratione suspiciat; invocemus suppliciter deos et religiose promissa numinibus vota reddamus, ut confirmata animi nostri divinitate ex aliqua parte stellarum violenti decreto et earum potestatibus resistamus (vol. 1, p. 18.3–13 Kroll–Skutsch).
107. On the relationship of ancient astrology to the concept of fate see Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, 17, 84–89.

Part A: Studies in Early Christian Anti-Astrological Polemic

The forms of early Christian polemic against astrology have been described in summary fashion as “either full-dress discourses on fatalism or else...briefer statements by Biblical commentators called forth by a passage or episode in Scripture.”¹ Indeed, a number of early Christian writers produced entire treatises “Against Fate” (*Contra Fatum*),² and for many γένεσις, the technical term referring to an individual’s (natal) horoscope,³ was simply equivalent to fate.⁴ It was natural that fatalism was a primary focus of Christian argument since it was this aspect of astrology which seemed so evidently opposed to early Christian views of divine authority and human free will. Elsewhere, the polemic took the form of passing attacks on astrology, that is, polemical digressions found within Christian texts primarily devoted to other topics.⁵ Within both of these types of polemical writing various lines of attack were pursued, including arguments defending human freedom, arguments (often ill informed) attacking astrological doctrines and methodologies, and theological and dogmatic arguments which were informed by Christian belief and practice.⁶

Early Christian anti-astrological polemic was drawn from pre-Christian Greco-Roman, as well as Christian, sources. Christian opponents of astrology were primarily motivated by the conviction that astrology posed a significant threat to Christianity. Thus, while they made extensive use of arguments from Greco-Roman sources these were likely regarded as of less significance than arguments drawn from Christian doctrine and scripture.⁷ Nevertheless, traditional arguments were popular and widely used: the Christian polemical literature demonstrates that stock Greco-Roman arguments, drawn from a traditional arsenal of commonplace repudiations of astrology, were frequently reiterated by Christian authors. These traditional arguments are usually attributed by scholars to Carneades, head of the New Academy in the second century B.C.E., who formulated a number of τόποι which became authoritative in the tradition of anti-fatalist argumentation.⁸ The attribution of these arguments to Carneades is generally accepted, although

...du fait que Carnéade n’a laissé aucun écrit et que les ouvrages de son disciple Clitomaque de Carthage sont tous perdus, il est difficile de contrôler l’exactitude des résultats de cette *Quellenforschung*; il n’est pas impossible que l’on fasse jouer en ce domaine à Carnéade un rôle analogue à celui qui fut longtemps attribué à

Posidonius. Quoi qu'il en soit, il demeure que les arguments de la polémique se répètent d'un auteur à l'autre et semblent bien relever d'un fonds commun....⁹

Christian writers likely had access to traditional anti-fatalist arguments from the doxographical literature, popular and easily accessible handbooks summarizing the teachings or opinions (δόξαι) of the philosophical schools.¹⁰ That Christian writers did use the doxographical literature is evident from Athenagoras, *Legation* 6.2, where the author claims to have “turned to the opinions” (ἐπὶ τὰς δόξας ἐτραπόμην) to show that not only the Christians affirm the oneness of God.¹¹ The use of such sources is also evident in Augustine, *On the City of God* 19.1ff. According to Stanislas Giet, the compilation of excerpts from the writings of Origen in the *Philocalia* by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus may suggest that they had been in the habit of compiling such handbooks in the course of their studies in Athens.¹² In some cases, Christian writers copied from their sources literally and without acknowledgement. For example, much of Hippolytus’ diatribe against astrology in the *Refutation of All Heresies* 4 is drawn verbatim from book 5 of Sextus’ *Empiricus’ Against Astrologers*. Amand describes Hippolytus as a “théologien copiste qui se garde bien de citer sa source” and who follows his sources “servilement”; moreover “[d]e fréquents malentendus manifestent son incompétence en matière d’astrologie.”¹³ The example of Hippolytus does not, however, show that the early Christians had difficulty forging their own arguments against astrological fatalism.¹⁴ By contrast with Hippolytus, the sources used by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Preparation for the Gospel* are usually clearly identified.¹⁵

It is not my task here to thoroughly rehearse the arguments relating to astrology in the ancient world. In the nineteenth century, Franz Boll sketched out a genealogy of ancient anti-astrological arguments which derived from Carneades and traced their reception and transmission down to the writers of late antiquity.¹⁶ For this study I will not assume that every argument should be—or can be—neatly traced to an earlier source; earlier Greco-Roman polemic, as well as Jewish and Christian scriptures, beliefs and practices, provided the background out of which the early Christians developed the polemic which was their most prevalent response to ancient astrology. Moreover, since an historical development within early Christian anti-astrological polemic is not clearly discernible I shall proceed by treating the polemic by theme and topic rather than chronologically.

Christian polemicists naturally took up arguments that were already available which derived from the Greco-Roman tradition of anti-fatalist debate, such as:

I) The argument of practical impossibility: that it is not possible to exactly determine the horoscope (see below chapter 2)

II) The argument of different destinies: that discrepancies occur in the lives of people who have the same horoscope (see below chapter 3)

III) The argument of common destinies: that identical fates occur in the lives of people who have different horoscopes (see below chapter 4)

IV) The argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά: that since characteristics, manners and customs of whole peoples and nations are the same, they are not determined by each individual's horoscope (see below chapter 5).

V) The argument from animals: that if animals and human beings are equally subject to astrological influence then animals would have the same destinies as humans (see below chapter 6).

VI) The moral argument: that belief in all powerful fate suppresses moral obligation because morality presupposes personal responsibility. If human deeds are caused by the external influence of fate, then no one could be praised or blamed, rewarded or punished, for his/her actions. Therefore laws, judges and courts would lose their *raison d'être*; people would become indifferent with respect to their occupations and social duties; and religious belief would be nullified, for fatalism renders prayers and sacrifices useless (see below chapter 7).¹⁷

Each of these traditional Greco-Roman arguments was used, adapted and developed in various ways by early Christian writers.

Notes

1. M.L.W. Laistner, "The Western Church and Astrology during the Early Middle Ages," *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Chester G. Starr

- (New York, 1966), 62.
2. W. Gundel, "Heimarmene," RE 7, 2625–26; W. Gundel, "Astrologie," RAC 1, 828.
 3. s.v. LSJ II.2. Cf. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 14.5.2, where the term is explained λέγω δὴ τῷ τῆς ἀστρολογίας μαθήματι (p. 206.10–11 Rehm [GCS]).
 4. A.J. Festugière, *L'Idéal Religieux des Grecs et L'Évangile* (Paris, 1932; repr. 1981), 111n7; G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, 1936), 53–54.
 5. For example: Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks* 7–11; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 36.1–2; Origen, Commentary on Genesis 1.14 (= Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 6.11, *Philocalia* 23.1–11, 14–21); Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 8.13–17; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel* 6.6.4–20; Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 6.5–7; Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, 4.12–19; Augustine, *On the City of God* 5.1–7; Nemesius of Emesa, *On Human Nature* 35–38.
 6. H.O. Schröder, "Fatum (Heimarmene)," RAC 7, 582–83; W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 332–33.
 7. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 64.
 8. Gundel, "Heimarmene," RE 7, 2643–44; Amand, *Fatalisme*, 49–68; Boll, Bezold, Gundel, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung*, 24–25.
 9. P. Agaësse et A. Solignac ed., *Augustin: La Genèse au Sens Littéral en Douze Livres* (1–VII) (Paris, 1972; BA 48), 610. (...since Carneades left no writing and the works of his disciple Clitomachus of Carthage are all lost, it is difficult to control the accuracy of the results of this research into sources; it is not impossible that in this area Carneades might be made to play a role analogous to that which for a long time was attributed to Posidonius. However that may be, it remains that the arguments of the polemic were repeated from one author to the other and rightly seem to belong to a common foundation.)
 10. Schröder, "Fatum," 583; cf. Amand, *Fatalisme*, 340. On the doxographical literature see: A.D. Nock's introduction to *On the Gods and the Universe* (Cambridge, 1926), xxxviii–xxxix; Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 2, 350ff; Aimé Solignac, "Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de saint Augustin," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (1958): 113–148; Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique* (Paris, 4th ed. 1958), 407–13; Ian Mueller, "Heterodoxy and Doxography in Hippolytus' 'Refutation of All Heresies'," ANRW 2.36.6, 4309–4374; Jaap Mansfeld and David T. Runia, *Aëtiana*, vol. 1

(Leiden, 1997).

11. p. 12–13 Schoedel. On this use of the δόξαῖ see Festugière’s comments in his review of Gustave Bardy’s SC edition of the *Legation* (*Revue des Études Grecques* 56 [1943], 369–71).
12. Stanislas Giet ed., *Basile de Césarée: Homélie sur l’Hexaéméron* (Paris, 1968; SC 26 bis), 65.
13. Amand, *Fatalisme*, 226 (a copyist theologian who takes good care not to cite his source, who follows his sources slavishly; frequent misunderstandings reveal his incompetence in the subject of astrology). On p. 226–227 Amand lists the parallels between Hippolytus, *Refutation* 4 and Sextus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.
14. Contra Éric Junod, ed. *Origène: Philocalie 21–27: Sur le Libre Arbitre* (Paris, 1976; SC 226), 45.
15. For example, in refuting astrological fatalism in book 6 Eusebius acknowledges his quotations from the writings of the Cynic philosopher Oenomaos of Gadara, the Epicurean Diogenianos, the Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias, and the Christian writers Bardaisan of Edessa and Origen of Alexandria—in spite of his basic religious antipathy toward all of these writers save the last. On Eusebius’ *Preparation for the Gospel* see T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 71–72, 93–94, 178–186.
16. *Studien über Claudius Ptolemäus*, 182. Boll’s stemma omits Basil’s *Hexaemeron* 6.5–7, which should be located along the line between Origen and Ambrose. This genealogy was enthusiastically endorsed as having “beaucoup de sagacité” by Bouché-Leclercq, 571 and n1. More recently, A.A. Long has cautioned against the “fallacies of treating intellectual history by the methods of stemmatology” (“Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra,” in *Science and Speculation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes [Cambridge, 1982], 184n39).
17. This is the subject of Amand, *Fatalisme*; see the summary on p. 581–584.

2. *The Argument of Practical Impossibility*

One argument against astrology which was widely used by Christian authors was directed at the methodologies that were believed to be involved in the practice of astrology. This argument is particularly concerned with the practical difficulties involved in determining the position of the heavens at the particular moment of conception or birth.¹

Typically, texts which make use of this argument presuppose a rather fanciful scene involving two individuals at the home of a woman as she is giving birth: one of these keeps watch over the birth of the child while the other is upstairs or on the roof observing and taking measurements of the heavens.² The several stages of the process that allegedly take place in this situation are then subjected to criticism in the following series of argumentation.

1) The exact moment of the horoscope, whether of conception or birth, cannot be determined since both of these events occur over shorter or longer periods of time rather than at one specific moment. Taking this to its *reductio ad absurdum*, Gregory the Great remarked that the length of birth meant that different parts of a baby ought to have different horoscopes since a child is born under a succession of zodiacal signs (*Sermon 10*).³ A variant of this argument was used against the doctrine of catholic influences in astrology by Gregory of Nyssa. In his *Against Fate*, Gregory asks how one can measure the horoscope of a ship, or a city, or a nation since each of these are manufactured and developed over a period of time: at what exact stage in the construction of a ship, or the building of a city, or the development of a people, is the horoscope to be determined?⁴

2) When the person watching over the childbirth rings a gong to indicate to the astrologer upstairs that the child is born, a period of time is again required for the sound of the gong to travel upstairs.

3) While the astrologer observes the heavens and determines the horoscope, the calculations which must be made as well as the rapid movement of the heavens both involve further elapses of time.

4) Locating the horizon is also prone to error since it is affected by the latitude of the place of observation, as well as mountains or other obstacles which obscure the astrologer's observation of the heavens.⁵ (This objection demonstrates the generally inadequate knowledge of astrology among its opponents, and their rote repetition of stock arguments: for astrologers, the fact that the horizon changes depending on the situation of the observer was obvious.⁶)

5) Finally, the use of the κλεψύδρα,⁷ or water-clock, is undependable due to the variability of the flow of the water within it.

The Christian text which presents this sequence of argumentation in fullest detail is Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 4.3.5–4.5.3;⁸ similar polemic is also presented, though more concisely, in fourth century texts such as Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* 6.5,⁹ Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* 4.14¹⁰ and the Arian Julian's Commentary on Job.¹¹ However, not only is it most unlikely that such scenes actually took place at the birth of a child but the target of such polemic is also largely mistaken since by Greco-Roman times the fixing of the horoscope did not usually depend on actual celestial observation but was derived from astrological handbooks and tables.¹² Of course, measuring the exact time of the horoscope is as elusive as measuring the exact time of conception or birth, but this point did not prevent astrologers from prescribing methods for determining the horoscope:

Ce sont expédients de gens mis aux abois par l'impossibilité de résumer la naissance en un instant indivisible pour la faire correspondre avec un Horoscope également instantané. ...le plus sûr était pour eux de laisser planer un certain vague sur des questions où la rigueur logique faisait seule l'obscurité. Le sens commun les trouvait beaucoup moins compliquées: il ne voyait pas de difficulté à compter la naissance d'un enfant pour un fait simple....¹³

Indeed, compared with the astrologers' "common sense" approach their opponents' argument of the practical difficulty of observing the horoscope remained on the level of abstract theory.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the argument of the practical difficulty of observing the horoscope was a popular weapon used by Christian writers against astrology. For example, Basil of Caesarea argued that astrologers themselves admitted that they were unable to determine the horoscope adequately:

The inventors of this genethliology, realising that over time many of the configurations escape their notice, divided the measurements of time into very tiny divisions; so that across the smallest and briefest period of time—as the apostle says “in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye” [1 Cor 15.52]—there is the greatest difference between horoscope and horoscope. The person born in one momentary period would be a monarch of cities, and ruler of people, exceedingly rich and powerful; but the one born in the next moment of time [would be] a mendicant beggar, going from door to door for daily sustenance. Because of this they divide what they call the animal-bearing circle [i.e. the zodiac] into twelve parts; since the sun goes through the twelfth part of what they call the fixed sphere in thirty days, they have divided each of the twelfths into thirty parts [degrees]. Then they divided each part

into sixty further parts [minutes], then each of the sixtieths sixty times [i.e. into seconds] (*Hexaemeron* 6.5).¹⁵

This passage was evidently the source for a parallel passage in Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* 4.4.14, which follows Basil's points almost to the letter.¹⁶ The argument was also asserted by Augustine, who writes that astrologers were unable to measure the zodiac with accurate precision, i.e. down to the seconds of a degree: "but they are unable to discern the "minutes" of the minutes which are in the constellations, [yet] they say these are the means by which they foretell future events" (83 *Diverse Questions*, Qu. 45.2).¹⁷ In order to reassure their readers that they knew what they were writing about it was important for these Christian authors to make a point of demonstrating that they were aware of the division of the zodiac into degrees, minutes and seconds—though this was actually common knowledge. Basil, Ambrose and Augustine do not use the technical astrological terms for these divisions, i.e. δεκανοί (the thirds of signs, of ten degrees length), λεπτά (minutes) and δευτερολεπτά (seconds).¹⁸ Hippolytus (*Refutation* 5.3–4) does mention them, but only because the terminology appeared in the source text he is following from Sextus Empiricus.¹⁹ Some Christian polemicists felt the need to explicitly use the correct terminology, again no doubt to increase the impression that they were well informed about astrology. This is evident in the version of the argument of technical difficulty in Procopius of Gaza's commentary on Gen 1.14 (which even mentions λεπτεπίλεπτα, the smallest divisions of time imaginable).²⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus is playing on the word λεπτόν when he writes "Tell me about astrologers and fine degrees" (ὠροθέτας δὲ σύ μοι καὶ λεπταλέας ἀγόρευε/ μοίρας) (*Poemata Arcana* 5.45–46); the phrase implies that the divisions of the zodiac are too fine to be calculated accurately.²¹

The most sophisticated criticisms of astrological method expressed by a Christian author were developed by Origen. In his commentary on Gen 1.14 he too asserts that astrologers were unable to measure the horoscope or the time of the movement of the heavens with sufficient accuracy (*Philocalia* 23.17).²² He then proceeds to raise the argument that astrologers did not take into account the law of the precession of the equinoxes, and that hence their calculations of the heavens were not exact. Origen himself seems to have regarded this as his most significant argument against astrology. At the end of the previous passage dealing with astrologers' inaccuracies in the measurement of time (23.17) he writes "But let it be granted to them that they grasp

the hour”;²³ since he concedes this latter he likely felt it was less significant than what follows next, which is the argument of the precession of the equinoxes (23.18).

A theorem is reported demonstrating that the circle of the zodiac [i.e. the stars of which it is composed], like the planets, moves from west to east one degree in a century, and after a long time this changes the placement of the [signs of the] zodiac. The occurrence of the “notional” signs is [thus] different from the so to speak “formed” signs. But they say that results are obtained not from the sign as it is “formed” but from the “notional” sign, which cannot be fully apprehended (*Philocalia* 23.18).²⁴

The precession of the equinoxes—the fact that the fixed stars appear to move uniformly from the west to the east at the rate of about one degree per century—was first noted by the ancient astronomer Hipparchus, according to Ptolemy, *Almagest* 7.2.²⁵ This posed a problem for astrology, i.e. whether astrologers were to use the actual constellations in the heavens or notional signs measured from the vernal equinox or another fixed point. Origen rightly states that astrologers preferred to use notional (νοητός) signs in their calculations as distinct from actual, concrete signs that were formed (μορφώματα) from the stars.²⁶ Origen, however, rejects these notional (νοητός) signs, though whether he accepted the validity of the actual signs formed (μορφώματα) in the heavens or was merely using this astrological distinction in order to attack astrology is uncertain. If he was saying that it is impossible to base astrological calculations on the notional signs, he was in fact wrong;²⁷ if he was claiming that it is absurd to base predictions on merely notional signs, rather than the actual signs in the heavens, his argument has more merit. The astrologers’ solution is stated by Ptolemy, who defined “the beginnings of the signs from the equinoxes and solstices” (*Tetrabiblos* 1.22).²⁸ (Thus, for example, the first degree of Aries would be located at the vernal equinox.) Ptolemy’s reason for doing this was precisely his recognition of the problem of precession:

For if other starting-places are assumed [for the zodiac], we shall either be compelled no longer to use the natures of the signs for prognostications or, if we use them, to be in error, since the spaces of the zodiac which implant their powers in the planets would then pass over to others and become alienated.²⁹

In effect, this solution did detach the notional zodiacal signs from the actual zodiacal constellations.³⁰ Today the effect of precession is that the actual signs of the zodiac (i.e. the constellations) are some 29 degrees from where they were at the time of Hipparchus, the vernal equinox now being at the start of Pisces, rather than Aries.³¹ However, this was no problem for astrology, which could still be practiced despite the precession of the equinoxes by simply agreeing to use the notional signs rather than the actual constellations of the zodiac. This solution anticipated Origen, who was the first writer we know of to use precession as an argument against astrology.³² Such use of ancient scientific ideas to combat astrology is evidence of Origen's erudition outside of matters connected with the Bible and Christian teaching. The historical significance of this argument of Origen has been described as "kulturgeschichtlich ausserordentlich wertvoll."³³ Similarly, W. and H. G. Gundel wrote: "Damit ist Origenes der Menschheit um 1 3/4 Jahrtausende vorausgeeilt; denn erst im 20. Jahrhundert sind mit dieser Waffe die entscheidenden Schläge gegen alle Sterndeuterei geführt worden."³⁴ For the believer in astrology, therefore, the notional signs would have to do.

Origen also applied the argument of the practical impossibility of observation to the specific doctrine of astrological "aspects." He claimed that astrologers were not able to take adequate account of the influence of the signs of the zodiac when these are in aspect with one another: that is, he argued that the extent of the influence of the angular relationships (such as opposition, trine, square, and sextile) between the signs could not be sufficiently determined because astrologers are unable to say precisely how much, or how little, planets in aspect affect each others' astrological influences (*Philocalia* 23.18).³⁵ This version of the argument of practical impossibility, like the argument from procession, also seems to belong uniquely to Origen.

Origen's knowledge of ancient astrology is again evident in another part of his commentary on Gen 1.14, where he refers to an astrological doctrine according to which the horoscope was believed to influence not only future events but also the past:

Among the things which are proclaimed by the astrologers, they think that events which are earlier than the configuration [of stars] are foretold concerning human beings. ... They scrutinize not only things to come, but also the past, and what is before the birth and the conception of the person concerning whom the consultation is taking place: concerning one's father, of what sort he happens to be, rich or poor; whether his body is sound or frail, his character excellent or worse; whether he is poor or has many possessions; whether he does this or that; and the same concerning one's mother and elder siblings if there happen to be any (*Philocalia* 23.14).³⁶

This type of divination is reminiscent of the diviner Calchas in *Iliad* 1.70, who was said to have knowledge of all things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before.³⁷ It was attributed to the Chaldeans (i.e. astrologers) already by Vitruvius (*On Architecture* 9.6.2).³⁸ The context for understanding this astrological doctrine is explained by Ptolemy, who outlines the following basic categories into which the subject of genethliology was divided: things preceding birth (e.g. one's parents); those coming both before and after birth (e.g. one's brothers and sisters); events at the very time of birth; and post-natal matters, which according to Ptolemy are more complex (*Tetrabiblos* 3.3).³⁹ He discusses the first category, that of parents, in *Tetrabiblos* 3.4,⁴⁰ and the second category dealing with siblings is treated in 3.5.⁴¹ It is also possible that Origen had in mind the fourth of the twelve "places" (τόποι) according to the system of places which was held by many ancient astrologers⁴² in which the fourth "place" related to parents and thus necessarily to the past.⁴³ At any rate, within the overall astrological system and its underlying doctrine of cosmic sympathy it made sense to relate the horoscope to parents, as Bouché-Leclercq remarks:

L'astrologie avait la prétention d'être en pleine possession du trépied divinatoire, le passé, le présent et l'avenir. Selon que l'on remonte ou qu'on descend l'enchaînement immuable des causes et des effets, on peut conclure également bien d'une donnée présente à l'avenir ou au passé. La destinée des parents conditionne et contient virtuellement celle de leur postérité; de même, le thème de nativité d'un enfant peut renseigner sur la destinée passée, présente, future de ceux qui l'ont engendré.⁴⁴

Origen himself had difficulty with the idea that the stars bring about events, whether in the past or the future. His own view, which he shared with Plotinus, was that the stars do not cause earthly events but rather are to be regarded as divinely appointed signs of what will take place in the future (*Philocalia* 23.6, 14–15). This fundamental concern of Origen, that the stars should not be seen as causes but only as signs, is the motivation for his argument that it is illogical to apply genethliology to the past: for how can any effect occur prior to its cause? (*Philocalia* 23.15)⁴⁵

Another argument which also deals with the relationship of individual horoscopes to one another was featured in Diodore of Tarsus' lost work *Against Fate*, known to us only through the report in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, 223. According to Photius' summary, Diodore wrote that the fatal effects of

individual horoscopes are logically cancelled by those of different horoscopes. Thus sometimes the horoscopes of children lead them to rise up against their parents while the horoscopes of parents can cause misfortune to their children; the horoscopes of children can bring about the same results for their siblings; and those of married persons for their spouses, even if one spouse has a different horoscope and even if he/she is a foreigner. Parents can be compelled by their horoscopes to hate their children, and children their parents; brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, can be driven to murder, and all family relationships come to be thrown into disorder. That a horoscope can compel people to endure the sickness of a child or the death of a spouse: can any rational person accept such things? (Τὰ ὅλα ἀνέξοιτ' ἄν τις νοῦν ἔχων;) When slaves are oppressed due to the horoscope of their masters, when animals suffer because of the destiny of their owners and armies because of their king, when soldiers are fated to rebel against their leaders, and when slaves injure their master: such situations only make the problem of fate worse (πλείονα ποιοῦσι τὴν ἀπορίαν). The conclusion of this argument is that since individual horoscopic fates inevitably clash, genethliology ultimately contradicts itself:

Therefore if the horoscopes are overturned by each other, and the horoscopes of children annul those of parents and *vice versa*, and the horoscopes of married couples annul one another, and the horoscopes of houses annul those of the people who live within them or the horoscopes of residents annul those of their dwellings, and in a word such things are predicted, from all sides the horoscope overturns and destroys itself.⁴⁶

It is of course extremely unlikely that in practice astrologers would address all such sorts of relationships in detail. They would have used the complexity of the astrological system to their own practical advantage in dealing with their clients, rather than becoming lost in evaluating the reciprocal ramifications of horoscopes upon each other. Practitioners of astrology were able to live with the logical contradictions inherent in their art. Therefore, the argument that the effects of horoscopes logically cancel each other, though it succeeds in marshalling astrological doctrine against itself, was nevertheless ultimately irrelevant.

For the Christian writers we have been looking at, attacking astrological methods may well have seemed like the most direct way to refute astrology and would likely have made a definite impression on the Christian audience to whom these writers were directing their arguments. Moreover, by citing astrological details to refute astrology itself these writers sought to assure

their readers of their familiarity with the subject. Basil explicitly claims: “I myself shall say nothing of my own, but I shall avail myself of what is theirs [i.e. the astrologers’] in order to refute them” (*Hexaemeron* 6.5).⁴⁷ Nevertheless, for the most part the arguments of these writers would have been effective only among the readers and listeners to whom they were addressed. It is unlikely that arguments which asserted the impossibility of astrological practice would have had much effect on professional astrologers. Such arguments would not have dissuaded them from their work, nor constrained them to seek more rigorous precision in their methods.⁴⁸ Indeed, astrologers were not obliged to perform their craft infallibly: Ptolemy and Firmicus Maternus, for example, freely admitted that in astrology methodological precision was an ideal which its practitioners did not always attain.⁴⁹ Similarly, Seneca (*Natural Questions* 2.32.7-8) takes it as a matter of fact that astrologers will make mistakes, adding “it is more difficult to know what power they [the stars] have than to doubt whether they have power.”⁵⁰ Astrologers had to use their knowledge of the client’s social, ethnic and economic background, as well as their own common sense, to satisfy a customer with a particular horoscopic reading.⁵¹ And the customers always had the choice to move on to consult someone else—an option which they no doubt exercised.⁵²

Notes

1. Bouché-Leclercq, 590n1 describes it as the minor premise of the following syllogism: “l’Horoscope est la base de tout le thème de géniture; or, il est inobservable; donc la methode des Chaldéens ne tient pas debout.” The argument had been used by Philo of Alexandria in *On Providence* 1.87; by Favorinus of Arles, as recorded in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 14.1.26; and at great length by Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.50–87. It is also mentioned in Manilius, *Astronomica* 3.203–218 and in the précis of anti-astrological arguments in book 1 of Firmicus Maternus’ *Mathesis* (1.3.2).
2. See the summaries in Boll, Bezold and Gundel, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*, 25 and Bouché-Leclercq, 589–590. However, contra Bouché-Leclercq the scene does not always depict “une équipe de deux Chaldéens”: in Hippolytus’ version (*Refutation* 4.4.4, following Sextus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.68) the person watching over the childbirth is a doctor in attendance (ὁ παρ᾽εδρεύων), and Basil’s *Hexaemeron* 6.5 refers to a mid-wife (μαῖα) as does the parallel text in Ambrose’s *Hexaemeron*

(obstetrix).

3. Quibus e diverso nos dicimus quia magna est mora nativitatis. Si igitur in ictu puncti constellatio permutatur, necesse iam erit ut tot dicant fata, quot sunt membra nascentium (PL 76, 1112B).
4. p. 52–53 McDonough.
5. This objection is also found in Cicero, *On Divination* 2.44.
6. Bouché-Leclercq, 590n1 says it was “en effet, l’A B C du métier.”
7. Hippolytus, *Refutation* 4.5.3 (p. 97.14 Marcovich) uses the term ὑδρία, following Sextus, *Against Astrologers* 5.75.
8. p. 94–97 Marcovich, corresponding to Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.50–88.
9. p. 350–352 Giet.
10. CSEL 32/1, 120–121.
11. p. 257.5–258.2 Hagedorn.
12. See Bouché-Leclercq, 386ff. (on Ptolemy’s method for determining the horoscope) and 591.
13. Bouché-Leclercq, 390, 590–591. (It was expedient for people pushed to the wall by the impossibility of summing up the birth in an individual instant to make it correspond with an equally instantaneous Horoscope ... the surest was for them to allow a certain vagueness to hang over questions where logical rigour only made for obscurity. Common sense found them much less complicated: it did not see the difficulty in counting the birth of a child as a simple fact....)
14. *Ibid.*, 86.
15. Οἱ τῆς γενεθλιαλογίας ταύτης εὑρεταί, καταμαθόντες ὅτι ἐν τῷ πλάτει τοῦ χρόνου πολλὰ τῶν σχημάτων αὐτοὺς διαφεύγει, εἰς στενὸν παντελῶς ἀπέκλεισαν τοῦ χρόνου τὰ μέτρα· ὡς καὶ παρὰ τὸ μικρότατον καὶ ἀκαριαῖον, οἷόν φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος, τὸ ἐν ἀτόμῳ, καὶ τὸ ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ, μεγίστης οὔσης διαφορᾶς γενέσει πρὸς γένεσιν· καὶ τὸν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ἀκαριαίῳ γεννηθέντα, τύραννον εἶναι πόλεων, καὶ ἄρχοντα δῆμων, ὑπερπλουτοῦντα καὶ δυναστεύοντα· τὸν δὲ ἐν τῇ ἑτέρᾳ ῥοπῇ τοῦ καιροῦ γεννηθέντα, προσαίτην τινὰ καὶ ἀγύρτην, θύρας ἐκ θυρῶν ἀμείβοντα τῆς ἐφ’ ἡμέραν τροφῆς

- ἔνεκα. Διὰ τοῦτο τὸν ζοφοφόρον λεγόμενον κύκλον διελόντες εἰς δώδεκα μέρη, ἐπειδὴ διὰ τριάκοντα ἡμερῶν ἐκβαίνει τὸ δωδέκατον τῆς ἀπλανοῦς λεγομένης σφαιράς ὁ ἥλιος, εἰς τριάκοντα μοίρας τῶν δωδεκατημορίων ἕκαστον διηρήκασιν. Εἶτα ἑκάστην μοῖραν εἰσέξήκοντα διελόντες, ἕκαστον πάλιν τῶν ἐξηκοστῶν ἐξηκοντάκις ἔτεμον (p. 348–350 Giet).
16. CSEL 32/1, 121.4–122.10. Ambrose makes the allusion to 1 Cor 15.52 into an explicit quotation, and adds a further allusion to Vergil, *Georgics* 3.284.
 17. Minutas autem minutarum iam in constellationibus, de quibus futura praedicere se dicunt, non inveniunt (CCL 44A, 68.29–31).
 18. On these terms, see Bouché-Leclercq, 215–235, 258n3.
 19. Hippolytus, *Refutation* 5.3–4 (p. 175.15–20 Marcovich) = Sextus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.5. In *Refutation* 6.28.4 (a section where Hippolytus attributes astrological teaching to the Pythagoreans) he refers to divisions of the zodiac into twelve signs, the signs into thirty parts (which are the thirty days of the month), the thirty parts of the signs into sixty λεπτά, and the λεπτά into λεπτά [καί] ἔτι λεπτότερα (p. 236.15–237.18 Marcovich); cf. the phrase λεπτά λεπτῶν in *Refutation* 6.34.3 (*ibid.*, p. 246.10–11) where the “Pythagorean” subdivisions of the zodiac are compared to the Valentinian division of the Pleroma.
 20. Ἐκάστου γὰρ δωδεκατημορίου τῆς ἀπλανοῦς εἰς τριάκοντα μοίρας διαιρουμένου, δι’ ὅσων ἥλιος ἡμερῶν τοῦτο διαπορεύεται, ἑκάστης δὲ μοίρας εἰς ἐξήκοντα λεπτά, καὶ τούτων ἑκάστου πάλιν εἰς ἐξήκοντα τὰ λεγόμενα λεπτεπίλεπτα, ποῦ δυνατὸν τοῦ τεχθέντος τὸν ὠροσκόπον καταλαβεῖν ἐπὶ τίνος τῶν λεπτοτάτων ἐτύγχανεν; Οὕτως ὀξυτάτης οὔσης τῆς οὐρανίας φορᾶς καὶ πλείστα παρατρεχούσης λεπτά ἐν τῷ τὸν ἀστρολόγον κᾶν τύχη παρῶν, διὰ τοῦ ἀστρολάβου τὴν τοῦ ὠροσκόπου πῆξιν δι’ ἀκριβείας ἐθέλειν εἰδέναι. Εἰ δὲ τοῦτο λίαν ἀδύνατον, τοσαύτη δὲ διαφορά λεπτοτάτου πρὸς λεπτότατον, ὡς τὸ μὲν, εἰ τύχοι, βασιλέα ποιεῖν, τὸ δὲ προσαίτην, πῶς οὐκ ἀσύστατος ἡ τέχνη φανήσεται (PG 87/1, 92D–93A).
 21. p. 24–25 Moreschini-Sykes and Sykes’ note on p. 189; the translation of ὠροθέτας as “ascendant signs” in the text is curious since as Sykes points out ὠροθέτης is best translated as “caster of horoscopes,” i.e. astrologer.
 22. p. 188.5–190.21, 190.30–31 Junod (SC 226).
 23. Ἄλλ’ ἔστω συγκεχωρημένα αὐτοῖς τὰ κατὰ τὸ ἐκλαμβάνειν τὴν ὥραν (p. 190.32–33 Junod).

24. Φέρεται δὴ θεώρημα ἀποδεικνύον τὸν ζωδιακὸν κύκλον ὁμοίως τοῖς πλανωμένοις φέρεσθαι ἀπὸ δυσμῶν ἐπὶ ἀνατολᾶς δι' ἑκατὸν ἑτῶν μοῖραν μίαν, καὶ τοῦτο τῷ πολλῷ χρόνῳ ἐναλλάττειν τὴν θέσιν τῶν δωδεκατημορίων· ἑτέρου μὲν τυγχάνοντος τοῦ νοητοῦ δωδεκατημορίου, ἑτέρου δὲ τοῦ ὡσανεὶ μορφώματος· τὰ δὲ ἀποτελέσματα φασιν εὐρίσκεισθαι οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ μορφώματος, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ νοητοῦ ζῳδίου· ὅπερ οὐ πᾶν τι δυνατὸν καταλαμβάνεσθαι (p. 190.1–192.8 Junod). In translating this passage I have followed the lead of Junod's translation and that of Pierre Duhem, *Le Système du Monde*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1965), 191.
25. Duhem, *Système*, vol. 2, 181–82. Hipparchus' discovery, which occurred c. 129 B.C.E., resulted from comparing his own observation of the star Spica in the constellation Virgo at 174 degrees longitude, with that of the astronomer Timocharis (c. 300 B.C.E.) who had observed it at 172 degrees longitude.
26. Duhem, *Système*, vol. 2, 192–93.
27. Stuckrad, *Ringens*, 781n45.
28. ὅτι καὶ τὰς τῶν δωδεκατημορίων ἀρχὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ἰσημερινῶν καὶ τῶν τροπικῶν σημείων εὐλόγῳ ἐστὶ ποιεῖσθαι (p. 108 Robbins).
29. ἄλλων μὲν γὰρ ἀρχῶν ὑποτιθεμένων ἢ μηκέτι συγχρῆσθαι ταῖς φύσεις αὐτῶν εἰς τὰς προτελέσεις ἀναγκασθησόμεθα ἢ συγχρῶμενοι διαπίπτειν, παραβάντων καὶ ἀπαλλοτριωθέντων τῶν τὰς δυνάμεις αὐτοῖς ἐμπεριποιησάντων τοῦ ζῳδιακοῦ διαστημάτων (p. 110–111 trans. Robbins).
30. Bouché-Leclercq, 129n1.
31. Goold, "Introduction" to Manilius, *Astronomica* (LCL), lxxxiii.
32. Boll, Bezold, Gundel, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*, 131 ("zuerst"). If Origen was "presumably drawing on an earlier source," as Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 92 claims, such source(s) are unknown. On knowledge of the doctrine of precession in antiquity see Roger Beck, "In the Place of the Lion: Mithras in the Tauroctony," *Studies in Mithraism*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Rome, 1990), 38n43.
33. Boll, Bezold, Gundel, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*, 131–132 (extraordinarily worthwhile in the history of culture).
34. *Astrologumena*, 335n12. (With that Origen rushed on ahead of humanity by 1 3/4 millenia; for only in the 20th century were the decisive blows taken against all

- astrologers with this weapon.)
35. p. 192.11–20 Junod.
 36. Ὅσον δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς μαθήμασι τῶν τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐπαγγελλομένων, πρεσβύτερα τοῦ σχηματισμοῦ προλέγεσθαι νομίζεται περὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. ... οὐ μόνον τὰ μέλλοντα ἐξετάζουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ παρεληλυθότα, καὶ τὰ πρὸ τῆς γενέσεως καὶ τῆς σποράς τοῦ περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος γεγενημένα· περὶ πατρός, ποταπὸς ὦν τυγχάνει, πλούσιος ἢ πένης, ὀλόκληρος τὸ σῶμα ἢ σεσιωμένος, τὸ ἦθος βελτίων ἢ χείρων, ἀκτῆμων ἢ πολυκτῆμων, τήνδε τὴν πρᾶξιν ἢ τήνδε ἔχων· τὰ δ' αὐτὰ καὶ περὶ τῆς μητρός, καὶ περὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἀδελφῶν, ἐὰν τύχωσιν ὄντες (p. 176.9–12, 176.23–178.30 Junod). The same argument is used almost aphoristically in the work *On the Gods and the Universe* 9: πῶς γὰρ ἂν τὰ πρὸ τῆς γενέσεως ἐκ τῆς γενέσεως γένοιτο; (p. 18.26–27 Nock) The lines just preceding this show that the author of this work, like Origen, also held the view that the stars are signs, not causes, of events. *On the Gods and the Universe*, ascribed to a certain Sallustius, was likely written by Saturninius Secundus Salutius, who served as Praetorian Prefect under the emperor Julian (G.W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* [Cambridge, MA, 1978], 86, 125; J.L. Desnier, “Salutius-Salustius,” *REA* 85 [1983], 53–65; T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* [Ithaca, 1998], 62).
 37. ὅς ἤδη τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρὸ τ' ἐόντα (vol. 1 p. 8–9 Murray [LCL]).
 38. Chaldaeorum ratiocinationibus est concedendum, quod propria est eorum genethialogiae ratio, uti possint ante facta et futura ex ratiocinationibus astrorum explicare (p. 25 Soubiran [Budé]).
 39. p. 234–235 Robbins. See the discussion in Bouché-Leclercq, 392ff.
 40. p. 240–251 Robbins.
 41. p. 250–255 Robbins.
 42. On the system of twelve “places” see Bouché-Leclercq, 280–281; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 98.
 43. Bouché-Leclercq, 283.
 44. Bouché-Leclercq, 392. (Astrology pretended to be in full possession of the divinatory tripod, the past, the present and the future. According as a person goes up or comes down the unchangeable sequence of causes and effects, one can equally well conclude from a present fact to the future or to the past. The destiny of parents conditions and virtually contains that of their posterity; likewise, the horoscope of a child

can provide information about the past, present and future destiny of those who produced him or her.) On p. 603n1 Bouché-Leclercq emphasizes that it was precisely this nexus of “cause and effect” which would have furnished the reply to Origen’s argument; he also claims “et le système astrologique des καταρχαί y échappe,” though Origen and Ptolemy are both dealing with genethliology only.

45. p. 178.3–6 Junod.
46. Εἰ τοίνυν αἱ γενέσεις ὑπ’ ἀλλήλων ἀνατρέπονται, καὶ αἱ μὲν τῶν παίδων τὰς τῶν πατέρων αἱ δὲ τούτων τὰς ἐκείνων ἀνατροῦσι, καὶ αἱ τῶν συζυγίων τὰς ἀλλήλων, καὶ αἱ τῶν οἰκιῶν τοὺς ἐνοικοῦντας ἢ αἱ τούτων τὰς τῶν οἰκημάτων, καὶ ἀπλῶς ὅσα προεῖρηται, πανταχόθεν ἢ γένεσις ἑαυτὴν ἀνέτρπεε καὶ διέλυσεν (p. 27.13–19 Henry).
47. Ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδὲν ἑμαυτοῦ ἴδιον, ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκείνων πρὸς τὸν κατ’ αὐτῶν ἔλεγχον ἀποκρήσομαι (p. 348 Giet).
48. Amand, *Fatalisme*, 50–51n2. Cf. the comment of Franz Cumont concerning the anti-astrological polemic of Ambrosiaster: “au IV^e siècle je doute qu’une pareille démonstration ait pu faire renoncer aucun astrologue à la pratique de son art” (“La Polémique de l’Ambrosiaster contre les Païens,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses* 8 [1903]: 434).
49. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 157; see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.2 (p. 12–14 Robbins) and Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 1.3.6 and 8 (vol. 1, p. 11.5–7 Kroll–Skutsch).
50. What else is there which causes the greatest error among the experts in horoscopes than the fact that they assign us to only a few stars while all that is above us claim a share of us for themselves? (Quid est porro aliud quod errorem maximum incutiat peritis natalium quam quod paucis nos sideribus assignant, cum omnia quae supra nos sunt partem nostri sibi vindicent? ... non magis autem facile est scire quid possint, quam dibutare an possint. [p.152–54 Corcoran])
51. David Pingree, “Astrology,” *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. 1 (New York, 1968, 1973), 120.
52. H. Leclercq, “Magie,” *DACL* 10, 1070: “Les erreurs ne manquaient certes pas, mais loin de donner un démenti à la doctrine, elles n’atteignaient que la science ou la probité de l’astrologue qu’on maudissait copieusement, sauf à s’adresser à un de ses confrères en possession d’une réputation plus brillante et, en apparence, mieux justifiée.”

3. *The Argument of Different Destinies*

The next two Carneadean arguments, the argument of different destinies and the argument of common destinies, derive from the same assumption, i.e. that astrological fate entails that those who possess the same horoscope will have the same destinies in life while those who have different horoscopes will have different destinies. These arguments therefore call attention to discrepancies and contrasts between individual horoscopic predictions and destinies.

General Discussion of the Argument

First, the argument of different destinies claims that people who are born in the same circumstances, and who therefore would possess the same horoscope, do not always have the same appearances, characters or life experiences.¹ The earliest Christian author to present this argument is Hippolytus:

For those who have been born at the same time have not lived the same life; but some for example have reigned as kings while others have grown old in chains. None of the many who were born across the inhabited world at the same time as Alexander of Macedon were like him, and none [were like] Plato the philosopher. So that if the astrologer carefully observes the approximate time of birth he will not be able to say if he who is born at that time will be fortunate; for many who have been born at the same time were unfortunate. Therefore vain is the likeness according to disposition [of stars] (*Refutation* 4.5.4–6).²

The sarcastic proposition that great personages of the past ought to reappear if their horoscopes were replicated in the heavens was a regular feature of traditional Greco-Roman anti-astrological polemic as well. Instead of Alexander or Plato, however, a Christian author such as Gregory of Nazianzus used the argument with reference to Christ as a theological *reductio ad absurdum*.

What would hinder Christ from being born again to cancel these things, and to be betrayed again by Judas, and to be crucified, and to be buried, and to rise again, so that the same sequence of events be fulfilled, according to the Greek idea of recurrence, with the same movement of stars bringing around the same events (*Letter* 101).³

The latter reference is to the Stoic notion of periodic cosmic conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) following which the cycle of history begins anew. Gregory's words, of course, carry the additional implication that Christ was beyond the

power of astrological fate. Gregory gives the argument of common destinies in poetic form in *Poemata Arcana* 5.19–21: “The sole king shares his star with many of his subjects, one a fine man, another a rascal, this one an orator, that a merchant, yet another a vagabond. But he is the one borne up in pride on the lofty throne.”⁴ The argument of different destinies is also featured in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Against Fate*.⁵

A variation of the argument of different destinies took the form raised by Basil of Caesarea in *Hexaemeron* 6.7: “If at each moment of time the formation [of the stars] changes, and in such myriad changes the royal astral configuration occurs many times a day, why are not kings born every day?”⁶ He asks further why only the children of royalty inherit the throne, citing by way of illustration the royal genealogy of Israel.⁷ This passage from Basil was presumably the source for similar assertions of Ambrose in his sermons on the *Hexaemeron* 4.4.18.⁸ The same argument is also featured in Procopius of Gaza’s Commentary on Gen 1.14⁹ and Julian the Arian’s commentary on Job.¹⁰ As we have seen, a horoscope regarding ascent to the throne was not merely a harmless theoretical consideration; such predictions were usually seen by the emperors as an implicit political threat. However, there is no recognition of such political realities by the Christian writers of these passages in which royal horoscopes are discussed. Moreover, these passages again demonstrate a lack of awareness of the realities of astrology, and that by and large the Christian tradition of anti-astrological polemic functioned in isolation from ancient astrology: in response to the argument of different destinies the astrologers could have pointed to the complexity of the astrological system as a whole, which pretty well guaranteed that each person’s birth chart would be unique.

Avec la précision exigée par les méthodes de l’astrologie savante, il était hautement improbable qu’il y eût jamais deux thèmes de géniture identiques. Les éléments du calcul, les sept planètes et leurs aspects réciproques ou leurs dodécatémeries, les douze signes du Zodiaque, leurs aspects et leurs rapports avec les planètes, les décans, les lieux fixes, les lieux mobiles ou sorts, etc., tout cela, mesuré au degré et à la minute, suffisait à des millions de combinaisons, arrangements et permutations mathématiques.... En attendant, il y avait place pour une diversité presque infinie de génitures.¹¹

Indeed, astrologers might well have replied to the assertions of Basil, Ambrose, Procopius and Julian the Arian concerning hereditary royalty with the common sense observation that not all children of royalty inherit the throne.¹²

The argument of different destinies played a significant role in the thought of Augustine: it is evident in his writings and effected a strong personal impression on him as well. For example, in his attack on astrology in book 5 of *On the City of God* he writes that “It is an unheard of insolence that so many things of very different type, very diverse in action and accomplishment, can be conceived and born at the same time on earth in one region, subjected to the same [configuration of the] heavens” (5.2). He adds that the realization that innumerable things begin at the same point in time yet have vastly different outcomes “will induce any boy to laughter” (5.7).¹³ In the same passage he also reflects on the common, ordinary practice of farmers planting crops at a particular time, i.e. on a given day of the calendar each year. (In itself, this was an archaic form of katarthic astrology.) Even though so many seeds are sown at the same time, he says, nevertheless some of the crop is destroyed by blight, some are taken by birds, and some picked by human beings: does this mean that it should be said that all the seeds had different constellations, since they came to such different destinies? Yet the seeds were planted on the same day.¹⁴

According to Augustine’s *Confessions* it was the argument of different destinies which led him to give up the active interest in astrology which he had had earlier in his life. Before proceeding to look at how Augustine used this argument in his writings, it is therefore necessary to ascertain this early experience of Augustine with astrology, particularly with reference to the account of his life in the *Confessions*.¹⁵

Astrology in the Early Career of Augustine

It is not clear when Augustine first became involved in astrology.¹⁶ The 1933 study of de Vreese, *Augustinus en de Astrologie*, takes the chronology of the *Confessions* at face value and therefore dates the beginnings of Augustine’s attachment to astrology to the mid 370’s, since Augustine first mentions that he had frequented the astrologers (*Confessions* 4.3.4–6) in the context of references to the time he taught rhetoric in Thagaste (4.2.2; 4.4.7).¹⁷ Leo Ferrari proposed that Augustine first became involved with astrology earlier during his student days in Carthage in the early 370’s.¹⁸ Ferrari connected this with the reference in *Confessions* 4.3.5 (cf. 7.6.8) to (Helvius) Vindicianus, who as proconsul of Africa crowned the young Augustine in a poetry contest and who sought to dissuade him from astrology. However, this does not provide evidence that Augustine was frequenting astrologers

back in his student days since Vindicianus' proconsulship did not take place until the early 380's.¹⁹ Elsewhere Ferrari makes a different claim, that Augustine only "converted" to astrology later in life after joining the Manicheans.²⁰ Ferrari's use of the term "conversion" with regard to Augustine's interest in astrology is not entirely useful since consulting astrologers and reading astrological literature was rather different from adhering to organized groups such as the Manicheans or the Catholics.

Other recent studies by scholars such as Alfonsi, Doignon and Bruning have proposed that although the *Confessions* give the impression that the period of Augustine's astrological interest was contemporaneous with his association with the Manicheans, in fact his attachment to astrology commenced much earlier.²¹ Their view is founded on their interpretation of an autobiographical passage from one of Augustine's earliest writings, *On the Happy Life* 1.4,²² which they divide into three stages as follows. (1) First Augustine recalls in this passage that following his reading of Cicero's Hortensius at age nineteen he wanted to devote the rest of his life to philosophy.²³ (2) Next he writes that nevertheless

clouds were not absent from me, through which my way became perplexed, and for a long time, I confess, I looked upwards to the stars sinking in the ocean, by which I was led into error.²⁴

According to Alfonsi et al., these words (with their admittedly obscure imagery) refer to Augustine's attraction to astrology.²⁵ (3) Then, following this Augustine describes his involvement with the Manicheans, again in rather vague terms.

For a certain childish superstition frightened me away from this search and, when I stood up straighter I scattered that fog and persuaded myself to yield to those who teach rather than to those who give commands; and I fell among people for whom that light which is seen with our eyes appears among the highest divine objects of worship.²⁶

However, the proposed distinction between stages (2) and (3) is not altogether clear because worshipping the stars as visible gods could equally refer to astrologers as to Manicheans. Thus it is hard to see how *On the Happy Life* 1.4 can be used as sure evidence that Augustine became involved in astrology prior to joining the Manicheans. Courcelle has suggested that the "certain childish superstition" (*superstitio quaedam puerilis*) in the above passage

refers to the catholic piety in which Augustine had been raised, which would have been antithetical to the philosophic quest;²⁷ this interpretation has been recently defended by Robert J. O'Connell.²⁸ However, neither Courcelle nor O'Connell satisfactorily explain Augustine's use of celestial imagery as a metaphor for such catholic "superstitio." Instead, it seems more straightforward to accept Augustine's language in *Happy Life* 1.4 at face value, that is: a) he became enamoured of philosophy; and b) he subsequently became a follower of astrology as well as Manicheism (though in which order his involvement with the latter two occurred is not made clear by the text).

How long Augustine was involved with astrology is also not clearly known; that it evidently went on for some time is indicated by the imperfect tense in the phrase "mathematicos...consulere non desistebam" (I did not cease to consult...astrologers) in *Confessions* 4.3.4.²⁹ Augustine's break with astrology (described in *Confessions* 7.6.8–10) took place when he was perhaps thirty years of age (*Confessions* 6.11.18; at 8.7.17, just prior to the famous garden "conversion scene," he indicates he is about thirty-one), after he had left the Manicheans.³⁰ Thus it seems astrology had a longer hold on Augustine than did Manicheism.³¹

Astrology in Augustine's *Confessions*

The first mention in the *Confessions* that as a young man Augustine had been interested in astrology occurs in 4.3.4:

On the same ground I did not cease openly to consult those impostors called astrologers (mathematicos), because they offered, so to speak, no sacrifices, and no prayers were addressed to any spirit for the purpose of divining the future.³²

Here Augustine shows his knowledge that the word "mathematici" was traditionally a popular term for the astrologers.³³ Just before this (4.2.3) he writes that he had rejected other forms of divination which involved animal sacrifice, presumably because these conflicted with his Manichean beliefs;³⁴ however, for that very reason (ideoque) he was able to justify his adherence to astrology. Thus it seems that in Augustine's youth astrology replaced other popular forms of divination.³⁵ Astrological elements were certainly present in Manichean cosmology (e.g. the signs of the zodiac were associated with the parts of the body in the Manichean *Kephalaia* 70³⁶); by Augustine's day the Manicheans had "acquired a considerable reputation, or notoriety, as

astrologers,” even though they were “forbidden to dabble in the black arts.”³⁷ In *Confessions* 4.3.5–6, Augustine also refers to having read astrological books (libris genethliacorum...me deditum)³⁸ and he continued to pay heed to astrology despite the attempts of his friends Vindicianus and Nebridius to dissuade him. (Though Vindicianus is not mentioned by name in 4.3.6, it is clear that he is being referred to from the parallel reference to him in 7.6.8.) Vindicianus had formerly studied astrology but decided to become a physician instead so as not to earn his living by deception (4.3.5), even though in antiquity medicine was not incompatible with astrology.³⁹ Augustine’s respect for Vindicianus is evident here in the *Confessions* and again in *Letter* 183.3.⁴⁰ Another friend of Augustine who was opposed to astrology was Nebridius, who regarded all forms of divination as ridiculous (*Confessions* 4.5.6) and almost succeeded in dissuading him from astrology (7.6.8).⁴¹

Augustine’s personality has been described as oriented toward heaven “not only in the religious sense but also in the physical sense.”⁴² Already in an early work, *Soliloquies* 1.11, he has Reason address him as one who takes more joy in heavenly, rather than earthly, beauty.⁴³ For Augustine, as for ancient culture in general, astronomical and astrological study were ultimately inseparable.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Augustine’s involvement with astrology is best understood within the context of his larger interest in the physical (and spiritual) heavens.⁴⁵ According to the *Confessions*, it was Augustine’s general preoccupation with celestial phenomena, rather than his interest in astrology per se, which played a role in his rejection of Manicheism.⁴⁶ In *Confessions* 5.3.3 he writes that in his twenty-ninth year he began to compare the teaching which he remembered from books of certain philosophers with the “Manichaeorum longis fabulis,” the lengthy fables of the Manicheans; in 5.3.4–5 he especially focusses on the ability of those philosophers to correctly predict eclipses of the sun and the moon.⁴⁷ Whoever the philosophers were that Augustine had in mind, and whatever else was contained in their books, it seems at least evident that they dealt with the observation of the physical heavens; of course such study was not incompatible with philosophy in the ancient world.⁴⁸ According to Augustine, while these philosophers whose works he had read did not acknowledge the Christian God he was impressed that their celestial observations were correct; they compared favourably with

the sayings of Mani who wrote much on these matters very copiously and foolishly. I did not notice any rational account of solstices and equinoxes or eclipses of luminaries nor anything resembling what I had learnt in the books of secular wisdom....But he [Mani] was not in agreement with the rational explanations which I had verified by calculation and had observed with my own eyes. His account was

very different (*Confessions* 5.3.6).⁴⁹

Though he preferred the explanations of the philosophers, Augustine censures the curiosity and arrogance of those who focussed on creation (i.e. celestial phenomena) while ignoring the creator (5.3.4–5); this parallels his rebuke of Mani for arrogantly persisting to teach errors concerning the heavens since he claimed that the Holy Spirit was personally present within himself (5.5.8–9).⁵⁰ The contrast between the philosophers' view of the heavens and that of the Manicheans led Augustine to increasingly question the authority of the teachings of the Manicheans in general (5.5.8–9).⁵¹ The opportunity came for Augustine to pose his questions directly to the Manichean bishop, Faustus of Milevis, but he failed to receive an adequate reply, which dampened his enthusiasm for Manicheism (5.7.12–13). Augustine's exit from Manicheism only came after encountering yet another bishop, Ambrose of Milan (5.13.23–14.25). Nevertheless, as Brown notes, "Faustus had as good as lost the support of Augustine the Manichee"⁵²—and according to Augustine the focus of his debate with Faustus was the discrepancy between the Manichean view of the heavens and that of the philosophers. Thus Augustine's general preoccupation with the heavens can be seen as one of the factors which led him to question Manicheism and set him on the road to his eventual repudiation of the sect;⁵³ the same celestial orientation is evident in his earlier attraction to astrology.

Having related his departure from Manicheism, Augustine turns to the subject of astrology once again in *Confessions* 7.6.8: referring again to the opposition of his friends Vindicianus and Nebridius, he says that nevertheless astrology continued to exert a fascination on him. The story of Augustine's repudiation of astrology is then related in *Confessions* 7.6.8–10, where he writes that he had already started to waver under the influence of Nebridius; however, what finally convinced him was a story which he heard from yet another friend, Firminus, who is described as "not a passive consulter of astrologers, nor yet well versed in that literature, but...an inquisitive consulter who knew something nevertheless, which he said he had heard from his father" (7.6.8).⁵⁴ In the course of visiting Augustine, Firminus related the following story concerning his father, who along with a friend paid a great deal of attention to astrological books. It happened that when Firminus' mother had been pregnant with him a slave girl of this friend also became pregnant at the same time.

The two men made exact observations, the one of his wife, the other of his maid-servant, for the days and hours and minutes, and it so came about that the women both had their infants at the identical time. So they had to make the same horoscopes for each newborn child identical to the minute, one for his son, the other for the little slave. When the women began to be in labour, the two men informed each other what was going on in his own house, and they prepared messengers to send to one another so that the news of the birth was given to each as soon as it had taken place. Each on his own estate easily arranged for the news to be carried instantly. The messengers sent by each man, he [Firminus] said, met at the halfway point between their houses, thereby excluding the possibility that either of them could make a different observation of the stars' position and of the precise time. Nevertheless, Firminus who was born into a well-to-do family had a career along the world's main roads. His wealth increased; he was elevated to high honours. But that slave served his owners and experienced no relaxation of the yoke of his condition (7.6.8).⁵⁵

Immediately after relating Firminus' story Augustine describes the change in his own views: "After I heard this story, which I believed because of the character of the narrator, all my reluctance to abandon astrology dissolved and collapsed."⁵⁶

Of particular significance for Augustine were astrological predictions which prove successful.⁵⁷ In 7.6.8 he mentions sarcastically that since astrologers offer so many predictions they are bound to hit on the truth at some time or other.⁵⁸ Then, in a more serious vein, Augustine writes that in light of Firminus' anecdote he at first came to agree with the view of his friend Vindicianus, who had tried to convince him that successful astrological predictions should be regarded as the result of chance: "From this I drew the certain inference that true predictions on the basis of horoscopes are given not by skill but by chance, while false forecasts are due not to lack of skill in the art but to chance error" (7.6.9).⁵⁹ Vindicianus (who at one time had considered a career as an astrologer) held the view that chance is evident in "the power apparent in lots, a power everywhere diffused in the nature of things," citing the practice of sortilege from books of poetry as an example. On a more theoretical level, Vindicianus

used to say that it was no wonder if from the human soul, by some higher instinct that does not know what goes on within itself, some utterance emerges not by art but by 'chance' which is in sympathy with the affairs or actions of the inquirer" (4.3.5).⁶⁰

(The wording here echoes Cicero, *On Divination* 1.6.12.⁶¹) Vindicianus was not affirming belief in a purely random chance, but rather in cosmic sympathy.⁶² Of course, the practice of sortilege from poetry, notably the works of Vergil, was well known in Augustine's day.⁶³ Sortilege by means of the Bible features prominently in the *Confessions* in the famous "conversion scene" in the garden (8.12.29),⁶⁴ though elsewhere Augustine expresses his reservations concerning this practice among Christians.⁶⁵ (For Augustine, the crucial point in foretelling the future was submission to God;⁶⁶ in his triumphalistic view, this was what distinguished Christian and "pagan" types of divination.) Though he seems to have temporarily accepted Vindicianus' positive view that accurate astrological predictions are due to cosmic sympathy, eventually Augustine came to attribute successful divination to the influence of demons.⁶⁷

The final mention of astrology in the *Confessions* occurs at 10.35.56, where Augustine lists astrology among certain pursuits in which he had once engaged but which he has abandoned since his return to catholic Christianity: "the theatres no longer hold my attention, nor am I concerned to know the transit of the stars...I abhor all immoral allegiances."⁶⁸ Of course, the term "immoral allegiances" (*sacrilega sacramenta*) conveys an implicit contrast with the Christian "mysteries."

In sum, according to the account of Augustine's involvement with astrology in the *Confessions* the crucial factor in his break with astrology was the anecdote of Firminus, which essentially offered the argument of different destinies in narrative form.⁶⁹ In the *Confessions*, as Bruning puts it, "L'entretien avec Firminus devint le point de rupture."⁷⁰ In 4.3.6 Augustine had said that the warnings of his friends had not yet given him the certain proof for which he was seeking;⁷¹ it was the anecdote of Firminus that provided Augustine with the certainty he was after.⁷² Indeed, from his earlier devotion Augustine says that Firminus' anecdote led him to actively oppose astrology:

Starting from the approach to the subject which this story gave me, I ruminated further on these phenomena. For one of those charlatans who make money out of astrology, and whom I now wished to attack and with ridicule to refute, might resist me by arguing that false information was given either by Firminus to me or by his father to him. I therefore gave attention to those who are born twins (7.6.10).⁷³

As was noted above, the date of Augustine's rejection of astrology cannot be established exactly.⁷⁴ Courcelle suggests that Augustine's remarks on the argument of the twins in *Confessions* 7.6.8–10 recall Ambrose's homilies on the *Hexaemeron* 4.14, which Augustine may have personally heard at the time of his meeting with Firminus, i.e. shortly after he arrived in Milan;⁷⁵ however, this cannot be proved. The impression from Augustine's account at this point in the *Confessions* is that he moved quickly from disenchantment with astrology to forthright hostility. In 7.6.8, having related Firminus' anecdote of the two children born under identical horoscopes who arrived at different destinies, Augustine immediately describes his own rejection of astrology and states that he tried to dissuade Firminus from it right away as well (7.6.9);⁷⁶ then, in 7.6.10 Augustine states that from that point it was his intention to attack and ridicule the astrologers (“quos iam iamque invadere atque inrisos refellere cupiebam”), which led him to undertake an examination of the argument of twins (“intendi considerationem in eos qui gemini nascuntur”).⁷⁷ In light of the significant personal impact that the argument of different destinies had on him in the form of the anecdote of Firminus, it is not surprising that Augustine came to focus special attention on this argument in one particular form, i.e. the different destinies of twins; nor is it surprising that this argument of twins holds such a prominent role in Augustine's polemical writings against astrology.⁷⁸

Augustine and the Argument of Twins

The argument of the different destinies of twins is the argument Augustine used most frequently to attack astrology.⁷⁹ It appears in seven passages, most extensively in the opening sections of book 5 of *On the City of God*.⁸⁰ Here Augustine is concerned with the larger question of fate and its relation to the history of the Roman Empire; along the way he defends the Christian belief in providence and criticizes Cicero's view of divine foreknowledge (5.8–11).⁸¹ As well, he says that established usage of the word “*fatum*” (fate) leads people to think of the influence of the stars (5.1); therefore, in 5.1–7 he argues at some length against astrology.⁸² While this may seem like a narrowing of the concept of fate, in fact Augustine's argumentative strategy at this point testifies to the widespread influence of astrology in antiquity.⁸³ Moreover, the fact that Possidius' *Indiculus* of Augustine's writings lists astrologers as the second type of false teachers combatted by Augustine⁸⁴ suggests an early appreciation of Augustine's anti-astrological polemic.⁸⁵ According to Lynn

Thorndike, Augustine's arguments against astrology in *City of God* 5.1–7, though not original, came to have more influence during the Middle Ages than any other anti-astrological text.⁸⁶

At the outset of *City of God* 5.1 Augustine lists a number of objections to astrology in passing: that astrological fatalism makes an end of worship and prayer, dispenses with divine judgement, and attributes evil to the stars and ultimately to God. He then weighs in with the argument he regards as irrefutable:

How is it that they have never been able to answer why in the life of twins—in their deeds, their successes, their professions, fields of knowledge, accomplishments and the other things pertaining to human life and in death itself—there is such diversity that with regard to these things many strangers are more similar to them than twins are to each other, even though when they were born they were separated by the smallest interval of time and, moreover, when they were conceived they were begotten in one moment in a single act of intercourse?⁸⁷

The argument of twins had featured in traditional Greco-Roman anti-fatalist argumentation. Cicero reports that it was raised by Diogenes the Stoic (*On Divination* 2.43.90–91). Diogenes had referred to Procles and Eurysthenes, kings of the Lacedaemonians: they had different fortunes, Diogenes claimed, for Procles had died a year earlier than his twin brother and his deeds were far superior.⁸⁸ It has been suggested that the latter account was Augustine's source for the argument of twins, but this is uncertain.⁸⁹ Naturally, the example that Augustine preferred to cite was a story of twins with different destinies taken from the Bible, i.e. Jacob and Esau:

There was such great diverse qualities in their life and customs, such disparity in their deeds, such dissimilarity in the love of their parents, that this very difference between them even made them mutual enemies.... One lived as a paid servant, the other did not; one was loved by his mother, the other was not; one lost the honour which was greatly esteemed among them, the other attained it. What about their wives, their children, their possessions—such a vast diversity! (*City of God* 5.4)⁹⁰

According to Bouché-Leclercq, the argument of twins “n'est pas plus tranchée par l'exemple d'Esau et de Jacob que par celui des Dioscourses; l'attaque et la riposte en restent au même point.”⁹¹ However, I am not aware of an instance where the Dioscuri were specifically cited in connection with the argument of twins, however, despite their obvious astrological association with the sign of Gemini. Ferrari suggests that it would have been more apt for Augustine to

cite the story of Romulus and Remus, but this ignores the fact that Augustine's thought was thoroughly infused with Biblical imagery and themes: this is evident in his frequent recurrence to Esau and Jacob.⁹²

Augustine cites a further instance of twins with different destinies in *City of God* 5.6. These were apparently contemporaries of his own acquaintance. He does not mention their names, but instead calls special attention to their difference in gender: "how is it that under the same fatal constellation one [twin] may be conceived a male, the other a female?" Not only do they pursue different activities in that the brother travels extensively as a soldier in the army while his sister stays at home, but he is married and has many children while she is a consecrated virgin. Augustine remarks that the difference in their calling to marriage or celibacy is "more incredible if the astral fates are to be believed, but not astonishing if personal will and divine gifts are accepted."⁹³ Nevertheless, the fact that the woman was a "virgo sacra" somewhat undermines Augustine's emphasis on the gender difference between these two twins: in late antiquity aristocratic women who professed an ascetic Christian commitment were in fact accorded a remarkable measure of freedom and social status which in many ways paralleled that of men.⁹⁴

Of course, the argument of twins with different destinies could be countered by an example of twins who have identical fates. This possibility is addressed in *City of God* 5.2, where Augustine cites a report of Cicero⁹⁵ concerning twin brothers who had fallen ill at the same time, and who had then simultaneously recovered under the care of the renowned physician Hippocrates. The story possibly reflects Hippocrates, *Epidemics* 1.20, which gives a case history of two brothers who fall ill on the same day; according to Augustine, Hippocrates concluded from the brothers' illness and recovery that they were twins, but nothing of the kind is found in this passage of Hippocrates.⁹⁶ Thus, as Pingree notes, Augustine is defending an "alleged, but unattested, medical conjecture."⁹⁷ Augustine's concern in *City of God* 5.2 is not with the data of the twins' illness and recovery but rather with competing explanations for their apparently identical experience. Thus he contrasts Hippocrates' diagnosis that it was due to the twins' physical similarity with the explanation of the Stoic philosopher Posidonius that it was because the brothers had been conceived and born under the same horoscope.⁹⁸ Posidonius is described by Augustine as "very much given to astrology," a "philosopher astrologer," and "one of those who assert that the stars have the power of fate."⁹⁹ Posidonius was also identified as a believer in predictive astrology by Boethius.¹⁰⁰ Many recent scholars have therefore concluded that Posidonius

was an astrologer, one who played a decisive role in the transmission of astrology in the Roman world.¹⁰¹ However, aside from the claims of Augustine and Boethius, the evidence rather indicates that Posidonius possessed a general interest in the Stoic doctrine of cosmic sympathy and a curiosity about divination. It may be that Posidonius held some notion of the stars as signs, rather than causes, of events, a view for which Augustine expresses some respect (*City of God* 5.1).¹⁰² It has been suggested that Augustine and Boethius may have confused Posidonius' Stoic view of universal sympathy with belief in predictive astrology.¹⁰³

In his discussion of the twin brothers with apparently identical destinies in *City of God* 5.2, when Augustine compares the verdicts of Hippocrates and Posidonius he does not deal with the merits of either point of view but merely expresses his preference for the medical diagnosis and dismisses the astrological explanation out of hand.¹⁰⁴ A few lines later he accuses people such as Posidonius of playing a game with matters they do not really understand.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Augustine does not linger on such identical fates of twins in 5.2 but immediately returns to his preferred argument of different destinies:

But to want to refer the situation of the sky and the stars when they were conceived or born to this parity of illness is some kind of arrogance, since so many things which have very different types of influences and outcomes can be conceived and born subject to the same sky at the same time in the same sector of the earth. But we know that twins not only have different behaviour and travels but also endure different illnesses.¹⁰⁶

The mention of “some kind of arrogance” (*nescio cuius sit insolentiae*) is evidence of the suspicious attitude which Augustine had adopted toward astrologers: he has become convinced of their dishonesty.¹⁰⁷

Intertwined with Augustine's reiteration of the argument of twins in *City of God* is a sub-argument which seeks to contrast the effects of the horoscope of conception with those of the birth horoscope.¹⁰⁸ Augustine accepts as given that twins are conceived by a single act of intercourse,¹⁰⁹ and he therefore uses the horoscope of conception as a fixed point against which to play off the birth horoscope. He indulges in this at some length in *City of God* 5.5–6, asking why the horoscope of conception should only relate to matters of health, or to gender difference, while the birth horoscope is taken to deal with other matters;¹¹⁰ in fact, such distinctions were not made in ancient astrology. Augustine also refers to a saying “if the time of conception were known they [the astrologers] would be able to utter many more prophecies”;¹¹¹ this was indeed the kind of thing an astrologer might say, i.e. a strategic claim that

astrologers would make (for example, if they had given a prediction that failed). However, when Augustine then adds “from this it is often related by some that a certain wise man chose the time when he would have intercourse with his wife so as to beget an extraordinary son,”¹¹² it is likely that he is indulging in sarcasm: while elsewhere he tells us that people selected their wedding day according to (katarchic) astrology (*Sermon* 190.1),¹¹³ I know of no evidence that astrologers offered advice with regard to when intercourse should take place. In fact, the horoscope of conception was not of great practical significance in ancient astrology.¹¹⁴ For example, Ptolemy mentions that although the horoscope of conception is theoretically preferable to the birth horoscope, since the former is not usually known for practical purposes the point of departure used in genethliological astrology is the moment of birth (*Tetrabiblos* 3.1).¹¹⁵ Therefore, Augustine’s sub-argument regarding the horoscope of conception really amounts to a red herring; in the words of Bouché-Leclercq, Augustine’s “volée d’arguments passe à côté des astrologues assez avisés pour tirer un voile sur le mystère de la conception et se contenter sur l’horoscope de la naissance.”¹¹⁶

What is essential to Augustine’s main argument is the issue of the different destinies of twins: he claims that the horoscope of twins should either be able to account for all diversity in the lives of twins or to completely override any difference between them. Astrologers, he says, do try to account for the differences between twins:

therefore if one [twin] is born so quickly after the other that the same part of the horoscope lasts [for both] I expect them to be completely the same—which can never be found in any twins; but if the slowness of the second twin changes the horoscope, I expect them even to have different parents—which twins are not able to have.¹¹⁷

That is, Augustine claims that on the basis of astrology twins should either be completely different or completely identical; and since twins inevitably do exhibit both similarities and differences he brandishes astrology’s apparent failure to account for both as a weapon against it. It is important to note that this attack rests entirely on Augustine’s own portrayal of astrology. Indeed, his version of astrology is something of a straw figure, so that with a sarcastic flourish and a clever *reductio ad absurdum* he appears to demolish astrology (or at least genethliology) completely. However, even as he was presenting this picture of astrology it was already out of date: as Bouché-Leclercq notes,

“[l]’astrologie, avertie par des siècles de discussions, ne disait pas ou ne disait plus que les destinées des jumeaux dussent être de tout point semblables ou de tout point différentes.”¹¹⁸ As we have seen, Christian anti-astrological polemic tended to be largely out of touch with contemporary, technical astrology. It is not surprising, therefore, that Augustine’s picture of astrology contains some significant inaccuracies.

The view of astrology which Augustine presents assumes that genethliological astrology entailed an absolute fatalism in which every event of a person’s life was believed to be completely predetermined by the horoscope. However, such an all-embracing fatalism—though frequently assumed among Christian authors dealing with astrology—was not necessarily held by ancient astrologers themselves. Not all astrologers would have followed the determinism expressed by Manilius in his *Astronomica* (4.14–22):

Fate rules the world, all things stand fixed by its immutable laws, and the long ages are assigned a predestined course of events. In dying we are born and our end depends on our beginning. From this [fate] flow riches and kingdoms and what appears more often, poverty, and skills are given and manners created, both vices and merits, losses and saving of things. No one can abstain from what is given nor have what is denied, nor take hold of fortune with prayers if she is unwilling, nor flee what is at hand: all must bear their lot.¹¹⁹

Instead, the more sophisticated astrological treatise of Ptolemy distinguishes between “divine, unchangeable destiny” which directs the movement of the stars and “natural and mutable fate” which governs earthly affairs (*Tetrabiblos* 1.3).¹²⁰ By means of such considerations Ptolemy in effect moderated the fatalism with which astrology was often associated.¹²¹ Thus by simply equating astrology with purely fatalistic genethliology, Augustine’s presentation of astrology ignores significant distinctions within ancient astrology; his portrayal of astrology is certainly much less nuanced than that of Ptolemy. As Thorndike says,

But he [Augustine] could not have studied the books of the astrologers very deeply, as he ascribes views to them which many of them did not hold. Also, he seems never to have read the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy. His attack upon and criticism of astrology was therefore narrow, partial and inadequate.¹²²

Elsewhere, Thorndike describes Augustine’s arguments as “somewhat piddling and sophistical.”¹²³

Augustine's argument of twins also conveniently ignores the fact that divination was not universally regarded as infallible in the ancient world. Yet he knew this from firsthand experience: according to *Confessions* 4.2.3 in his youth Augustine had entered a poetry contest, when a haruspex had approached him to ask what fee he would be willing to pay to ensure victory in the competition.¹²⁴ It is clear from Augustine's report of this episode that the haruspex had not viewed the outcome as absolutely predetermined according to fate, but instead was seeking to curry favour with Augustine—and to earn a fee—by adapting his prediction in Augustine's favour. This commonplace and very human side of the practice of divination is quite overlooked in Augustine's attack on astrology in *City of God* 5.1–7.¹²⁵

Moreover, Augustine's specific claim that the horoscopes, and hence the destinies, of twins should be identical is simply incorrect. As we have seen, the complexity of the system of ancient astrology pretty well guaranteed that, at least in principle, each individual birth chart was unique.¹²⁶ Indeed, this is the implication of the single objection to his argument of twins which Augustine mentions in *City of God*, an anecdote concerning the Pythagorean teacher and contemporary of Cicero, Nigidius Figulus (5.3).¹²⁷ Augustine relates that Nigidius turned a potter's wheel with as much force as he could, then while it was spinning marked it twice with ink at what seemed to be the same spot; when the spinning had stopped, the marks were found to be quite far apart on the wheel. Nigidius then said: "In this way the speed of the sky is so great that even if [twins] are born as quickly one after another as when I marked the wheel twice, that is a large part in the expanse of the sky: from this...whatever differences in the character and lives of twins is accounted for."¹²⁸ Immediately after reporting this anecdote of Nigidius and the potter's wheel Augustine proceeds to sarcasm, remarking: "This story is even more fragile than the pottery made on that wheel!"¹²⁹ He then switches to the argument of practical impossibility of observation of the heavens, asking whether the different horoscopic positions at the birth of twins could even be observed.¹³⁰ This is a good strategic response to the story of Nigidius and the potter's wheel. By focussing on the difficulty of making an exact observation of the heavens Augustine succeeds in turning the analogy of the potter's wheel against itself:¹³¹ just as Nigidius could not anticipate the arc indicated by the marks of ink on the potter's wheel, even so the "arc" of the distance between two rapidly moving points in the heavens (i.e. at two successive births) could not be measured by an astrologer—and therefore accurate genethliology could not be guaranteed. In effect, Augustine uses Nigidius Figulus' anecdote as a

reductio ad absurdum: his point is that if even the minute differences between the horoscopes of twins cannot be calculated it follows that no other horoscopic calculations are dependable either.

Augustine's Knowledge of Astrology

Augustine's arguments in *City of God* 5.1–7, including the argument of twins, are philosophical rather than technical arguments against astrology.¹³² In combatting astrology, Augustine usually did not concern himself with the technical details of the system of astrology. Nevertheless, Augustine's inaccurate statements concerning the details of astrology are difficult to reconcile with his claim to have studied it himself as a young man (*Confessions* 4.3.4). Some scholars have even claimed that Augustine was himself a practicing astrologer, citing especially the use of “consulere” (consult) with reference to Firminus' visit to Augustine in *Confessions* 7.6.8. Thus according to Alfarcic, Augustine

étudiera passionnément leurs écrits [i.e. des astrologues] et il s'en assimilera si bien l'enseignement qu'il tirera lui-même des horoscopes...il appréciait beaucoup les astrologues. Il lisait assidûment leurs livres et il les consultait souvent eux-mêmes. Il finit par s'imprégner si bien de leur enseignement qu'il apprit à tirer comme eux des horoscopes et qu'il se vit consulter comme une autorité par tel de leurs adeptes....¹³³

And concerning Firminus, Alfarcic claims “Augustin tira du mieux qu'il put son horoscope,” though he confuses his portrayal of Augustine by completing the sentence “mais en lui faisant remarquer qu'il ne croyait plus guère à tout cela.”¹³⁴ (This latter assertion completely fails to correspond with the account in the *Confessions*, according to which Augustine still believed in astrology when Firminus came to visit him; it was only after hearing Firminus' anecdote of the two children who have the same horoscope but different destinies [7.6.8–9] that Augustine rejected astrology.) Other scholars have also portrayed Augustine as one who was able to read horoscopes: Davids writes that “Firminus quidam Augustinum de sua constellatione i.e. horoscopo suo consuluit”;¹³⁵ Bourke has Augustine being called on to cast horoscopes;¹³⁶ Marrou claims “il était devenu capable de dresser, au moins sommairement, un horoscope”;¹³⁷ W. and H.G. Gundel affirm “Er stellte selbst Horoskope”;¹³⁸ and Courcelle asserts “il [Augustin] consentira encore—sans grand illusion, il est vrai—à tirer un horoscope” for Firminus.¹³⁹ That Augustine practiced as an astrologer has also been claimed more recently by

Ferrari,¹⁴⁰ Bruning¹⁴¹ and O’Loughlin; the latter writes:

we know that a certain Firminus, who like him [Augustine] was very interested in astrology but who was not skilled in the art, came to him to read his horoscope. Augustine obviously was considered quite skilled in the practice of astrology....that Augustine was consulted by someone who could, and did, afford other astrologers is the clearest evidence of Augustine’s competence in astrology...if he were so unfamiliar would people have paid him for his prognostications?¹⁴²

All such claims are highly misguided, however, because Augustine’s writings display a lack of detailed, technical astrological knowledge. Certainly at times he does seem to demonstrate some knowledge of astrology. For example: he refers to the cardinal points (*City of God* 5.5),¹⁴³ to ἀποτελέσματα (*Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.35),¹⁴⁴ the divisions of the circle of the zodiac (83 *Diverse Questions*, 45.2),¹⁴⁵ the revolution of the Great Bear (*Confessions* 5.4.7),¹⁴⁶ the definition of “constellationes” and the astrological “tabula” (*On Christian Teaching* 2.22.33.82 and 34.86),¹⁴⁷ and the view of Saturn as maleficent (*Harmony of the Gospels* 1.23.36)¹⁴⁸ and cold (*Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.5.9).¹⁴⁹ (Ironically, he finds Biblical support for this last point, stating that Saturn derives its coldness from the “waters of the firmament” described in Gen 1.6–7.) Nevertheless, these are fairly general and commonplace references, primarily touted to reassure Augustine’s readers of his familiarity with the subject; Hendrikx rightly describes the technical details mentioned in one passage as most elementary.¹⁵⁰ The inadequate portrayal of astrology in Augustine’s writings is the best justification for rejecting the suggestion that in his youth Augustine had been a professional astrologer or had been consulted in that capacity.

With all of these fulminations against as[trology], and in light of his adherence to it in his youth, A[ugustine] says remarkably little about astrological methods.... [his] great attack on as[trology], therefore, is based on the general, Carneadean arguments of the problems of twins and of free will, and on an assertion of demonic involvement, not on a detailed knowledge of the practices of astrologers. Had he studied those practices more thoroughly, he undoubtedly would have found much else worthy of his criticism.¹⁵¹

Certainly, he would at least have made more mention of them. Brown’s assessment that Augustine “dabbled in astrology” is likely close to the truth,¹⁵² as is the verdict of F. van der Meer in his magisterial study *Augustine the Bishop*: “It is doubtful whether Augustine ever really did understand the

principles of the horoscope.”¹⁵³ It is not necessary to censure Augustine for deliberate misrepresentation, however, as does Bouché-Leclercq, who claims that in Augustine’s use of the argument of twins “il a recours à des artifices de rhétorique et à des pièges de mots.”¹⁵⁴ In defense of Augustine’s motives, de Vreese asks whether Augustine would have even been conscious of portraying astrology incorrectly since he was largely ignorant about its technical details; moreover, since it is likely that most of his audience was similarly ill-informed, Augustine’s Christian readers would still have found his arguments convincing and conclusive.¹⁵⁵

Astrology among the Liberal Arts

During his career Augustine also came to the conviction that for the most part observation of the heavens is useless for the Christian whose primary focus ought to be on matters of salvation.¹⁵⁶ This was his mature view evident, for example, in *On Christian Teaching*. However, it has been suggested that since in his early career Augustine had been a teacher of the liberal arts (*Confessions* 4.1.1) astrology would have been among the subjects which he taught.¹⁵⁷ This seems unlikely.

It is true that in book 2 of *On Order*, an early work written during his retreat at Cassiciacum, Augustine mentions “astrologia” in the course of discussing the cycle of liberal studies.¹⁵⁸ Augustine’s basic point in this section of the work is that the liberal studies enable one to perceive the divinely instituted principle of order within the universe.¹⁵⁹ After dealing in turn with grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, music and geometry, Augustine proceeds to a very brief discussion of “astrologia.” He writes that by contemplating such things as the motion of the sky, the alteration of the seasons, and the courses of the stars, the mind comes to understand that “dimension and numbers have dominion”; and by defining, distinguishing and weaving these into order, the mind produces “astrology, a great subject for the religious and a torment for the curious” (2.15.42).¹⁶⁰ The very wording here betrays Augustine’s ambivalence concerning astrology. Thus it is clearly misleading to claim that this brief reference is “un de ceux où Augustin se prononce favorablement sur l’astrologie.”¹⁶¹ It is significant that in her discussion of the liberal arts in *On Order* Ilsetraut Hadot consistently, and quite correctly, renders “astrologia” from 2.15.42 as “astronomy” not “astrology”;¹⁶² this reflects the fact that Augustine really has only celestial observation in mind, not astrology. Whatever positive assessment Augustine accords to “astrologia” in *On Order*

is driven by his admiration for the order inherent in the universe which reflects its divine creation; as Bruning correctly remarks, Augustine “n’est pourtant pas poussé par le tourment de la curiosité mais attiré par le caractère religieux d’un ordre numérique.”¹⁶³ This view which allows that the study of the heavens can enable one to ascend to the invisible divine through observation of the visible stars reflects Platonic influence;¹⁶⁴ it was also approved by other Christian writers including Clement of Alexandria,¹⁶⁵ Origen¹⁶⁶ and Gregory of Nazianzus.¹⁶⁷

In *On the Greatness of the Soul*, a work Augustine wrote two years after *On Order*, he again refers to the seven liberal studies, depicting them as steps for the soul’s ascent to divine wisdom. The list culminates with the “conjecture of things past and future from the present” (33.72);¹⁶⁸ this is certainly a reference to astrology, but the indirect description again seems to suggest Augustine’s ambivalence. The lack of discussion he gives to the topic also reflects the fact that even in his early career Augustine held celestial observation to be relatively unimportant for Christians. This is clear from a passage of his debate with Felix the Manichean in which Augustine asserts that Christ “wanted to make Christians, not astrologers”: it is enough therefore to possess the celestial knowledge which is taught in schools, just that which is necessary for ordinary life.¹⁶⁹

Thus even if Augustine was initially prepared to include “astrologia” among the liberal arts, he intended it only in the sense of observation of the physical heavens. He first makes this explicit in *On Christian Teaching* 2.29.46. Here he points out that very few passages of Scripture refer to knowledge of the stars. People can note the course of the moon, which is necessary for the annual calculation of Easter¹⁷⁰ and make other celestial observations without falling into error. However, Augustine says that such knowledge

even when it is not tied to any superstition, is nevertheless of very little, almost no, assistance in dealing with the divine scriptures, and even impedes it by means of fruitless effort; and since it is the companion of the most pernicious error of predicting foolish fates, it is more suitably and properly condemned.¹⁷¹

While Augustine concedes that observing the heavens has a limited usefulness, his fundamental concern remains that his audience avoid any possibility of transgressing into the realm of predictive astrology. (Ironically, O’Loughlin tries to present Augustine’s opposition to astrology in *On Christian Teaching*

as evidence that he did actually teach astrology when he was teaching the liberal arts.¹⁷²⁾

On Christian Teaching also demonstrates that for Augustine the value of liberal studies in general came to be subordinated to their utility for theological, and in particular Biblical, studies.¹⁷³ It was for this reason that of the books on the liberal arts which Augustine intended to write only the books on grammar (lost) and on music were completed. In *Reconsiderations* 1.6 he lists the seven works which he had intended to write on grammar, music, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic and philosophy;¹⁷⁴ it is significant that in this list philosophy has taken the place usually held by astrology as the highest of the liberal studies, while astrology is not mentioned at all.¹⁷⁵ The fact that he did not complete all seven books was not only due to lack of time: in the case of astrology it was also because of Augustine's "prise de position critique à l'égard d'une science qui n'est pas au service de la *doctrina christiana*."¹⁷⁶ It is surely no accident that in *Confessions* 4.16.30, where Augustine looks back at his reading of books of the liberal arts in his youth, he omits any reference to books on astrology.

Thus there is no conclusive evidence that Augustine would have taught astrology as part of his practice of teaching the liberal arts. This also accords with the general evaluations of scholars of the history of ancient education that predictive astrology was excluded from the ancient curriculum.¹⁷⁷

Notes

1. The argument is found in Cicero, *On Divination* 2.45.95 and 97 (p. 478–480 Falconer [LCL]) and Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.88–89 (p. 360–62 Bury [LCL]).
2. οἱ γὰρ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ γεννηθέντες οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν ἔζησαν βίον, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν λόγου χάριν ἐβασίλευσαν, οἱ δὲ ἐν πέδαις κατεγήρασαν. οὐθεις γοῦν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τῷ Μακεδόνι γέγονεν ἴσος, πολλῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ὁμοίως ἀποτεχθέντων αὐτῷ, οὐθεις Πλάτῳ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ. ὥστε τὸν ἐν πλάτει τῆς γενέσεως χρόνον <σκοπῶν> ὁ Χαλδαῖος ἀκριβῶς οὐ δυνήσεται λέγειν εἰ <ὁ> κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον γεννηθεῖς εὐτυχήσει· πολλοὶ γὰρ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον γεννηθέντες ἐδυστύχησαν. ὥστε ματαῖα καὶ ἡ κατὰ τὰ διαθέματα ὁμοιότης (p. 97.20–98.28 Marcovich). This is an almost verbatim transcription of Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.88–89.
3. τί κωλύει καὶ πάλιν γεννηθῆναι Χριστὸν εἰς ἀθέτησιν τῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ προδοθῆναι

- πάλιν ὑπὸ Ἰουδα, καὶ σταυρωθῆναι, καὶ ταφῆναι, καὶ ἀναστῆναι, ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὰ πάντα τὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀκολουθίας, κατὰ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν ἀνακύκλωσιν, τὰ αὐτὰ περιφερούσης τῆς αὐτῆς τῶν ἄστρον κινήσεως; (PG 37, 192A)
4. εἰς βασιλεὺς πλεόνεσσι συνάστερος, ὧν ὁ μὲν ἐσθλός, ὅς δὲ κακός, ῥητήρ τις, ὁ δ' ἔμπορος, ὅς δ' ἄρ' ἀλήτης, / τὸν δὲ φέρει θρόνος αἰτὺς ὑπέρφρονα (p. 22–23 trans. Moreschini-Sykes). On p. 185, Sykes' comment on v.19 incorrectly attributes laws of Valentinian (CTh 9.16.8) and Honorius (CTh 9.16.12) against astrologers to Constantius.
 5. p. 43–44 McDonough.
 6. Εἰ δὲ καθ' ἕκαστον ἀκαριαῖον τοῦ χρόνου ἐπ' ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο μεθαρμόζονται σχῆμα, ἐν δὲ ταῖς μυριάσι ταύταις μεταβολαῖς, πολλάκις τῆς ἡμέρας, οἱ τῶν βασιλικῶν γενέσεων ἀποτελοῦνται σχηματισμοί, διὰ τί οὐκ ἐφ' ἑκάστης ἡμέρας γεννῶνται βασιλεῖς; (p. 360 Giet).
 7. ἢ διὰ τί ὅλως πατρικαὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς εἰσι βασιλείας διαδοχαί; Οὐ δῆπου γὰρ ἕκαστος τῶν βασιλέων παρατετηρημένως εἰς τὸ βασιλικὸν τῶν ἀστέρων σχῆμα τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ τὴν γένεσιν ἐναρμόζει. Τίς γὰρ ἀνθρώπων κύριος τοῦ τοιοῦτου; Πῶς οὖν Ὁζίας ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωάθαμ; Ἰωάθαμ τὸν Ἀχαζ; Ἀχαζ τὸν Ἐζεκίαν; καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐν τούτοις δουλικῇ συνέτυχεν ὥρα γενέσεως; (p. 360–362 Giet). The genealogy is quoted from Matt 1.9.
 8. CSEL 32/1, 125.10–126.5. Ambrose cites the earlier part of the Matthean genealogy (Matt 1.7b–8).
 9. PG 87/1, 93B–C.
 10. p. 256–57 Hagedorn.
 11. Bouché-Leclercq, 587–88. (With the precision required by the methods of learned astrology, it was highly improbable that there would ever be two identical horoscopes. The elements of the computation, the seven planets and their reciprocal aspects or their dodecatemories, the twelve signs of the zodiac, their aspects and their relationships with the planets, the decans, the fixed places, the moving places or lots, etc., all of this, measured to the degree and to the minute, was enough for millions of mathematical combinations, arrangements and permutations ... Meanwhile, there was room for an almost infinite diversity of horoscopes.)
 12. Bouché-Leclercq, 587n1.
 13. ...tam multa diversissimi generis diversissimorum effectuum et eventorum eodem

tempore in unius regionis terra eidem caelo subdita potuerint concipi et nasci, nescio cuius sit insolentiae....considerent quam innumerabilia sub uno temporis puncto vel nascantur vel oriantur vel inchoentur, et tam diversos exitus habeant, ut istas observationes cuius puero ridendas esse persuadeant (CCL 47, 130.22–25; 134.20–23).

14. Nec illud volunt advertere, quod electo ad seminandum agrum die tam multa grana in terram simul veniunt, simul germinant, exorta segete simul herbescunt pubescunt flavescent, et tamen inde spicas ceteris coevas atque, ut ita dixerim, congerminales alias robigo interimit, alias aves depopulantur, alias homines avellunt. Quo modo istis alias constellationes fuisse dicturi sunt, quas tam diversos exitus habere conspiciunt?" (CCL 47, 135.39–46).
15. Of course, the question of the historicity of the *Confessions* has long been debated. I accept the view of Pierre Courcelle that the theological motivation of the text does not preclude its historical value; see the second edition of *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1968), 29–48 et passim.
16. There is no evidence to support the suggestion of Thomas O’Loughlin, “The *Libri Philosophorum* and Augustine’s Conversions,” in Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey, ed. *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity* (Dublin, 1992), 112 that “we cannot exclude the possibility that astrology was an accepted part of his [Augustine’s] home life.”
17. L.C.P.J. de Vreese, *Augustinus en de Astrologie* (Maastricht, 1933), 13. This work was the author’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Amsterdam that year.
18. Leo Charles Ferrari, “Astronomy and Augustine’s Break with the Manichees,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 19 (1973): 273; “Augustine and Astrology,” *LTP* 33 (1977): 246; “Astrology,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids, 1999), 76. For a similar rearrangement of events related in the *Confessions* see Courcelle, *Recherches*, 43–46.
19. T.D. Barnes, “Proconsuls of Africa, 337–392,” *Phoenix* 39 (1985): 151 (most likely 380–81, possibly 382–83).
20. *The Conversions of Saint Augustine* (Villanova, 1984), 46–48; “Saint Augustine’s Various Conversions: Some Insights of Modern Science,” *Religious Studies and Theology* 12 (1992): 27. This accords with the earlier view of Prosper Alfaric, *L’Évolution Intellectuelle de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1918), 234 that Augustine’s interest in astrology was prompted by his Manichean views.
21. Luigi Alfonsi, “Sant’Agostino, *De Beata Vita*, c.4,” *Rivista di Filologia e di*

- Istruzione Classica* 86 (36 n.s.) (1958): 251, and Jean Doignon ed., *Augustine: Dialogues Philosophiques: De Beata Vita – La Vie Heureuse* (Paris, 1986) (BA 4/1), 135n, though this does not accord with Doignon's more recent statement in "*Factus erectior* (B. vita 1,4). Une Étape de l'Évolution du jeune Augustin à Carthage," *Vetera Christianorum* 27 (1990): 81 that "Alors qu'il enseignait la rhétorique à Carthage, Augustin...s'est laissé séduire par des *mathematici* au point de les consulter": by the time he was teaching in Carthage Augustine was already involved with the Manicheans. Bernard Bruning, "De l'Astrologie à la Grâce," *Collectanea Augustiniana: Mélanges T.J. van Bavel* II, ed. B. Bruning et al. (Leuven, 1990-91), 585 writes: "Il est probable que le jeune Augustin ait déjà pris intérêt à l'astrologie avant d'avoir été séduit par la cosmologie manichéenne..."
22. Courcelle had claimed this is to be used alongside of the *Confessions* to retrace "à grands traits les phases principales de l'évolution psychologique d'Augustin et de contrôler la valeur autobiographique des livres...des *Confessions*" (*Recherches*, 270, cf. 64), noting that this text has "l'allure d'une confession avant la lettre." In this appendix to *Recherches*, entitled "Les Premières Confessions d'Augustin," Courcelle also uses passages from another early work, *On the Usefulness of Belief* 1.2, 8.20, in a similar fashion.
 23. Ego ab usque undevicesimo anno aetatis meae, postquam in schola rhetoris librum illum Ciceronis, qui Hortensius vocatur, accepi, tanto amore philosophiae succensus sum, ut statim ad eam me ferre meditarer (CCL 29, 66.75–79). Cf. *Confessions* 3.4.7–8.
 24. Sed neque mihi nebulae defuerunt, quibus confunderetur cursus meus, et diu, fateor, quibus in errorem ducerer, labentia in Oceanum astra suspexi (CCL 29, 66.79–81).
 25. Alfonsi, "Sant'Agostino," 250–252, who cites A. Pincherle, *Sant'Agostino d'Ippona* (Bari, 1930), 38–40 and 305 as having connected the "nebulae" with Augustine's adherence to astrology. André Mandouze writes that "l'adverbe *diu* est la preuve qu'il y a chez Augustin, en faveur de l'astrologie, beaucoup plus qu'une tentation passagère" (*Saint Augustin: L'Aventure de la Raison et de la Grâce* [Paris, 1968], 253n4). So too Doignon, "*Factus Erectior*," 81–82 and Bruning, "De l'Astrologie," 587n38 identify the "superstitio quaedam puerilis" of the next line with astrology.
 26. Nam et superstitio quaedam puerilis me ab ipsa inquisitione terreat et, ubi factus erectior illam caliginem dispuli mihi que persuasi docentibus potiusquam iubentibus esse cedendum, incidi in homines, quibus lux ista, quae oculis cernitur, inter summe divina colenda videretur (CCL 29, 66.81–67.85).
 27. *Recherches*, 273–74.

28. *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imagination* (New York, 1994), 188–89.
29. CCL 27, 41.1–2.
30. Mandouze, *Aventure*, 100–101 n. 5; see also, by the same author, “Saint Augustin et la Religion Romaine,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (1958): 196n49.
31. Ferrari, “Break,” 268–69; “Augustine and Astrology,” 247–48.
32. Ideoque illos planos, quos mathematicos vocant, plane consulere non desistebam, quod quasi nullum eis esset sacrificium et nullae preces ad aliquem spiritum ob divinationem dirigerentur (CCL 27, 41.1–3; trans. Chadwick, 54). In his commentary on this passage, James O’Donnell (Oxford, 1992), vol. 2, 212, objects to the translation of “plane” as “openly” since public and private consultation of “mathematici” was a capital offence according to CTh 9.16.8; however, O’Donnell’s preference of “utterly, absolutely, quite” for “plane” is hard to credit since “plane” modifies “consulere.” It is in any case unclear how effectively CTh 9.16.8 (p. 462 Mommsen), promulgated in 370 in Constantinople, would have been implemented in north Africa in Augustine’s youth; the law was addressed to the Praetorian Prefect of the East Domitius Modestus (PLRE, vol. 1, 605–08), characterized as a “time-server” in his religious views by T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 154, 288n14.
33. He does this also in *83 Diverse Questions*, Qu.45.1 (CCL 44A, 67.2–4) and *On Christian Teaching* 2.21.32 (CCL 32, 55.3). See Frederick Van Fleteren, “Mathematici,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids, 1999), 547. Jerome too associates the term “mathematicus” with the “vulgus”: see his commentary on Is 47.12–15 (CCL 73A, 525.30) and on Dan 2.2 (CCL 75A, 784.163–64). There is thus no reason to think that the popular usage of “mathematici” developed “particulièrement en Afrique” (contra Solignac in BA 13, 89). Cf. Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.9.6: hi [i.e. the Pythagoreans] dicebantur in eo tempore μαθηματικοί, ab his scilicet artibus quas iam discere atque meditari inceptaverant...vulgas autem, quos gentilitio vocabulo “Chaldaeos” dicere oportet, “mathematicos” dixit (vol. 1, p. 46 Rolfe [LCL]).
34. In Manichean teaching the killing or injuring of animals was forbidden to the elect as well as to auditors (such as Augustine) (Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, [San Francisco, 1987], 340–341; Ferrari, “Augustine and Astrology,” 246). In *Confessions* 4.2.3, when Augustine adds that though he refused (animal) sacrifice to demons on his own behalf he was nevertheless being sacrificed to demons by superstition (illa superstitione, CCL 27, 41.27–28) the reference is to his involvement with the Manicheans rather than with astrology (contra Lynn Thorndike, “The Attitude of Origen and

- Augustine toward Magic,” *The Monist* 18 [1908]: 58n30). Cf. the phrase “cor contritum et humilatum” (echoing Ps 50:18–19) at the end of *Confessions* 4.3.4: the spiritual sacrifice corresponds to the absence of animal sacrifice (O’Donnell, vol. 2, 214).
35. E. Hendriks, “Astrologie, Waarzeggerij en Parapsychologie bij Augustinus,” *Augustiniana* 4 (1954): 333. It is significant that in his attack on Roman religion in the first half of *On the City of God* Augustine spends several chapters (5.1–7) refuting astrology but hardly mentions other forms of divination such as augury or haruspicy (Ferrari, “Augustine and Astrology,” 244).
 36. p. 183–84 Gardner. See H.G. Schipper, “Melothesia: A Chapter of Manichaean Astrology in the West,” in Johannes van Oort et al., ed., *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West: Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht International Symposium of the International Association of Manichaean Studies (IAMS)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 195–204, and cf. the discussion of melothesia in Part B chapter 21 below.
 37. Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2 ed. (Tübingen, 1992), 177–78 and n120 with references cited there. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, 1967, 2000), 47 claims that astrology was condemned by the Manicheans as “amateurish dabbling.”
 38. CCL 27, 42.24–25. Chadwick, 55, translates this “I was addicted to the books of those who cast horoscopes.” The Latin in fact suggests that Augustine claimed such books had enslaved him (de Vreese, *Augustinus*, 15). F. Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose* (Oxford, 1935), 326 says that Augustine “threw himself...into the study of astrology.”
 39. Bouché-Leclercq, 517–42.
 40. For the career of Vindicianus see PLRE, v. 1, 967 and John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364–425* (Oxford, 1975, repr. 1990), 72, 213.
 41. Courcelle, *Recherches*, 75–76, claims that another aristocratic acquaintance of Augustine, Flaccianus, also tried to turn Augustine away from astrology at this time, though this is not mentioned in the *Confessions*. There is no evidence for Courcelle’s claim that the two were friends. Flaccianus’ view that divination is inspired by demons is mentioned in *Against the Sceptics* 1.7.21; it was also Flaccianus who pointed out to Augustine the Sibylline prophecies of Christ, which both of them accepted (*City of God* 18.23).
 42. Ferrari, “Break,” 268; “Augustine and Astrology,” 242–43 (in the latter essay, among

the texts Ferrari cites in n7 despite his claim only *City of God* 22.24 actually has the motif, common among early Christian writers, that humans were created upright in stature so as to contemplate the sky and fix their thoughts on heavenly things). On Augustine's general orientation to the heavens see also Bruning, "De l'Astrologie," 575–84.

43. non tam terrae quam caeli pulchritudine atque splendore laetens (CSEL 89, 19.12–13).
44. See David Pingree, s.v. "Astrologia, astronomia," *Augustinus–Lexikon*, vol. 1/4 (Basel, 1990) 482–90 and, more generally, Hübner, *Begriffe "Astrologie" und "Astronomie,"* 10–22 and 7n5.
45. Marrou, *St. Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique*, 249–51. Ferrari's claim ("Augustine and Astrology," 250–51; *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions*, 130) that the young Augustine was drawn to astrology because he wished to attribute his own sins to the stars is based on a misreading of *Confessions* 4.3.4 where Augustine attacks astrology because it nullifies responsibility for human behaviour; this is an example of the "moral argument" against astrology (discussed in Part A chapter 6 below) and does not describe Augustine's own experience.
46. Contra Alfarié, *Évolution Intellectuelle*, 253 and n1: "D'autre part, la critique qu'il faisait de leur [i.e. the astrologers'] doctrine se retournait dans sa pensée, contre la dogmatique de Mani. Depuis longtemps, il avait plus ou moins confondu ces deux enseignements" and citing *On Heresies* 70 where he claims Augustine accuses the Priscillianists of following the doctrines of Mani. In fact, it is not at all evident that Augustine confused the Priscillianists and the Manicheans, and *On Heresies* 70 offers no support for Alfarié's contention that Augustine confused astrology and Manicheism; indeed Augustine had personally experienced both of the latter for a long time "from the inside." Much preferable to Alfarié's view is Marice Testard's statement (*Saint Augustin et Cicéron* [Paris, 1958], vol. 1, 67n3) in the context of discussing Augustine's exit from Manicheism: "nous évitons ici à dessein le mot d'astrologie qui peut être équivoque." Astrology and Manicheism are quite distinct themes in the *Confessions* and were evidently so in Augustine's own experience.
47. Ferrari, "Break," 270–71. Augustine also refers to this in *Letter*. 55.4.7. Of course, this does not mean that Augustine learned to predict eclipses himself! Augustine's reading of these philosophers merely taught him that there were laws by which eclipses could be calculated (Marrou, *St. Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique*, 250). Ferrari's suggestion ("Augustine and Astrology," 249–50) that one of the philosophers' books Augustine had read was Plotinus, *Ennead* 2.3 (which argues against the view that the stars are causes of earthly events) is unfounded.

48. Contra Ferrari, “Break,” 266 (“In modern terminology these ‘philosophers’ are obviously astronomers”) and O’Loughlin’s argument (“Libri Philosophorum,” 106–11) that they should be identified as astrologers. A. Solignac, in BA 13, 92f. suggests they were “physici”; cf. also Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 589–92 and nn48, 51, 53, who describes them (perhaps most aptly) as “cosmologues.” It should be stressed that our modern academic categories, with their discrete disciplines, cannot be applied to antiquity in a facile manner. André Mandouze’s explication of *Confessions* 5.3.4 is correct: “ce ne sont pourtant pas explicitement les *mathematici* qui sont donnés comme référence dans ce passage; mais, sans doute pour éviter l’équivoque du mot et préciser cependant la valeur intellectuelle en même temps que la vanité morale de ces ‘savants’, il est successivement fait allusion dans le même contexte aux *philosophi* et aux *superbi*” (*Aventure*, 101n1); having carefully distinguished Augustine’s “philosophi” from astrologers, it is surprising that Mandouze goes on to say that Augustine’s Manichean faith was ruined “par le scientisme astrologique” (*ibid.*, 102n1).
49. Multa tamen ab eis ex ipsa creatura vera dicta retinebam, et occurrebat mihi ratio per numeros et ordinem temporum et visibiles attestaciones siderum et conferebam cum dictis Manichaei, quae de his rebus multa scripsit copiosissime delirans, et non mihi occurrebat ratio nec solistitorum et aequinoctiorum nec defectuum luminarium nec quidquid tale in libris saecularis sapientiae didiceram....et ad illas rationes numeris et oculis meis exploratas non occurrebat et longe diversum erat (CCL 27, 59.58–60.66; trans. Chadwick, 75).
50. Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 588n43.
51. That Augustine believed he was never fully committed to the Manicheans is evident from *On the Happy Life* 1.4 (CCL 29, 67.84–87) and *Confessions* 8.7.17 (CCL 27, 124.24–25) (Courcelle, *Recherches*, 275; Doignon, *Vie Heureuse*, 136n.). On the role of “ratio” in Augustine’s attraction to, and repudiation of, Manicheism see O’Donnell’s commentary, vol. 2, 292 (on *Confessions* 5.3.6) and 295 (on 5.5.8).
52. *Augustine*, 48.
53. “Leurs récits fabuleux se révélant astronomiquement intenables, la rupture d’Augustin avec ses croyances antérieures s’avèra inévitable” (Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 589). Ferrari, “Break,” 274–76, asserts that Augustine’s exit from Manicheism should be connected with two solar eclipses (in 378 and 381) which Augustine may have witnessed; this complements yet another speculative essay by Ferrari, which tries to link an appearance of Halley’s comet with Augustine’s entrance into Manicheism (“Halley’s Comet of 374 A.D.: New Light Upon Augustine’s Conversion to Manicheism,” *Augustiniana* 27 [1977]: 139–50). For criti-

cisms, see Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 586–87n33 and O’Donnell’s commentary, vol. 2, 288.

54. non quidem segnem consultorem mathematicorum nec eas litteras bene callentem, sed...consultorem curiosum et tamen scientem aliquid, quod a patre suo se audisse dicebat (CCL 27, 97.14–17). Thus Firminus is not portrayed as “un client assidu des ‘Mathématiciens’” (contra Alfarc, *Évolution*, 251), nor as “een intellectueel, ‘n ontwikkeld man, die zich bezig houdt—en wel véél bezig houdt—met astrologie en vertrouwt op zijn horoscoop” (contra de Vreese, *Augustinus*, 20). Courcelle (*Recherches*, 77, 262) conjectures that Firminus was Milanese because according to the *Confessions* his family seems to have been unknown to Augustine and also a (lost) letter of Augustine to Firminus is listed among “un lot de lettres adressées aux amis du temps du séjour milanais” in the *Indiculus* of Augustine’s works assembled by his biographer, Possidius (ed. A. Wilmart, in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, vol. 2 [Rome, 1931], 182). There is a parallel between Augustine’s description of Firminus and his statement in *Confessions* 4.3.4 “mathematicos...plane consulere non desistebam” (CCL 27, 41.1-2); the same verb “consulere” is also used in 7.6.8 to describe Firminus’ approach to Augustine.
55. atque ita factum esse, ut cum iste coniugis, ille autem ancillae dies et horas minutioresque horarum articulos cautissima observatione numerarent, enixae essent ambae simul, ita ut easdem constellationes usque ad easdem minutias utriusque nascenti facere cogerentur, iste filio ille servulo. Nam cum mulieres parturire coepissent, indicaverunt sibi ambo, quid sua cuiusque domo ageretur, et paraverunt quos ad se invicem mitterent, simul ut natum quod parturiebatur esset cuique nuntiatum; quod tamen ut continuo nuntiaretur, tamquam in regno suo facile effecerant. Atque ita qui ab alterutro missi sunt, tam ex paribus domorum intervallis sibi obviam factos esse dicebat, ut aliam positionem siderum aliasque particulas momentorum neuter eorum notare sineretur. Et tamen Firminus amplo apud suos loco natus dealbatiores vias saeculi cursitabat, augebatur divitiis, sublimabatur honoribus, servus autem ille conditionis iugo nullatenus relaxato dominis serviebat. (CCL 27, 98.35–50; trans. Chadwick, 118).
56. His itaque auditis et creditis—talis quippe narraverat—omnis illa reluctatio mea resoluta concidit (CCL 27, 98.52-53).
57. Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 596–609.
58. CCL 27, 97.10–13.
59. Inde certissime conlegi ea, quae vera consideratis constellationibus dicerentur, non arte dici, sed sorte, quae autem falsa, non artis imperitia, sed sortis mendacio (CCL

- 27, 99.64–66; trans. Chadwick, 118–19).
60. ...cum quaesissem, quae causa ergo faceret, ut multa inde vera pronuntiarentur, respondit ille [Vindicianus], ut potuit, vim sortis hoc facere in rerum natura usquequaque diffusam. Si enim de paginis poetae cuiuspiam longe aliud canentis atque intendentis, cum forte quis consulit, mirabiliter consonus negotio saepe versus exiret, mirandum non esse dicebat, si ex anima humana superiore aliquo instinctu nesciente, quid in se fieret, non arte, sed sorte sonaret aliquid, quod interrogantis rebus factisque concineret (CCL 27, 42.36–44; trans. Chadwick, 55). Cf. *83 Diverse Questions*, Qu.45.2 (CCL 44A, 69.49–50).
 61. Est enim vis et natura quaedam, quae tum observatis longo tempore significationibus, tum aliquo instinctu inflatuque divino futura praenuntiat (p. 234–36 Falconer).
 62. Chadwick, 55n7; A. Solignac in BA 13, 416n1; Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 597–99 and nn69–70; O’Donnell, vol. 2, 215–16.
 63. Successful astrological predictions are again paralleled with sortilege from literary texts in *83 Diverse Questions*, Qu. 45.2 (CCL 44A, 69.50–55).
 64. Cf. also the story of Antony’s “call” to monasticism through hearing Matt 19.2 (*Life of Antony* 2), which is referred to in Ponticianus’ story of the conversion of certain “agentes in rebus” to monasticism (*Confessions* 8.6.14–15) and explicitly mentioned in the account of Augustine’s conversion (*Confessions* 8.12.29).
 65. *Letter* 55.20.37. See the discussion in O’Donnell, vol. 3, 65–66.
 66. Hendrikx, “Astrologie,” 334.
 67. *Ibid.*, 348. Similarly, Diodore of Tarsus moved from ascribing successful predictions to chance to attributing them to demons in the same section (chapter 50) of his work *Against Fate*, according to Photius’ summary (p. 43–45 Henry).
 68. Sane me iam theatra non rapiunt, nec curo nosse transitus siderum...omnia sacrilega sacramenta detestor (CCL 27, 185.42–45). On Augustine’s attraction to the theatre see *Confessions* 3.2.2–4.
 69. Mary T. Clark, *Augustine* (London, 1994), 14 incorrectly ascribes Augustine’s repudiation of astrology to “when Nebridius [!] pointed out that they [astrologers] gave opposite predictions concerning two infants born at exactly the same time.”
 70. “De l’Astrologie,” 596n66. (The conversation with Firminus became the breaking

point.) Similarly, C.P. Mayer, *Die Zeichen in der Geistigen Entwicklung und in der Theologie des Jungen Augustinus* (Würzburg, 1969), I. Teil, 86 writes that Firminus' anecdote "brach die Dämme." To Ferrari, "Augustine and Astrology," 248, Firminus provided the "decisive evidence" for the "test case" which Augustine "required in order to crystallize his nebulous doubts into concise rejection." To de Vreese, *Augustinus*, 22: "En hiermee is voor hem persoonlijk het proces beslecht; nadien is geen ommekeer meer gekomen: hij is en blijft vast overtuigd van de ijdelheid der astrologie." Goulven Madec, "La délivrance de l'esprit (Confessions VII)," in "*Le Confessionni*" di Agostino D'Ippona: *Libri VI-IX*, ed. José M. Rodriguez et al. (Palermo, 1985), 52 also affirms "il fallut la consultation de Firminus...pour qu'Augustin...se débarrassât de toute hésitation."

71. CCL 27, 43.47–53.
72. Mandouze, *Aventure*, 100–101n5.
73. Hinc autem accepto aditu ipse mecum talia ruminando, ne quis eorundem delirorum, qui talem quaestum sequerentur, quos iam iamque invadere atque inrisos refellere cupiebam, mihi ita resisteret, quasi aut Firminus mihi aut illi pater falsa narraverit, intendi considerationem in eos qui gemini nascuntur... (CCL 27, 99.67–71; trans. Chadwick, 119).
74. Solignac, BA 13, 595n3.
75. *Recherches*, 77n6. The verbal parallels between *Confessions* 7.6.10 and Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 4.14 claimed by Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, vol. 1, 102–103n5 are unconvincing.
76. primo Firminum ipsum conatus sum ab illa curiositate revocare (CCL 27, 98.53–54). As de Vreese, *Augustinus*, 22, points out we are not informed as to whether or not this was successful.
77. De Vreese, *Augustinus*, 24 emphasizes the intensity which Augustine conveys about his struggle at this point: "Dit 'intendi considerationem' moet men meer verstaan van persoonlijk zich verdiepen in de vraag, dan van boekenstudie."
78. *Ibid.*, 24. Johannes Alphons Davids, *De Orosio et Sancto Augustino Priscilianistarum Adversariis. Commentatio Historica et Philologica* (The Hague, 1930), 191 writes: "Hoc argumentum ad geminos pertinens...Augustinus variis locis adhibuit et exhaustit magnis suis viribus dialecticis."

79. An example of earlier Christian use of the argument of twins is from Origen's commentary on Gen 1.14, preserved in *Philocalia* 23.17 (p. 190 Junod).
80. The other passages are *83 Diverse Questions*, 45.2; *Diverse Questions to Simplicianus* 1.2.3; *On Christian Teaching* 2.22.33–34; *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.36; *Confessions* 6.10; *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 2.14–16. The latter is omitted from the survey in de Vreese, *Augustinus*, 25–47.
81. See W. Rordorf, "Saint Augustin et la Tradition Philosophique Antifataliste. À propos de De Civ. Dei 5.1–11," VC 28 (1974): 196–202, and José Oroz Reta, "Une Polémique Augustinienne contre Cicéron: Du fatalisme à la prescience divine," *Studia Patristica* 17, 3 (Oxford, 1982), 1269–90.
82. Similarly, in arguing against the assertion of the Pelagians that his doctrine of grace was a type of fatalism (*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 2.6.10) Augustine immediately connects "fatum" with astrology (CSEL 60, 472.18–21).
83. De Vreese, *Augustinus*, 32.
84. ed. Wilmart, *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, vol. 2, 164.
85. O'Loughlin, "Libri Philosophorum," 103.
86. *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, 1947), vol. 1, 514.
87. quid fit, quod nihil umquam dicere potuerunt, cur in vita geminorum, in actionibus, in eventis, in professionibus, artibus, honoribus ceterisque rebus ad humanam vitam pertinentibus atque in ipsa morte sit plerumque tanta diversitas, ut similiores eis sint, quantum ad haec adinet, multi extranei quam ipsi inter se gemini perexiguo temporis intervallo in nascendo separati, in conceptu autem per unum concubitum uno etiam momento seminati? (CCL 47, 129.47–54).
88. etenim geminorum formas esse similis, vitam atque fortunam plerumque disparem. Procles et Eurysthenes, Lacedaemoniorum reges, gemini fratres fuerunt. At nec totidem annos vixerunt; anno enim Procli vita brevior fuit, multumque is fratri rerum gestarum gloria praestitit" (p. 472 Falconer [LCL]).
89. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 102. Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Göteborg, 1967), vol. 2, 528–29 suggests that Augustine derived the argument of twins found in *City of God* 5 from a portion (now lost) of Cicero's work *On Fate*.
90. Tanta in eorum vita fuerunt moribusque diversa, tanta in actibus disparilitas, tanta

in parentum amore dissimilitudo, ut etiam inimicos eos inter se faceret ipsa distantia...Unus duxit mercennariam servitutem, alius non servivit; unus a matre diligebatur, alius non diligebatur; unus honorem, qui magnus apud eos habebatur, amisit, alter indeptus est. Quid de uxoribus, quid de filiis, quid de rebus, quanta diversitas! (CCL 47, 131.3–14). On Augustine's use of Jacob and Esau against astrological fatalism see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton, 1992), 230–31. The example of Jacob and Esau is also cited in connection with the argument of twins in *Diverse Questions to Simplicianus* 1.2.3 (commenting on Rom 9.10), *On Christian Teaching* 2.22.33–34, *Confessions* 7.6.10 and *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.36 (where Augustine says that no astrologer could have predicted that one of them would be loved by their mother while the other would not).

91. Bouché-Leclercq, 620–21. (...not more clear-cut by using the example of Esau and Jacob than by that of the Dioscuri; the attack and the response to it rely on the same point.)
92. Ferrari, "Augustine and Astrology," 248–49nn45–46; cf. Bruning, "De l'Astrologie," 601n79.
93. ...unde fit ut sub eadem constellatione fatali alter concipiatur masculus, altera femina? Novimus geminos diversi sexus, ambo adhuc vivunt, ambo aetate adhuc vident; quorum cum sint inter se similes corporum species, quantum in diverso sexu potest, instituto tamen et proposito vitae ita sunt dispares, ut praeter actus, quos necesse est a virilibus distare femineos (quod ille in officio comitis militat et a suo domo paene semper peregrinatur, illa de solo patrio et de rure proprio non recedit), insuper (quod est incredibilius, si astralia fata credantur; non autem mirum, si voluntates hominum et Dei munera cogitentur) ille coniugatus, illa virgo sacra est; ille numerosam prolem genuit, illa nec nupsit (CCL 47, 133.2–24).
94. See Elizabeth A. Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston/Queenston, 1986) 175–208.
95. The attribution of this account to a lost portion of Cicero's *On Fate* by A. Schmekel, *Die Philosophie der Mittleren Stoa* (Berlin, 1892), 162–65 is accepted by recent scholars. Augustine may well have derived this account from the large lacuna between *On Fate* 2.4 and 3.5; see Albert Yon, "Introduction," *Cicéron: Traité du Destin* (Paris, 1950) XXn1, XXXVII–XL; Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, vol. 2, 527; Rordorf, "Saint Augustin et la Tradition Philosophique Antifataliste," 192–93; and Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, vol. 1, 102n4, 104n2 (notwithstanding the parallels with *On Divination* listed in n3) and vol. 2, 46.

96. p. 176 Jones (LCL).
97. Pingree, "Astrologia," 483.
98. CCL 47, 129.5–6.
99. Posidonius Stoicus, multum astrologiae deditus...hoc philosophus astrologus ...Posidonius vel quilibet fatalium siderum assertor (CCL 47, 129.4–5, 8 and 130.31–32) (= Edelstein–Kidd T69, T74, F111).
100. *De Diis et Praesensionibus* 20.77 (= Edelstein–Kidd T70 and F112).
101. Boll, *Studien über Claudius Ptolemäus*, 133ff., 190ff. et passim; Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, 47–48; Edwyn Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics* (Oxford, 1913), 116; W. Gundel, "Heimarmene," RE 7, 2631; Cramer, *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics*, 62–63; William H. Stahl, *Roman Science* (Madison, 1962), 110, 274n6.
102. CCL 47, 129.41–42.
103. See the reference to A. Lörcher, *De Compositione et Fonte Libri Ciceronis qui est de Fato*, cited in Edelstein–Kidd, vol. II(i), 59; also see Long, "Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra," 170, as well as Kidd's thorough discussion of Posidonius' view of fate and astrology in light of the testimonia and fragments in Edelstein–Kidd, vol. II(i) 59–60, 414–40.
104. CCL 47, 129.6–11. He also draws on medical expertise against astrology in 83 *Diverse Questions*, 45.2 (CCL 44A, 68.32–34).
105. CCL 47, 130.31–33.
106. Constitutionem vero caeli ac siderum, quae fuit quando concepti sive nati sunt, velle trahere ad istam aegrotandi parilitatem, cum tam multa diversissimi generis diversissimorum effectuum et eventorum eodem tempore in unius regionis terra eidem caelo subdita potuerint concipi et nasci, nescio cuius sit insolentiae. Nos autem novimus geminos non solum actus et peregrinationes habere diversas, verum etiam dispares aegritudines perpeti (CCL 47, 129.19–130.27).
107. De Vreese, *Augustinus*, 34–35.
108. Cf. *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.36, where the difference of destinies is used against prediction from the birth horoscope as well as that of conception (CSEL 28/1, 60–61). This type of argument had been raised by Philo, *On Providence* 1.87 (p. 196–198 Hadas-Lebel) and Favorinus as recorded in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*

- 14.1.19 (p. 10 Rolfe). Another Christian author who makes use of it is Ephrem of Syria, *Hymns Against Heresies* 6.3–5 (p. 24–25 trans. Beck).
109. *City of God* 5.1, 5 and 6 (CCL 47, 129.52–54; p. 132.31–32; p. 133.60–61, 17–20). In *83 Diverse Questions*, 45.2 this view of conception is attributed to medical authorities (CCL 44A, 68.32–33).
110. CCL 47, 133.15–134.33.
111. Quid est ergo quod dicunt, si hora conceptionalis inveniatur, multa ab istis dici posse divinius? (CCL 47, 132.50–51)
112. Unde etiam illud a nonnullis praedicatur, quod quidam sapiens horam elegit, quae cum uxore concumberet, unde filium mirabilem gigneret (CCL 47, 132.52–133.54). He returns to this in 5.7 (p. 134.2–5). Cf. the parallel in Basil’s sixth homily on the *Hexaemeron* (p. 360 Giet).
113. PL 38, 1007.
114. On the debate concerning the horoscopes of conception and of birth in ancient astrology, see Bouché-Leclercq, 373–83.
115. p. 222–24 Robbins.
116. Bouché-Leclercq, 622. (...volley of arguments by-passes astrologers who were discerning enough to draw a veil over the mystery of conception and to content themselves with the birth horoscope.)
117. Ac per hoc si tam celeriter alter post alterum nascitur, ut eadem pars horoscopi maneat, paria cuncta quaero, quae in nullis possunt geminis inveniri; si autem sequentis tarditas horoscopum mutat, parentes diversos quaero, quos gemini habere non possunt (CCL 47, 130.41–45).
118. Bouché-Leclercq, 621. (Astrology, informed by centuries of discussions, did not say or would no longer say that the destinies of twins should be similar in every point or different in every point.) He adds “Avec de telles exigences, on ne comprendrait pas que les mêmes parents puissent avoir jamais plus d’un enfant, absurdité dont l’astrologie n’est aucunement responsable,” though this cannot be borne out even by Augustine’s rhetoric (cf. de Vreese, *Augustinus*, 35–36).
119. fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege/ longaque per certos signantur tempora casus./ nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet./ hinc et opes et regna fluunt et, saepius orta,/ paupertas, artesque datae moresque creatis/ et vitia et laudes,

damna et compendia rerum./ nemo carere dato poterit nec habere negatum/
 fortunamve suis invitam prendere votis/ aut fugere instantem: sors est sua cuique
 ferenda (p. 222–24 Goold).

120. p. 22–23 Robbins.
121. Long, “Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra,” 183.
122. Thorndike, *History*, vol. 1, 519.
123. “Attitude of Origen and Augustine toward Magic,” 59.
124. Recolo etiam, cum mihi theatrici carminis certamen inire placuisset, mandasse mihi nescio quem haruspicem, quid ei dare vellem mercedis, ut vincerem... (CCL 27, 41.16–18).
125. Thorndike, “Attitude of Origen and Augustine toward Magic,” 58n30.
126. Bouché-Leclercq, 587–88.
127. “On connaît, par la célèbre comparaison de la roue du potier, la façon dont les astrologues expliquaient comment deux jumeaux pouvaient avoir parfois des destinées différentes” (Bouché-Leclercq, 588). Augustine’s etymological derivation of Figulus, cognomen of the gens Nigidia, from “figulus” (potter) is incorrect (Pingree, “Astrologia,” 484); it is more likely that the story of the potter’s wheel was connected to Nigidius because of his name than that his cognomen derived from the story.
128. Dum enim rotam figuli vi quanta potuit intorsisset, currente illa bis numero de atramento tamquam uno eius loco summa celeritate percussit; deinde inventa sunt signa, quae fixerat, desistente motu, non parvo intervallo in rotae illius extremitate distantia. “Sic, inquit, in tanta rapacitate caeli, etiamsi alter post alterum tanta celeritate nascatur, quanta rotam bis ipse percussit, in caeli spatio plurimum est: hinc sunt, inquit, quaecumque dissimillima perhibentur in moribus casibusque geminorum (CCL 47, 130.3–11 = Frg. 17 Swoboda p. 137). The image of the universe as a potter’s wheel was common in antiquity: see Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 9.1.14 and the references in Gundel, s.v. “Astronomie,” RE 20, 2, 2082. Regarding the speed of the heavens, in *Astronomica* 1.57 Manilius similarly describes the great differences effected by small movements of the sky: “quantaque quam parvi facerent discrimina motus” (p. 8 Goold). In 3.211–17 Manilius also admits the difficulty of measuring the horoscope due to the movement of the heavens (p. 178 Goold): his

solution is that practicing astrology entails hard work!

129. Hoc figmentum fragilius est quam vasa, quae illa rotatione finguntur” (CCL 47, 130.12–13). Cf. his sarcasm in 5.4 concerning those who assert that the divisions of the zodiac can be measured: What then does that potter’s wheel mean, except that people with hearts of clay are sent [spinning] in a circle lest they refute the lying words of the astrologers? (quid hic agit rota illa figuli, nisi ut homines luteum cor habentes in gyrum mittantur, ne mathematicorum vaniloquia convincantur?) (CCL 47, 131.20–22).
130. CCL 47, 130.13–131.18.
131. Pingree, “Astrologia,” 484, states that the argument as Augustine reports it is “inept.” Strictly speaking, Pingree is right. What Augustine should have reported, and what Nigidius may well have said, is that a *small but perceptible* distance between the marks on the circumference of a potter’s wheel corresponds to a very large *absolute* distance (though still of course the same *angle*) at the circumference of the universe (i.e. the sphere of the fixed stars). To this argument, Augustine’s counter-argument is entirely valid: the angular distance between two celestial configurations, which is all that astrologers can measure, remains minute—and therefore in practice unmeasurable.
132. This is true of most anti-fatalist arguments (Bouché-Leclercq, 86). Hendriks, “Astrologie,” 340 notes that Firminus’ anecdote of twins would have appealed to Augustine’s “dialectische geest.”
133. *Évolution*, 46 and 221. (...passionately studied the writings [of the astrologers] and he digested their teachings so well that he himself drew horoscopes...he held astrologers in high esteem. He read their books assiduously and he consulted them often. He finished by imbuing himself with their teaching so well that he learned to draw horoscopes like them and was consulted as an authority by such of their followers...)
134. *Ibid.*, 251. (Augustine drew his horoscope as best he could ... but while doing so told him that he scarcely believed in all that any longer.)
135. Davids, *De Orosio*, 190. (A certain Firminus consulted Augustine about his constellation, i.e. his horoscope.)
136. Vernon J. Bourke, *Augustine’s Quest of Wisdom* (Milwaukee, 1947), 53–54.
137. *St. Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique*, 250. (He became capable of drawing a

horoscope, at least in summary form.) There is no mention in the *Confessiones* of Augustine calculating horoscopes in “summary” form.

138. *Astrologumena*, 337. (He himself cast horoscopes.)
139. *Recherches*, 77. (He agreed once more—without great illusion, to be sure—to draw a horoscope...)
140. “Augustine and Astrology,” 250n55; “Astrology,” 77; “Saint Augustine’s Various Conversions,” 27. In *The Conversions of Saint Augustine*, 47 he marshalls de Vreese’s 1933 thesis *Augustinus en de Astrologie* in support of this view, claiming it as an exception to what he regards as the general scholarly tendency to underrate Augustine’s attachment to astrology. In fact, de Vreese maintains the opposite view: commenting on the argument of twins in *City of God* 5.1–7, he writes: “Deze redeneering is geheel en al die von een buitenstaander; op háár als grondslag rust de gangbare meening omtrent de astrologie van wie zelf niet beroepsastroloog is” (p. 36). In another essay, “The Peculiar Appendage of Augustine’s ‘Enarratio in Psalmum LXI,’” *Augustiniana* 28 (1978): 18–33, Ferrari claims that at the end of Augustine’s sermon on Ps 61 (section 23 [CCL 39, 792–93]) where Augustine points out a converted “mathematicus” in his congregation, Augustine is actually referring to himself in the third person, i.e. he is condemning his former life as a devotee of astrology before the congregation. Ferrari reiterates this claim in “Saint Augustine’s Various Conversions,” 27 and in his article in *A Reader’s Companion to Augustine’s Confessions*, 130–31. Ferrari’s argument falls, however, since there is no evidence in the sermon that Augustine intended this meaning or that the “mathematicus” being addressed is to be identified with Augustine himself. In *Images of Conversion in St. Augustine’s Confessions* (New York, 1996), 88n81, Robert J. O’Connell writes: “I am unable to find Ferrari’s case convincing...that Augustine became an enthusiast of astrology in the proper sense; the hard evidence for that view seems fragmentary in the extreme and needs to be sutured together by generous appeals to likelihood and tenuous reference. The resulting edifice I find so shaky that I question whether it should be required to bear the weight of additional interpretation Ferrari builds on it.”
141. “De l’Astrologie,” 585n32; at the outset he writes: “Ce n’est sans doute pas un fait universellement connu qu’Augustin...s’occupa d’astrologie et la pratiqua même en tant que *consulens*...” (575). Regarding the verb “consulere” in *Confessions* 7.6.8, it is hardly likely that Augustine was “consulted” by Firminus in either of the following senses: “On consulte les astrologues non pas tellement pour prendre connaissance de la constellation que pour être renseigné sur l’avenir proche” (585n31).
142. O’Loughlin, “Libri Philosophorum,” 118. Of course, there is no mention in the *Con-*

fessions of any payment by Firminus! O'Loughlin is also palpably wrong when he asserts (p. 117) that Augustine "shows a most detailed knowledge of the beliefs and methods of the astrologers...he offers along with the theological rejection a series of rebuttals based on their own claims and premises....This precision can only be accounted for by a thorough knowledge of their practices...this was a legacy from the time when he was dedicated to the study of them." Augustine's skill in refuting astrology, therefore, is decidedly *not* to be attributed to the idea that he was "poacher turned gamekeeper" (p. 103). O'Loughlin's outline of the influence of Augustine's "youthful adventure into astrology" on his later writings (p. 124–25) is at best speculative, and stands in need of substantiation by means of evidence.

143. CCL 47, 132.30.
144. CSEL 28, 60.2.
145. CCL 44A, 68.24–31.
146. CCL 27, 60.12–13.
147. CSEL 80, 57–58.
148. CSEL 43.35.
149. CSEL 28, 38–39.
150. "Astrologie," 343 ("aller elementairste soort"), referring to *83 Diverse Questions*, Qu.45. In *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.16.33 (CSEL 28, 1, 58–59), where Augustine criticizes the astrological explanation that planetary stations and retrogressions are caused by the sun's rays, he may have had Pliny, *Natural History* 2.13.68–71 in mind (Pingree, "Astrologia," 487).
151. Pingree, "Astrologia," 486.
152. Brown, *Augustine*, 47. Long's estimation ("Astrology: Arguments Pro and Con," 190–91), which agrees with that of Brown, is not assumed but derives from the evidence (contra O'Loughlin, 104 and n10).
153. Trans. Brian Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London, 1961), 60.
154. Bouché-Leclercq, 621. (...he had recourse to the artifices of rhetoric and to word traps)
155. De Vreese, *Augustinus*, 36–37, who also claims (p. 37–38) that Bouché-Leclercq's

criticism betrays a basic misunderstanding of ancient rhetoric.

156. Pingree, "Astrologia," 486–89.
157. O'Loughlin, "Libri Philosophorum," 116. For a survey of Augustine's attitudes toward the liberal studies, see O'Donnell, vol. 2, 269–78.
158. See Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts Libéraux et Philosophie dans la Pensée Antique* (Paris, 1984), 101–36, and George Howie, *Educational Theory and Practice in St. Augustine* (New York, 1969), 245. Augustine discusses the liberal studies in a number of passages which are conveniently tabulated in Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique*, 189.
159. *On Order* 2.5.14: *Iam in musica, in geometrica, in astrorum motibus, in numerorum necessitatibus ordo ita dominatur....* (CCL 29, 115.7–8).
160. *Motus eam [i.e. mentem] caeli multum movebat et ad se diligenter considerandum invitabat. Etiam ibi per constantissimas temporum vices, per astrorum ratos definitosque cursus, per intervallorum spatia moderata intellexit nihil aliud quam illam dimensionem numerosque dominari, quae similiter definiendo ac secernendo in ordinem nectens astrologiam genuit, magnum religiosis argumentum tormentumque curiosis* (CCL 29, 130.9–16). For possible sources of this passage see Solignac, "Doxographies et manuels," 136–37.
161. Bruning, "De l'Astrologie," 578n10 (...one of those where Augustine pronounces favourably on astrology.) Bruning incorrectly claims this to be the assessment of this passage by Hendrikx, "Astrologie," 347. In fact, Hendrikx recognizes the ambivalence in Augustine's statement: "Positief het gunstigst staat Augustinus tegenover de sterrenkunde in *De ordine*....Met deze laatste woorden [i.e. Augustine's description of astrology as 'magnum religiosis argumentum tormentumque curiosis'] tekent Augustinus wel uitstekend de sterrenkunde van zijn dagen, die zowel astronomisch als astrologisch georiënteerd kon zijn."
162. *Arts Libéraux*, 101–36. Although Bruning's article refers to this chapter of Hadot's book, it fails to take into account the implication of her translation of "astrologia."
163. "De l'Astrologie," 578n10 (...he was not, however, pushed by the torment of curiosity but attracted by the religious character of numerical order.) Bruning's discussion in this part of his essay (p. 575–81) of Augustine's veneration of number and order in the universe is useful. As Hadot, *Arts Libéraux*, 123, remarks, for Augustine

“la science des nombres embrasse aussi bien...la théologie.”

164. John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge, 1994), 24n4.
165. *Miscellanies* 6.80.3 and 6.90.3 (pp. 471.27, 477.7 Stählin [GCS]).
166. Gregory Thaumaturgos’ panegyric of Origen, 8.113–14 (p. 142 Crouzel [SC]) states that Origen included ἀστρονομία among other μαθήματα that were intended to raise the “lower” part of the soul.
167. In his funeral oration for his younger brother Caesarius (*Oration 7.7*) Gregory commends him for this (PG 35, 761C–D).
168. praeteritorum ac futurorum ex praesentibus coniecturam (CSEL 89, 220.17–18).
169. christianos enim facere volebat, non mathematicos. sufficit autem, ut homines de his rebus, quantum in schola didicerunt, noverint propter usus humanos (CSEL 25/2, 812.3–5).
170. Presumably this is what O’Loughlin means in “Knowing God and Knowing the Cosmos: Augustine’s Legacy of Tension,” *Irish Philosophical Journal* 6 (1989):42–45, when he observes that when Augustine sifted superstition, myth and astrology from out of ancient cosmology in this passage of *On Christian Teaching*, what remained was “computistics.”
171. Siderum autem cognoscendorum...perpauca scriptura commemorat. Sicut autem plurimis notus est lunae cursus, qui etiam ad passionem domini anniversarie celebrandam sollemniter adhibetur, sic paucissimis ceterorum quoque siderum vel ortus vel occasus vel alia quaelibet momenta sine ullo sunt errore notissima. Quae per se ipsa cognitio, quamquam superstitione non alliget, non multum tamen ac prope nihil adiuvat tractationem divinarum scripturarum, et infructuosa intentione plus impedit, et quia familiaris est perniciosissimo errori fatua fata cantantium, commodius honestiusque contemnitur (CCL 32, 64.22–32). He continues in the same vein down to p. 65.45.
172. “Libri Philosophorum,” 116.
173. On this development in Augustine’s thought see Howie, *Educational Theory*, 224–276; Hadot, *Arts Libéraux*, 136; Christoph Schäublin, “*De Doctrina Christiana*: A Classic of Western Culture?” in Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, ed., *De Doctrina Christiana: a Classic of Western Culture* (North Bend, IN, 1995), 53–54. Still valuable is the classic study of Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique*, though see the criticisms in Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*,

565–67 and Hadot, *Arts Libéraux*, 52–57. A similar view is found in Ambrosiaster's commentary on Col 2.1 (CSEL 81/3, 179.22–27).

174. Aside from the book on grammar which had been lost from his library, and *On Music* which was only completed after his return to Africa, he had started in on works dealing with the other arts: “De aliis vero quinque disciplinis illic similiter inchoatis—de dialectica, de rethorica, de geometrica, de arithmetica, de philosophia—sola principia remanserunt, quae tamen etiam ipsa perdidimus; sed haberi ab aliquibus existimo” (CCL 57, 17.40–53).
175. Howie, *Educational Theory*, 251–52.
176. Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 577n8.
177. Hans Weinhold, *Die Astronomie in der antiken Schule* (München, 1912), 85; H.I. Marrou, *Histoire de l’Éducation dans l’Antiquité*, 6e édition revue et augmentée (Paris, 1965), 272; M.L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World* (London, 1971), 50.

4. *The Argument of Common Destinies*

Within the tradition of ancient anti-astrological polemic, the argument of common destinies—how can people who have different horoscopes come to similar or identical fates—was most commonly expressed in terms of collective death: if each individual’s destiny is determined by his/her horoscope, it was asked, how could it happen that whole groupings of people have died together in battle, shipwreck, flood, the collapse of buildings or any other occurrence of collective catastrophe?¹ This argument was used by a few early Christian writers.

A Christian text in which this argument appears is the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* of Bardaisan of Edessa. In the course of his extended presentation of diverse customs ascribed to various nations and ethnic groups (νόμιμα βαρβαρικά), Bardaisan mentions the argument of common destinies in passing. For example, concerning the Medes who are said to leave their dead to be eaten by dogs, Bardaisan says:

Yet we cannot say that all Medes are born when the Moon stands together with Mars in Cancer for them, by day beneath the earth. For so it is written that those are born whom the dogs eat.²

Similarly, he says that the Hindus burn widows alive along with the bodies of their deceased husbands:

But we cannot maintain that all the wives of the Hindus who are burnt, have a nativity in which Mars with the Sun stands in Leo, by night beneath the earth, circumstances in which people are born who are burnt with fire.³

And when he declares that all Germans were believed to die by strangulation, aside from those killed in war, he adds: “Yet it is impossible that all Germans have the Moon and Hora between Mars and Saturn in their nativity.”⁴ (The term “Hora” presumably refers to the horoscope.⁵) The theme of collective catastrophe is also used against astrological fate by Hippolytus in *Refutation* 4.5.6–9⁶ and by Gregory of Nyssa in *Poemata Arcana* 5.21–22.⁷

The argument of common destinies is mentioned in passing in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.30.4 within the context of the moral argument against fatalism, i.e. that divine rewards and punishments are given on the basis of a person’s free actions rather than fate. The author notes that such

punishments are not reserved for the next life but take place in the present as well, citing those who perished during the great flood in the time of Noah.⁸ Similarly, the Arian writer Maximinus cites the common destinies of those who died in the Biblical flood,⁹ as does Ambrosiaster (Qu. 115.15);¹⁰ both writers contrast the fate of the victims of the flood with the salvation of Noah and his family. Ambrosiaster cites a number of examples of catastrophes taken from the Bible to illustrate the argument of common destinies, such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the victims of the great flood, and the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea;¹¹ he also refers to recent famines in Italy and Africa, Sicily and Sardinia, as well as a disaster in Pannonia (Qu. 115.15).¹² Perhaps the most extensive passage from a Christian author featuring the argument of common destinies is in Gregory of Nyssa's *Against Fate*, where in the course of his debate with an unnamed astrologer Gregory raises numerous examples from Biblical and secular history of catastrophes in which people perished together; like Ambrosiaster, Gregory too refers to contemporary events.¹³

The argument of collective destinies was adapted by some writers for particular use against the astrological doctrine of catholic influences. As we have seen, Ptolemy had distinguished between general (or "catholic") astrology and genethliology; the former relates to races, countries and cities while only the latter deals with the fate of individuals (*Tetrabiblos* 2.1 and 3.1).¹⁴ Since the doctrine of catholic influences served to mitigate the absolute type of astrological fatalism to which Christians objected, it is not surprising that it was used as a defence of astrology. Thus the astrologer with whom Gregory of Nyssa is debating in his treatise *Against Fate* replies to Gregory's use of the argument of common destinies by objecting that "there is a fate which belongs to every ship, and every city, and each nation, assigning things in order according to the first position [of the heavens]" (*Against Fate*);¹⁵ that is, Gregory's opponent responds by bringing up the doctrine of catholic influences. In turn Gregory replies to the astrologer's objection in a variety of ways. First, he argues that in practical terms it is impossible to specify the moment when a ship, or a city, or a nation has its beginning; each of these takes time to build or develop, and so it is not possible to determine the exact moment when the influence of the heavens takes effect upon them.¹⁶ Focussing in particular on the fate of cities, Gregory next revises his earlier argument of common personal destinies to combat the doctrine of catholic influences over cities:

And what would you say about the nation that was wiped out by disasters in war? What fate and whence, taking its beginning against them, killed some and enslaved others through captivity? How did Hannibal or Caesar or Alexander of Macedon, against whomever they were campaigning, work an equality of fate for all, so far mastering that famous necessity that all were gathered together by the same measures of evil?¹⁷

Gregory then raises a third argument against catholic astrology, asserting that events which are supposedly effected by the catholic influences upon specific regions of the globe in fact can and do take place anywhere, in vastly different areas: for example, earthquakes can destroy cities, but they also occur in uninhabited areas.¹⁸

Notes

1. See Cicero, *On Divination* 2.47 (p. 480 Falconer); Favorinus quoted in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 14.1.27–28 (p. 14–16 Rolfe); Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.91–93 (p. 362 Bury); Philo, *On Providence* 1.87 (p. 196–98 Hadas-Label). Bouché-Leclercq, 582n1, contrasts the “rational” approach of the astrologers toward collective deaths with the ancient popular opinion (accepted by “faith”) that shipwrecks are caused by the presence on board of one who is pursued by divine vengeance; in addition to Antiphon, *De Caede Herodis* 82 he could have also cited Jonah 1.7–16. The argument apparently did not persuade the astrologer Vettius Valens, who describes six men with different horoscopes who all narrowly avoided dying in the same shipwreck; see *Anthologies* 7.6.127–160 (ed. Pingree p. 274.11–275.24; English trans. in *Greek Science of the Hellenistic Era*, ed. Georgia L. Irby-Massie and Paul T. Keyser [London, 2002], 111–12).
2. p. 51 trans. Drijvers.
3. *Ibid.*, 53. Bardaisan’s interest in Indian customs is evident from traces of his writings quoted in other ancient authors. In a fragment of Porphyry’s *Peri Stygos* preserved in Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1.3.56 (p.66–70 Wachsmuth) Porphyry had referred to a story recorded by Bardaisan concerning a “lake of ordeal” into which Indians who were guilty of crimes were thrown. In *On Abstinence* 4.17 (p. 256–57 Nauck) Porphyry also cites Bardaisan concerning a cave in India which contained an androgynous statue representing the plan of the cosmos; within the cave was a door through which only the pure could pass. Motifs from the latter story of the Indian cave are also found in Achilles Tatius’ adventurous romance *Leucippe and Cleitophon*; according to Drijvers, Achilles Tatius’ source need not have been Porphyry but may have been

Bardaisan's original writing on Indian customs (Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* [Aasen, 1966], 174–75; he refers to this Achilles as “an astrologer and novelist,” though the Achilles Tatius who commented on the astronomical writer Aratus is distinguished from the author of *Leucippe and Cleitophon* in OCD, 3d ed., 7). Both Porphyrian references suggest that Bardaisan acquired these stories firsthand from an Indian embassy to the emperor Elagabalus (Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 173 and n3). According to Drijvers (*ibid.*, 175–76) Bardaisan's work on India may possibly have also been the source for the story cited in Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 2.14 (PL 23, 317), concerning the gymnosophists of India who Bardaisan divided into two groups, the Brahmans and the Samanaeans, whose lives were marked by self-control and who were venerated by their king since he believed that peace in his territory was founded on their prayers. On Bardaisan's interest in Indian customs see also Javier Teixidor, *Bardesane d'Edesse: La Première Philosophie Syriaque* (Paris, 1992), 95–96, and Steven K. Ross, *Roman Edessa* (London, 2001), 122

4. p. 53 trans. Drijvers.
5. F. Nau, *Bardesane l'Astrologue: Le Livre des Lois des Pays* (Paris, 1899), 52n2. In *Patrologia Syriaca* 1.2 (Paris, 1907), 654 s.v. “Hora,” Nau explains the term as “pars horoscopi.”
6. p. 98.28–40 Marcovich (*Refutation* 4.5.7–9 = Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.92–93).
7. ἐν δέ τε πόντῳ/ καὶ πολέμῳ πλεόνεσσιν ὁμῶς μόρος ἀλλογενέθλοις (p.22–23 trans. Moreschini–Sykes).
8. p. 318.12–15 Rehm (GCS).
9. dicant pagani, si possunt, quid hic fatum facere potuit; numquid omines in illo diluvio fatum occidit? aut isti uni fatum vitam donavit? si omnes fatum occidit, cur non et istum? si huic fatum vitam donavit, cur non et omnibus? (p.329.275–78 Spagnolo–Turner). In their edition of this sermon (JTS 17 [1916]: 321–337) the editors incorrectly attribute it to Maximus of Turin.
10. CSEL 50, 323.12–14.
11. CSEL 50, 323.10–18. His claim that these “exempla” suffice to prove his case reflects Deut 19.15, cf. Matt 18.16.
12. CSEL 50, 334.11–17. On the famines, and the tribal incursions into Pannonia, see the discussion in Dietrich v. Queis, *Ambrosiaster Quaestiones Veteris et Novi*

Testamenti Quaestio 115 De Fato (Diss. Basel, 1972), 185–86.

13. p. 52.1–19 McDonough. Note the use of astrological terminology such as σύνοδος and ὠροσκοπέω. The same argument is found again in the same work a few paragraphs later (*ibid.*, 54.8–12; 56.2–10).
14. p. 116–19, 220–21 Robbins.
15. Ἄλλ' ἔστι, φησί, καὶ νεῶς καὶ πόλεως καὶ ἔθλους παντὸς εἰμαρμένη κατὰ τὴν πρώτην θέσιν τὸ ἐφεξῆς ἐπικλώθουσα (p. 52.20–23 McDonough).
16. p. 52–53 McDonough. This is of course a variant of the technical argument concerning the practical impossibility of determining the horoscope (discussed in chapter 2 above) here applied to the horoscope of a ship, a city or a nation.
17. τί δ' ἂν εἴποις περὶ τοῦ ἔθλους ὃ ταῖς κατὰ πόλεμον συμφοραῖς ἐξετρίβη; τίς ἢ πόθεν κατ' αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα ἢ μοῖρα τοὺς μὲν κατεφόνευσε, τοὺς δὲ δι' αἰχμαλωσίας κατεδουλώσατο; πῶς Ἄννιβας ἢ Καῖσαρ ἢ καὶ ὁ ἐκ Μακεδονίας Ἀλέξανδρος παρ' οἷς ἂν ἐγένοντο στρατευόμενοι πᾶσιν ὁμοτιμίαν εἰμαρμένης εἰργάσαντο τοσοῦτον τῆς ἀνάγκης ἐκείνης ὑπερισχύοντες ὡς τοῖς αὐτοῖς τοῦ κακοῦ μέτροις πάντας συνάγεσθαι; (p. 54.5–12 McDonough). The argument of common destinies was also used against the doctrine of catholic influences by Diodore of Tarsus in his work *Against Fate*, according to Photius' summary (p.26.1–27.13 Henry).
18. ἀλλὰ μὴν τὸ οἶεσθαι τὰς τῶν πόλεων εἰμαρμένας ἐν τοῖς τῶν σεισμῶν καταπτώμασι τὰς συναστρίας ποιεῖν, ὡς ἔξω τοῦ εἰκότος ὁ λόγος ἐστίν, ἐντεῦθεν ἂν τις κατίδοι· τίς οὐκ οἶδεν ὅτι τὰ τοιαῦτα πάθη τῆς γῆς οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς οἰκουμένοις τόποις ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀοικήτοις συνίσταται; (p. 54.12–17 McDonough). He then cites as “proofs” (τεκμήρια) particular instances of earthquakes which took place in farthest Bithynia, Paphlagonia, Cyprus, Pisa and Achaea.

5. *The Argument of Νόμιμα Βαρβαρικά*

General Discussion of the Argument

A variation of the argument of common destinies is the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά (customs of the nations) which asserts that the common laws, physical characteristics, temperaments and customs which are shared by nations, tribes and peoples contradict genethliac astrology.¹ According to this argument: (1) all individuals belonging to a particular social group have the same customs; but (2) they do not all possess the same horoscope; therefore (3) it cannot be that the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά are astrologically determined.² As with the other arguments discussed so far, the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά is fundamentally an argument against all-encompassing fatalism. It is a formal argument in that the specific νόμιμα βαρβαρικά, though remarkably diverse, matter less than the general conclusion which is the argument's primary objective: that human conduct is freely determined and not the result of fate.

This objective is evident in the introductory words to the section in which the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά is found in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*.³ (Of course, the very title of this work derives from the extensive portrayal of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά within the overall text.)

Now listen, and try to understand that not all people over the whole world do that which the stars determine by their Fate.... For men have established laws in each country by that liberty given them from God, for this gift counteracts ...Fate.⁴

Bardaisan then proceeds to list the customs of various tribes and national groupings "beginning in the extreme East of the whole world".⁵ The sequence of nations presented in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* reflects the point of view of a resident of Edessa.⁶ Bardaisan begins with the Seres (i.e. the Chinese⁷), who do not commit murder, fornication or idolatry:

And not even mighty Mars, standing in midheaven, so forces the liberty of the Seres as to make a man shed the blood of his fellow with an iron sword. Nor does Venus, when in conjunction with Mars, force any of the Serian men to have intercourse with the wife of his neighbour or with any other woman.⁸

Next Bardaisan mentions the Brahmans in India, who do not commit murder, idolatry or fornication, who practice vegetarianism and abstain from wine;

and another (unnamed) group in India, who commit idolatry, fornication, murder, and even cannibalism.

And the malign stars have not forced the Brahmins to do evil and impure things, neither have the benign stars induced the other Indians not to do evil things. Also, those stars that have a favourable position in their fitting place and in the human signs of the Zodiac, have not brought the eaters of human flesh to cease partaking of the impure and disgusting meats.⁹

Bardaisan reports that the Persians marry their sisters, daughters, granddaughters, and some even their mothers,¹⁰ adding that some Persians also live elsewhere in the east, in Medea, Atrapatene, Parthia, Egypt and Phrygia; in these places they are known as Magians. “Yet we cannot say that all Magians and other Persians have Venus in the house of Saturn with the Moon and Saturn, in her sectors, and in the presence of Mars.”¹¹ Also mentioned at this point is the empire of the Parthians, where men kill their wives, brothers and sons with impunity. This practice is then contrasted with the death penalty imposed on murderers among the Romans and the Greeks.

Next in the list are the Geli, whose women sow, reap, build houses and perform manual labour; refrain from colourful clothes, shoes and fragrant oils; and are promiscuous. Their husbands, however, wear colourful clothing, as well as gold and jewels, and anoint themselves with fragrant oils.

Yet we cannot say that all the women of the Geli have Venus in Capricorn or in Aquarius, in the ill-fated position. Nor can we say that all the Gelian men have Mars in Aries with Venus, a place of which it is written, that brave but effeminate men are born then.¹²

Among the Bactrians women wear male attire, gold and beautiful ornaments; receive better service from their slaves than do their husbands; ride on horses caparisoned with gold and jewels; and are promiscuous. Moreover, their husbands do not reproach them for this. “Yet we cannot aver that all Bactrian women have Venus with Mars and Jupiter in the house of Mars, in mid-heaven, a situation whereby rich and adulterous women are born, who lord it over their husbands in every way.”¹³ Among the Rakamaeans,¹⁴ Edessenes and Arabs wives convicted, or even suspected, of adultery are executed. According to the laws in Hatra thieves are stoned and spat upon; in the same vein, it is also mentioned that among the Romans thieves are whipped and then set free. It is interesting that the Romans are not clearly distinguished

from other nations in Bardaisan's list; because of this one scholar believes that Bardaisan retains "une vision traditionnelle du monde de son temps; il ne distingue pas entre Barbares et Romains: les peuples, ou les nations, se singularisent par l'une ou l'autre idiosyncrasie..."¹⁵ Indeed, later in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* the "idiosyncratic" behaviour attributed to the Romans is precisely that they are "always conquering new territories".¹⁶

On the eastern side of the Euphrates, says Bardaisan, no man called a thief or murderer will become very angry but if he is accused of pederasty he revenges himself and does not even shrink from murder.

Turning to the northern peoples, he reports the Germans and their neighbours practice pederasty.

Yet it is impossible that all those in Gaul who are guilty of this infamy should have Mercury in their nativity together with Venus in the house of Saturn, in the field of Mars and in the Western signs of the Zodiac. For regarding the men who are born under this constellation, it is written that they shall be shamefully used, as if they were women.¹⁷

On the other hand, the Britons practice monogamy. Still on the theme of marriage (though out of geographical sequence) he returns to the Parthians who practice chaste polygamy. Next on the list are the Amazons, who have no husbands. Once a year they travel to a mountain to have intercourse with men of that region. Then, returning to their own country, when their children are born the Amazons expose the sons and raise only the daughters. "Yet none of the stars can save all the little boys who are born from being exposed," argues Bardaisan.¹⁸ As we shall see, the *νόμια* ascribed to the Amazons were apparently popular: they are cited often by writers employing this argument.

The *Book of the Laws of the Countries* also presents the argument of *νόμια βαρβαρικά* in reverse form, i.e. that there are groups of people where the effect of particular celestial bodies is apparently not evident, such as in the regions around the edge of the known world.

It is written in the book of the Chaldaeans, that when Mercury stands with Venus in the house of Mercury, this gives rise to sculptors, painters and money-changers, but that when they stand in the house of Venus they produce perfumers, dancers, singers and poets. But in the whole region of the Tayites, of the Saracens, in Upper Libya, among the Mauretians, in the country of the Numidians which lies at the mouth of the Oceanus, in Outer Germany, in Upper Sarmatia, in Spain, in all the countries to the North of Pontus, in the whole region of the Alanians, among the Albanians, and among the Sasaye and in Brusa, which lies across the Duru, no one

sees sculptors, or painters, or perfumers or money-changers or poets. The influence of Mercury and Venus is powerless along the outskirts of the whole world.¹⁹

The section concludes by listing a few more νόμιμα βαρβαρικά concerning the Medes, Hindus and Germans (cited above, p.86).

In conclusion, Bardaisan summarizes the overall argument as follows: “In all places, every day and each hour, people are born with different nativities, but the laws of men are stronger than Fate, and they lead their lives according to their own customs.”²⁰ Although the burden of the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά is to emphasize the constancy of customs and practices within particular groups, it was most likely the variety of colourful characteristics associated with the groups which contributed to the vitality and widespread use of the argument. Among Christian texts, the passage from the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* we have discussed here, with its extensive and luxuriant portrayal of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά, was quoted extensively by Eusebius of Caesarea in *Preparation for the Gospel* 6.10.48, and is closely paralleled in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.19–29 and Pseudo-Caesarius, *Dialogue* 2.109–110.²¹ Drijvers concludes that the “*Book of the Laws of the Countries*, or its extremely similar predecessor” was the source from which these derived.²² This does not, of course, refute the claim of Boll²³ that the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά ultimately goes back to Carneades, even if the problem of how the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά motif reached Bardaisan remains unresolved.²⁴

Use of Particular Νόμιμα Βαρβαρικά

A variant tradition of the use of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά against astrology focusses on particular examples of the customs of the nations. For example, in his commentary on Gen 1.14 Origen refers to the practice of circumcision of male Jews on the eighth day after birth, circumcision of male Ishamelites in Arabia at age thirteen, the removal of kneecaps among certain people in Ethiopia, and the Amazons who remove one of their breasts: “How do the stars do such things to groups of people?” he asks (*Philocalia* 23.16)²⁵ (The motif of the Amazons’ removing one breast was a fanciful derivation for their name, ἄ-μαζός). The passage from Origen’s commentary seems to have been directly adapted by Procopius of Gaza in his commentary on Gen 1.14.²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa also attributes the practice of incest to the Persians in his dialogue *Against Fate*.²⁷ Incest among the Persians and infant circumcision

among the Jews are again mentioned in Julian the Arian's commentary on Job.²⁸

A rather idiosyncratic example of the argument of *νόμιμα βαρβαρικά* is found in Ambrosiaster's polemical essay on fate, *Question* 115.16–23.²⁹ While the basic form and purpose of the argument is maintained, the *νόμιμα* which are cited by Ambrosiaster do not reflect the common elements of this tradition of argumentation that are evident in other authors. Instead, it seems that the list of *νόμιμα* compiled in this text is to be credited to the ingenuity of this mysterious author.³⁰ It is interesting that the obvious instance of Solon and Lycurgus who “established many things which were preserved by Greek law as a custom” is only mentioned by Ambrosiaster (Qu. 115.22).³¹ Among the particular *νόμιμα* listed by Ambrosiaster are the following. In Rome women are permitted to divorce their husbands;³² the author expresses displeasure over this because of the Biblical injunction that men (i.e. vires, not mulieres) may do this only in cases of fornication (Matt 5.32) (Qu. 115.16). The making of eunuchs is not permitted in the Roman empire, though elsewhere it is allowed (Qu. 115.17).³³ The women of Persia wear earrings, which practice is ugly and illegal “here” (in Rome), though by contrast the wearing of earrings does occur in Rome among the (male) priests of Magna Mater; not surprisingly, Ambrosiaster follows this with a pious expression of outrage concerning the cult of Cybele, and then raises the question whether or not the emasculation of the priests of Cybele is the result of fate (Qu. 115.18). The by now familiar motif of incest among the Persians is discussed next (Qu. 115.19), followed by the custom of the Mauritians where women wear earrings in their noses (Qu. 115. 20). Also mentioned is that Jewish kings like to ride mules; Romans prefer to ride horses; the kings of the Garamantes, who live beyond Tripoli in Africa, are pleased to ride on bulls; Persian kings are carried in couches, so as not to be seen by the public; the kings of Media³⁴ ride on camels; and throughout Africa the preference is to ride donkeys (Qu. 115.23). Finally, Ambrosiaster links the variety of human behaviour to freedom of the will, adding that once people have chosen a custom they retain it unchanged (Qu. 115. 24).

Another unique instance of the argument of *νόμιμα βαρβαρικά* was found in Diodore of Tarsus' *Against Fate*. According to Photius' report, Diodore asks how it is that among the same people one group grows their hair completely long, while another cuts it short, and in one tribe they marry their mothers while most hold this practice to be abominable? (Presumably he had the Persians in mind.) However “no revolution of the stars cuts hair, or forces

those whose hair is cut to grow it long, or other folk to do other things which they did not learn.”³⁵ It was the citation of these types of unusual, even bizarre, practices which would have rendered the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά memorable for readers. No matter that in the course of presenting the argument the customs attributed to certain groups of people were fanciful, immoral or inconsistent; the singular, exotic and spectacular quality of the customs themselves (note the repeated mention of customs attributed to the mythical Amazons³⁶) no doubt contributed to the popularity of the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά.

Astrological Geography and Arguments Against it

Of course, ancient astrologers did not lack responses to the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά. One counter-argument is evident in a question in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* posed to Bardaisan by his pupil Philippus, who acts as the narrator in the text and was the author of the work as it stands.³⁷ Following Bardaisan’s lengthy recital of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά surveyed above, the text proceeds with Philippus’ question:

Then I said to him [Bardaisan]: ...“Yet you are also aware that the Chaldaeans maintain that the earth is divided into seven parts named climates, and that one of the Seven rules over each of these parts, and that in each of these regions the will of his government rules and is called law?”³⁸

Bardaisan’s interlocutor is here referring to the doctrine of astrological geography, or chorography, which held that the sun, moon and five planets rule over a number of geographical regions or zones (χώραι, κλίματα) (usually seven) into which the earth is divided, and that the influence of these heavenly bodies accounts for the various physical characteristics, customs and practices of nations and peoples around the globe. In effect, in the doctrine of astrological geography the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά are transferred to the service of astrology.³⁹ That the doctrine of astrological geography was used to defend astrology against the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά is evident from Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 1.10.1–12.⁴⁰

The doctrine of astrological geography was not merely a defensive response of astrologers, however. In *Tetrabiblos* 2.1 and 3.1 Ptolemy maintains that catholic astrology is prior to, and more universal than, genethliology;⁴¹ for Ptolemy “in Wirklichkeit ist dieser Teil der Astrologie

...geradezu als der erste und wichtigste Teil der Astrologie bezeichnet worden."⁴² Sections 2 and 3 of *Tetrabiblos* book 2 survey the catholic influences on particular geographical regions and the effect of these on the physical bodies and temperaments of various peoples and nations; in effect, these parts of Ptolemy's work offer a summary of ancient astrological geography and ethnography.⁴³ Astrological geography seems to have been known in the eastern Mediterranean as early as the second century B.C.E.⁴⁴ Thus it was already a longstanding doctrine of astrology by the time of Bardaisan.⁴⁵

A number of Christian writers developed a response to astrological geography which was specifically their own. For example, in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, when Bardaisan's pupil Philippus brings up the teaching of the "Chaldaeans" regarding the seven terrestrial climates which are each ruled over by one of the Seven (i.e. the sun, moon and five planets) (cited above p.97), Bardaisan replies:

In the first place you must know, my son Philippus, that the Chaldaeans have invented this doctrine to bolster up their fallacy. Even if the earth is divided into seven parts, yet in each of these parts many laws are found that differ from one another. For we do not see seven laws in the world according to the number of the Seven stars, nor twelve according to the number of the signs of the Zodiac, nor thirty-six according to the number of the decanal stars, but there are numerous laws in every reign, in every region, in every district and in every inhabited place that differ one from the other.⁴⁶

As an example of the differences within one geographical zone he raises a variation in customs ascribed to the Hindus, that some are vegetarians while others practice cannibalism.⁴⁷ Bardaisan also presents two arguments to oppose the doctrine of astrological geography. On the one hand, the laws of nations and peoples have been known to change under the direction of their rulers. He says, for example, the Romans have recently conquered Arabia and done away with their laws and customs such as circumcision;⁴⁸ similarly at Edessa the practice of self-emasulation in honour of the goddess Tar'ata (i.e. Atargatis) ended when king Abgar of Syria converted to Christianity.⁴⁹ (The story of the conversion of Abgar VIII is apocryphal.⁵⁰) Secondly, Bardaisan brings up examples of people who maintain their own idiosyncratic practices across the geographical zones; in effect, this is a new way of employing the *νόμια βαρβαρικά* against astrology once again by marshalling them not against fatalism but against astrological geography. Thus, Bardaisan again cites the incestuous practices of the Persians and the Magians; earlier he had

used these to refute astrological fatalism⁵¹ but now he emphasizes the universality of their νόμιμα.

Then I have told you of the Persians and the Magians, who not only marry their daughters and sisters in the climate of Persia, but in every place they came to they have kept to the law of their fathers and observed the secret practices they transmitted to them.⁵²

A more extensive example is the νόμιμα of the Jews who, although they are found in all known countries and geographical contexts, preserve their own traditional customs of observing the Mosaic law and the Sabbath and practicing circumcision.

And the star that rules the climate they are in has no compulsive power over them. But whether they live in Edom or in Arabia, in Greece or in Persia, in the North or in the South, they keep to the law laid upon them by their fathers. And clearly they do not do this because of their horoscope, for it is impossible that on the eighth day, when they are circumcised, Mars should be in such a position with regard to all the Jews, that iron comes over them and their blood is spilt...⁵³

Finally, Bardaisan brings up the Christians, among whom he numbers himself, as another group of people who depart from some of the customs of people around them while maintaining the constancy of their own characteristic practices:

What shall we say of the new people of us Christians, that the Messiah has caused to arise in every place and in all climates by his coming? For behold, we all, wherever we may be, are called Christians after the one name of the Messiah. And upon one day, the first of the week, we gather together and on the appointed days we abstain from food... But in whatever place they are and wherever they may find themselves, the local laws cannot force them to give up the law of their Messiah, nor does the Fate of the Guiding Signs force them to do things that are unclean for them.⁵⁴

Such use of the universality of the νόμιμα against astrological geography is found only in early Christian authors, which led Boll to posit a Christian source (rather than Carneades) for this particular type of anti-astrological argument; it seems to have been an exclusively Christian contribution to the wider tradition of anti-astrological polemic in the Greco-Roman world.⁵⁵ The use of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά against astrological geography appears first in

the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, though it is not known if Bardaisan developed this argument himself.⁵⁶ It is unclear why it was the early Christians who first formulated this argument, though the universality of Christianity—that the νόμιμα of the Christians clearly transcended the κλίματα, which is repeatedly emphasized by writers who employed the argument—may well have had something to do with it. H.J. Schoeps had argued that the use of the νόμιμα against astrological geography derives from an original Jewish source; this has been refuted by Drijvers.⁵⁷ Indeed, the universality of ancient Judaism—also stressed by these writers—could well have produced the same argument among Jewish writers; however, generally speaking the Jewish diaspora was regarded quite differently by Jewish writers than the notion of catholicity was by the Christians.⁵⁸

The tradition of argument against astrological geography evident in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* apparently influenced Diodore of Tarsus' polemic in his lost treatise *Against Fate*.⁵⁹ As in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, so too in Photius' précis of Diodore's work the argument against astrological geography follows directly after the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά.⁶⁰ Strangely, Diodore's polemic at this point seems to have been directed against a doctrine associated with the παρανατέλλοντες (i.e. the extra-zodiacal stars which rise and set "along side" of the ecliptic), which Diodore (or Photius) claims are believed by astrologers to possess influence over the global κλίματα. (This notion, while not impossible, is not reflected in ancient astrological sources.⁶¹) Against this (unusual) type of astrological geography, Diodore argued using the same themes we have encountered already in the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, i.e. the changes which were brought about by Roman rule and the constancy of the Jewish νόμιμα.⁶² Then, once again like Bardaisan, Diodore proceeded to cite the universality of the Christians: "And our people—I mean the Christians—began 400 years ago [and] took the whole inhabited world all at once, and turned each nation from its own customs, and reformed their life to piety."⁶³ This is remarkably similar to the earlier words of the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*. Both Bardaisan and Diodore begin their presentation of the νόμιμα of the Christians with a strong personal identification with the Christian community using the first personal plural: Diodore refers to "our race—I mean the Christians" (Τὸ δὲ γὰρ ἡμέτερον γένος, τὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν λέγω), while Bardaisan had asked, "What shall we say of the new people of us Christians...?"⁶⁴ Aside from this, Diodore's argument against astrological geography departs somewhat from Bardaisan's earlier version, which had emphasized the νόμιμα per se of the

Christians; Diodore focusses instead on the change brought about by the legal and social establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire.

A further text which shows that some early Christians were aware of the doctrine of astrological geography, and sought to refute it, is Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *Against Fate*.⁶⁵ Like Bardaisan and Diodore of Tarsus before him, Gregory too employs the theme of the universal νόμματα βαρβαρικά, that the customs and practices of certain nations are constant across the earth, to undermine astrological geography. However, there are significant differences between Gregory's formulation of the argument and that of Bardaisan. He follows Bardaisan in citing the practice of incest ascribed to the Persians first of all;⁶⁶ then, like Bardaisan, Gregory goes on to invoke the universal νόμματα of the Jews. However, while Bardaisan had simply listed some traditional Jewish practices (e.g. circumcision), Gregory's portrayal of the Jews at this point is dominated by his Christian anti-semitism: what is emphasized by Gregory as universal among the Jews is the divine "curse" for having rejected Christ.

The race of the Jews is distributed over just about all parts of the earth; peoples of the east, south, inland, west, north, practically all the nations are mixed in community with the Jews. How therefore does no necessity of the stars prevail over any of them to favour any of the nation with indemnity? But in the myriad combinations of the stars as they come together, for the one who is born it is always the same, according to the ordered cycle of the days, their nature enduring the curse.⁶⁷

Moreover, while Bardaisan dwells longest on the universal practices of Christians which obtain across the regions of the earth, Gregory does not even mention the example of the Christians. Presumably for Gregory the universality of Christianity was obvious. Behind this, and also behind their respective portrayal of the Jews, lies the decisive change in the church's social and political status which had taken place between the time of Bardaisan and that of Gregory of Nyssa.⁶⁸

An interesting contrast to the use of the νόμματα by these Christian writers is the Emperor Julian's anti-Christian polemic in *Against the Galileans* 351A–354A,⁶⁹ where Julian criticizes the Christians precisely because they have departed from Jewish customs such as circumcision, and observing the rules of unleavened bread and Passover. Indeed, Julian tries to invoke the authority of Christ against Christianity by pointing out that circumcision was not only divinely commanded by Moses but was also approved by Christ. A significant aspect of Julian's attack on Christianity was precisely that he regarded Christians as innovators who had radically departed from ancient custom and tradition.

Notes

1. Boll, *Studien*, 182 terms this argument “der Beweis e coloribus et moribus gentium.”
2. This argument is found in Cicero, *On Divination* 2.46 (p. 478 Falconer), Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.102 (p. 366–68 Bury), and Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis*, 1.2.1–4. Another parallel is the treatise *On the Gods and the Universe* 9, where the author rejects absolute determinism, asking “Why do the Massagetae eat their fathers, and the Hebrews circumcise themselves, and the Persians preserve their nobility by begetting children on their mothers?” (διὰ τί γὰρ Μασσαγέται μὲν τοὺς πατέρας ἐσθίουσιν, Ἑβραῖοι δὲ περιτέμνονται, Πέρσαι δὲ τὴν εὐγένειαν σώζουσιν ἐκ μητέρων παιδοποιούμενοι;) (p. 18–19 Nock).
3. p. 40–53 trans. Drijvers.
4. p. 41, trans. Drijvers.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 91.
7. W. and H.G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 327.
8. p. 41 trans. Drijvers. The chastity of the Seres is also mentioned in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 8.48.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. As we shall see, the association of the Persians with incest is often found listed among the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά. In one example of the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά (Philo, *On Providence* 1.85) incest is referred to the Scythians; however, *On Special Laws* 3.13 shows that Philo was also familiar with the traditional attribution of incest to the Persians.
11. p. 45 trans. Drijvers.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, 47.

14. That is, the inhabitants of Petra, which was formerly called Rekeme (Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 91 and n4).
15. Teixidor, *Bardesane*, 96. (A traditional vision of the world of his time; he does not distinguish between barbarians and Romans: the peoples, or the nations, stand out by one or the other idiosyncrasy.)
16. p. 53 trans. Drijvers.
17. p. 49 trans. Drijvers.
18. *Ibid.*, 51.
19. p. 51 trans. Drijvers.
20. *Ibid.*
21. These are presented synoptically in A. Hilgenfeld, *Bardesanes, der Letzte Gnostiker* (Leipzig, 1864), 92–123, and in Rehm’s GCS ed. of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, 270–317.
22. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 76; see also his detailed survey of the history of scholarship on this and related questions on p. 2–59.
23. *Studien*, 181–88.
24. See Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 61, 90.
25. p. 184–86 Junod (SC 226). Cf. Philo, *Questions on Genesis* 3.48 referring to circumcision among Egyptians, Arabs, Ethiopians, etc. (p. 243 Marcus [LCL]).
26. PG 87/1, 93C. The following parallels are listed by Paul Wendland, *Philos Schrift über die Vorsehung* (Berlin, 1892), 30–32: Philo, *On Providence* 1.84–86 (Jews, Scythians, Egyptians); Origen in *Philocalia* 23.16 (Jews, Ishmaelites, Ethiopians, Amazons); Procopius (Jews, Ishmaelites, Amazons, Christians); the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* (Persians, Jews, Christians). Of these, as we shall see, the latter (p. 55–61 Drijvers) is directed not against astrological fatalism in general but against the doctrine of astrological geography. Like Origen, Philo, *On Providence* 1.84, dwells at greatest length on the example of the Jews. Philo’s reference to Egyptian zoolatry in *On Providence* 1.86 is unique among authors employing this argument, although Eusebius’ excerpt quoting Bardaisan’s lengthy recital of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά (*Preparation for the Gospel* 6.10.46) mentions that the Christians who live in Egypt do not follow Egyptian religion: οὐχ οἱ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ θρησκεύουσι τὸν Ἄπτιν ἢ τὸν κύνα

ἢ τὸν τράγον ἢ αἴλουρον (p. 230 des Places) (This is not found in Drijvers' edition of the Syriac version of the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*.)

27. p. 56.10–16 McDonough.
28. p. 259.1–8 Hagedorn. This text also should belong on the branch derived from Origen on Boll's stemma of anti-astrological arguments (*Studien*, 182). Boll's placement of Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* along this branch seems unclear since Ambrose did not make use of the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά.
29. CSEL 50, 323–26.
30. Cumont, "La Polémique de l'Ambrosiaster," 434 notes the personal touch of Ambrosiaster's anti-astrological polemic, as well as his fondness for references to Biblical examples and to contemporary events.
31. ...quia apud omnes gentes instituta manent non fatorum ratione, quae ubique una est, sicut tractant, sed hominum excogitatione—quidquid enim alicui, qui primus putatus est apud suos, ratione dignum visum est et aptum decori, statuit quibus praeerat—, inde una quaeque regio vel gens propria habet quae servet, sicut Solon et Licurgus multa statuerant, quae a Graecis legis more servarentur, quae paulatim deficiente regno eorum oblitterata sunt (CSEL 50, 325.15–22).
32. Ambrosiaster refers earlier (Qu. 115, 12) to this as "Iuliani edictum" (CSEL 50, 322.18). This refers to an edict of the emperor Julian contravening Constantine's legislation (CTh 3.16.1 of 331) making divorce more difficult to obtain (so Alexander Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* [Cambridge, 1905], 167n2; Antti Arjava, "Divorce in Later Roman Law," *Arctos* 22 [1988], 9; Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity* [Oxford, 1995], 233; Barnes, *Ammianus*, 124–26; contra Cumont, "La Polémique de l'Ambrosiaster," 440 and Queis, 145–46).
33. Roman legislation regarding this topic is surveyed in Wilhelm Rein, *Das Kriminalrecht der Römer von Romulus bis auf Justinian* (Leipzig, 1844; repr. Aalen, 1962), 422–24.
34. The reading of the text is "Madiam".
35. Πῶς δὲ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γένους ἔθνος μὲν ὀλόκληρον κομᾶ, ἄλλο δὲ κείρεται; Καὶ ἄλλο μὲν μητρογαμεῖ, τὰ πλείω δὲ μυσαρὰν τὴν πρᾶξιν ἡγοῦνται; Καὶ μυρίαὶς ἄλλαις κατατέμνονται διαφοραῖς νόμων, βίων, ἐθῶν· καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀστέρων δρόμος οὔτε τοῦς κομήτας κείρει, οὔτε τοῦς κειρομένους κομᾶν ἐκβιάζεται, οὐδὲ τὰ ἄλλα πράττειν ἄλλους, ὅσα τοῖς παρὰ σφίσι νόμοις οὐκ ἔμαθον (p. 35.31–38 Henry). Cf. also a few

lines later: Πῶς οὖν τόδε τὸ ἔθνος ὡς τόδε ἀντικειμένοις καὶ βίῳ καὶ νόμοις καὶ ἡθεσι διοικεῖται; (p. 35.9–10).

36. The *Book of the Laws of the Countries* (p. 49–51 Drijvers trans.) refers to their mating and child-rearing habits; Origen, followed by Procopius of Gaza, mention the etymological motif that they remove one of their breasts; in another anti-astrological context (Qu 115.74) Ambrosiaster says that the Amazons have intercourse with their slaves, and kill their sons but spare their daughters, training them in wrestling and weapons (CSEL 50, 344.3–18). Of course the Amazons were already regarded as spectacular in classical mythology (s.v. “Amazons,” OCD, 3d ed., 69–70).
37. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 75; he notes that the work “may, however, be accounted as representing the ideas of Bardaisan”.
38. p. 55 trans. Drijvers.
39. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 19. For earlier sources and general discussion of the doctrine of astrological geography see Boll, *Studien*, 187–88 (who argues that it likely goes back to Eratosthenes); Ernst Honigmann, *Die Sieben Klimata und die ΠΟΛΕΙΣ ΕΠΙΣΗΜΟΙ* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1929) (brief discussion of Bardaisan on p. 92–94); F. Gisinger, s.v. “Geographie” (sec. 23–24), RE Suppl. 4, 578–80; Boll, Bezold, Gundel, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*, 157–58; and Bouché-Leclercq, 327–47.
40. vol. 1, p. 36.26–37.22 Kroll–Skutsch. The argument of νόμμα βαρβαρικά is also mentioned earlier in *Mathesis* 1.5.2–6, where Firmicus asserts that despite their differences people are essentially and physically the same (formed from a mixture of the four elements) and he reasserts the astrological doctrine that individual characteristics derive from the influence of the celestial bodies. Strangely, Bouché-Leclercq, 582–83n4 claims that astrological geography is not evident in *Mathesis* 1.10.1–12 and that Firmicus was ignorant of such doctrine, adding that the doctrine of astrological geography would have been “moins banale” than what Firmicus presents here; in fact, Firmicus’ response clearly reflects a version of astrological geography.
41. Boll, *Studien*, 121. In an unusual argument Diodore of Tarsus claimed that the catholic and geneathlogical influences could be opposed against each other, or that they could be interfered with by the influence of one of the παρανατέλλοντες (p. 19 Henry).
42. Boll, *Studien*, 186. (In reality this part of astrology ... was described as virtually the

first and most important part of astrology.)

43. On *Tetrabiblos* 2.2–3 see also *ibid.*, 194–217.
44. Franz Cumont, “La Plus Ancienne Géographie Astrologique,” *Klio* 9 (1909), 273 reports the view of F.C. Burkitt that astrological geography lies behind Dan 8.20–21a (usually dated to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes), where the Ram is associated with the king of the Medes and the Persians, and the aegis-bearing Goat (Capricorn) with the king of the Greeks (i.e. Syria).
45. Contra Teixidor, *Bardesane*, 98; see Bouché-Leclercq, 583.
46. p. 55 trans. Drijvers. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 92 writes that this text brings together all imaginable systems of astrological geography. Diodore of Tarsus focussed on a system of twelve κλίματα, each ruled by the zodiacal signs (see Photius’ summary, p. 14–16 Henry).
47. Bardaisan claims that he had mentioned this earlier. In fact, the reference is to the earlier description (p. 43 Drijvers) of Brahmans as vegetarians and other (unnamed) residents of India as cannibals.
48. Understandably, this passage has been used to try to date the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* (Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 92n3). The reference is not to the Roman province of Arabia (contra Teixidor, *Bardesane*, 100) but rather to Mesopotamia which was annexed by Septimius Severus (G.W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* [Cambridge, 1983], 79–80n12).
49. p. 57–59 Drijvers.
50. H.J.W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden, 1980), 76–78; Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 131–136.
51. See p. 43–45 trans. Drijvers.
52. p. 55–57 trans. Drijvers.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 57–59. A brief echo of this is evident in Ambrosiaster, Qu. 115.13 (CSEL 50, 322.23–27).
54. p. 59–61 trans. Drijvers.
55. *Studien*, 187.

56. Modifying the earlier view of F. Haase, *Zur Bardesanischen Gnosis* (Leipzig, 1910; TU 34/4), 48–49 that this argument was invented by Bardaisan, Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 60 (cf. p. 252) suggests that “Bardesane pourrait bien l’avoir constituée dans sa forme définitive”.
57. H.J. Schoeps, “Astrologisches im Pseudoklementinischen Roman,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 5 (1951): 88–100; see Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 72–73.
58. Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung*, vol. 1, 422–23; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco, 1978), 190.
59. Cf. the section (p. 20 Henry) where natural variations in topography, weather, etc. within each of the κλίματα are cited against astrological determinism. As well, earlier in Photius’ summary (p. 14–15 Henry) there is a report of a passage in which Diodore attacked a version of astrological geography in which the earth is divided into twelve κλίματα over which the signs of the zodiac hover like a cloud (δίκην νεφέλης...ἐποχούμενον) (p. 14.21–22). Against this Diodore raises several points. He claims that the astrologers are inconsistent because the idea that the signs physically preside over certain areas of the earth is contradicted by the observed movement of the sky and of the zodiacal band, so that no sign can be thought to have any more hold over one region of the earth than another. As well, Diodore questions the measure of influence of the signs *vis-à-vis* the 12 κλίματα of the earth apportioned to them, since the signs are so much larger than the whole earth itself, and since human population is spread unevenly within each of the κλίματα. He also mocks the assignment of particular terrestrial features to the signs, that topographical elevations are related to Cancer’s claws and other features to the horns or hooves of Taurus. Finally, he claims that the doctrine that each of the κλίματα are influenced by one of the signs is refuted by variations in conditions within the κλίματα: Diodore affirms that all climactic conditions are really the result of nature, which reflects the rule of divine providence rather than of fate or the stars.
60. p. 35–36 Henry.
61. On the παρανατέλλοντες see Bouché-Leclercq, 225n1, 229n1, 338n2 and 426; he makes no mention of any such connection with the κλίματα.
62. p. 35.11–36.23 Henry.
63. Τὸ δέ γε ἡμέτερον γένος, τὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν λέγω, πρὸ τετρακοσίων μὲν ἐτῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔσχεν, ἀθρόον δὲ πᾶσαν ἔλαβε τὴν οἰκουμένην, καὶ τῶν μὲν οἰκειῶν ἐθῶν ἕκαστον ἀπέστησεν ἔθνος, εἰς δὲ τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας μετερρῦθμισε βίον... (p. 36.23–5 Henry).

64. p. 59 trans. Drijvers.
65. p. 56.19–57.8 McDonough.
66. p. 56.10–18 McDonough.
67. πάντα σχεδὸν τὰ μέρη τῆς γῆς τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐπενεμήθη γένος, ἀνατολικοί, νότιοι, μεσογεῶται, δυτικοί, προσάρκτιοι, πάντα σχεδὸν τὰ ἔθνη μέμικται πρὸς τὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων συνοίκησιν. πῶς τοίνυν οὐδεμία τῶν ἄστρον ἀνάγκη ἐπ' οὐδενὸς αὐτῶν ἴσχυσέ τι τῶν ἐκ τοῦ ἔθνους χαρίσασθαι τὸ ἀλώβητον, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς μυριοτρόποις τῶν ἄστρον ἐπιπλοκαῖς, ᾗπερ ἂν συνενεχθῆ τὸ τικτόμενον, ἐν τῷ ὁμοίῳ πάντως ἐστί, κατὰ τὴν τεταγμένην τῶν ἡμερῶν περίοδον ὑπομενούσης τὴν λῶβην τῆς φύσεως; (p. 57.9–17 McDonough)
68. Later examples of the Christian argument against astrological geography, again mentioning the universality of Jews and Christians, are found in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.26–29 (p. 300–317 Rehm) and Procopius of Gaza's commentary on Gen 1.14 (PG 87/1, 93C–D).
69. p. 420-22 Wright (LCL).

6. *The Argument from Animals*

The argument from animals was a logical extension of the argument of different destinies. If, according to fatalist belief, the whole terrestrial world is understood to be subject to astrological fate then that fatal influence cannot be limited only to humankind: “[l]e raisonnement fait pour les races d’hommes était applicable aux espèces animales.”¹ Therefore, there ought to be no distinction between the destinies of animals and of human beings.

Augustine mentions animals, and even plants, within the context of the argument of different destinies (*Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.35).² As well, in *City of God* 5.7 he refers to a primitive example of katarchic astrology, the longstanding Roman tradition of selecting days for planting crops, to support his contention that logically the influence of fatalism should be admitted for non-human creatures by adherents of astrology.³ Here Augustine is suggesting that implicit in the selection of days for planting crops is the idea that animals and plants are also influenced by fate.

Most often, the argument from animals occasioned expressions of sarcasm from Christian writers:⁴ to claim that an animal such as a donkey or mouse should experience the same destiny as a human was a rhetorically effective *reductio ad absurdum*. Again, Augustine furnishes an example of the argument used in this manner:

Let them consider how many innumerable things are born or arise or are begun at one point of time, and [yet] their outcomes are so different that such sorts of observations will induce any boy to laughter. For who is so stupid that he or she dares to say that all trees, plants, all animals, snakes, birds, fish and worms one by one have their different times of birth? ...They are so foolish as to think that when a human being is born all other births of things are held back, so that not even a mouse is born with him/her under the same region of the sky. For if they allowed that, the reasoning would progress which would lead them by little approaches, step by step, from mice to camels and elephants (*City of God* 5.7).⁵

This is fine rhetorical style, and not to be taken absolutely literally: Bouché-Leclercq ascribes incredible ignorance to Augustine when he claims that “S. Augustin imagine que le moment de la naissance fait seul la différence entre l’homme et l’animal ou même le végétal, si bien qu’un homme et un animal ne pouvaient pas naître en même temps au même lieu.”⁶ Nevertheless, there is evidence that some astrologers were willing to take horoscopic readings for their clients’ animals. In his commentary on Genesis 1.14, Origen refers to

those who believed that everything which occurs on earth, both to human beings as well as to irrational creatures (καὶ τῶν περὶ ἕκαστον ἄνθρωπον, τάχα δὲ καὶ ἀλόγων ζώων), depends on the relation of the planets and the stars of the zodiac (*Philocalia* 23.1).⁷ And Augustine describes how people would mark the births of their animals.

For people are accustomed, in order to test the knowledge of astrologers, to bring them the constellations of dumb animals, whose births they carefully observed at home for this examination. They prefer those astrologers above all who, when they have measured the constellations, say that it was not be a person who would be born, but an animal. For they even dare to predict what sort of animal, whether it would be good for wool, or carrying things, or for the plow, or to take care of the house. They are even tested concerning canine fates and they reply to such things with great shouts from their admirers (*City of God* 5.7).⁸

This is a fascinating glimpse into late antique Roman behaviour. Not only did some people enquire from astrologers concerning the fates of animals which belonged to them, but on occasion the astrologers were “tested” by being asked to give a horoscope with no indication of its native: the astrologers were expected to infer from the horoscope alone what species of creature (human or domestic animal) the native was. Augustine comments that those astrologers who were able to pass such a “test” successfully were especially admired by their customers.

The practice of taking animal horoscopes is also evident in *Confessions* 7.6.8, where Augustine mentions two amateur astrologers (one of them the father of his friend Firminus) who made celestial observations for domestic animals that were born in their homes:

An equal enthusiasm and close collaboration kindled the fire of their passion for these trivialities, to such a point that if dumb animals gave birth at their house, they recorded the moments of birth and made a note of the position of the heaven, as a basis for a collection of experiments in this pseudo-science. ...[The one even] took pains to know the most precise details when his bitches were producing puppies.⁹

In order to appreciate such seemingly absurd practices, it is necessary to realize that the influence of the heavens upon animals and the rest of nature makes eminent sense as a corollary of the doctrine of universal sympathy. It was for a similar reason that in the ancient world the heavens were consulted by farmers, alchemists, physicians, etc.¹⁰

Notes

1. Bouché-Leclercq, 585. (The reasoning applied to races of humanity was applicable to animal species.)
2. CSEL 28/1, 60.6–16.
3. CCL 47, 134.12–17.
4. As well as from non-Christian authors: see Cicero, *On Divination* 2.47.98 (p. 480 Falconer); Favorinus cited in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 14.1.31 (p. 16 Rolfe); and Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Astrologers* 5.94 (p. 362–64 Bury).
5. Quis enim est tam excors, ut audeat dicere omnes arbores, omnes herbas, omnes bestias serpentes aves pisces vermiculos momenta nascendi singillatim habere diversa? ...Sic desipiunt homines, ut existiment, cum homo nascitur, ceteros rerum ortus ita inhiberi, ut cum illo sub eadem caeli plaga nec musca nascatur. Nam si hanc admiserint, procedit ratiocinatio, quae gradatim accessibus modicis eos a muscis ad camelos elephantosque perducatur (CCL 47, 134.23–26, 135.35–39).
6. Bouché-Leclercq, 586. (Saint Augustine images that the moment of birth makes the only difference between the human being and the animal or even the plant, with the result that a person and an animal cannot be born in the same time at the same place.)
7. p. 130–32 Junod.
8. Solent tamen homines ad temptandam peritiam mathematicorum adferre ad eos constellationes mutorum animalium, quorum ortus propter hanc explorationem domi suae diligenter observant, eosque mathematicos praeferunt ceteris, qui constellationibus inspectis dicunt non esse hominem natum, sed pecus. Audent etiam dicere quale pecus, utrum aptum lanitio, an vectationi, an aratro, an custodiae domus. Nam et ad canina fata temptantur et cum magnis admirantium clamoribus ista respondent (CCL 47, 134.26–135.35).
9. Qui pari studio et conlatione flatabant in eas nugas ignem cordis sui, ita ut mutorum quoque animalium, si quae domi parerent, observarent momenta nascentium atque ad ea caeli positionem notarent, unde illius quasi artis experimenta conligerent. ...etiam canum suarum partus examinatissima diligentia nosse curabat (CCL 27, 98.27–35; trans. Chadwick, 117–18).
10. Bouché-Leclercq, 586–87.

7. *The Moral Argument*

According to the moral argument, astrology denies freedom of the will, overthrows all systems of morality and justice, nullifies religious worship and renders prayer useless. It is not my purpose here to offer a thorough study of the use of this argument by Christian authors since this has been extensively done by other scholars, most notably Amand.¹

Astrology Denies Freedom of the Will

Again, as with most other types of ancient anti-astrological polemic we have considered thus far, the brunt of the moral argument was directed against fatalism. Fundamental to the moral argument was the claim that astrological fatalism entails an evasion of personal responsibility for moral action. Thus Gregory of Nazianzus asserted that adherents of astrology blamed their own negligence and laziness on fate and the stars, and ascribed the mysterious dispensation of divine providence to what they called blind fortune and capricious chance (*Homilies* 9 ["On the Arians"] 10.3).² Cyril of Jerusalem also connects astrology with denial of personal responsibility for evil deeds and attributing blame to the guiltless stars (*Catechesis* 4.18).³ Moreover, according to the moral argument astrology attempts to attribute the cause of evil to fate or to the gods instead of ourselves.⁴ It was a common complaint in Christian anti-astrological polemic that astrology imputes responsibility for evil to God; this theme is found in: Origen's commentary on Gen 1.14 (*Philocalia* 23.1);⁵ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel* 6.6.52–56;⁶ Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 16.220–21;⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 6.7;⁸ Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 4.4.17;⁹ Diodore of Tarsus *Against Fate* (as reported by Photius);¹⁰ Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 14.5.5–6;¹¹ Julian the Arian's commentary on Job;¹² Nemesius of Emesa, *On Human Nature* 35.290;¹³ and Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.35.¹⁴ Understandably, Christians also felt obliged to exculpate their God from responsibility for human evil acts.

When the subject of astrology first arises in Augustine's *Confessions* (4.3.4), he writes that Christians oppose astrology because it means shirking human responsibility for sin and attributing it rather to God. Admitting his own attraction to astrology as a young man, Augustine immediately writes that astrology is rejected and condemned by true Christian piety;¹⁵ astrologers try to destroy the whole saving doctrine of Christianity by saying "The reason

for your sinning is determined by the heaven,” and “Venus or Saturn or Mars was responsible for this act.” If this were true the blame for evil acts would lie with the Creator, who ordered the heavens and stars and is “our God, sweetness and source of justice.”¹⁶ In *Confessions* 5.10.18 Augustine admits that part of the appeal of Manicheism was that it had enabled him to evade personal responsibility by attributing sin to a celestial power.¹⁷ Augustine often attacks astrologers for holding that Venus causes adultery, or that Mars is the cause of murder, thereby denying human culpability for such acts.¹⁸

Moreover, the common Christian attribution of the origin of astrology to demons led Christian writers to portray astrology as not only an evasion, but a fundamental negation, of moral responsibility. Christians taught that the antithesis of belief in astrological fate was freedom of the will; therefore, since astrology was regarded as a demonic power its adherents were seen to have lost their freedom of the will, and to have become completely subservient to fate. This is the background to Augustine’s frequent use of the image of slavery to refer to the devotees of astrology. For example, in *On Christian Teaching* 2.21.32 he writes that when a free person consults an astrologer they “come away a slave either of Mars or Venus or rather of all the stars.”¹⁹ Again, in a sermon on John 2.4 (“My hour is not yet come”)—a text which some were using as a warrant for astrology derived from Jesus’ own words²⁰—Augustine says that the fee that clients pay to consult an astrologer is payment for their own enslavement:

For they go in to visit an astrologer to buy masters for themselves such as the astrologer is pleased to give them, Saturn or Jupiter or Mercury or some other thing with a wicked name. A free man went in, having paid money to come out a slave. On the contrary if they were free they would not go in at all: they enter there where their lord Error, and their mistress Desire, dragged them. From this also does the Truth say: “Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin” (Jn 8.34) (*On John's Gospel* 8.11).²¹

Elsewhere he says that consulting an astrologer is the equivalent of paying for one’s own spiritual death (*On Psalms* 140.9).²²

Other Christian writers used the moral argument to defend not only free will but also human rationality which they claimed astrology denied as well. Diodore of Tarsus used the moral argument in this way,²³ as did Proclus, bishop of Constantinople in the early fifth century, in a letter to the western bishops.²⁴ In his work *On Human Nature* (35.290) Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa in the late fourth century, asserted a global condemnation of fatalism:

it destroys not only free will but what is possible in nature, and it does damage to everything.²⁵

Astrology Overthrows all Systems of Morality and Justice

Traditionally, the moral argument proceeded as follows: if human deeds are the result of fate and people are not responsible for their behaviour, then they ought not to receive praise or blame, reward or punishment, for their actions under any system of morality or justice. Such a view, once accepted on a wide scale, would have serious social consequences: judges and courts of law would be unable to function in any credible sense, and people would become indifferent concerning their work and social obligations.

Of course Christian writers were also concerned to defend the moral system inherent within Christianity and many did so. A good example of such argumentation, reflecting a standard form of the traditional moral argument, is found in Augustine's *Letter 246*. The letter is addressed to Lampadius, who had requested Augustine's advice because he was troubled by such questions:²⁶

So that you may know much sooner and more briefly, all laws and all practices of discipline, praises, blames, words of encouragement, threats, rewards, punishments and all other things by which the human race is managed and ruled are completely destroyed and overthrown and nothing at all remains in them of justice, unless the will is the cause of sin. How much more freely and rightly, therefore, do we condemn the errors of the astrologers...²⁷

Augustine follows this by arguing that the astrologers themselves fail to live up to these implications of their belief in fate, for after he leaves his business at the end of the day and goes home the astrologer no doubt proceeds to enforce rules upon the members of his household. For example, if his wife jokes impudently, or stands gazing out the window "rather immodestly" (the image suggests behaviour associated with prostitution²⁸) he will correct her not only with words but even with blows.²⁹ And if she were to object "why did you hit me? hit Venus, if you can, who compels me to such behaviour" the astrologer would ignore the implications of his earlier advice to his customers and go ahead and inflict just punishment to straighten out the members of his own household.³⁰ Augustine is here defending a practice that was regarded as normal in the society of his day, the right of the *paterfamilias* to mete out discipline (including even corporal punishment) to his household.

By contrast, the "theological" use of the law is defended by Ambrosiaster

in Qu. 115.59. If everything happens by fate and the law is annulled, he says, then immorality will happen openly everywhere; those who are able to do good will not be able to do so; and those who now do not think of evil will begin to be evil when their fear of the law is removed; for “we read that the law was given for the sake of sin” (citing Rom 5.20).³¹

Divine judgment in the after life is defended against astrological fatalism by Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion* (“Medicine Chest”) against heresies. In the section dealing with the Pharisees (*Panarion* 16) Epiphanius asserts that fate and astrology meant much to them (2.2).³² There is some evidence that some Pharisees held to a type of belief in fate.³³ However, in *Panarion* 16.2.2–3 Epiphanius further claims that the Pharisees replaced the Greek names of the planets with their names in Hebrew. The list of Hebrew planetary names that he provides is remarkably accurate, as is the list of Hebrew names for the signs of the zodiac in 16.2.4–5;³⁴ both lists cohere with traditional Hebrew terms for the planets and the stars.³⁵ However, it is probable that Epiphanius himself connected these lists with Pharisaic belief in fate in order to provide him with an opportunity to polemicize against fate; thus his testimony concerning Pharisaic use of the names of the planets and the signs of the zodiac per se is untrustworthy.³⁶ Against the belief in fate attributed to the Pharisees, Epiphanius argues (16.3.3–4.3) that it is contradicted by divine judgment in the after life, which presupposes human free will; he cites Is 1.19–20 as a proof text to support his view.³⁷ He ends the section by quoting a series of anti-Pharisaic passages from the Gospels (16.4.4–8).

Amand claims that Origen played an especially significant role in the adaptation of the traditional Carneadean moral argument against fate to the perspective of Christian theology: “Il [Origène] transpose partout des preuves philosophiques et abstraites en *arguments théologiques*; partout il élargit la perspective morale par la considération des sanctions d’outre-tombe.”³⁸ It is true that Origen asserted that astrological fatalism suppresses divine judgment of human actions (*Philocalia* 23.1).³⁹ However, Amand ignores the fact that “philosophy” and “theology” were intimately connected in Greco-Roman antiquity. Moreover, the contradiction between religion and astrological fate was already recognized by Greco-Roman writers. Even the notion that fate negates rewards and punishments after death was not original to Origen. Indeed, the importing of astrology into Egypt during the Hellenistic period entailed an inevitable conflict with the beliefs regarding the after life in traditional Egyptian religion, and as a result the traditional eschatological themes of Egyptian religion were played down in the hermetic literature.⁴⁰

Astrology Nullifies Religious Worship and Renders Prayer Useless

This specifically religious element of the moral argument against astrology is found in Christian as well as non-Christian authors of antiquity.⁴¹ Some astrological texts explicitly admitted that worship, sacrifices and prayer were ineffective against astrological fate.⁴² However, despite the logical opposition between fate and religious worship, in practice astrology and religion attained a *modus vivendi* in the ancient world.⁴³ As we have seen, ancient astrology possessed many of the features of religion; elements of astrology had also been incorporated into certain Greco-Roman religious traditions, such as the mysteries of Isis and of Mithras. As well, Stoicism showed that fatalism is not incompatible with the practice of ethical virtue, indeed that it could provide a basis for virtue by encouraging one to live in harmony with the cosmos and extolling the attitude of peaceful resignation (*apatheia*) before fate. On a more popular level, religions did offer a variety of means to counter fatalism such as prayer, sacrifice and initiation rites.

The logical inconsistency between belief in fate and religious activities was nevertheless exploited by the opponents of astrology, including Christian writers against astrology. According to Diodore of Tarsus, the very choice to follow a particular religion or philosophy contradicts astrological fate.⁴⁴ In the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, the character Niceta, one of the brothers whom Clement “recognizes” (7.25–28), addresses the contradictory position of those who worship and offer prayers and sacrifices to the gods all the while affirming belief in astrology (8.12.2–3);⁴⁵ it is noteworthy that the argument here does not distinguish “pagan” from Christian religious worship. Similarly, Augustine says that belief in fate should be refused by not only Christians but also “those who want to worship gods of whatever sort, even false gods. For what does this view bring about except that God would not be worshiped or prayed to at all?” (*City of God* 5.1).⁴⁶ A contemporary of Augustine, the Arian writer Maximinus, uses the argument in a vehement attack on Greco-Roman religion but ignores the application to Christianity.⁴⁷ The opposition between astrological fate and prayer was remarked on by Origen in *Philocalia* 23.2,⁴⁸ Julian the Arian’s commentary on Job,⁴⁹ Ambrosiaster, Qu. 115.41 and 76–78,⁵⁰ and Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17;⁵¹ that between fate and sacrifices to bring about the gods’ favour was noted by Arnobius, *Against the Nations* 7.10.⁵² Nemesius of Emesa wrote that if astrological fate is true then prayers are useless, and divine providence as well

as human piety are abolished (*On Human Nature* 35.289).⁵³ Augustine also emphasized that astrology denies God's care for human beings by subjecting them to the stars (*On Psalms* 72.22).⁵⁴

Of course, Christian belief in the divine will could be understood and experienced in a way similar to fate. Some of those outside the church regarded Christian belief in prophecy as deterministic.⁵⁵ There is evidence that others criticized the Christian doctrine of divine election on the same grounds that Christians were attacking astrology, i.e. that it denied the role of human free will (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 11.6).⁵⁶ Minucius Felix even went so far as to identify fate with God's will, playing on the word "fatum" and divine speech (fari).

For what is Fate except what God has spoken about us individually? Since he is able to know our abilities ahead of time he also determines our fates on the basis of our individual merits and qualities (*Octavius* 36.2).⁵⁷

It is interesting that in effect Minucius Felix here grants some scope to the power of fate because he understands it as equivalent to God's will. Nevertheless, he insists that humans are ultimately responsible for their moral behaviour: immediately following the above statement about fate he hastens to add "Thus it is not our birth constellation but the nature of our character that is punished" by God's judgment.⁵⁸ Minucius goes on to say that he intends to write a treatise on fate, but if he did it has been lost.⁵⁹ From his statement in *Octavius* 36.2⁶⁰ it is unclear if he ever did write the work; some scholars have suggested it is merely a literary convention.⁶¹

Notes

1. See Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*. However, Amand's almost exclusive focus on Greek texts, at the expense of early Christian sources in other languages, is arbitrary. The only non-Greek authors he discusses in detail are Firmicus Maternus (p. 177–88), who is included because book 1 of Firmicus' *Mathesis* cites Carneades' moral argument, and Bardaisan (p. 228–257).
2. *desudemus adversum eos qui vitas suas astrorum motibus vel cursibus pensant, qui suam negligentiam atque desidiam fato et astris deputant et incomprehensibilem divinae providentiae dispensationem fortunae casibus caecae, ut aiunt, et ludentis adscribunt* (Rufinus' Latin translation) (CSEL 46/1, 276.5–9).

3. PG 33, 480A.
4. There is a precedent for this rebuttal in the well-known Platonic axiom "The responsibility belongs to the one who chooses; God is blameless" (αἰτία ἐλομένου θεός ἀνάιτος [*Republic* 10.617e; cf. 2.380b and *Timaeus* 42d]).
5. p. 136.43–44 Junod.
6. p. 152–54 des Places.
7. p. 248 Musurillo–Debidour (SC 95).
8. p. 358 Giet.
9. CSEL 32, 1, 124.
10. p. 40 Henry; cf. p. 37.35: ἡ μέμψις ἐκείνης ἢ τοῦ ταύτην πεποιηκότος.
11. p. 207.1–7 Rehm (GCS), adding that this is also blasphemy.
12. p. 122 Hagedorn.
13. p. 104–05 Morani.
14. ingerunt accusandum potius deum auctorem siderum quam hominem scelorum (CSEL 28/1, 60.5-6).
15. Quod tamen christiana et vera pietas consequenter repellit et damnat (CCL 27, 41.4–5).
16. Quam totam illi salubritatem interficere conantur, cum dicunt: “De caelo tibi est inevitabilis causa peccandi” et “Venus hoc fecit aut Saturnus aut Mars,” scilicet ut homo sine culpa sit, caro et sanguis [cf. Matt 16.17, 1 Cor 15.50] et superba putredo, culpandus sit autem caeli ac siderum creator et ordinator. Et quis est hic nisi deus noster, suavitas et origo iustitiae... (CCL 27, 41.9–42.15; trans. Chadwick, p. 54). Cf. also *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.35 (CSEL 28/1, 60.4–6); *On Contenance* 14–15 (CSEL 41, 157–58); *Letter* 246 (CSEL 57, 584.4–6, 25–27); *On Psalms* 2.16 (on Ps 31) (CCL 38, 236–37); *On Psalms* 1.14 (on Ps 58) (CCL 39, 740.17–20); *On Psalms* 128.9 (CCL 40, 1887); and *On Psalms* 91.3 (CCL 39, 1281.22–39).
17. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 2, 212; cf. *On Contenance* 14 (CSEL 41, 157).

18. *On Psalms* 40.6 (CCL 38, 453.24–27); *On Psalms* 61.23 (CCL 39, 792.6–13); *On Psalms* 140.9 (CCL 40, 2032.1–2, 6–9, 15–19). For an earlier example see Plotinus, *Ennead* 2.3.6 (vol. 2, p. 66.1–4 Armstrong [LCL]).
19. vendunt imperitis hominibus miserabilem servitatem. Nam quisque liber ad huius modi mathematicum cum ingressus fuerit, dat pecuniam, ut servus inde exeat aut Martis aut Veneris vel potius omnium siderum (CCL 32, 55.7–10).
20. Dicunt enim vaniloqui et seducti seductores: Vides quia sub fato erat Christus, qui dicit “Nondum venit hora mea” ... Si ergo dixisset: “Horam non habeo,” exclusisset mathematicos, non esset unde calumniarentur; nunc vero quia dixit: “Nondum venit hora mea,” contra ipsius verba quid possumus dicere? Mirum est quod mathematici credendo verbis Christi, conantur convincere christianos quod sub hora fatali vixerit Christus.... (*On John's Gospel* 8.8, 10 [CCL 36, 87.19–21, 88.6–11]). Such use of Jn 2.4 is also condemned by Ambrosiaster, Qu. 115.79 (CSEL 50, 346.21–347.3).
21. Nummos accipiunt, cum se homines hominibus vendunt; dant isti nummos, ut se vanitatibus vendant. Intran enim ad mathematicum, ut emant sibi dominos, quales mathematico dare placuerit; vel Saturnum, vel Iovem, vel Mercurium, vel si quid aliud sacrilegi nominis. Intravit liber, ut nummis datis servus exiret. Immo vero non intraret, si liber esset; sed intravit quo eum dominus error, et domina cupiditas traxit. Unde et Veritas dicit: “Omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati” (CCL 36, 89.5–13). See also 83 *Diverse Questions*, Qu. 45.2: mathematici volentes actus nostros corporibus caelestibus subdere et nos vendere stellis ipsumque pretium quo vendimur a nobis accipere (CCL 44A, 68.20–23).
22. CCL 40, 2032.21–24.
23. See Photius’ summary (p. 37 Henry).
24. p. 66–67 Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* 4/2. The attribution of this letter to Proclus of Constantinople, which Schwartz denied, has been defended by A[ibert] E[berhard] in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 23 (1914–19): 484–85 and by Fr[anz] Diekamp in *Theologische Revue* 16 (1917): 357–58.
25. οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν συναναίρουσι καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἐνδεχομένου φύσιν, καὶ οὕτως οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ τῷ παντὶ λυμαίνονται (p. 104.21–23 Morani).
26. CSEL 57, 583.16–584.2.
27. Illud sane quanto citius ac breviter noveris, omnes leges atque instituta omnia disciplinae, laudes, vituperationes, exhortationes, terrores, praemia, supplicia ceteraque

omnia, quibus humanum genus administratur et regitur, penitus labefactari atque subverti nihilque in eis omnino iustitiae remanere, nisi voluntas sit causa peccandi. quanto ergo licentius et aequius mathematicorum improbamus errores... (CSEL 57, 584.7–13).

28. Brent D. Shaw, "The Family in Late Antiquity: the Experience of Augustine," *Past and Present* 115 (1987): 31. The same image is found in *On John's Gospel* 13.11.
29. On husbands beating their wives see Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity," 28–32.
30. ...quod nec ipsi mathematici faciunt! nam cum aliquis eorum hominibus nummatis fatua fata vendiderit, mox, ut oculum a tabellis eburneis ad domus suae moderamen ac sollicitudinem revocaverit, non solum vocibus sed etiam plagis emendat uxorem, non dico si petulantius iocantem sed si immoderatus per fenestram aspicientem animadverterit. quae tamen si ei dicat: 'Quid me caedis? Venerem caede, si potes, a qua cogor hoc facere,' tunc vero ille non curat, quam vana verba componat fallendis extraneis, sed quam iusta verbera inponat corrigendis suis (CSEL 57, 584.15–24). This passage is paralleled in *On Psalms* Ps. 140.9 (CCL 40, 2032.24–30) and *Sermon* 199.3 (PL 38, 1028).
31. Et si omnia fato fiunt, quo modo lex subintravit, quae non sinat fieri quod fati est? si enim tollatur lex, passim publice inlicita fient nec potentes poterunt ferri nec erit libertas, quia et qui nunc non cogitat malum sublato timore incipiet malus esse. denique legimus legem malorum causa datam (CSEL 50, 338.21–25). The moral argument was a favourite of Ambrosiaster: see Qu. 115.1, 5, 53–62, 64–66. For the theological function of the law see also Rom 3.20 and Gal 3.19.
32. ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰμαρμένη καὶ ἀστρονομία παρ' αὐτοῖς σφόδρα ἐχρημάτιζεν (vol. 1, p. 211.12–13 Holl [GCS]).
33. Fatalism is also attributed to the Pharisees by Josephus (*Antiquities* 13.172 and 18.13; *Jewish War* 2.162–163), by Hippolytus (*Refutation* 9.28), and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6.3. Literary sources for the parallels between Josephus and Hippolytus have been proposed: see Albert I. Baumgarten, "Josephus and Hippolytus on the Pharisees," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1985): 1–25, repr. *Origins of Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 2/1 (New York, 1990), 31–55, and the literature referred to there.
34. p. 211.13–20 Holl
35. J. M. Lieu, "Epiphanius on the Scribes and the Pharisees (*Pan.* 15.1–16.4)," *JTS* n.s. 39 (1988): 518–523.

36. *Ibid.*, 523; Robert R. Stieglitz, “The Hebrew Names of the Seven Planets,” *JNES* 40 (1981): 135–37 and 135n1, views Epiphanius’ testimony more favourably.
37. p. 212.17–213.7 Holl. Cf. *Panarion* 5.3.1 (against the Stoics) for a simple repudiation of fate on the basis of moral law, i.e. the traditional moral argument without any explicit appeal to religion (p. 184–85 Holl).
38. Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 320 (emphasis his). (He transposes everywhere philosophical and abstract proofs into theological arguments; everywhere he extends the moral perspective by considering the judgment beyond death.) He continues: “Nous verrons concrètement comment le théologien Origène applique une argumentation néo-académicienne toute rationnelle à des valeurs morales et religieuses que ne pouvait soupçonner Carnéade: mérite, démérite, foi chrétienne, Christ, Église, rétributions eschatologiques.”
39. p. 134.16–20 Junod.
40. Cumont, *L’Égypte des Astrologues*, 201–05.
41. On the the issue of fate versus human freedom in ancient religions see Albrecht Dihle, “Liberté et Destin dans l’Antiquité Tardive,” *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 121 (1989): 129ff. According to Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 272, it was Clement of Alexandria who first used the argument that fatalism nullifies religion and piety in connection with Christianity.
42. Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 167 and 290–91nn65–68; *L’Égypte des Astrologues*, 205.
43. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, 84–89.
44. p. 37 Henry. On the religious aspects of the philosophical schools see Nock, *Conversion*, 164–86 and Steve Mason, “PHILOSOPHIAI: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian,” *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London, 1996), 38–55.
45. p. 23.27–224.5 Rehm (GCS). Cf. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 14.4.4: τὸ μέντοι τοὺς νομιζομένους θεοὺς σέβειν γενέσεως ἐπικρατούσης περιττόν ἐστιν (p. 206.3–4 Rehm).
46. Sed illi, qui sine Dei voluntate discernere opinantur sidera quid agamus vel quid bonorum habeamus malorumve patiamur, ab auribus omnium repellendi sunt, non solum eorum qui veram religionem tenent sed [et] qui deorum qualiumcumque licet

falsorum, volunt esse cultores. Haec enim opinio quid agit aliud, nisi ut nullus omnino colatur aut rogetur Deus? (CCL 47, 128.15–21).

47. p. 321.14–322.31–36, 323.63–64 Spagnolo–Turner.
48. p. 138.22–140.26 Junod. Cf. Origen’s comment in a fragment (no. 49) on Jer 36.8: εἰ γὰρ ἀστέρες τυχὸν ἐνεργοῦσι, μάτην εὐχόμεθα (p. 223.13 Klostermann [GCS]).
49. p. 260 Hagedorn.
50. CSEL 50, 331.18 and 345–46.
51. CSEL 28/1, 60.3–4. See also Leo the Great, *Sermon 27* ("On the Lord's Nativity") 7.3 (PL 54, 218B–C).
52. CSEL 4, 245.3–5; cf. 1.14–17: nisi quod validius premere opinionem istam, si voluerint, quibunt, ut etiam ipsos deos frustra dicant a vobis coli et supervacaneis supplicationibus adorari.
53. p. 104.18–19 Morani. The whole of book 36 (p. 106.15–107.26) is also devoted to the contradiction between prayer and fatalism; Nemesius’ attack here is directed specifically against the combination of religious faith with astrology by certain “Egyptian sages,” but it would have served as a warning to Christians in general.
54. CCL 39, 997.6–998.13.
55. Robert Wilken, “Justification by Works: Fate and the Gospel in the Roman Empire,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40 (1969): 383.
56. igitur iniquum iudicem fingitis, qui sortem in hominibus puniat, non voluntatem (p. 9.19–20 Kytzler).
57. quid enim aliud est fatum quam quod de unoquoque nostrum deus fatus est? qui cum possit praescire materiam, pro meritis et qualitatibus singulorum etiam fata determinat (p. 34.7–9 Kytzler).
58. ita in nobis non genitura plectitur, sed ingenii natura punitur (p. 34.9–10 Kytzler).
59. In *On Illustrious Men* 58 (cf. *Letter 70.5*) Jerome mentions a work attributed to Minucius Felix "on fate or against astrologers" (de fato vel contra mathematicos) but he questions its authenticity on stylistic grounds. The work to which Jerome referred is unknown; the identification by J. Langen with one of the *Questions of Ambrosiaster* is to be rejected (Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Lit-*

eratur (Darmstadt, 1962), vol. 1, 343).

60. But enough concerning fate ... for the time, I will discuss it more fully and completely elsewhere (ac de fato satis ... pro tempore disputaturi alias et uberius et plenius [p.61 Beaujeu]).
61. So trans. Clarke, p. 362n608. Jean G. Præaux, "A Propos du 'De fato' (?) de Minucius Felix," *Latomus* 9 (1950): 413n2 (cf. p. 399) also asks whether the statement is "une échappatoire commode" after the model of Balbus in Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.8.19, a technique also used by Arnobius, *Against the Nations* 7.10–12 and Lactantius, *On the Workmanship of God* 19.6–7 in order to postpone discussing the topic of fate.

8. *Astrology as the Work of Demons*

Early Christian writers also made use of other arguments which arose from the teachings and practices of Christianity itself. Some Christian writers were perhaps unaware of the traditional Carneadean arguments against fate in any formal sense, while others chose not to use them, but even those who were familiar with traditional anti-fatalist polemic also used arguments that were derived from a distinctly Christian basis.

Among the early Christians the most common view concerning the origins of astrology was that it is the work of evil demons.¹ For example, the second century writer Tatian asserted that the demons “taught a chart of the constellations” (διάγραμμα ... ἀστροθεσίας ἀναδείξαντες) to humankind, thus making humans subject to the demons’ own apostasy and to the power of fate (*Oration to the Greeks* 8.1–2).² The term ἀστροθεσία (also found in Tatian’s *Oration* 9.1 and in *Excerpts from Theodotus* 74.2), referring to the order or arrangement of the stars, can further mean the placement of the heavenly bodies on a horoscope.³ Tatian also uses the term τὸ ἐπικρατήσαν, i.e. the “lord” or “starting point” (οἰκοδεσπότης, τόπος ἀφετικός) used in calculating the length of life,⁴ in *Oration* 9.2; the phrase ὡς φασιν (as they say) immediately following indicates that he is aware this is technical terminology.⁵ According to Tatian, the manipulation of humanity by astrological fate provides a form of entertainment to the demons.⁶ He portrays them as spectators watching in a theatre and laughing at humanity’s plight: “And every natal horoscope gave entertainment as if in a theatre to them [the demons], among whom, as Homer says, “unquenchable laughter arose to the blessed gods” (*Oration* 8.1).⁷ (The presence of a Homeric quotation here, *Iliad* 1.599 or *Odyssey* 8.326, is ironic.) While for Tatian, as one scholar has noted, astrology is the demons’ “oeuvre principale,”⁸ his repudiation of astrology is interwoven with his wider polemic against Greek religion in the *Oration*. He identifies the Greek gods with the demons of Jewish and Christian belief,⁹ claiming that the gods/demons are also subject to fate along with their ruler Zeus (who thus has a parallel function to the devil) and that they are influenced by passions such as those of human beings (8.2).¹⁰ In *Oration* 8–10, Tatian treats various Greco-Roman mythological tales, including a number which feature catasterisms, with scathing hostility; then he asks: “how can I accept [the doctrine of] genesis according to fate seeing that its ministers are

like this?" (*Oration* 11.1)¹¹ Ironically, the identification of the demons with the "pagan" gods constituted an affirmation of their power.

Like pagans, Christians still sensed and saw the gods and their power, and as something, they had to assume, lay behind it, by an easy, traditional shift of opinion, they turned these pagan *daimones* into malevolent "demons," the troupe of Satan. They were most demonic when they were most plausible.... By their demonic imagery, Christians took the 'presence' of the gods ... as literally as any Homeric hero, more literally, perhaps, than many pagan contemporaries.¹²

With regard to astrology, Tatian's main concern is fatalism. He maintains that Christians have been set free from astrological fate and are above its power: "But we are above fate, and instead of planetary [i.e. erring] demons we have come to know one lord who does not err; we are not led by fate and have rejected its lawgivers" (*Oration* 9.2).¹³ A parallel anti-astrological passage in the excerpts from the Valentinian Gnostic Theodotus preserved at the end of Clement of Alexandria's *Miscellanies* similarly describes Christians as "born again, becoming higher than all other powers" (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 76.4).¹⁴ In order to safeguard human responsibility for moral behaviour Tatian emphasizes the early Christian belief in the original freedom that was inherent in the divine creation of humankind (and also of the angels) (*Oration* 7 and 11).¹⁵

"Die to the world" by rejecting the madness in it; "live to God" by comprehending him and rejecting the old birth.¹⁶ We were not born to die, but die through our own fault. Free will has destroyed us; born free, we have become slaves;¹⁷ we have been put up for sale because of sin. God has done nothing bad, it was we who exhibited wickedness; but we who exhibited it are still capable of rejecting it (*Oration* 11.2).¹⁸

The "old birth" (*παλαιά γένεσις*) here has a double meaning: it refers to the natural (physical) birth before the "new birth" in Christ (cf. Jn 3.3, 7) as well as the "old [doctrine of the] natal horoscope," i.e. astrology, which Christians are to have left behind. The *παλαιά γένεσις* thus has a parallel function to the "old covenant" (*παλαιά διαθήκη*), i.e. Judaism (2 Cor 3.14).¹⁹

Though Tatian himself was accused of heresy,²⁰ there is no doubt that his belief that fallen angels had taught astrology to humankind reflects a fundamental perspective which was very widely held by the early Christians; as evidence of this, as Bouché-Leclercq writes, "[i]l y aurait ici cent textes à citer."²¹ Some Christian writers credited the origins of astrology directly to the

devil, the leader of the fallen angels. For example, Ambrosiaster affirms that “astrology is to be avoided, for the cunning and subtlety of the devil invented it” (*Question* 115.3).²² More commonly, astrology was ascribed to the demons in general: the early Christians followed Jewish (especially apocalyptic) writers who had identified the δαίμονες as evil spirits, that is, fallen angels who were subservient to the devil.²³ Thus Tertullian writes concerning astrology “I only put forward one thing: that it is those angels,²⁴ apostates from God, lovers of women, who introduced also this inquisitiveness and who are, also for this reason, damned by God” (*On Idolatry* 9.1).²⁵ Tertullian claims that as with other forms of idolatry²⁶ astrology too derives from the fallen angels who are the teachers²⁷ of this form of “curiositas.”²⁸ Moreover, both the teachers and their pupils share the same punishment of exile from heaven, which Tertullian derisively parallels with imperial expulsions of astrologers from the city of Rome and Italy:

Oh divine sentence which in its working even reaches the earth and to which even those ignorant of it bear testimony: the astrologers are banned just like their angels; Rome and Italy are denied to the astrologers, as heaven is to their angels: the same penalty of exile applies to disciples and masters (*On Idolatry* 9.2).²⁹

Although Origen’s understanding of astrology was much more sophisticated than that of other early Christian writers (as we shall see), he too ascribes the belief that heavenly bodies are causes of events rather than mere signs (as in Gen 1.14) to angels who had overstepped their own rank and consequently fell (*Philocalia* 23.6).³⁰ From this it is an easy progression to chastising human adherents of astrology for overstepping the divinely imposed limits: thus in *Hexaemeron* 6.5 Basil of Caesarea refers to proponents of astrology as “those who overstep the borders.”³¹ The notion of fate as the limitation which divides God and humanity is also reflected in one of the traditional folk etymologies of fate (εἰμαρμένη), from εἰρμός (series) and εἶρω (string together).³²

Origen also attributes astrology to demons in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. In his discussion of Matt 17.14–21, the story of the healing of an epileptic boy, Origen includes a section devoted to the “literal” reading of the text which focusses on the meaning of the boy’s “lunacy.” He reports that physicians diagnosed such illness as due to the sympathetic movement of moist humours in a person’s head caused by the light of the moon, which was regarded as moist (hence the term “lunacy”).³³ In the ancient world children

were believed to be especially vulnerable to lunar influence on the moist humours;³⁴ in *Tetrabiblos* 4.10 Ptolemy assigns the moon primacy over children up to about age four.³⁵ Instead of the “literal” reading, however, Origen expresses his preference for a “spiritual” explanation of the boy’s illness recorded in the Matthean passage: he writes that it is the “unclean spirit [that] keeps an eye on certain aspects of the moon, and makes it so that people suffer at such and such aspect of the moon.” The fault is with the evil spirit, he says, not the moon: indeed the moon was appointed “to rule the night” (Gen 1.16), and it has no “rule” over human afflictions. This then leads Origen into a diatribe against astrology. He condemns fatalism as well as catholic and horoscopic astrology (those who say “that the cause of everything on earth is from the disposition of the stars, whether things in general or each occurrence”); he also attacks those who affirm “that some of the stars are maleficent and others beneficent, for no star was created by the God of the universe to work evil” (*Commentary on Matthew* 13.6).³⁶

Origen held that supernatural powers are able to read the heavens (*Philocalia* 23.20–21).³⁷ In his commentary on Matt 17.14–21 he asserts that these demons, which are able to watch the movement of the heavens, time their infliction of disease with certain phases of the moon in order to make it seem as though the disease were the result of astrological influence. Indeed he broadens the scope of the demons’ observation to the rest of the heavens:

And it is likely that just as this unclean spirit, effecting what is called lunacy, observes the phases of the moon ... even so other spirits and demons do with regard to certain aspects of the other stars, so that not only the moon but also the rest of the stars may be reviled.³⁸

It may be inferred from this that Origen believed the demons specialize according to function, i.e. “lunatic” spirits observe the moon while other demons watch the sun and the other planets. The demons’ objective is apparently not to snare human souls by means of belief in astrology, however; rather, the goal of the demons is to slander, or misrepresent, divine creation.³⁹ Origen’s aim therefore is to defend the stars, because they partake of the goodness of creation (based on Gen 1). This approach was followed by Jerome: commenting on Matt 4.24 he says that the “lunatics” brought to Jesus were “those who thought they were lunatics because of the deceit of demons, who observe the lunar phases because they want to defame the creation, so that blasphemies may abound against the Creator.”⁴⁰

It is because the unclean spirits observe the stars in the heavens (e.g. the phases of the moon) and time their infliction of disease accordingly that Origen acknowledges that “it is possible to listen to astrologers, who trace the cause of all madness and demon possession to the aspects of the moon.”⁴¹ In this latter remark Origen is not endorsing astrology but expounding on its demonic origins in order to dissuade his readers from consulting astrologers.⁴² More specifically, in his comments on Matt 17.14–21 Origen trades on the Matthean text’s association of disease with demonic possession⁴³ as well as the connection in ancient medicine between “lunacy” and the moon⁴⁴ in order to reaffirm the Christian view that what were popularly regarded as the harmful effects of the celestial bodies are really the work of demons. He adds that not everyone can be afflicted with illness by the demons in this way, but only people who for certain (unstated) reasons are given over to the demons or who have made themselves unworthy of being guarded by (good) angels.⁴⁵ Later, Jerome would be more specific in pointing out responsibility: commenting on Matt 17.18 (“And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him”) Jerome writes: “It must be that he rebuked the demon, not the boy who was suffering; or he rebuked the boy, and the demon left him, because he had been oppressed on account of his own sins.”⁴⁶ A medical writer of the second century C.E., Aretaeus of Cappadocia, also put the blame for epilepsy on the patient, thus exculpating the moon.⁴⁷ Like other early Christian writers Eusebius of Caesarea also identified the Greco-Roman gods as demons. However, the reason he gives for attributing astrology to the demons is that they themselves are able to foretell the future by observing the stars, a view which likely reflects the influence of Origen’s view of the stars as signs (which can be read by angels) and not causes. Like Tatian, Eusebius also held that demons as well as humans who engage in astrology are thereby rendered subject to fate (*Preparation for the Gospel* 6, preamble and 1.1–3, citing Porphyry’s *Philosophy from Oracles*; 6.6.3–4; 6.11.82–83).⁴⁸

By the time Christianity was established as the Roman state religion, such attitudes toward astrology were largely taken for granted by Christian authors. According to the report of Photius, Diodore of Tarsus described astrology as a (war) machine invented by the devil (κατὰ ἀνθρώπων αὐτῆ παρὰ τοῦ πονηροῦ προβέβληται ἡ μηχανή) to separate people from God by preventing them from taking responsibility for their actions and repenting.⁴⁹ Diodore also attributed successful predictions to the demons’ own knowledge of astrological writings which they use in order to bring human lives under their control.⁵⁰ The view that astrology is due to the demons’ desire to deceive human beings into sin is

also found in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.12.2–3,⁵¹ a work which, though it contains earlier material, dates to the fourth century in its final form.⁵² The particular concern of *Recognitions* 9.12.2–3 relates to the astrological notion of climacterics, i.e. hours, days, months and years that were regarded as especially dangerous;⁵³ the theory derives from the medical concept of “critical” periods during an illness, but at some point came to be assimilated into astrology so that climacterics were discussed in the treatises of astrological writers.⁵⁴ The attribution of astrology to demons is discussed at length in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Against Fate*.⁵⁵ The view is also found in an anonymous text of the early fifth century, the *Deliberations of the Christian Zaccheus and the Philosopher Apollonius* (1.30.8–13);⁵⁶ a particular concern of this text is to maintain that astrology is demonically inspired even though it appears innocuous (1.29–30).⁵⁷

The association between astrology and the demons also lies behind an early Christian reference to the decans, the 36 astrological divine beings that presided over sections of ten degrees of the zodiacal circle, in the apocryphal infancy Gospel entitled the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* 21. Here the narrator describes how Joseph was attacked by Death personified, accompanied by his advisor Hades and the cunning devil and countless decans wearing fire and breathing sulphur and flames from their mouth.⁵⁸ In effect, the decans are the equivalent of demons in this passage. The mention of the decans is found in the Coptic (Bohairic and Sahidic) version of the text which is the earliest extant form in which the work has come down to us (the original Greek version is lost). Because of the existence of the text in the two main Coptic dialects it has been argued that the work was composed during the fourth or fifth centuries.⁵⁹

Augustine too followed the established attribution of astrology to demons. He uses it in an early work, *Against the Sceptics* 1.6.20–21, to describe the feats of a certain Carthaginian seer, Albicerius.⁶⁰ (However, there is no evidence that he had Albicerius in mind in his discussion of astrology in the *Confessions*.⁶¹) Augustine also attributes divination to demons in *City of God* 8.16⁶² and in the treatise *On the Divination of Demons*.⁶³ In *City of God* 5.7 he ascribes astrological predictions which come true to the demons’ desire to implant belief in astrology in the minds of human beings.⁶⁴ As to how the demons themselves can accurately know the future, Augustine offers a number of explanations. In *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17 he claims that demons are permitted knowledge about temporal things partly because, having bodies which are much more subtle than humans, they possess keen and subtle

senses;⁶⁵ partly because they are clever due to the experience of having lived for so long; and partly because sometimes the good angels, who learn it from God, reveal it to them at God's command. As well, demons sometimes foretell what they themselves are going to do.⁶⁶ It is in light of this demonic conception of divination that an anecdote Augustine relates in *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 12.22.46 is to be understood: he tells of some youths who pretended to be astrologers only to discover that their prophecy actually came true!

Notes

1. On the background to this Christian view of demons as evil, see the discussion of the development of Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish belief in intermediate powers (δυνάμεις) in F.E. Brenk, "In Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," ANRW 1.16.3, 2068–2145.
2. p. 14.4–20 Whittaker. Cf. 9.1, where people who are active and lazy, self-controlled and uncontrolled, rich and poor are said to "belong to those who enacted their [astral] nativity" (τῶν νομοθετησάντων τὴν γένεσιν), i.e. to the demons who invented astrology.
3. See Vettius Valens, *Anthologies* 3.16 (p. 149.19 Pingree); Festugière, *Idéal Religieux*, 112n4.
4. See Bouché-Leclercq, 404–28; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 125–26.
5. p. 18.4 Whittaker.
6. εὐαρεστοῦσι δὲ αὐτοῖς οἱ ἐπὶ πλανῆται ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς πεσσοῖς ἀθύροντες (p. 18.6–7 Whittaker); Whittaker adds an explanatory note on p. 19: "The gods enjoy watching the game in which the planets control men's lives just as draught players move pieces on the board."
7. πᾶσά τε γένεσις ὥσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ τερπωλὴν παρέσχε τούτοις, παρ' οἷς, ὡς φησὶν Ὅμηρος, "ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνώρτο γέλως μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν" (p. 14.10–12 Whittaker). Cf. the Stoic notion of human life as a performance in the "theatrum mundi" (Heinrich Dörrie, "Der Begriff 'Pronoia' in Stoa und Platonismus," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 24 [1977]: 75).
8. Aimé Puech, *Recherches sur le Discours aux Grecs de Tatiens* (Paris, 1903), 44.

9. This was a commonplace in early Christianity (see e.g. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 26–27, etc.).
10. οἱ δαίμονες αὐτοὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἡγουμένου αὐτῶν Διὸς ὑπὸ τὴν εἰμαρμένην πεπτώκασιν τοῖς αὐτοῖς πάθεισιν οἴσπερ καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι κρατηθέντες (p. 14.18–20 Whittaker).
11. Πῶς οὖν γένεσιν τὴν καθ' εἰμαρμένην ἀποδέξομαι τοιούτους αὐτῆς τοὺς οἰκονόμους θεωρῶν; (p. 20.25–26 Wittaker). Cf. the phrase θεοῦ οἰκονόμος in Titus 1.7 and οἰκονόμος μυστηρίων θεοῦ in 1 Cor 4.1.
12. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1987), 137, 444.
13. ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ εἰμαρμένης ἐσμὲν ἀνώτεροι καὶ ἀντὶ πλανητῶν δαιμόνων ἕνα τὸν ἀπλανῆ δεσπότην μεμαθήκαμεν καὶ οὐ καθ' εἰμαρμένην ἀγόμενοι τοὺς ταύτης νομοθέτας παρητήμεθα (p. 18.7–10 and p. 19 trans. Whittaker).
14. ἀναγεννώμεθα τῶν λοιπῶν δυνάμεων ἀπασῶν ὑπεράνω γινόμενοι (p. 86.667–68 Casey).
15. In section 11 he extols his own (freely-chosen) virtue in words echoing Paul (e.g. 1 Cor 7.21, 9.19–22; Phil 3.6), and using phrases reminiscent of Ecclesiastes he also laments that humans are fated to die.
16. Cf. Rom 6.2, 8, 14.8; Gal 2.19; Col 2.20.
17. Cf. Jn 8.31–36; Rom 6.16, 20, 7.14, 25; 1 Jn 3.8; 2 Pet 2.19.
18. "ἀπόθνησκε" τῷ κόσμῳ παραιτούμενος τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ μανίαν· "ζῆθι τῷ θεῷ" διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ καταλήψεως τὴν παλαιὰν γένεσιν παραιτούμενος. οὐκ ἐγενόμεθα πρὸς τὸ ἀποθνήσκειν, ἀποθνήσκομεν δὲ δι' ἑαυτούς. ἀπώλεσεν ἡμᾶς τὸ αὐτεξούσιον· δοῦλοι γεγόναμεν οἱ ἐλεύθεροι, διὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐπράθημεν. οὐδὲν φαῦλον ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πεποιήται, τὴν πονηρίαν ἡμεῖς ἀνεδείξαμεν· οἱ δὲ ἀναδείξαντες δυνατοὶ πάλιν παραιτήσασθαι (p. 22.11–17 and p. 23 trans. Whittaker).
19. On "la querelle chronologique" as a theme in early Christian anti-pagan polemic, see J[ean] P[é]rin, "Christianisme et Mythologie. Jugements chrétiens sur les analogies du paganisme et du christianisme," *Dictionnaire des Mythologies et des Religions des Sociétés Traditionnelles et du Monde Antique*, ed. Yves Bonnefoy (Paris, 1981) vol. 1, 164–65, repr. Pépin, *De la Philosophie Ancienne à la Théologie Patristique* (London, 1986).
20. See the discussion in Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London: Routledge, 2003), 20ff. *et passim*.

21. Bouché-Leclercq, 600n1. (There would be a hundred texts to cite in this regard.) The attribution of astrology to demons was not limited to Gnostics, as implied by Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 68.
22. ars matheseos evitanda et fugienda est. hanc enim astutia et subtilitas invenit diaboli (CSEL 50, 318.21–22); cf. Qu. 115.83: Igitur fugiendum omnibus modis ab hac arte monemus. curiosi enim eius et inimici dei sunt et sine sollicitudine numquam sunt (ibid., 349.8–10).
23. See Everett Ferguson, “Demons,” EEC, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 325–27 and the bibliography cited there.
24. Echoing Genesis 6.1–4, commonly interpreted in apocalyptic writings as referring to the angelic fall. Via 1 Enoch, this myth came to be widely accepted by early Christian writers. Clement of Alexandria specifies (*Prophetic Eclogues* 53.4): ἤδη δὲ καὶ Ἐνώχ φησιν τοὺς παραβάντας ἀγγέλους διδάξαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀστρονομίαν καὶ μαντικὴν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας (p. 152.9–10 Stählin [GCS]). Clement also refers to a variant of the myth in which some of the fallen angels reveal secret knowledge to women while other angels hide it, or rather hold it in reserve, until the παρουσία (*Miscellanies* 3.6.59.2). Among the many citations of 1 Enoch in early Christian, Gnostic and apocalyptic texts collected in R.H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), vol. 2, 181–84, most are references to the myth of the fallen angels.
25. Unum propono, angelos esse illos desertores dei, amatores feminarum, proditores etiam huius curiositatis, propterea quoque damnatos a deo (p. 34.6–8 and p. 35 trans. Waszink and van Winden). *On Idolatry* may be dated to 196 or early 197 (T.D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* [Oxford, 1985], 55).
26. In the previous sentence, the disclaimer “non allego, quod idola honoret” is clearly rhetorical within a treatise on idolatry! Tertullian’s claim (9.1) is that the astrologer assigns divine power to idols such that people do not seek after God (p.34.4–6 Waszink and van Winden). (On “addicere” here in the sense of “assign” see Waszink and van Winden, 158.) On Tertullian’s view of idolatry see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 96ff., and J.C.M. van Winden, “*Idolum* and *idololatria* in Tertullian,” VC (1982): 108–14. Astrology is also portrayed as a form of idolatry in Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 6.67.2.
27. On this sense for “proditores” here, see Waszink and van Winden, 159–60.
28. The Greco-Roman background to the early Christian censure of “curiositas” is discussed by Robert Joly in *L’Antiquité Classique* 30 (1961): 33–44. The magical books

- burned in Acts 19.19 belonged to “practitioners of curiosity” (τῶν τὰ περίεργα πραζάντων). Many Christians condemned astrology as a form of “curiositas”: see e.g., Origen’s Commentary on Gen 1.14 in *Philocalia* 23.20 (p.197 Junod [SC]) with numerous references cited there and Junod’s helpful discussion at p. 196-98n2. On Tertullian’s view of “curiositas” see René Braun, “Tertullien et la Philosophie Païenne: Essai de mise au point,” *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé* (1971): 237–38, repr. *Approches de Tertullien* (Paris, 1992), 27–28; Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Tertullien et la Conversion de la Culture Antique* (Paris, 1972), 411–442; Virginia Alfaro Bech and Victoria E. Rodríguez Martín, “Precedentes de las Doctrinas Antiastrológicas y Antifatalistas de Tertuliano,” *MHNH* 2 (2001): 218-19; Waszink and van Winden, 160–161.
29. O divina sententia usque ad terram pertinax, cui etiam ignorantes testimonium reddunt: expelluntur mathematici, sicut angeli eorum; urbs et Italia interdicitur mathematicis, sicut caelum et angelis eorum: eadem poena est exilii discipulis et magistris (p. 34.8–36.12 trans. Waszink and van Winden). Cf. Ambrosiaster, Qu. 115.63 (CSEL 50, 340.1–6).
 30. ἐκ διδασκαλίας ἀγγέλων τὴν ἰδίαν τάξιν παραβεβηκότων καὶ ἐπὶ τῆ τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν ἐπιτριβῆ διδασκάντων περὶ τούτων τινά, φήθησαν τοὺς ἀφ’ ὧν τὰ σημεῖα οἴονται λαμβάνειν αἰτίους ὑπάρχειν τούτων, ἃ σημαίνειν ὁ λόγος φησί (p. 150.13–18 Junod).
 31. οἱ ὑπὲρ τὰ ἐσκαμμένα πηδῶντες (p. 348 Giet).
 32. Gundel, “Heimarmene,” 2624. For an example of this etymology in a Christian text see the brief anti-astrological excursus in Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 3.9.50 (p. 283.4–6 Jaeger).
 33. Bouché-Leclercq, 91–92, 499–500, 521–22; Schwenn, “Selene,” RE 2A/1, 1139.
 34. Claire Préaux, “La Lune dans la Pensée Grecque,” *Académie Royale de Belgique: Mémoires de la Classe des Lettres*, 2e série, 61/4 (1973): 132–33.
 35. p. 442 Robbins.
 36. ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ καὶ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ πιστεύοντες ὅτι τὸ νόσημα τοῦτο ἀπὸ πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου, ἀλάλου καὶ κωφοῦ ἐν τοῖς πάσχουσιν αὐτὸ θεωρεῖται ἐνεργούμενον ... τὸ ἀκάθαρτον τοῦτο πνεῦμα ἐπιτηρεῖ τινες σχηματισμοὺς τῆς σελήνης καὶ οὕτως ἐνεργεῖ, ἵν’ ἐκ τῆς τηρήσεως τοῦ κατὰ τὸν τοιόνδε τῆς σελήνης σχηματισμὸν πάσχειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὴν αἰτίαν δόξη τοῦ τηλικούτου κακοῦ μὴ "τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφόν" λαμβάνειν δαιμόνιον, ἀλλὰ ὁ μέγας ἐν οὐρανῷ φωστῆρ, ὁ τεταγμένος "εἰς ἀρχὰς τῆς νυκτός" [Gen 1.16] καὶ μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἀρχὴν τῆς τοιαύτης ἐν ἀνθρώποις νόσου. καὶ

“ἀδικίαν γε εἰς τὸ ὕψος” λαλοῦσι [Ps 72.8] πάντες ὅσοι παρὰ τὴν τῶν ἄστρον σχέσιν φασὶν εἶναι τὴν αἰτίαν πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς (εἴτε καθολικῶν εἴτε καὶ τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστον) συμπτωμάτων· καὶ οἱ τοιοῦτοὶ γε ἀληθῶς “ἔθεντο εἰς οὐρανὸν τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν” [Ps 72.9] κακοποιούς τινες λέγοντες εἶναι τῶν ἀστέρων καὶ ἄλλους ἀγαθοποιούς, οὐδενὸς ἄστρου γενομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν ὄλων ἵνα κακοποιῇ... (p. 193.19–25, 194.1–23 Klostermann [GCS]).

37. On this see Part B chapter 20 below.
38. Εἰκὸς δὲ ὅτι, ὡσπερ τοῦτο τὸ ἐνεργοῦν τὸν καλούμενον σεληνιασμὸν πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἐπιτηρεῖ τοὺς τῆς σελήνης σχηματισμοὺς ... οὕτως καὶ ἄλλα πνεύματα καὶ δαιμόνια πρὸς τινες σχηματισμοὺς τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων, ἵνα μὴ μόνον σελήνη ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ λουδορηθῶσιν ἀστέρες ὑπὸ τῶν “ἀδικίαν εἰς τὸ ὕψος” λαλούντων (Ps 72.8) (p. 194.28–195.10 Klostermann).
39. διαβάλλειν τὰ κτίσματα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα καὶ ἀδικία “εἰς τὸ ὕψος” λαληθῇ καὶ θῶνται “εἰς οὐρανὸν τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν” (p. 193.31–34 Klostermann).
40. qui putabantur lunatici ob daemonum fallaciam, qui observantes lunaria tempora creaturam infamare cupiebant ut in creatorem blasphemiae redundarent (CCL 7, 23.409–11).
41. ἔστι γοῦν ἀκοῦσαι τῶν γενεθλιαλόγων, τὴν αἰτίαν πάσης μανίας καὶ παντὸς δαιμονιασμοῦ ἀναφερόντων ἐπὶ τοὺς τῆς σελήνης σχηματισμοὺς (p. 195.13–16 Klostermann). See Francis Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen, 1984), 390.
42. Gustave Bardy, “Origène et la Magie,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 18 (1928): 130–131.
43. Matt 4. 24 parallels δαιμονιζομένους καὶ σεληνιαζομένους καὶ παραλυτικούς.
44. See Préaux, “Lune,” 91–92, and the sources cited in 91n4. Préaux claims that the association does not appear in Greek before the Hellenistic period and thus assumes the expansion of astrology in the west. Regarding the moon and σεληνιασμός see Cumont, *L’Égypte des Astrologues*, 168 and n4, 169 and nn1–2.
45. εἰς τὸν διὰ τινος αἰτίας παραδιδόμενον αὐτῷ καὶ μὴ ποιήσαντα ἑαυτὸν ἄξιον φρουρᾶς ἀγγελικῆς.... (p. 195.2–4 Klostermann).
46. Non ille qui patiebatur sed daemon debuerat increpari. Sive increpavit puerum et exiit ab eo daemon quia propter peccata sua a daemone fuerat oppressus (CCL 77, 152.378–81).

47. Préaux, "La Lune," 92, who adds: "C' est le schéma de la tragédie grecque."
48. p. 112–16, 130–31, 270–71 des Places (SC).
49. p. 30.33–31.38 Henry. Astrology is again portrayed by Diodore in the context of the battle between God and the demons later in the same work (p. 44–45). Military imagery is also used by Ambrosiaster, who in commenting on 1 Cor 1.20 refers to the advocate of astrology as the recruiting officer of this present world (conquisitor ... saeculi) (CSEL 81/2, 15.2–5).
50. p. 43.44–44.22 Henry.
51. p. 264.6–13 Rehm.
52. F. Stanley Jones, "Pseudo-Clementines," EEC, 2nd ed., vol. 2, 964–65.
53. See Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 187–88.
54. Bouché-Leclercq, 527–29.
55. p. 58–63 McDonough.
56. vol. 1, p. 184 Feiertag (SC). On the date of this work see the editor's introduction, p. 16–22.
57. vol. 1, p. 178–182 Feiertag (SC).
58. Constantinus de Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (Hildesheim, 1966; repr. of 1876 ed.), 132n9 (Latin version of the Sahidic). The Bohairic version also refers to the decans: see J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1993), 115.
59. Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 111. According to Wolfgang A. Bienert the text originated in Egypt about 400 (*New Testament Apocrypha*, rev. ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1 [Westminster, 1991], 484).
60. CCL 29, 14.35–39.
61. Contra Bruning, "De l'Astrologie," 601 and O'Donnell, vol. 2, 210. As well, contra Hendrikx, "Astrologie," 335–37, there is no indication in *Against the Sceptics* that Albicerius was an astrologer.
62. CCL 47, 233–34, citing Apuleius.

63. CSEL 41, 597–618.
64. CCL 47, 135.50–54.
65. On Augustine's view of the qualities of the bodies of angels and demons, see *City of God* 15.23 and 21.10; *Letter* 95.8; *On Psalms* 85.17; *On the Trinity* 3.1.4–5.
66. partim subtilioris sensus acumine, quia corporibus subtilioribus vigent, partim experientia callidiore propter tam magnam longitudinem vitae, partim sanctis angelis, quod ipsi ab omnipotente deo discut, etiam iussu eius sibi revelantibus ... aliquando autem idem nefandi spiritus etiam quae ipsi facturi sunt velut divinando praedicunt (CSEL 28/1, 61.20–26).

9. *Christian Condemnations of Astrology in a Broader Context*

In early Christian writings astrology is condemned together with a number of other practices of which the Christians also disapproved. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus cast his net wide, condemning astrology (i.e. the belief that the world is run by the stars and configurations of fate, ἀστροσὶν ἄγεσθαι καὶ σχηματισμοῖς ἀνάγκης) alongside of atheism, denial of divine providence, attributing events to chance (τύχη), and hedonism (*Orations* 4.44).¹ Augustine also lists astrology within a broad spectrum of “sinful” activities in *Sermon* 56.12,² and of “worldly burdens” in *Sermon* 88.25.³ In *Sermon* 9.17 Augustine tells his audience to “abstain from detestable seductions and enquiries, from astrologers, haruspices, fortune-tellers, augurs, impious people, and useless theatrical shows,”⁴ and he goes on (9.18) to enjoin adulterers, fornicators, murderers and those who frequent astrologers to repent.⁵

Astrology, Magic and Divination

Astrology and magic were of course closely associated in Greco-Roman antiquity;⁶ this association was strengthened in the minds of the early Christians by their rejection of both practices and by regarding both together as derived from demons.

The attribution of astrology to demons may be seen as a subset of the early Christians’ larger condemnation of magic as demonic.⁷ In *On Idolatry* 9.3, Tertullian writes “We know the mutual relationship between magic and astrology,”⁸ and in 9.6 he refers to astrology as a “species” of magic;⁹ he clarifies the relationship in 9.7, where magic is termed the “genus” to which astrology belongs as “species.”¹⁰ By subsuming astrology to the larger category of magic in this way, Tertullian can argue that the Biblical censure of magic (in his view, evident in the condemnations of Simon Magus and Bar-Jesus/Elymas in the Acts of the Apostles) also entails the rejection of astrology:¹¹ “But at any rate, if magic, of which astrology is a species, is punished, of course the species is also condemned in the genus.”¹² Astrology could also be seen as leading to magic: in his orations against the emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus attacks Julian’s “impious” learning concerning the stars, horoscopes and foreknowledge of the future, as well as the magic which follows from it (*Orations* 4.31).¹³

Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 4.26–31 refutes magic and astrology by describing their invention in some exotic detail. According to this text, after magic was invented by demons it was then discovered by Ham the son of Noah, who in turn handed down this knowledge to his son “Mestraim,” the ancestor of the Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians (*Recognitions* 4.27).¹⁴ (“Mestraim” is evidently a form of the Hebrew word for Egypt, מִצְרַיִם; for Egypt as the son of Ham see Gen 10.6.) This latter personage is said to have also been called Zoroaster, and as such is particularly associated with astrology in the text.

He was much and often attentive to the stars, and since he wanted to appear as a god among humans he began to bring forth certain sparks from the stars and show them to people; by this the rude and ignorant were bewildered as with a miracle. And wanting to increase their estimation of him in this way, he performed this again and again until he was set on fire and burned to ashes by that very demon that he had associated with inconveniently.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the text continues, despite his spectacular demise Zoroaster had a grave erected in his honour, and he was adored as a friend of God and as one who had been raised to heaven in a chariot of lightning; indeed, he came to be worshipped as a “living star” (*vivens astrum*), whence the name he was posthumously accorded (*Zoroastres, hoc est vivum sidus*) by those who were taught to speak the Greek language one generation later (4.28).¹⁶ The ashes of Zoroaster were transferred to the Persians that he might be worshipped as a heavenly god (4.29). The text then extends this sort of euhemerist explanation to other figures, including a king named Nimrod, whose name is *Nimus* among the Greeks and from whom the city of Nineveh took its name. (On Nimrod see Gen 1.9–10, where his kingdom is the land of Shinar, i.e. Babylon.) Nimrod is said to have received the magic art from above as by a flash of lightning (*quasi corusco ad eum delato*);¹⁷ in parallel versions of this story, the connection with Nimrod is evident in that the star which is invoked by Zoroaster is Orion, the catasterism of the great hunter.¹⁸

The combination of non-Biblical and Biblical mythological themes is the most striking feature of this passage from the *Recognitions*. The association of astrology with Zoroaster exemplifies the tendency of the ancients to attach knowledge that was regarded as arcane or esoteric to a respected sage or similar authority: in contrast to the traditional civic cults, proponents of esoteric religious knowledge often sought legitimacy by claiming the authority of an authoritative figure of the extremely remote past, who also properly belonged outside the bounds of Greco-Roman culture, such as Zoroaster.¹⁹

Thus, this text from the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* partakes of that “burgeoning Greek tradition who expropriated Zoroaster’s name because Zoroaster, the ‘living star’, was a ‘known’ Chaldean and hence manifestly an astrologer. The authority of the puissant and exotic name was all that was required.”²⁰ Aside from Zoroaster, the figure of Nimrod was also associated with astrology in ancient literature;²¹ both of these traditional authorities are brought together in this section of the *Recognitions* which deals with the etiology of magic and astrology. Of course, both the Biblical and non-Biblical elements are primarily used in the text for polemical purposes in order to portray magic and astrology as means by which human beings were turned away from God (4.29).²²

Astrologers were often connected by the early Christians with other persons they classified as adherents of false religion.²³ In *Didache* 3.4 the practice of astrology is listed as an occupation forbidden to Christians, alongside being a diviner and an enchanter.²⁴ This prohibition is later repeated in the *Apostolic Tradition* 16.14²⁵ and in *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.11.²⁶ Clement of Alexandria ascribes all methods of “pagan” divination to fallen angels (*Prophetic Eclogues* 53.4).²⁷ Astrology is condemned along with divination (μαντεία) in a fragment of Origen (frag. 49 on Jer 36.8)²⁸ and in a sermon of Gregory of Nazianzus.²⁹ Tertullian brands together various types of divination (astrology, haruspicy, augury, as well as consulting with magi about the emperor’s fate) as “arts produced by rebel angels and forbidden by God” (*Apology* 35.12);³⁰ for similar lists which include astrology see *On Idolatry* 9.7,³¹ *On the Dress of Women* 1.2.1³² and *Apology* 43.1–2.³³ Astrology and divination are condemned together by Lactantius in *Divine Institutes* 2, 15.6–16.1 on the basis of the authority of Hermes Trismegistus, Asclepius and the Sybilline Oracle.³⁴

In his Commentary on Genesis 1.14 Origen refers to other divinatory practices and contrasts them with astrology to support his view that the stars are signs, and not causes, of events. He argues that if telling omens by means of the flight of birds or sacrifices or observation of the stars (τὴν ἀστεροσκοπικὴν) does not contain the “proper cause” (τὸ ποιοῦν αἴτιον) of events then the same should hold true for genethliology: why should events be caused by the stars (as the astrologers claim) and not by birds (the objects of augury) or the entrails of sacrificed animals (in haruspicy) or shooting stars (seen as omens)? (*Philocalia* 23.16)³⁵

Augustine also condemned astrology in the context of other types of divination. In *Against the Sceptics* 1.7.19 one of the speakers in the dialogue,

Trygetius, condemns the Carthaginian seer Albicerius because his words were not always true, and avers that for the same reason he also rejects haruspices, augurs, those who consult the stars, interpreters of dreams, etc.³⁶ Augustine also condemns astrology alongside other types of divination in his sermons on the Psalms (*On Psalms* 73.18;³⁷ *On Psalms* Ps 91.10³⁸).

In his treatise *On Christian Teaching* Augustine offers a unique treatment of astrology in the context of magic and divination (2.19.29–24.37). Here, while Augustine portrays some superstitions as relatively innocuous, others are described in much more malign terms, and conspicuous among the latter is astrology (2.21.32).³⁹ Augustine writes that using data gained from observation of the heavens to predict an individual's future is a great mistake and madness (*magnus error et magna dementia*), and he designates astrologers as wretches who are consulted by those even more wretched than themselves (*miseri a miserioribus consuluntur*) (2.22.33).⁴⁰ He also adduces a Biblical proof-text, Wisdom of Solomon 13.9: "For if they have been able to know so much that they could calculate the age of the universe, how is it that they did not all the more readily find its Lord?" (*Si enim tantum potuerunt scire, ut possent aestimare saeculum, quomodo eius dominum non facilius invenerunt?*),⁴¹ adding that those who have realized that such things are better forgotten know that astrology is to be refuted (2.22.33).⁴² The latter implicit allusion to Augustine's own attraction to astrology in his youth suggests that here, as elsewhere in his writings, Augustine's anti-astrological polemic is strongly coloured by his personal experience.

After invoking his favourite argument of twins against astrology (2.22.33–34), Augustine then returns to the larger theme which he has been addressing in book 2 of *On Christian Teaching*, his theory of signs.⁴³ Astrology, he writes, is a system of signs developed by human pride and is therefore a type of vicious contract between demons and human beings (2.22.34–23.35).⁴⁴ He follows this with another metaphor that parallels the image of a contract with demons, describing astrology as a kind of spiritual fornication with God's enemies (2.23.35).⁴⁵ Augustine's concern with predictions that prove successful is evident in the Biblical support which he chooses to cite against such "fornicatio animae": the texts to which he refers each describe instances of veracious divination, i.e. the prophecy of the dead Samuel summoned by the medium of Endor at the request of Saul (1 Sam 28.7–19) and the acknowledgement of the apostles by a divinatory demon (Acts 16.16–18). Because of the association of divination with demons in these texts, Augustine concludes, Christians must completely reject astrology.

Therefore all masters of this type of useless and harmful superstition, and the contracts, as it were, of a faithless and deceitful friendship established out of a certain destructive community of people and demons, are to be completely rejected and avoided by the Christian. “Not that an idol is anything,” says the apostle, “but because what they sacrifice is sacrificed to demons and not to God I do not want you to become associates with demons” [1 Cor 10. 19–20]. (2.23.36)⁴⁶

The choice of this Pauline citation is also determined by Augustine’s view of astrology and divination as demonic; thus he completely ignores Paul’s other, parallel comments that it was Christians who were “weak” who had scruples about meat sacrificed to idols, and that only love should be the principle for Christian behaviour in such matters (1 Cor 8). In the rest of his discussion of astrology and divination in *On Christian Teaching* (2.23.36– 24.37) Augustine briefly raises several other objections: that such practices draw people to idolatry, or to worship the creation rather than the creator; that they are not public activities which foster love of God and neighbour but fix the heart on private, selfish desires for temporal benefits;⁴⁷ that they were devised by the demons to restrict and obstruct people from returning to God; in short, they are full of destructive curiosity, tormenting worry and slavery which leads to death.⁴⁸

A remarkable feature of Augustine’s treatment of astrology and divination in *On Christian Teaching* is his view that divinatory practices, as a system of signs, are a social convention comparable to human language.⁴⁹ Augustine’s discussion of such sign systems recalls the modern discipline of sociology of knowledge⁵⁰ in that he saw signification and meaning as constructed within, and constitutive of, social communities. In *On Christian Teaching* 1.2.1 Augustine distinguishes between knowledge of things (res) and of signs (signa) but asserts that things are learned by signs: “Omnis doctrina vel rerum est vel signorum, sed res per signa discuntur.”⁵¹ That distinction summarizes the outline of the rest of *On Christian Teaching*: in book 1 Augustine deals with the knowledge of things (res) in terms of his concepts of use (uti) and enjoyment (frui), while signs (signa) are discussed in books 2–4. The comparatively larger treatment accorded to the discussion of signs reflects Augustine’s conviction that all human knowledge is dependent on signs. At the beginning of book 2, Augustine divides signs into those which have their meaning by nature (signa naturalia), i.e. signs which convey meaning without any desire or intention of signifying (such as smoke signifying fire) (2.1.2),⁵² and those which derive their meaning from convention (signa data) (2.2.3).⁵³

Rist comments:

Whether Augustine's distinction is precise or not, or whether it is to be regarded as a rule of thumb, his intention is plain enough: knowledge is of things (res) or of signs, but it is by means of signs that we know things, for a sign is itself a thing which 'brings something else to mind' (*in cogitationem*) or communicates what is in the mind of whoever makes the sign to somebody else's mind (or, presumably, to the awareness of an animal). Thus verbal signs are of circumscribed usefulness and will clearly be effective only in a community, whether of humans or animals, which recognizes the relevant 'conventions' of communication.⁵⁴

In effect for Augustine, language (i.e. signa data) provides the basis for all human interaction, communication and community, and in this sense all communities are linguistic communities.⁵⁵ Moreover, at least in *On Christian Teaching* the differences between communities are delineated in what amount to linguistic or hermeneutical terms.⁵⁶ For example, Augustine condemns the "miserable servitude" of the Jews because they refused to accept the "true" (i.e. Christian) meaning of the Old Testament signs; playing on the linguistic theme of his argument Augustine also invokes the well worn Pauline letter/spirit dichotomy against the Jews (3.5.9).⁵⁷ However, according to Augustine, along the spectrum of "servitude" to the sign even worse than the Jewish "signa pro rebus accipere" is "pagan" idolatry which worships the very signs per se within natural creation. Here the linguistic theme is reinforced by the traditional Christian accusation that "pagan" religion entails the worship of the creation rather than the Creator (3.7.11).⁵⁸ Both Judaism and "pagan" religion misunderstood the signs of God placed in the Old Testament or in the world of nature, and their error is thus "hermeneutical"; both ignored the "higher" reference of that which the signs signified. Though he regarded "paganism" as worse than Judaism in this regard (3.7.11),⁵⁹ for Augustine the divinely given signs can ultimately only be properly read from a Christian perspective. R.A. Markus is thus surely incorrect when he tries to make the naive case that on the basis of Augustine's thought ("in a very authentically Augustinian direction") an inclusive community could be envisioned comprised of Christians, Jews and all those "able to see the world of creatures as pointing beyond themselves to God."⁶⁰

"Pagan" religion not only confuses the creation for the Creator; for the early Christians it also entails consorting with demons, and this aspect of Augustine's view of linguistic communities comes to the fore in his discussion of divination in *On Christian Teaching* 2.19.29–24.37 (on which see above p. 143–44). His insertion of the subject of divination into his treatment of signs and language in the text reflects what has been called Augustine's

“phenomenological” approach to understanding language, in which starting from some observed phenomenon he proceeds to offer a theological explanation.⁶¹ Augustine claims that since magic and divination are demonic, practices such as astrology bring a person into fellowship with demons (2.24.34).⁶² “Magical invocations, to be effective, presuppose a solidarity between magician and the demons which lend magic its efficacy;”⁶³ yet it is a malignant efficacy which the various types of divination possess, since divinatory practices are evil and the pact between humans and demons inherent in divination is a “perniciosa societas.”⁶⁴ The choice of human beings to enter into such solidarity is simultaneous with their use of the agreed conventions (i.e. the “signs,” the “language”) of divination. In the very choice to take up a practice such as astrology, Augustine held that humans also choose the fellowship of demons. “It is as if a person entered the ‘contract’ with the demons in the very movement of his will towards the demons with whom he associates himself.”⁶⁵

Yet one’s entry into communities such as Augustine is describing in *On Christian Teaching* does not ultimately depend on personal choice. As Markus writes:

It was clear to Augustine that if the meanings of expressions are ‘conventional’ in the sense that their links with their referents are not fixed by nature, they are, nevertheless, not freely chosen by the language-user, but imposed by the conventions of the existing linguistic community, its habits and traditions. You do not *choose* to use the language of demons, thereby entering a community with them; rather, you belong to their community, so you speak their language.⁶⁶

Augustine was himself aware of the fact that human linguistic activity is socially derived, as is evident from *Confessions* 1.18.29: “See the exact care with which the sons of men observe the conventions of letters and syllables received from those who so talked before them.”⁶⁷ Thus there is a logical inconsistency between Augustine’s construal of divination and astrology as a system of signs or language occurring in demonic-human society and his emphasis on personal and intentional choice to enter into that society. Markus raises this inconsistency in Augustine’s thought but fails to really address it, focussing on the role of “intention” in entering into the demonic-human community wherein magic and divination occur.⁶⁸ Indeed, Markus presents the intentions of demons and humans in entering this community as parallel when he writes that for Augustine the community is

brought into being through evil men, seeking their own, selfish and ‘private’ ends, being assisted by demonic powers similarly intent on their own, ‘private’, glorification. The community sharing a symbolic system is brought into being by the identity of intentions.⁶⁹

This seems very different from the usual early Christian view that divination originated with the demons, a view which Augustine also shared: for Augustine and other early Christians the demonic-human relationship was conceived as fundamentally unequal. Indeed, as we have seen for the early Christians the demonic origins of astrology were seen as prior to human participation in astrology. There is a logical tension, therefore, between this view of astrology as originating from demons and Augustine’s depiction of astrology and divination as practices of (demonic-human) “communities” which one chooses to enter. Ultimately, the issue comes down to that question which held endless fascination for Augustine: “unde malum?”⁷⁰

Astrology as Heterodoxy

Astrology was also associated with false teaching (heresy) in the minds of many early Christian writers. For example, Tertullian connects both heresy and astrology with “curiositas” (*Prescription Against the Heretics* 43.1).⁷¹ To defenders of orthodoxy, astrology became one of the standard activities engaged in by “heretics,” and hence a further reason for condemning them. For example, Irenaeus addresses Marcus the Valentinian in verse as follows, quoting a “divinely inspired old man”:

You are a maker of idols, Marcus, and a watcher of omens; you know astrology and the art of magic; through these you assert your teaching of error, displaying signs to those who are seduced by you, works of apostate virtue which your father Satan shows you (*Against the Heresies* 1.15.6).⁷²

When later heresiologists such as Hippolytus and Epiphanius wrote against Valentinianism they drew on this passage from Irenaeus.⁷³ In the prologue to the *Refutation of All Heresies*, Hippolytus asserts that astrology is one of the primary sources of heresy: “the teachings of heretics have their source in the wisdom of the Greeks, the opinions of those who engage in philosophy, those who undertake mysteries and roaming astrologers.”⁷⁴

The heresiologists also expanded on the association of astrology and heresy. Aside from the diatribe against astrology per se in the *Refutation* Hip-

polytus also attacks as heretical a number of groups (the allegorizers of Aratus, the Peratae, and the Elchasaites) that featured astrological themes in their teachings,⁷⁵ while in *Refutation* 7.27.5 he claims that the Gnostic teacher Basilides was associated with astrology in that he subordinated Christ to the power of γένεσις.⁷⁶ For Epiphanius, astrological beliefs furnish one of the grounds for his condemnation of the Pharisees as a “heresy” (*Panarion* 16).⁷⁷ In his attack on Marcion and his followers, Tertullian emphasizes the connection between the Marcionites and astrology (*Against Marcion* 1.18.1).⁷⁸

In *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.35 Augustine asserts that loyalty to sound faith entails rejecting astrology.⁷⁹ Augustine also condemned certain “heretics” as well as astrologers for invoking John 2.4, “My hour is not yet come” (*On John* 8.8). This text was being interpreted christologically by certain people who were denying the joint divinity and the humanity of Christ⁸⁰ and it was also being used by adherents of astrology to claim justification for astrology on the basis of Christ’s words, as well as that Christ himself admitted he was subject to fate. Augustine connects all of this with the serpent that tempted Eve: “To which shall we reply first, therefore, to the heretics or the astrologers? For both come from that snake, and want to ruin the church’s purity of heart which it has in complete faith.”⁸¹ Belief in astrology again functions as a criterion of heresy in Augustine’s discussion of the Priscillianists in *On Heresies* 70.1.⁸²

The accusation of astrology was also one of the charges which were levelled against Origen by Theophilus of Alexandria during the “Origenist controversy” of the early fifth century.⁸³

Notes

1. p. 144.4–9 Bernardi (SC 309).
2. Abstinentes ab idololatria, a constellationibus mathematicorum, a remediis incantatorum; abstinentes a deceptionibus haeticorum, a conscissionibus schismatorum; abstinentes ab homicidiis, ab adulteriis et fornicationibus, a furtis et rapinis, a falsis testimoniis.... (PL 38, 382).
3. Sic ergo, fratres mei, quotquot habetis inter vos, qui adhuc amore saeculi praegravantur, avaros, perjuros, adulteros, spectatores nugarum, consultores mathematicorum, fanaticorum, augurum, aruspicum, ebriosos, luxuriosos, quidquid inter vos malorum esse nostis; quantum potestis, improbate, ut corde recedatis; ut

- redarguite, et exeat inde; et nolite consentire, ut immundum non tangatis (PL 38, 553).
4. ...abstinetes vos a detestabilibus corruptelis et a detestabilibus inquisitionibus, a mathematicis, ab aruspibus, a sortilegis, ab auguribus, a sacrilegis; abstinetes vos, quantum potestis, a nugatoriis spectaculis (PL 38,88).
 5. ...si moechus eras, noli esse moechus; si fornicator eras, noli fornicari; si homicida, noli esse homicida; si ibas ad mathematicum et ad caeteras pestes sacrilegas, iam desine (PL 38, 88).
 6. See Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 151–179. However, some astrologers also sought to distance themselves from magicians: Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* could hardly be said to deal with a form of magic.
 7. See e.g. Justin, *Second Apology*, 3.5.
 8. Scimus magiae et astrologiae inter se societatem (p. 36–37 trans. Waszink and van Winden).
 9. alia illa species magiae, quae miraculis operatur, etiam adversus Moysen aemulata (p. 36–37 Waszink and van Winden). The reference is to the Egyptian magicians who copied the plagues (Ex 7.8–12, 19–22; 8.5–7, 16–18). These magicians were embellished within Jewish and Christian traditions, and later identified by name as Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim 3.8); see Albert Pietersma, ed. *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians* (Leiden, 1994), 3–71.
 10. Cf. *On the Soul* 57.6 (CCL 2, 866.35–40) where “magia” is subdivided into the ability to conjure demons and “illa alia specie magiae,” the power of conjuring the souls of the dead.
 11. See Acts 8.9–24 and 13.6–12 for the respective accounts of these “magicians.” Tertullian also mentions Simon Magus and Elymas together—again in connection with Moses—in *On the Soul* 57.7 (CCL 2, 866.40ff.). Of course, Simon Magus featured prominently in early Christian writings on magic (see Robert F. Stoops, “Simon 13,” ABD vol. 6, 29-31, and Waszink and van Winden, 173); on Simon Magus in the writings of Tertullian, see Waszink’s ed. of Tertullian’s *De anima*, 401–05.
 12. Attamen cum magia punitur, cuius est species astrologia, utique et species in genere damnatur (p.36.34–36 trans. Waszink and van Winden). Note that Tertullian incorrectly claims that Elymas was opposed by the same apostles as Simon Magus: in the Acts accounts, the latter was punished by Peter and John while Elymas was

opposed by Paul and Barnabas. Tertullian's fluidity in Biblical citation is also apparent in his quotation of Acts 8.21 in the next section of *On Idolatry* (9.8): "Non est tibi pars neque sors in ista ratione." This again derives from the story of Simon Magus in Acts 8, where v. 21 (οὐκ ἔστιν σοι μερίς οὐδὲ κληρος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ) refers to Peter's judgment that Simon has no share in the gospel, and in particular in the conferring of the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands which Simon has attempted to purchase. In either case, by translating λόγος as "ratio" (rather than the more usual "sermo") Tertullian has significantly changed the meaning of the text, i.e. his version does not deal with the gift that Simon Magus was after but rather the knowledge or science (ratio) of astrology which is to be abandoned. Thus Tertullian renders Acts 8.21 more amenable to his point that the Christian should have no part in astrology and magic. In fact, Tertullian usually used "sermo" (rather than "verbum") to render the term λόγος in the NT, as has been clearly demonstrated by René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien*, 2e éd. (Paris, 1977), 266-271.

13. τὸ τῆς ἀσεβείας διδασκαλεῖον, ὅση τε περὶ ἀστρονομίαν καὶ τὰς γενέσεις καὶ φαντασίαν προγνώσεως ... καὶ τὴν ἐπομένην τούτοις γοητικὴν (p. 128.5–7 Bernardi). Gregory condemns Julian's interest in astrology at greater length in *Orations* 5.5 (p. 302 Bernardi).
14. p. 159.4–22 Rehm.
15. hic ergo astris multum ac frequenter intentus, et volens apud homines videri deus velut scintillas quasdam ex stellis producere et hominibus ostentare coepit, quo rudes atque ignari in stuporem miraculi traherentur, cupiensque augere de se huiusmodi opinionem, saepius ista moliebatur usquequo ab ipso daemone, quem inportunius frequentabat, igni succensus concremaretur (p. 159.24–160.4 Rehm; trans. Smith, ANF 8, 140).
16. p. 160.4–11 Rehm. On this etymology, see Beck, "Thus Spake Not Zarathustra," 523.
17. p. 160.15–18 Rehm.
18. Beck, "Thus Spake Not Zarathustra," 523n82.
19. Richard Gordon, "Authority, Salvation and Mystery in the Mysteries of Mithras," in *Image and Mystery in the Roman World: Papers Given in Memory of Jocelyn Toynbee* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988), 47. Gordon's point, made with regard to the mysteries of Mithras, of course also applies to ancient astrology. On the growing fascination with the wisdom of the East during the Hellenistic period see Martin

- Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia, 1974), vol. 1, 210–214.
20. Beck, “Thus Spake Not Zarathustra,” 525.
 21. See Pieter W. van der Horst, “Nimrod after the Bible,” *Essays on the Jewish World of Early Christianity* (Freiburg, 1990), 220–32.
 22. p. 160.18–161.2 Rehm.
 23. For example, in *Against Cresconius* 4.61.74 Augustine refers to “gentium barbararum proprias religiones, Persarum ritus, sidera Chaldaeorum, Aegyptiorum superstitiones, deos magorum” (CSEL 52, 573.18–20).
 24. p. 152.7–154.11 Rordorf-Tuilier (SC 248).
 25. Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Minneapolis, 2002), 90.
 26. p. 238.33 Metzger (SC 336).
 27. τοὺς παραβάοντας ἀγγέλους διδάξει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀστρονομίαν καὶ μαντικὴν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας (p. 152.9–10 Stählin [GCS]).
 28. p. 223 Klostermann (GCS).
 29. nulla apud nos magorum immolatio et in fibris quaesita praesentia; nulla apud nos Chaldaeorum astronomia et nativitates humanae astrorum caelestium cursibus ponderatae (Rufinus’ Latin version) (CSEL 46/1, 114.13–15).
 30. artes...ab angelis desertoribus proditas et a deo interdictas (CCL 1, 146.61). Jerome too lists together enchanters, augurs, soothsayers, magi, astrologers and and “Gazarenorum studium, quos nos auruspices appellamus” in his Commentary on Isaiah 13 (on Is 47.12–15) [CCL 73A, 524.23–525.24, 49–50], with a similar list in his Commentary on Daniel 1 (on Dan 2.2) [CCL 75A, 784.158–169]).
 31. Post evangelium nusquam invenias aut sophistas aut Chaldaeos aut incantatores aut coniectores aut magos nisi plane punitos (p. 36.36–37 Waszink and van Winden). Tertullian goes on to support this assertion by citing 1 Cor 1.20: Ubi sapiens, ubi litterator, ubi conquisitor huius aevi? Nonne infatuavit deus sapientiam huius saeculi? Again, this is likely his own translation of the Biblical text; “sapientia huius saeculi” is usually applied to human wisdom in general rather than specifically occult learning (Waszink and van Winden 176–77). A parallel to this usage is found in

Ambrosiaster's commentary on 1 Cor 1.20, where this text is applied to astrology in particular (CSEL 81/2, 15.2–5).

32. metallorum opera...herbarum ingenia...incantationum vires...omnem curiositatem usque ad stellarum interpretationem... [et] instrumentum... muliebris gloriae... (CCL 1, 349.6–10). For a similar list of censured behaviour, also focussing on feminine adornment, see Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 8.14 (p. 127.11–22 Rehm; astrology is mentioned in 1.17–18).
33. CCL 1.158.1–5: His infructuosos esse magnus est fructus.
34. vol. 2, 192–94 Monat (SC); cf. *Epitome* 23.5–9. On Lactantius' use of the Hermetic writings see Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton, 1986, 1993), 205–10.
35. p. 186.38–48 Junod. Junod, 187n3 rightly adopts the reading διαπτόντων ἀστέρων found in Eusebius' citation of Origen's commentary. On shooting stars as omens, see Bouché-Leclercq, 358. The same argument had been made by Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.1.5 (vol. 3, p. 24 Armstrong).
36. CCL 29, 14.1–18.
37. CCL 39, 1017.23–24.
38. CCL 39, 1287.32–35.
39. Neque illi ab hoc genere perniciosae superstitionis segregandi sunt, qui genethliaci propter natalium dierum considerationes, nunc autem vulgo mathematici vocantur (CCL 32, 55.1–3). R.A. Markus, "Signs, Communication, and Communities in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," in *De Doctrina Christiana: a Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (North Bend, 1995), 105–06 discusses the polysemy in Augustine's discussion of signs at this point in *On Christian Teaching* and its relation to Augustine's view of the relationship between Christian and secular society.
40. CCL 32, 56.1–6.
41. *On Christian Teaching* 2.21.32 (*ibid.*, 56.34–36). On Augustine's use of this text elsewhere see O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 2, 287.
42. apud eos quidem, qui talia dediscenda didicerunt, sine ulla dubitatione refellitur haec superstitio (CCL 32, 56.3–4).
43. On this see John M. Rist, "Words, Signs and Things," in *Augustine: Ancient Thought*

Baptized, 23–40.

44. CCL 32, 57.30–58.12. Cf. also 2.24.37 on divination as a system of signs between humans and demons; on astrology and human pride cf. *Confessions* 5.3.3 and the preface to *On the Trinity* 4.
45. CCL 32, 58.12–16. Astrology and divination are similarly referred to in *On Psalms* 140.18 (CCL 40, 2038.24–26) and *Sermon* 9.3 (PL 38,76). On “fornicatio animae” in Augustine see Bouché-Leclercq, 620n4.
46. Omnes igitur artifices huiusmodi vel nugatoriae vel noxiae superstitionis <et> ex quadam pestifera societate hominum et daemonum quasi pacta infidelis et dolosae amicitiae constituta penitus sunt repudianda et fugienda Christiano, “Non quod idolum sit aliquid,” ait apostolus, “sed quia quae immolant, daemioniis immolant, et non deo; nolo vos socios daemoniorum fieri” (CCL 32, 58.23–28; the insertion of ‘et’ is suggested in the ed. of R.P.H. Green [1995], 98).
47. This aspect of Augustine’s view of the pact between demons and humans inherent in astrology and other types of divination is well brought out in William S. Babcock, “*Caritas* and Signification in *De Doctrina Christiana* 1–3,” in *De Doctrina Christiana: a Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Arnold and Bright, 150–52. See also Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 614 and n129, and Robert A. Markus, “Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory,” in Markus, ed. *Signs and Meanings* (Liverpool, 1996), 131–133.
48. Quae tamen plena sunt omnia pestiferae curiositatis, cruciantis sollicitudinis, mortiferae servitutis (CCL 32, 59.3–4).
49. This is also evident in 2.24.37, where in the midst of his discussion of divination he refers to the semantic difference between the letter ‘τ’ in Greek and ‘t’ in Latin, and the homonyms βῆτα and ‘beta’ (“beet” in Latin) and λέγε (speak) and ‘lege’ (“read” in Latin).
50. Babcock, “*Caritas* and Signification,” 151 and 159n9.
51. CCL 32, 7.1–2. (Every teaching is either of things or of signs, but a thing is learned through signs.)
52. Signorum igitur alia sunt naturalia, alia data. Naturalia sunt, quae sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi praeter se aliquid aliud ex se cognosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem (CCL 32, 32.12–33.15). Other examples he mentions are

the footprints of an animal and emotions evident from human facial expressions.

53. Data vero signa sunt, quae sibi quaeque viventia invicem dant ad demonstrandos, quantum possunt, motus animi sui vel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet. Nec ulla causa est nobis significandi, id est signi dandi, nisi ad depromendum et traiciendum in alterius animum id, quod animo gerit, qui signum dat (CCL 32, 33.1–6).
54. Rist, *Augustine*, 34. Augustine also conceived of a “community” of human beings with demons, which used divination as its system of signs; Rist refers to this on p. 35.
55. On the problem of failure of communication see Rist, *Augustine*, 23–40 passim.
56. I follow here the suggestion of R.A. Markus, “World and Text in Ancient Christianity I: Augustine,” in *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool, 1996) 41. Cf. Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 614: “On pourrait dire qu’il [Augustin] aborde la *superstitio* [e.g. astrology] comme un phénomène linguistique.”
57. Nam in principio cavendum est, ne figuratam locutionem ad litteram accipias. Et ad hoc enim pertinet, quod ait apostolus: ‘Littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat’ [2 Cor 3.6]. Cum enim figurate dictum sic accipitur, tamquam proprie dictum sit, carnaliter sapitur.... Qui enim sequitur litteram, translata verba sicut propria tenet neque illud, quod proprio verbo significatur refert ad aliam significationem, sed si ‘sabbatum’ audierit verbi gratia, non intellegit nisi unum diem de septem, qui continuo volumine repetuntur; et cum audierit ‘sacrificium’, non excedit cogitatione illud, quod fieri de victimis pecorum terrenisque fructibus solet. Ea demum est miserabilis animi servitus, signa pro rebus accipere; et supra creaturam corpoream, oculum mentis ad hauriendum aeternum lumen levare non posse (CCL 32, 82.3–83.19).
58. Et si quando aliqui eorum illa tamquam signa interpretari conabantur, ad creaturam colendam venerandamque referebant (CCL 32, 84.1–3). He goes on to condemn those who worship Neptune as well as those who regard the sea as divine.
59. Fateor tamen altius demersos esse, qui opera hominum deos putant, quam qui opera dei; ... Si ergo signum utiliter institutum pro ipsa re sequi, cui significandae institutum est, carnalis est servitus, quanto magis inutilium rerum signa instituta pro rebus accipere? (CCL 32, 84.16–85.23).
60. Markus, “World and Text I,” 34.
61. Rist, *Augustine*, 33–34.
62. CCL 32, 59.1–3, 8–10; p. 60, 18–24. See also *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17

- (CSEL 28/1, 62.1–3).
63. R.A. Markus, “St. Augustine on Signs,” in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus (New York, 1972), 78.
 64. The term is that of Andrew Louth, “Augustine on Language,” *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989): 152.
 65. See Markus’ nuanced discussion in “Signs, Communication and Communication,” 99–100. In “Augustine on Magic,” 136 he refers to the “language of almost legal precision” with which Augustine describes the pact between demons and humans in divination.
 66. Markus, “Augustine on Magic,” 137 (emphasis his). In n28 he refers to Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, 3e ed. (Paris, 1967), 104: “Si par rapport à l’idée qu’il représente, le signifiant apparaît comme librement choisi, en revanche, par rapport à la communauté linguistique qui l’emploie, il n’est pas libre, il est imposé.”
 67. Vide, domine Deus, et patienter, ut vides, vide quomodo diligenter observent filii hominum pacta litterarum et syllabarum accepta a prioribus locutoribus (CCL 27, 16.18–20; trans. Chadwick, 21). Augustine’s theory of signs is described exclusively in terms of intentionality in Giovanni Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, trans. Christine Richardson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 166–67.
 68. Markus, “World and Text I,” 31; “Augustine on Magic,” 137–40.
 69. Markus, “Augustine on Magic,” 137.
 70. On this all important theme in Augustine’s thought see Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Norwich, 1986), 196–211.
 71. Notata sunt etiam commercia haereticorum cum magis quam pluribus, cum circulatoribus, cum astrologis, cum philosophis, curiositatis scilicet et deditis (CCL 1, 222.24–26).
 72. Idolorum fabricator, Marce, et portentorum inspector/ Astrologiae cognitor et magicae artis./ Per quae confirmas erroris doctrinas,/ Signa ostendens his qui a te seducuntur,/ Apostolicae virtutis operationes,/ Quae tibi praestat tuus pater Satanus (vol. 2, p. 250.147–252.154 Rousseau–Doutreleau [SC 264]). Irenaeus also attributed astrology to other Gnostic opponents, Saturninus and Basilides, comparing their concept of 365 heavenly places to that of astrologers and adding that they accept

astrological propositions and doctrines (*Against the Heresies* 1.24.7; *ibid.* p. 332.119–123).

73. See Hippolytus, *Refutation* 6.39–55, who also describes Marcus’ Valentinianism as “partly an astrological and arithmetical invention from Pythagoras” and “usurping these things from the philosophy of Pythagoras and the curiosity of the astrologers [and] invoking Christ as having transmitted them” (ὄντα μέρη ἀστρολογικῆς ἐφευρέσεως καὶ ἀριθμητικῆς Πυθαγορείου ... τὰ αὐτῶν ἐφευρήματα ... ἐκ τῆς Πυθαγορείου φιλοσοφίας καὶ ἀστρολόγων περιεργίας ταῦτα σφετερισμένους ἐγκαλεῖν Χριστῷ ὡς ταῦτα παραδεδωκέναι [p.272.3–4, 278.10–12 Marcovich]) . See also Eriphanius, *Panarion* 34.11.11 (p. 23.8–15 Holl [GCS]).
74. ἀλλ’ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς τὰ δοξαζόμενα <τὴν> ἀρχὴν μὲν ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλήνων σοφίας λαβόντα, ἐκ δογμάτων φιλοσοφουμένων καὶ μυστηρίων ἐπιχειρημένων καὶ ἀστρολόγων ῥεμβομένων (p. 56. 50–53 Marcovich).
75. See *Refutation* 4.46–50 (allegorizers of Aratus), 5.12–18 (Peratae), 9.14 (Elchasaites), discussed below in Part B chapter 17.
76. p. 300.25–30 Marcovich, citing Jn 2.4 “My hour is not yet come.”
77. vol. 1, p. 210–214 Holl.
78. CCL 1, 459.4–11.
79. De fatis autem qualeslibet eorum argutias et quasi de mathesi documentorum experientia...omnino a nostrae fidei sanitate respuamus (CSEL 28, 1, 59.25–60.2).
80. These people who are attacked in *On John* 8.8–9 are not identified.
81. Quibus ergo prius respondendum est, haereticis, an mathematicis? Utrique enim a serpente illo veniunt, volentes corrumpere virginitatem cordis ecclesiae, quam habet in integra fide (CCL 36, 87.21–24).
82. CCL 46, 334.13–19.
83. See Theophilus’ synodical letter of 400, translated by Jerome and preserved among the latter’s letters (*Letters* 92.2 [CSEL 55, 150.4–10]). On this passage, Pierre Lardet notes “[Jerome] traduit ici sans sourciller ce qu’il devait bien savoir être une contre-verité” (*L’Apologie de Jérôme contre Rufin: Un Commentaire* [Leiden, 1993], 349); indeed, Jerome must have known that Origen rejected astrological fatalism.

10. Opposition to Astrology and Early Christian Doctrine

Early Christian opposition to astrology can also be situated within the larger context of early Christian theology. Here I shall examine it in relation to the doctrines of creation and providence, sin and evil, and salvation.

Creation and Providence

A number of Christian writers attacked astrology on the basis of the doctrine of divine creation. According to Diodore of Tarsus, faith in a divine creator completely negates belief in astrological fate (*γένεσις*).¹ Diodore also argues against the idea that the universe is eternal, and that the sky is spherical, since he thinks these ideas lead to belief in fate.² He elaborates on the opposition between eternity and creation using various meandering arguments regarding eternal and uncreated fate, to which he opposes the contingency and changeableness of the created world.³ Behind these arguments lies the simplistic claim that fate, which Diodore identifies as completely static and unchanging, is contradicted by any change in the created order. Ambrosiaster formulated at length a similar “argument from change” in which it seems any example of change in creation can serve as a weapon against astrology. Among the examples he raises are: the foundation of the Jewish people over 3000 years after creation,⁴ and the fact that while no Jews become Gentiles some pagans convert to Judaism; changes in Roman customs, e.g. that the women of Rome used to abstain from wine (Qu. 115, 26–29);⁵ Biblical miracles such as the virgin birth, Aaron’s rod that budded, Sarah’s pregnancy in old age, the sun standing still for Joshua, the addition of 15 years to Hezekiah’s life (Qu. 115, 42–46); and “historical” events such as the innovation of war and slavery by Ninus, the founder of Nineveh, or the development of a wealth-seeking culture out of primitive rustic society (Qu. 115, 47–48). Astrologers claim to predict how people will die, Ambrosiaster asserts, but what of people whose manner of death is unique, such as Anaxagoras who was crushed by a mortar,⁶ or Sisera who was killed when a woman (Jael) drove a tent peg through his temple (Judges 4.21); and what of the fact that the Romans used to practice crucifixion but later prohibited it (Qu. 115, 67)?⁷ Moreover, Ambrosiaster asks, if a person’s fate derives from their natal horoscope what about people who undergo change in the course of their lives: a

handsome Etruscan mutilated his face; some are born eunuchs (cf. Matt 19.12), while others become eunuchs after they are born; there was a Roman woman who was proven to have had 11 husbands, and a man who had 12 wives;⁸ and Ambrosiaster credits a story that in the time of Constantine a girl from Campania had been changed into a man (Qu. 115, 68 and 72). Ambrosiaster also presents the Amazons as an example of an aberration from nature. He adds the jibe that if astrologers teach that the world would be renewed in 1460 years, why has it existed for 6000 years? (Qu. 115, 74) (the reference is to the Stoic notion of the “great year”; of course, Ambrosiaster follows a literal version of Biblical chronology). Further examples of change that Ambrosiaster raises against astrology derive from the lives of individuals: M. (Licinius) Crassus, who was said to have only laughed once in his life (hence the nickname “Agelatus”); C. Iunius Brutus, who pretended to be stupid so that he would not be killed on account of his wealth (the reference is rather to L. Iunius Brutus, the traditional founder of the Roman republic); and Samsucius, a (court?) fool of Constantine, who pretended he was 30 years old so that the emperor would remove him from his tedious duties (Qu. 115, 74).⁹ Ambrosiaster also claimed that astrology entails a thoroughly naturalistic view of the world, outside of which nothing is believed to exist (Qu. 115, 13 and 42).¹⁰

As well, Christians developed arguments against astrology on the basis of the creation narrative in the first chapter of Genesis. Commenting on this text, the second century apologist Theophilus of Antioch combats those philosophers who would derive terrestrial things from the stars (*ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων εἶναι τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς φερόμενα*) by noting in Gen 1.11–19 plants and seeds were created prior to the stars (*To Autolytus* 2.15).¹¹ Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa uses the creation story in Gen 1 as an argument against astrological fate in his treatise *Against Fate*: since the earth was created before the stars (Gen 1.9–19) how can the latter have power over the former? However, he does not insist that Gen 1 be read in sequential order,¹² and in this passage the Stoic concept of cosmic sympathy is set alongside the argument from Gen 1, which reflects the integration of Christian and Greco-Roman influences within Gregory’s thought.

Since everything is bound together—heaven, earth, sea— and according to the text of Moses earth came before the constitution and movement of the stars, how can they attribute the cause of what happens in parts of the earth to the movement of the stars? Even if the earth is contemporaneous with the stars still let no one propose that from there are either its occurrences or continuance. ...[S]uch things take

place not by the necessity of fate but these events are according to their own individual cause.¹³

Christians also asserted that as creation is subject to the creator so the planets and stars should be strictly subordinated to God.¹⁴ Commenting on the eighth commandment that prohibits theft, Clement of Alexandria asserts that this commandment is broken by those who ascribe power to the stars since they “rob the untiring power from the Father of the universe” (*Miscellanies* 6, 16.148.1).¹⁵ Clement then goes on to present his own view that the stars are agents under God’s command.(16.148.2).¹⁶ Similarly, Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 8.22, 45–46, 52¹⁷ presents the view that the celestial bodies are instruments of divine providence, through which God blesses the righteous and chastises (and even creates opportunities for doubt among) the wicked. According to this text, the sun and moon were placed in the heavens to regulate the seasons and the divisions of time, but it is also through their administration (ministerio) and that of the five planets that “plague and corruption are sent upon the earth because of human sins, the air is disturbed, pestilence comes upon animals, crops are spoiled, and in every way a pestilent year takes place among mortal beings.” Thus God preserves, and sometimes destroys, things on earth by means of one and the same planetary “administration.”¹⁸

In contrast to the belief that the stars are demonic, malicious powers, some Christian writers came to regard the celestial bodies more naturalistically as material objects created by God, and they pitted this view against astrology. For example, in an anti-astrological passage Paulinus of Nola describes the stars on which astrologers claim the world depends as “tiny fires which are smaller than God and the world itself, which adorn only a third of the world with their ministry of light” (*Letter* 16.4).¹⁹ The subordination of the created heavens to the divine creator is also asserted, in no uncertain terms, in Basil of Caesarea’s *Hexaemeron* 6.7 where he says that it is insane to claim that things which are lifeless (i.e. the stars and the planets) are agents of evil: “it is madness to tell lies about beings without souls”(ὁ μανίας ἐστὶν ἐπέκεινα καταγεύδου τῶν ἀψύχων).²⁰ The commentary on Job by the Arian writer Julian similarly asserts that the stars are lifeless and do not move on their own, but rather are moved upon externally by God who appointed them as signs and indicators of seasons; while the text cites Aratus (*Phaenomena* 19–21) and Plato (*Timaeus* 38c) in support of this view it is evident that Gen 1.14 lies behind this as well.²¹ Though rooted in the theological assertion that the Creator is above the creation this “naturalistic” view of

the stars was also compatible with ancient theories of nature. Thus Gregory of Nazianzus refers to the theory that the stars are composed of fire, as well as that they are made of Aristotle's "fifth element": he writes that the stars pursue the path which Christ has assigned to them "whether their nature is the self-nourishing one of fire or whether there is what is called a 'fifth body', stars following a circular course" (*Poemata Arcana* 5.65–69).²²

The distinction between creator and creation also lies behind the affirmation that knowledge of the future belongs to God alone. This is expressed in the anonymous *Deliberations of the Christian Zaccheus and the Philosopher Apollonius* by the protagonist Zaccheus, who makes the obvious point that astrology is unsure and astrologers can make mistakes (29.15, 17; 30.4, 6),²³ and says that diviners can only pretend to predict things accurately since God alone knows the future infallibly (17.10).²⁴ In a more sarcastic vein, Tertullian mocks an astrologer who had converted to Christianity yet wanted to continue his earlier profession:

You know nothing, astrologer, if you did not know that you would become a Christian. If you did know it, you should also have known this, that you would have nothing to do with this profession. The profession itself, which presages the critical moments of others, would have taught you about the danger bound up with itself (*On Idolatry* 9.8).²⁵

Similarly, Jerome points out the absurdity that astrologers are consulted by others when they themselves are unaware of the divine punishment that awaits them (*Commentary on Isaiah* 13 [on Is 47.12–15]).²⁶

Augustine's polemic against astrology can be situated within the larger context of his theology of divine providence. Of course, the danger that Augustine had to avoid was deriving divination directly from the will of God. To accomplish this he made use of a key phrase, "occulto instinctu," in several passages. For example, at the conclusion of the passage in the *Confessions* where Augustine recounts his own repudiation of his earlier adherence to astrology, he states:

You Lord, most just controller of the universe, by your hidden prompting you act on those who consult fortune-tellers and those who are consulted, though they are unaware of it. So when someone consults a futurologist and he hears what he should hear, that is dependent on the hidden merits of souls and the profundity of your just judgment. Let not man say, 'What is this? Why is that?' Let him not say it, let him not say it; for he is man (7.6.10).²⁷

In this passage the “hidden prompting” (*occulto instinctu*) comes from God. Yet Augustine refers to an “*occulto instinctu*” of the demons in *City of God* 5.7: “When astrologers give replies that are surprisingly true, it is by a secret impulse [*occulto instinctu*] of evil spirits, whose concern is to instill and solidify these false and harmful views of astral fate in human minds.”²⁸ Still another usage is evident in *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17, where the “*occulto instinctu*” refers to the effect produced by demons in the (human) astrologers themselves.²⁹ Despite the differences in Augustine’s usage of the phrase, the effect of “*occulto instinctu*” in each case is to provide sufficient imprecision to avoid attributing astrology directly to the will of God. This reflects the fact that Augustine did not see providence as “close-textured, tightly ordered by God in every detail,” indeed that such a view “conflicts with his own cosmological convictions.”³⁰

In *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2.17 Augustine goes on to explain that the demons are permitted knowledge about temporal things in various ways, through their own senses, their knowledge based on long experience, and even from the good angels who reveal to them what they themselves learned from God. Moreover, all this imparting of knowledge to demons, and their handing it on to humans by means of astrology and other forms of divination, ultimately takes place “under the command of God who distributes human merits through the integrity of his hidden justice.”³¹ Elsewhere in his treatise *On the Divination of Demons* Augustine holds that the demons, in deceiving humans, are also themselves deceived by God:

...Augustin montrerait que les démons, par leurs divinations que Dieu accorda *certa iudicii sui ratione* [*On the Divination of Demons* 1.2³²] non seulement trompent les gens mais sont trompés eux-mêmes. ... les prédictions des démons, qui grâce à leur *dispositio* d’anges déchus savent plus de choses que les hommes, peuvent tout à coup être traversées d’un ordre d’une autorité supérieure qui dérange leurs *consilia*. On peut comparer cela à des gens qui, parce que placés sous une certaine autorité, croient pouvoir exécuter quelque chose, mais qui tout à coup sont freinés par un ordre d’en haut. ... Ainsi les démons peuvent disposer d’une prescience et faire des prédictions en se fondant sur des *causae* inférieures et plus usuelles, mais cependant être dérangés par des *causae* supérieures et plus cachées.³³

This is still relevant to the place of astrology within Augustine’s religious thought even though he makes no mention of astrology per se in *On the Divination of Demons*.

The moral inconsistency between providence which is conceived as good and astrology which is associated with evil demons remains a fundamental problem with Augustine's view. The lack of resolution of this problem was the price for subsuming evil to divine providence; among other things, it enabled Augustine to find a locus for astrology within his overall thought.

This is not to say, of course, that astrology possessed any positive moral or theological function of its own for Augustine. Bruning's rosy notion that Augustine "integrated" astrology into his Christian perspective is forced, and finally incredible, simply because in general Augustine evinces too much straightforward hostility toward astrology.³⁴ Thus it is hard to credit Bruning's claim that Augustine's use of "consulere" in the context of discussing prayer derives from his experience with astrology;³⁵ rather, Augustine uses the word according to its normal usage, which was never merely restricted to astrology. Similarly, I do not see how Augustine ever came to use "le mot 'contaminé' *fatum* dans une acception renouvelée;" and Bruning's idea that Augustine thought in terms of a "sors biblique," corresponding to the "sors" of astrology, is misleading.³⁶ Augustine fundamentally viewed astrology and divination as demonically inspired practices, and for that reason to be condemned. Bouché-Leclercq puts it vividly:

[Augustin] admet donc, sans ombre de doute, la possibilité de la révélation de l'avenir—sans quoi il faudrait nier les prophéties—et même il ne considère pas comme superstitions nécessairement illusoires et mensongères les pratiques divinatoires. Mais il abomine d'autant plus ces inventions de démons... S. Augustin accepte toute la démonologie cosmopolite qui minait depuis des siècles l'assiette de la raison, et nul esprit ne fut jamais plus obsédé par la hantise et le contact du surnaturel. Manichéen ou orthodoxe, il ne voit dans le monde, dans l'histoire comme dans la pratique journalière de la vie, que la lutte entre Dieu et le diable, entre les anges de lumière et les esprits de ténèbres, ceux-ci imitant ceux-là, opposant leurs oracles aux prophéties divines, disputant aux songes véridiques l'âme qui veille dans le corps endormi, luttant à coups de sortilèges magiques avec les vrais miracles.... Il pense avoir ruiné l'astrologie en tant que science humaine, et voilà qu'il la restaure comme révélation démoniaque....³⁷

Viewing the world in terms of a cosmic war between the forces of good and evil, and condemning astrology as "une révélation démoniaque," were by no means unique to Augustine, however; as we have seen these were commonly held views in early Christianity.³⁸

Sin and Evil

It was during the Pelagian controversy which especially occupied him in his later years that Augustine elaborated his ideas concerning original sin and predestination. A consequence of this was that his opposition to astrological fatalism was rendered problematic: how could Augustine refute fatalism while maintaining divine grace and predestination?³⁹

An instance of the complexity involved in Augustine's thought on these issues is found in Augustine's response in the second book of his *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* (written in 420) to accusations raised by certain Pelagian bishops and sent to the catholic bishops of the eastern empire. One of these accusations was that the Augustinian view of grace entailed a type of fatalism:

For thus they think to object to us: they say, "Under the name of grace they so assert fate as to say that unless God inspires an unwilling and reluctant person with desire for the good, even if it be an imperfect good, he or she would neither be able to avoid evil nor grasp the good" (2.5.10).⁴⁰

Such criticism was not new.⁴¹ Ultimately, it is directed against an inherent contradiction within the inherited Pauline message of grace. Augustine developed a renewed interest in the writings of Paul in the mid-390's which affected his thought profoundly.⁴² The extent of his writings during the Pelagian controversy made it almost inevitable that such criticisms would be focussed on him. Thus Julian of Eclanum would compare Augustine's theology to "the fanciful view of fate, Chaldean calculation, and the fictitious notions of the Manicheans."⁴³

Against the Pelagians, Augustine argues that if he is to be condemned for teaching fatalism under the guise of grace then the same accusation could also be levelled against the apostle Paul on the basis of Rom 9.15–16. Moreover, by the same logic the Pelagians themselves should also incur the same charge since, like the Catholics, they maintain the practice of infant baptism. In this way he attempts to turn the accusation of fatalism back against his Pelagian accusers.⁴⁴ According to Augustine, the Pelagians were attacking his doctrine of unmerited grace because they really maintained that grace is given on account of human merits—despite the fact that Pelagius himself had personally abjured such a view (2.5.10–6.11). In response to the Pelagians' charge that he was teaching fatalism Augustine defended his view of grace.

Nor do we maintain fate under the name of grace when we say that the grace of God is preceded by no human merit. However, if it seems right to someone to call the will of almighty God by the name of fate, we certainly avoid profane verbal innovations but we do not want to argue about words (2.5.9).⁴⁵

It was Augustine's view of irresistible grace that led to accusations of fatalism. According to Augustine, grace is given to everyone, but the human will is so corrupt that grace will be refused; some are given "efficacious grace" which brings forth the response of faith, while others are justly abandoned to their sin and its consequences.⁴⁶ In this view, freedom of the will is still retained: Augustine rejected the notion that the will starts from a "neutral" position of total indifference, insisting that it is in bondage to sin but "when it comes to the influence of grace upon human life...the freedom of the will is not violated but is rather liberated and enabled to accomplish that which is most suited to the character of true freedom."⁴⁷ Because of Augustine's emphasis that people are affected by factors beyond themselves (i.e. the human tendency to sinfulness, as well as divine grace) it is not surprising that he was accused of fatalism. Indeed, in *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 2.5.9 he admits he has no problem with the term "fate" if it is equated with God's will, though he admits this would be a verbal innovation. He recognizes that more usually people connect "fatum" with astrology (2.6.12),⁴⁸ and in this sense fate is most definitely to be clearly distinguished from the divine will: "the divine grace surpasses not only all stars and heavens but also all the angels."⁴⁹

Those who assert fate assign both the good and the evil things of humanity to fate. But in the evils which happen to humanity God follows through their merits with due retribution, while he lavishes good things through unearned grace with a merciful will; he does both not through a temporal partnership with the stars but according to the eternal and high counsel of his severity and his goodness. Therefore we see that neither [good nor evil] is assigned to fate (2.6.12).⁵⁰

Since no one is able to fathom "the eternal and high counsel" of God's severity and goodness, we see here Augustine resorting to the theme of divine mystery.

It is somewhat ironic that in defending himself against the charge of fatalism in *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, Augustine makes use of his favourite argument of twins. In 2.7.14 he tells a story about twin children who are born to a prostitute, who are left exposed but are taken up to be raised by

others; one of the children is baptized, while the other is not. Faithful to the logic of his theology, Augustine argues that if the children were to die, the one that was baptized would receive salvation while the other child would be condemned. However, he argues, the different destinies of the twins would be due not to astrological fate, nor to fortune or chance, nor to human merit or works, but solely to divine predestination:

What can we say here was “fate” or “fortune,” which are altogether nothing? ... they [the children] certainly had nothing from which one could be preferred to the other, and no merits of their own, either for good by which the one deserved to be baptized nor for evil by which the other died without baptism ... Therefore, if neither fate (since no stars separated them), nor fortune (since no accidental events produced these), nor [any] difference of persons or of merits did this, what remains, so far as pertains to the child that was baptized, except the grace of God which is given freely to “vessels made for honour” [Rom 9.21]; and as for the child that was not baptized, the wrath of God, which is repaid to “vessels made for dishonour” according to the merits of the “lump” [Rom 5.12] itself?⁵¹

It is no surprise that Augustine also raises a favourite Biblical example of twins with different destinies, the story of Jacob and Esau, in *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 2.7.15.⁵² The irony of the use of the argument of twins in this context is that Augustine marshalls it against the fatalism with which the Pelagians were charging him and at the same time in support of his doctrine of divine predestination.⁵³ From the outside, the argument of twins could well be used against the latter also; the difference rests solely in the religious faith which perceives the Christian God of grace behind the doctrine of predestination.

Salvation

The corollary to the early Christians’ derivation of astrology from demons was to affirm that Christ had defeated astrology and fate.⁵⁴ Thus Tatian, who as we have seen held a fairly naive view of the demonic character of astrology, also maintained that Christians have been set free from astrological fate and as such are above its power: “But we are above fate and instead of planetary [or erring] demons we have come to know the one lord who does not go astray, and we are not led by fate having given up its lawgivers” (*Oration to the Greeks* 9.2).⁵⁵ The theme of Christian triumph over astrological fatalism is reinforced here by means of word plays. The verb *μεμαθήκαμεν*, “we have

come to know,” which Tatian uses for the Christians’ faith in Christ’s victory, hints at its superiority to its cognate, μαθήσις (astrology).⁵⁶ As well, behind the phrase *πλανητῶν δαιμόνων* lies the traditional etymological identification of the planets as the “wanderers”⁵⁷ in contradistinction to the fixed stars, *οὐράνιοι ἀπλάνεις*.⁵⁸ By applying the latter term to Christ Tatian reinforces his Christian message: the demons that have “wandered” or “erred” from divine truth are contrasted with “the one Lord who does not err” (ἕνα τὸν ἀπλανῆ δεσπότην).⁵⁹

Tatian’s claim that Christians are “above fate” was paralleled by the affirmations which Greco-Roman astrologers made with regard to the emperor. For example, Firmicus Maternus explained that ascertaining the emperor’s horoscope was illegal because of the basis of the emperor’s exalted status: “no astrologer can determine anything true about the emperor’s fate; for the emperor alone is not subject to the courses of the stars, his fate alone are the stars not able to decree” (*Mathesis* 2.30.5).⁶⁰ The imperial exemption from fate is remarkably similar to the Christians’ status of emancipation from astrological fate described by a writer such as Tatian.

The themes of oppression by, and liberation from, the powers of fate were also connected by another second century writer, Theodotus. While Gnostic elements are evident in the excerpts of his writing which are preserved in Clement of Alexandria’s *Miscellanies*, Theodotus’ affirmation of the liberation of Christians from astrological fate is not peculiar to Gnosticism but rather is representative of “la mentalité commune de tous les chrétiens relative à la victoire du Christ sur le Destin astrologique.”⁶¹

Theodotus depicts fate as the union of opposing invisible powers which rule humanity by means of the stars which preside at each individual’s birth.

Fate is a union of many opposing powers and they are invisible and unseen, guiding the course of the stars and governing through them. For as each of them arrived, borne round by the movement of the world, it obtained power over those who were born at that very moment because they are its own children. Therefore through the fixed stars and the planets, the invisible powers holding sway over them direct and watch over births (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 69.1–70.1).⁶²

Theodotus also separates the astral powers into those which do good and those that do evil, those on the “right” and those on the “left” (71.2).⁶³ The powers on the right likely refer to protecting angels referred to earlier in *Excerpts* 22–23, 28 and 40.⁶⁴ However these powers on the right are weak: they are “followers that are unable to rescue and guard us” (73.1).⁶⁵ It is for this reason that the Lord has come (74.1).⁶⁶ Theodotus also goes on to affirm the Chris-

tian's liberation from these fatal powers.

From this situation and battle of the powers the Lord rescues us and supplies peace from the array of powers and angels.... Therefore the Lord came down to make peace for those from heaven not to those from earth, as the Apostle says, "Peace on the earth and glory in the heights" [Lk 2.14]. Therefore a strange and new star arose, doing away with the old astral order, shining with a new unearthly light, which turned toward a new and saving way, as the Lord himself, guide of humanity, came down to earth to transfer those who believed in Christ from Fate to his providence (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 72.1, 74.1–2).⁶⁷

The outcome of the Lord's appearance, therefore, is that those who believe in Christ are ushered into providence. Since in 73.2 Theodotus claims that the "providential power [of fate] is not perfect like the Good Shepherd's"⁶⁸ he apparently located not only the theme of the Christian's liberation, but the oppressive cosmological powers of fate themselves, under the same overarching divine providence. The motifs of fate and liberation from its power through Christ are also found together in: Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah* 50.1.3.4,⁶⁹ *Homilies on Judges*,⁷⁰ and in *On First Principles* 3.3.2;⁷¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel* 6.82–83;⁷² and Augustine, *On John* 8.10.⁷³

A significant emphasis in Theodotus' theology is given to baptism, both the baptism of the Lord and that of the individual Christian. In a series of word plays Theodotus lists the Lord's birth, baptism and passion as the constituent elements of the Christian's liberation: "As therefore the birth of the Saviour rescued us from our natal horoscope and [from] fate, so also his baptism removed us from fire and his passion [rescued us] from our passion so that we might follow him in all things" (*Excerpts* 76.1).⁷⁴ (Note how the author's theme is reinforced by trumping the astrological term γένεσις—and the human condition under fate—with the γέννησις τοῦ σωτήρος, the birth of the Saviour.) Parallel to the Lord's baptism, the Christian's own baptism also entails victory over the forces of evil.

For one who has been baptized unto God has advanced to God and has received "power to walk upon scorpions and snakes,"⁷⁵ the evil powers.... For this baptism is called a death and an end of the old life when we have done with the evil principalities; but [baptism is also called] life according to Christ, over which he alone rules. And the power of the change in the one who is baptised is not about the body (for he emerges the same) but the soul. At the very moment of coming up from the baptism he is called a servant of God even by the unclean spirits, and before him whom a little while earlier they overpowered they now "tremble" [James 2.19]. Therefore, they say, until baptism fate is true, but after it the astrologers are no

longer true (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 76.2, 77.1–78.1).⁷⁶

Theodotus' sole emphasis on the present efficacy of baptism over the evil powers differs from the more complex Pauline view in Rom 6 (cf. Col 2.12) where baptism is seen as participation in Christ's death and resurrection (in the past) as well as anticipation of the believer's own future (physical) death and resurrection; as well, Theodotus seems to ignore any corporate meaning of baptism (cf. 1 Cor 12.12-31; Gal 3.26-28). Jean Daniélou claimed that Theodotus differed from Tatian with regard to the role assigned to baptism in the Christian's deliverance from fate: "for the latter baptism is the means of this deliverance; for the former the gnosis is also needed."⁷⁷ However, while it is true that for Theodotus, as a Valentinian Gnostic, baptism and gnosis would have both been regarded as necessary for the soul's liberation⁷⁸ nevertheless Tatian does not refer to baptism at all in the *Oration to the Greeks*. Baptism is connected with rejection of astrology in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.12.4.⁷⁹ Liberation from astrological fate through baptism is also affirmed by the fourth century philosopher and convert to Christianity, Marius Victorinus, in his commentary on Galatians.⁸⁰

Baptism is also mentioned in connection with repentance from astrology in one of Origen's sermons on Joshua. He compares the crossing of the Jordan by the Israelites with Christian baptism, and warns his audience not to return to their old habits of following divination: "But when such some such curiosity disturbs you...say to it that 'I follow Jesus the leader, in whose power are the things that will happen.'"⁸¹ The phrase "I follow Jesus the leader" (*Iesum ducem sequor*) is a pointed repudiation of astrology: Aries was generally regarded as the first or "leading" sign of the zodiac, but according to Origen his audience is to follow not Aries (i.e. astrology) but Christ.⁸² Christ (the Lamb) also replaces Aries in a baptismal sermon of Zeno, bishop of Verona during the fourth century (*Treatise* 1.38).⁸³ Of course for the early Christians the theme of victory over astrological fate through Christ found expression in the rite, as well as the doctrine, of baptism.

However, the defeat of fate was believed to apply to the baptized only. Despite Christ's victory, the unbaptized were believed to remain under the power of fate. Theodotus writes that "there is [still] Fate for the others" (*Excerpts* 75.1),⁸⁴ while Tertullian put the contrast historically, asserting that astrology remained valid until the coming of the magi at the birth of Christ: "But that science was permitted until the gospel, so that after Christ had come from that point on no one should interpret a person's nativity from the sky"

(*On Idolatry* 9.4).⁸⁵ The Christian distinction between those liberated from fate by baptism and the rest of humanity led to polemic against the claims of other religions to overcome the power of fate. Thus Arnobius warns his readers against “pagans” (e.g. Gnostic and hermetic teachers) who were making similar claims with regard to fate as were the Christians: “And let not that which is said by some who have a smattering of knowledge and take a great deal upon themselves intrigue you or flatter you with vain hope that they are born of God and not subject to the laws of fate” (*Against the Nations* 2.62).⁸⁶

In early Christian belief, miracles were regarded as proof of the defeat of astrological fate. For example, Arnobius argued that since bodily illness was caused by fate the miracles of Christ proved that he had defeated fate (*Against the Nations* 1.47).⁸⁷ As well, in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 14.5.4 Peter asserts that though he is unfamiliar with the details of astrology his prayers that bring about healing from incurable illness are a sufficient refutation of astrological fate.⁸⁸ Another example of a miraculous event which disproves and defeats astrological fate is the story of the reunion of Clement’s family in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.32–37. In *Recognitions* 9.32 Clement’s father Faustianus claims that the horoscope of his wife Matthidia has been fulfilled: “she had Mars with Venus in midheaven, with the Moon in the west in the house of Mars and in the terms of Saturn” which, he explains, is “an arrangement which makes women commit adultery and love their own slaves and die on a journey and in waters”—all of which he believes has occurred to his wife.⁸⁹ The “recognitions” which immediately follow in 9.33–37, i.e. the miraculous restoration of Clement, his mother and his brothers to their father, then provide a dramatic refutation of the father’s faith in absolute fate.⁹⁰ The incident also serves as a pious anti-astrological reminder to the reader for whom this Christian romance was composed. Of course, miracle stories were a feature of Christian (and non-Christian) religious propaganda, functioning as “divine confirmations of the claims made in behalf of a particular god or goddess” and thus serving to confirm the superiority of one religious tradition over another in the minds of readers.⁹¹ The miraculous deeds performed by Christian healers—healing those who are broken, restoring the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, etc.—are also cited as evidence of the defeat of fate in a sermon of the Arian writer Maximinus.⁹² Here the author is clearly trading on the Christian belief that such miracles indicated the fulfillment of the kingdom of God (Lk 4.16–21) and marshalling them as “proofs” against astrological fate.

Christ's superiority over fate led to the portrayal of Christ himself as having expertise in astrology. In chapter 51 of the so-called Arabic Infancy Gospel, while the 12 year old Jesus is talking with the teachers in the Jerusalem Temple (cf. Lk 2.41–47) he is asked about his knowledge of astronomy. In reply, Jesus tells the number of the spheres and the heavenly bodies, with their natures, virtues, aspects (opposition, trine, square and sextile), ascensions and retrograde movements, their locations (in minutes and seconds), and other things "qui dépassent la raison."⁹³

The liberation of Christians from astrological fate was also depicted in early Christian iconography. For example, a lamp in the Berlin Museum shows Christ the Good Shepherd carrying a sheep across his shoulders; above the head of Christ are seven stars, which stand for the heavenly home to which the Christian (represented by the sheep) is being transported.⁹⁴ The manufacturer of this lamp was clearly expressing belief in Christ as a victorious, cosmic power. The victory of Christ over astrological fate is also portrayed in depictions of Christ as cosmocrator: examples include images of Christ enthroned on the vault of heaven; surrounded by the sun and moon; ascending to heaven on a shield representing the cosmos, or on a throne carried by four living creatures (cf. Ezek 1.10, Rev 4.6b); or stretching out his right hand in a gesture of omnipotence.⁹⁵

It is evident that the early Christians did not approach astrology exclusively from any single theological perspective. Instead, many themes served as points of departure for anti-astrological polemic. The breadth of Christian antipathy is evident in Origen's assertion that astrology (i.e. astrological fatalism) would in effect nullify the whole system of Christian belief; in *Philocalia* 23.1 he writes:

And if anyone considers the consequences for himself of what he declares, his faith will be in vain, and Christ's coming would have no effect, and the whole economy which was through [the] law and [the] prophets, and the toils of the apostles to bring together the churches of God through Christ; had not Christ also, according to some who dare [to say] this, by his birth submitted to necessity from the movement of the stars [and if] everything he did and suffered was not given to him by the incredible powers of the God and Father of all, but from the stars.⁹⁶

According to Basil of Caesarea, astrology causes the great hopes of Christians to vanish (*Hexaemeron* 6.7).⁹⁷ Ambrosiaster asserted that astrology does away with the "seed" of faith which makes the Christian righteous before God (Qu. 115.82).⁹⁸ As well, commenting on Rom 8.7 Ambrosiaster identifies

astrology as the “wisdom of the flesh” which equates creation with the Creator and denies that anything can exist beyond the system of the created world—in particular, that a virgin can give birth or that the bodies of the dead can be resurrected.⁹⁹ Diodore of Tarsus too declared that astrological fate would overthrow the basic theological premises of Christianity; according to Photius, Diodore claimed that “those who have become made under genethliology” subsume moral goodness, prayer and divine revelations to astrology and “they dare to [even] say that they prove God is a servant of the horoscope.”¹⁰⁰ Christian writers also asserted that the results of Christianity could in no way be attributed to the stars or fate. In a remark that seems appropriate for a chronicler of Christian martyrdom, Eusebius writes that, unlike Christianity, astrology never produced any martyrs (*Preparation for the Gospel* 6.6.63–64).¹⁰¹ He goes on to deny that the successes of Christianity—its geographical expansion, as well as the demise of “pagan idolatry”—was in any way attributable to astrological fate (6.6.65–73).¹⁰²

Notes

1. See the summary in Photius' *Library* (p. 12–13, 21 Henry).
2. p. 9–12, 13, 18 Henry.
3. See p. 9–12 Henry, as well as p. 15–16, 18–24, 27–30, 31–33 (variety in geographical conditions, natural species and human behaviour) and 33–34 (variations over time). For a balanced critique of Diodore's style of argumentation against astrology, see Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 471.
4. On the chronology see Queis, 147–48.
5. Cf. other Christian references to this cited in Queis, 165; on the historical background see Marcel Durry, “Les Femmes et le Vin,” REL 33 (1955): 108–113.
6. Cf. Queis, 195 (the anecdote rather concerns a certain Anaxarchos).
7. On Constantine's prohibition of crucifixion as a legal punishment see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 51 and 312n83.
8. Cf. a similar story in Jerome, *Letter* 123.9.
9. On the persons cited in Qu. 115, 74 see Queis, 203.

10. stellarum enim cursus a constitutione mundi est ... Hic est error mathematicorum, quo etiam deum pulsant. per hanc enim adseverationem negant aliquid posse fieri extra ordinem mundi (CSEL 50, 323.3–4, and 331.22–24).
11. p. 50 Grant.
12. The idea of the stars and earth as *ὁμόχρονοι* may possibly reflect the kind of exegesis later evident in Augustine's *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, which proposes a “literal” reading of Gen 1 as referring to the creation of “seminal principles” out of which came the physical creation recounted in Gen 2.4ff.
13. ἐπεὶ δὲ πάντα μετ’ ἀλλήλων καταλαμβάνεται, οὐρανός, γῆ, θάλασσα, κατὰ δὲ τὸν Μωϋσέως λόγον καὶ προτερεῦει ἡ γῆ τῆς τῶν ἄστρον κατασκευῆς καὶ κινήσεως, πῶς τῶν μερικῶν κατὰ τὴν γῆν συμπτωμάτων τὴν αἰτίαν εἰς τὴν τῶν ἄστρον ἀναθήσονται κίνησιν; εἰ τοίνυν ὁμόχρονος τοῖς ἄστροις ἡ γῆ καὶ οὐδεμίαν ἐκεῖθεν οὔτε συμπτώσεως οὔτε διαμονῆς αἰτίαν ἐπάγεται, ἐν μερिकाῖς δὲ τισὶ τόπων περιγραφαῖς τὰ τοιαῦτα ὑφίσταται πάθη, ἅρα οὐχ εἰμαρμένης ἀνάγκη ἀλλὰ κατὰ τινα ἐτέραν ἰδιάζουσαν αἰτίαν ἐν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις συμπτώμασι γενέσθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα συμβαίνει (p. 55.17–56.2 McDonough).
14. Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 397n3.
15. οἱ πλεῖστοι δὲ σὺν καὶ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις τὰς αὐξήσεις καὶ τὰς τροπὰς τοῖς ἄστροις κατὰ τὸ προηγούμενον ἀνατιθέασιν, ἀποστεροῦντες τὸ ὅσον ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς τὴν ἀκάματον δύναμιν τὸν πατέρα τῶν ὄλων (p. 507.30–33 Stählin [GCS]). On this passage see Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 274n1. The term προηγούμενα was also used for the “leading” stars in the daily movement of the heavens, i.e. the stars of the signs in the west of the sky (s.v. LSJ, 1480). The accusation that belief in astral causation entails “robbery” of God’s power is also made by Lactantius, *On the Workmanship of God* 19.7 (CSEL 27, 61.9–13).
16. τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα καὶ τὰ ἄστρα, τουτέστιν αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ διοικητικαί, προσετάγησαν ἐκτελεῖν τὰ εἰς οἰκονομίαν ἐπιτήδεια, καὶ αὐτὰ τε πείθεται ἀγεται τε πρὸς τῶν ἐπιτεταγμένων αὐτοῖς, ἧ ἂν ἡγήται τὸ ῥῆμα κυρίου, ἐπεὶπερ ἡ θεία δύναμις ἐπικεκρυμένως πάντα ἐνεργεῖν ἐφύκεν (p. 507.33–508.4 Stählin). Cf. *Poimandres* 1.9, where similar language is used for the planets as the ruling powers (Nock–Festugière, vol. 1, 9.16–20).
17. p. 230, 245–46, 249–50 Rehm.
18. horum autem ipsorum ministerio, et si quando pro peccatis hominum plaga et correptio terris incitur, perturbatur aer, lues animantibus, corruptio frugibus, pestilens per

omnia mortalibus annus inducitur, et ita fit, ut uno eodemque ministerio et servetur ordo et corrumpatur (p. 245.19–23 Rehm).

19. igniculis non solum deo sed et mundo ipso minoribus, immo etiam mundi ipsius tertiam partem ministerio famulae lucis ornantibus (CSEL 29, 117.15–17). Allotting the “third part of the universe” to the stars reflects the traditional Aristotelian view of the universe with the earth at the center, surrounded by the realm of the planets, beyond which is the realm of the fixed stars (or aether); Rev 8.12 may be distantly echoed here as well. This passage is discussed in relation to Paulinus’ opposition to fatalism in Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 200–01.
20. p. 360 Giet.
21. p. 253–54 Hagedorn.
22. ἀλλ’ οἱ μὲν περώων ἐὴν ὁδόν, ἦνπερ ἔταξε/ Χριστὸς ἄναξ, πυρόεντες, ἀεῖδρομοι, ἄστουφέλικτοι,/ ἀπλανέες τε πλάνοι τε παλίμποροι, ὡς ἐνέπουσιν,/ εἴτε τις ἄστροφός ἐστι πυρὸς φύσις, εἴτε τι σῶμα,/ πέμπτον ὃ δὴ καλέουσι, περιδρομον οἶμον ἔχοντες (p. 26–27 trans. Moreschini–Sykes). See the discussion of these theories of the composition of the stars in Sykes’ note on p. 192–93.
23. p. 180.53–58; 182.17–25 Feiertag.
24. p. 170.39–43 Feiertag.
25. Nihil scis, mathematice, si nesciebas te futurum Christianum. Si sciebas, hoc quoque scire debueras, nihil tibi futurum cum ista professione. Ipsa te de periculo suo instrueret, quae aliorum climacterica praecanit (p. 38.39–41 and p. 39 trans. Waszink and van Winden). Cf. Ambrosiaster’s similar sarcasm in Qu. 115. 63: “quo modo fato fiunt quae contra fatum sunt?” (CSEL 50, 340.2–3).
26. ut qui salutem aliis promittebant, sua ignorarent supplicia. ... Omnis labor eius et negotiatores illius, quos magos intellegimus, hoc profecit, ut unusquisque sua erraret via; et ipse perditus salutem alteri non praeberet (CCL 73A, 525.40, 52–54).
27. Tu enim, domine, iustissime moderator universitatis, consulentibus consultisque nescientibus occulto instinctu agis, ut dum quisque consulit, hoc audiat, quod eum oportet audire occultis meritis animarum ex abysso iusti iudicii tui. Cui non dicat homo: “Quid est hoc?,” “Ut quid hoc?” Non dicat, non dicat; homo est enim (CCL 27, 99.80–85; trans. Chadwick, p. 119). On this passage see Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 231, and Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 603 and n93.
28. cum astrologi mirabiliter multa vera respondent, occulto instinctu fieri spirituum non

- bonorum, quorum cura est has falsas et noxias opiniones de astralibus fatis inserere humanis mentibus atque firmare.... (CCL 47, 135.50–53).
29. CSEL 28/1, 61.16–19.
 30. Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York, 1970), 324.
 31. etiam iussu eius sibi revelantibus, qui merita humana occultissimae iustitiae sinceritate distribuit (CSEL 28/1, 61.24–25).
 32. CSEL 41, 600.
 33. Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 602–03. (Augustine would show that the demons, by their divinations which God granted by his “fixed judgment [and] reason” not only deceive human beings but also are themselves deceived. ... the predictions of demons, who thanks to their “disposition” as fallen angels know more things than human beings, can suddenly be thwarted by order of a superior authority which upsets their “counsels.” This can be compared to people who, because they are placed under a certain authority, believe that they can carry out something, but are suddenly restrained by an order from on high ... Thus the demons can have foreknowledge at their disposal and make predictions based on the lower and more usual “causes,” but nevertheless be overthrown by higher and more hidden “causes,”) Bruning is referring to Augustine, *On the Divination of Demons* 1.6 (CSEL 41, 609–610).
 34. Bruning, “De l’Astrologie,” 603–05.
 35. *Ibid.*, 604n96.
 36. *Ibid.*, 607–09.
 37. Bouché-Leclercq, 619, 623. (Augustine admits then, without a shadow of a doubt, the possibility of revelation of the future—without which it would be necessary to deny the prophecies—and he does not even consider divinatory practices as superstitions that are necessarily illusory and false. But he abominates all the more these inventions of demons... St. Augustine accepts all the cosmopolitan demonology which was undermining the foundation of reason for centuries, and no soul was ever more haunted with the obsession and the contact of the supernatural. Whether as a Manichean or orthodox, he saw in the world, in history as in the daily practice of life, only the battle between God and the devil, between the angels of light and the spirits of darkness, the latter mimicking the former, opposing their oracles to divine prophecies, contending with the soul which keeps watch in the slumbering body for

the dream that is true, fighting with blows of magic spells against true miracles.... He thinks that he has ruined astrology as a human science, and voilà he restores it as a demonic revelation....)

38. As well, Bouché-Leclercq's emphasis on "l'assiette de la raison" seems to be more of a reflection of modern, rather than ancient, preconceptions.
39. Bouché-Leclercq, 618–19; Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 197.
40. sic enim hoc nobis obiciendum putarunt: sub nomine, inquit, gratiae ita fatum asserunt, ut dicant, quia nisi deus invito et reluctanti homini inspiraverit boni et ipsius imperfecti cupiditatem, nec a malo declinare nec bonum possit arripere (CSEL 60, 469.12–16; see also p. 470.13–16).
41. See Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 11.5–6 (p. 9.16–19 Kytzler). The problem was also anticipated by Origen (Wilken, "Justification by Works," 384–392).
42. TeSelle, *Augustine*, 156, 161–63, 177–79. Augustine's *Diverse Questions to Simplicianus* 1.2 (of 396) reflects a pivotal change in his thought on the issues of grace, free will and predestination.
43. Augustine, *Incomplete Work Against Julian* 1.82 (CSEL 85/1, 95.7–96.10), citing Julian's *To Florus*. On the Pelagian accusations of Augustinian determinism see the discussion in Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 207–221.
44. Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 239–40.
45. nec sub nomine gratiae fatum asserimus, quia nullis hominum meritis dei gratiam dicimus antecedi. si autem quibusdam omnipotentis dei voluntatem placet fati nomine nuncupare, profanas quidem verborum novitates evitamus, sed de verbis contendere non amamus (CSEL 60, 469.5–9).
46. TeSelle, *Augustine*, 178–80.
47. *Ibid.*, 314.
48. See also *City of God* 5.1 (CCL 47, 128.9–14).
49. Fatum quippe qui adfirmant, de siderum positione ad tempus, quo concipitur quisque vel nascitur, quas constellationes vocant, non solum actus et eventa, verum etiam ipsas nostras voluntates pendere contendunt; dei vero gratia non solum omnia sidera et omnes caelos, verum etiam omnes angelos supergreditur (CSEL 60, 472.18–22).

50. deinde fati assertores et bona et mala hominum fato tribuunt; deus autem in malis hominum merita eorum debita retributione persequitur, bona vero per indebitam gratiam misericordii voluntate largitur, utrumque faciens non per stellarum temporale consortium, sed per suae severitatis et bonitatis aeternum altumque consilium. neutrum ergo pertinere videmus ad fatum (*Ibid.*, 472.22–473.1).
51. quod hic fatum fortunamve fuisse dicamus, quae omnino nulla sunt? quam personarum acceptionem, cum apud deum nulla esset, etiam si in istis ulla esse potuisset, qui utique nihil habebant, unde alter alteri praeferretur, meritaque nulla propria, sive bona, quibus mereretur alius baptizari, sive mala, quibus alius sine baptisate mori? ...si ergo nec fatum, quia nullae stellae ista decernunt, nec fortuna, quia non fortuiti casus haec agunt, nec personarum nec meritorum diversitas hoc fecerunt, quid restat, quantum ad baptizatum adinet, nisi gratia dei, quae vasis factis in honorem gratis datur, quantum autem ad non baptizatum, ira dei, quae vasis factis in contumeliam pro ipsius massae meritis redditur? (*Ibid.*, 474.25–475.13).
52. See Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 230–31.
53. *Ibid.*, 240.
54. The notion of divine liberation from astrological fate is also found in other religions of antiquity (W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 306–307). For example, in *Metamorphoses* 11.15 and 11.25.2 Apuleius describes Lucius' initiation into the cult of Isis as liberation from the oppressive power of the stars. See also Festugière, *Idéal Religieux*, 107–110, and the references cited in Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 2, 139n647.
55. ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ εἰμαρμένης ἐσμὲν ἀνώτεροι καὶ ἀντὶ πλανητῶν δαιμόνων ἕνα τὸν ἀπλανῆ δεσπότην μεμαθήκαμεν καὶ οὐ καθ' εἰμαρμένην ἀγόμενοι τοὺς ταύτης νομοθέτας παρητήμεθα (p. 18.7–10 Whittaker).
56. Festugière, *Idéal Religieux*, 111n4.
57. Bouché-Leclercq, 88 and n3.
58. The play on words is used in a similar way by Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolytus* 2.15 (p. 52 Grant), Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 6.67.2 (p. 51.21–23 Stählin) and Hippolytus, *Refutation* 5.13.1 (p. 174.2ff. Marcovich).
59. A similar distinction is applied to human beings by Theophilus of Antioch in *Ad Autolytum* 2.15: the fixed stars correspond to righteous people who keep the divine commandments, while the wandering planets are a type of people who depart from

God and abandon God's law (Ἡ δὲ τῶν ἄστρον θέσις οἰκονομίαν καὶ τάξιν ἔχει τῶν δικαίων καὶ εὐσεβῶν καὶ τηρούντων τὸν νόμον καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ. ... οἱ δ' αὖ μεταβαίνοντες καὶ φεύγοντες τόπον ἐκ τόπου, οἱ καὶ πλάνητες καλούμενοι, καὶ αὐτοὶ τύπος τυγχάνουσιν τῶν ἀφισταμένων ἀνθρώπων ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, καταλιπόντων τὸν νόμον καὶ τὰ προστάγματα αὐτοῦ [p.52 Grant]). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 6.67.2, on those who say "that the wandering planets are gods to those people who have truly wandered through this notorious astrology" (θεοὺς δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἀστέρας τοὺς πλανήτας, τοῖς ὄντως πεπλανημένοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ τῆς πολυθρηλήτου ταύτης ἀστρολογίας[p.51.21-23 Stählin]).

60. Sed nec aliquis mathematicus verum aliquid de fato imperatoris definire potuit; solus enim imperator stellarum non subiacet cursibus et solus est, in cuius fato stellae discernendi non habeant potestatem (vol. 1, p. 86.12–15 Kroll–Skutsch).
61. Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 25 (the common mentality of all Christians with regard to Christ's victory over astrological fate); cf. p. 28: "Le Valentinian Théodotos témoigne encore en faveur d'une croyance universellement acceptée par tous les chrétiens de son siècle. ... la conception particulière de l'εἰμαρμένη, énoncé par le disciple de Valentin, semble n'être point une doctrine secrète qu'on se transmettait dans les conventicules gnostiques, mais paraît avoir joui d'une large diffusion dans les communautés 'catholiques'." On p. 27–28 Amand summarizes the beliefs concerning the power of fate, and its defeat, that were largely shared by Christians of the second century. Amand's point that this was a common viewpoint among the early Christians is ignored by W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 324–325, and Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 650–655, who focus solely on Theodotus as a Gnostic.
62. Ἡ Εἰμαρμένη ἐστὶ σύνοδος πολλῶν καὶ ἐναντίων δυνάμεων, αὐταὶ δὲ εἰσὶν ἀόρατοι καὶ ἀφανεῖς, ἐπιτροπεύουσαι τὴν τῶν ἄστρον φορὰν καὶ δι' ἐκείνων πολιτευόμεναι. καθὼ γὰρ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἔφθακεν τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει συναναφερόμενον, τῶν κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν ῥοπήν γεννωμένων ἐῴληγεν τὴν ἐπικράτειαν, ὡς αὐτοῦ τέκνων. Διὰ τῶν ἀπλανῶν τοίνυν καὶ πλανωμένων ἄστρον αἱ ἐπὶ τούτων ἀόρατοι δυνάμεις ἐποχοῦμεναι ταμειοῦσι τὰς γενέσεις καὶ ἐπισκοποῦσι· (p. 84.618–24 Casey; trans. adapted from Casey p. 85).
63. διάφοροι δ' εἰσὶν καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις, ἀγαθοποιοὶ κακοποιοὶ, δεξιοὶ ἄριστεροὶ (p. 84.630–31 Casey). On the astrological notions of "right" and "left" see Bouché-Leclercq, 174 and n1.
64. See Casey's introduction, 7.
65. οἱ δὲ δεξιοὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἰκανοὶ παρακολουθοῦντες σφῆξιν καὶ φυλάσσειν ἡμᾶς (p. 84.641–42 Casey).

66. Διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κύριος κατήλθεν (p. 86.648). According to Casey's introduction (p. 7), ὁ κύριος in *Excerpts* 72.1 and 74.1–2 refers to the saviour Jesus, which in Theodotus' Gnosticism was distinguished from Christ. On the distinction between Jesus and Christ in Gnostic christology see Casey's overall discussion on p. 16–25, 37, and Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 151–71.
67. Ἀπὸ ταύτης τῆς στάσεως καὶ μάχης τῶν δυνάμεων ὁ κύριος ἡμᾶς ῥύσεται καὶ παρέχει τὴν εἰρήνην ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν δυνάμεων καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων παρατάξεως... Διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κύριος κατήλθεν εἰρήνην ποιήσων τοῖς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ οὐ τοῖς ἀπὸ γῆς, ὡς φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος: "εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις". διὰ τοῦτο ἀνέτειλεν ξένος ἀστήρ καὶ καινὸς καταλύων τὴν παλαιὰν ἀστροθεσίαν, καινῷ φωτί, οὐ κοσμικῷ λαμπόμενος, ὁ καινὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ σωτηρίους τρεπόμενος, αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἀνθρώπων ὁδηγὸς ὁ κατελθὼν εἰς γῆν, ἵνα μεταθῆ τοὺς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν πιστεύσαντας ἀπὸ τῆς Εἰμαρμένης εἰς τὴν ἐκείνου πρόνοιαν (p. 84.634–36, 86.648–54 Casey; trans. adapted from Casey p. 85 and 87). On the term ἀστροθεσία see above, p. 111. On the star of Bethlehem see Part B chapter 13 below.
68. οὐ γὰρ τέλεον προνοητικοί, ὥσπερ ὁ ἀγαθὸς ποιμὴν (p. 84.640–86.641 trans. Casey).
69. vol. 2, p. 328.47–330.52 Nautin (SC 238). In this passage, Origen describes rejecting astrology as being brought out from the land of "the Chaldeans" (referring to Abraham in Gen 15.7); it is ironic that the same image of leaving "Babylon/Chaldea" came to be used against Origen by Theophilus of Alexandria when he accused Origen of adhering to magic and astrology (see Jerome, *Letter* 96.16 [CSEL 55, 176.21–25]).
70. p. 84.85–92 Messié–Neyrand–Borret (SC 389).
71. vol. 3, p. 186.61–65 Crouzel–Simonetti (SC 268). Origen's anti-determinist purpose behind writing this work is clearly expressed in the preface to *On First Principles*, 5 (p. 82–84 Crouzel–Simonetti). This aspect of *On First Principles*, and of Origen's thought in general, is emphasized by Allain LeBoulluec, "La Place de la Polémique Antignostique dans le Peri Archon," in Henri Crouzel et al., ed. *Origeniana* (Bari, 1975), 51; Marguerite Harl, "La Préexistence des Âmes dans l'Oeuvre d'Origène," in Lothar Lies ed., *Origeniana Quarta* (Innsbruck, 1987), 238–58; and Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 195.
72. p. 270 des Places (SC).
73. CCL 36, 88.10–89.24.
74. Ὡς οὖν ἡ γέννησις τοῦ σωτῆρος γενέσεως ἡμᾶς καὶ Εἰμαρμένης ἐξέβαλεν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ πυρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξείλετο καὶ τὸ πάθος πάθους, ἵνα κατὰ πάντα

ἀκολουθήσωμεν αὐτῷ (p. 86.661–63 Casey). Cf. Matt 3.11; Lk 3.16, 12.49; Acts 2.17–21; Rom 6.2–4; 1 Pet 2.21. Baptismal water and fire, a rhetorical contrast of opposites, are also mentioned together in Clement of Alexandria, *Eclogues of the Prophets* 8.1.

75. Cf. Lk 10.19; Ps 91.13; Gen 3.15; Rom 16.20; Mk 16.18; Acts 28.3–6.
76. ὁ γὰρ εἰς θεὸν βαπτισθεὶς εἰς θεὸν ἐχώρησεν καὶ εἴληφεν "ἐξουσίαν ἐπάνω σκορπίων καὶ ὄφρων περιπατεῖν," τῶν δυνάμεων τῶν πονηρῶν.... ταύτη θάνατος καὶ τέλος λέγεται τοῦ παλαιοῦ βίου τὸ βάπτισμα ἀποτασσομένων ἡμῶν ταῖς πονηραῖς ἀρχαῖς, ζωὴ δὲ κατὰ Χριστόν, ἧς μόνος αὐτὸς κυριεύει. ἡ δύναμις δὲ τῆς μεταβολῆς τοῦ βαπτισθέντος οὐ περὶ τὸ σῶμα ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἀναβαίνει, ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχὴν. αὐτίκα δούλος θεοῦ ἅμα τὸ ἀνελεθῆναι τὸ[*sic*] βαπτίσματος καὶ πρὸς τῶν ἀκαθάρτων λέγεται πνευμάτων, καὶ εἰς ὃν πρὸ ὀλίγον ἐνήργουν, τοῦτον ἤδη "φρίσσουν." Μέχρι τοῦ βαπτίσματος οὖν ἡ Εἰμαρμένη, φασίν, ἀληθής, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο οὐκέτι ἀληθεύουσιν οἱ ἀστρολόγοι (p. 86.663–88.676 Casey; trans. adapted from Casey p. 87 and 89). In the last line, the subject of φασίν is the Valentinians; this is Clement's general way of citing Theodotus (see Casey's introduction, 5, 7).
77. Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans John Austin Baker (London, 1973) 432.
78. See Michel Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta, 1990), 119–20.
79. p. 264.14–16 Rehm.
80. PL 8, 1176–1176 (on Galatians 4.3)
81. Est et illud "opprobrium Aegypti" [Josh 5.9] quod, si neglexeris, etiam post Iordanis transitum et post baptismi secundam circumcisionem vetustae consuetudinis inustione suggeritur, servare auguria, requirere stellarum cursus et eventus ex his futurorum rimari, servare omina ceterisque huiusmodi superstitionibus implicari. Idolotriae namque mater est Aegyptus.... Sed si quando te talis curiositas interpellat ...dic ei quia Iesum ducem sequor, in cuius potestate sunt, quae futura sunt. Quid mihi scire, quae futura sunt, cum, quae ille vult, haec futura sint. Ideo ergo, ut in nobis vere secunda circumcisio compleatur, per quam vetera "Aegypti opprobria" deponamus, ab his omnibus segregati prorsus esse debemus.... (p. 320.13–26 Baehrens [GCS]).
82. Though neither "dux" nor ἡγεμών (which was presumably Origen's original) were technical terms of ancient astrology, it is possible that Origen had in mind the astrological concept of signs "preceding" and "following" each other in the order of

- diurnal motion (Bouché-Leclercq, 129). In a number of “hexasticha de duodecim signa” Aries is termed “dux” or “ductor” (*Poetae Latini Minores*, vol. 4, 144-146 Baehrens). Similarly, in discussing observation of the signs climbing to the ascendant Manilius refers to Aries leading, “Aries qua ducit Olympum” (*Astronomica*, 2.945 [p.156 Goold]); cf. 2.456 and 4.704 on the correspondence of Aries with the human head according to the system of zodiacal melothesia. An inscription from the mithraeum at Santa Prisca reads “here too Aries, first in line, runs in tighter compass” (Primus et hic aries astrictius ordine currit); see M.J. Vermaseren and C.C. Van Essen, *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca in Rome* (Leiden, 1965), 213-17, and Roger Beck, “Mithraism since Franz Cumont,” ANRW 2.17.4, 2029.
83. CCL 22, 105.15–19.
84. ὅτι δὲ ἐστὶ, φασίν, Εἰμαρμένη τοῖς ἄλλοις (p. 86.654–55 Casey).
85. At enim scientia ista usque ad evangelium fuit concessa, ut Christo edito nemo exinde nativitatem alicuius de caelo interpretetur (p. 36.18–19 Waszink and van Winden).
86. neque illud obrepat aut spe vobis aeria blandiatur, quod ab sciolis nonnullis et plurimum sibi adrogantibus dicitur, deo esse se gnatos nec fati obnoxios legibus.... (CSEL 4, 97.19–22).
87. nam si...debilitates et corporum passiones [surdi manci et muti], nervorum contractio et amissio luminis fatalibus accidunt inrogantur decretis, si solus haec Christus correxerit restituit atque sanavit: sole ipso est clarius, potentiorum illum fuisse quam fata sunt, cum ea soluit et vicit quae perpetuis nexibus et immobili fuerant necessitate devincta (CSEL 4, 31.20–26).
88. p. 206.17–207.1 Rehm (GCS). Contra Bouché-Leclercq, 622–23n4, Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 38, does not use the story of the miracle of the sun being turned back in its course to mock astrology. This story is not even mentioned in *Letter* 38; it is mentioned in *Poem* 26.183–84, but only in passing.
89. audi coniugis meae thema, et invenies schema cuius exitus accidit. habuit enim Martem cum Venere super centrum, Lunam vero in occasu in domo Martis et finibus Saturni, quod schema adulteras facit et servos proprios amare, in peregre et in aquis defungi, quod et ita factum est.... (p. 319.10–14 Rehm). On astrology in the Pseudo-Clementine literature see also Part B chapter 19 below.
90. Gundel and Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 328–29. The story also affirms the power

astrology, since much of Mattidia's horoscope was in fact fulfilled; see below Part B chapter 17.

91. Howard Clark Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven, 1983), 254–55, referring to pagan as well as Christian romances such as the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*; cf. p. 284–85 on miracles in the *Homilies* which establish Peter's status as a representative of Christ and hence his preeminence over Simon Magus. On the social function of miracle in ancient debates between pagans and Christians see also Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 80–82, 141–44.
92. vis videre prophetas et apostolos nostros, quanta faciebant non fati virtute sed fide et adiutorio summi Dei et divina potentia Christi: ecce, et contractos restituebant quos dicitis fato vexari, pariter et infirmos curabant, mortuos suscitabant, caecos inluminabant et claudos erigebant —et nihil a fato petebant sed totum, ut dixi sinceritate fidei et divinis opibus et miserationibus adinplebant (p. 322.45–51 Spagnolo–Turner; cf. p. 330.299–303).
93. Following the French translation of Paul Peeters, ed. *Évangiles Apocryphes*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1914), 63.
94. The lamp is reproduced in John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), 68.
95. H.P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo, 1953), 114; see p. 90ff. on the shield as an image of heaven (clipeus caelestis); p. 125ff. on the throne carried by the four living creatures bearing Christ aloft; and p. 165–70 on depictions of Christ extending his right hand.
96. Καί εἰ τὰ ἀκόλουθὰ τις ἐαυτῷ ἐφ' οἷς δογματίζει βλέπει, καὶ ἡ πίστις ἔσται μάταιος, ἢ τε Χριστοῦ ἐπιδημία οὐδὲν ἀνύουσα, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ διὰ νόμου καὶ προφητῶν οἰκονομία, κάματοί τε ἀποστόλων ὑπὲρ τοῦ συστήσαι τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ Χριστοῦ ἐκκλησίας· εἰ μὴ ἄρα κατὰ τοὺς οὕτω τολμῶντας καὶ Χριστός, ὑπὸ τὴν ἀνάγκην τῆς τῶν ἄστρον κινήσεως τῷ γένεσιν ἀνειληφέναι γενόμενος, πάντα πεποιήκοι τε καὶ πάθοι, οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρος τῶν ὅλων αὐτῷ τὰς παραδόξους δυνάμεις δωρησαμένου, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀστέρων (p. 134.20–136.29 Junod).
97. Αἱ δὲ μεγάλαι τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐλπίδες φροῦδαί ἡμῖν οἰχῆσονται (p. 362 Giet).
98. CSEL 50, 348.8–349.7.
99. sapientia ergo carnis est primo in loco astrorum ab hominibus praesumpta disputatio,

deinde visibilium oblectatio. haec enim deo sunt inimica, quia elementorum dominum et opificem mundi his coaequant quae fecit, adstruentes nihil posse fieri praeter quam mundi continet ratio. quamobrem negant deum fecisse, ut virgo pareret aut mortuorum corpora ut resurgant.... (CCL 81/1, 263).

100. φησὶν ὡς ὑπὸ τῆς γενεθλιαλογίας οἱ ἐκμανέντες καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ἀπάντων ὑποτάττουσι ταύτη. Φασὶ γάρ, ὥσπερ τὸ δικαιοπραγεῖν ἀπὸ γενέσεως, οὕτω καὶ τὸ προσευχόμενον εἰσακούεσθαι καὶ τὸ καταξιούσθαι θειοτέρων ἀποκαλύψεων. Ὡστε ἐξ ὧν τολμῶσι λέγειν, τὸν θεὸν ὑπηρέτην ἀποφαίνουσι τῆς γενέσεως (p. 41.11–17 Henry).
101. Καὶ μὴν οὐδεὶς ἐνταῦθα λόγος ἐπιτρέψειε τὴν εἰμαρμένην αἰτιάσθαι. Ποῦ γάρ σοι ἐξ αἰῶνος τοιούσδε ἀθλητὰς εὐσεβείας ἤνεγκεν ἢ τῶν ἄστρον φορά; (p. 158.1–3 des Places). Cf. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 4.4.13 (CSEL 32/1, 119–20) where the point is that none of the Biblical heroes (e.g. the condemned thief who was crucified beside Christ, Jonah, Peter, Paul) achieved anything by astrology but rather through their piety.
102. p. 158–62 des Places.

11. Pastoral Problems Posed by Astrology

That the early Christians were in the habit of consulting astrologers is evident from the repeated condemnations of astrology by Christian writers surveyed above.¹ This behaviour posed a practical pastoral problem for leaders of the church during the first centuries of its history. One response to this problem was that church leaders issued repeated warnings that Christians were not to practice astrology themselves. Such warnings are found from early in the church's history: thus in *Didache* 3.4, perhaps dating from the early second century C.E.,² the writer urges that a Christian should not become an augur (οἰωνοσκόπος), an enchanter (ἐπαιιδός), an astrologer (μαθηματικός), or a "purificator" (περικαθαίρων, the exact meaning of which is uncertain), and not even to look at such activities since they lead to idolatry.³ This passage features the earliest use of the usual term for astrologer (μαθηματικός) in Christian literature. The prohibition against practicing astrology was repeated in *Apostolic Tradition* 16.14⁴ and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.11.⁵ In these passages the profession of astrologer (ἄστρολόγος) is listed among several which are deemed unsuitable for Christians: people are advised that they must leave such occupations before being baptized into the church, and if they do not obey they should be rejected, while new members who have come from such occupations should be put to the test of time since such forms of evil are hard to be rid of.⁶

There were also some Christians who refused to give up astrology. Epiphanius relates that this was the case with the noted Biblical scholar Aquila who lived during the time of Hadrian. He tells a fanciful story that at one time Aquila had been a Christian who refused to give up astrology, which led to his ejection from the church, after which he converted to Judaism and produced his Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible to rival the Septuagint version which the Christians favoured (*On Measurements and Weights* 15).⁷ A more credible instance is the situation being addressed by Tertullian in *On Idolatry* 9, which is directed against a Christian who attracted Tertullian's ire because he was attempting to maintain his occupation as a practicing astrologer.⁸ These passages together indicate that in the early church the penalty for practicing astrology was excommunication.

It is possible that this penalty applied if a Christian merely consulted an astrologer: Augustine expresses the wish that it were so, but says that bishops no longer dare to excommunicate lay people for such behaviour (*Enchiridion* 21.80).⁹ Even so, stubborn persistence in this and other "sinful" activities

could still result in excommunication. Augustine relates that a person who commits a theft, then consults an astrologer, adds sin to sin (*On John* 10.5). He adds that since they are forbidden to go to the astrologer their sin is compounded further because they are rejecting the church's authority ("you slander the bishop"). Then they hear the words "Send him out from the church"—and the person adds yet another sin to the list by joining the Donatists!¹⁰

A number of passages in the writings of Origen reflect his awareness that among his Christian audience were adherents of astrology.¹¹ He reports that some thought that conversion to Christianity was itself brought about by fate.¹² The issue continued to be addressed by church leaders in the fourth century. It was in response to the request of a Roman nobleman, Macarius, for a refutation of astrological determinism that Rufinus translated Origen's *On First Principles* into Latin in 398.¹³ Both Rufinus¹⁴ and Jerome¹⁵ refer to the story of Macarius' dream of a ship, which the latter took as a premonition of Rufinus' coming to Rome in order to help him against the astrologers. Rufinus also translated into Latin the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, a work which deals in various ways with astrology.

As we have seen, for Augustine in his role as bishop of Hippo Christians who were in the habit of consulting astrologers were of particular concern.¹⁶ In his sermons, Augustine notes that many of the baptized in his congregation were engaging in such activities (*On John* 6.17;¹⁷ *On Psalms* 2 [on Ps 88.14];¹⁸ *On Psalms* 59.11¹⁹). In *On Catechizing the Simple* 7.11.3 he writes that catechumens should be given practical instruction for Christian behaviour so as not to be led astray by "drunkards, the avaricious, the dishonest, gamblers, adulterers, fornicators, lovers of shows, those who bind themselves with amulets, sorcerers, astrologers, and diviners of any other vain and evil arts."²⁰ Later in this same work Augustine warns that many people within the church indulge in such types of behaviour (25.48.14).²¹ It seems that some members of Augustine's congregation were "hedging their bets": they admitted to their bishop that they were Christians for the sake of eternity but that they adhered to astrology with regard to some aspects of life in the here and now (*On Psalms* 40.3).²² The depth of Augustine's concern about this problem is evident in the metaphors he uses: he condemns Christians who were consulting astrologers and diviners as guilty of spiritual adultery (*Sermon* 9.3)²³ and of cursing God (*On Psalms* 133.2).²⁴

A particular problem was that members of Christian congregations would seek the advice of astrologers with regard to daily activities, that is, they

maintained the practice of katarchic astrology. Caesarius of Arles condemns those who carefully calculated which day they would go out on a journey, and he also advises his audience that each day is to be honoured because it was created by God (*Sermon* 193.4;²⁵ *Sermon* 54.1²⁶). Ambrose writes that some people tended to avoid undertaking new activities on the fourth day of the week. Against this he points out that God created the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day (Gen 1.14–19) and that the fourteenth day (of Nisan) was the day on which Easter was celebrated (*Hexaemeron* 4.9.34).²⁷ Similarly, in one of his letters Ambrose notes that people would decide under what phase of the moon to undertake business, and they would avoid the fifth day of the month²⁸ as well as “following” days or “Egyptian days” (*Letters outside the collection* 13.4).²⁹ The “Egyptian days” (dies Aegyptiaci) were some 24 or 25 days (averaging two per month) which were considered dangerous for beginning any enterprise, and especially one was to be careful not to shed blood on those days.³⁰ In late antiquity, the following “Egyptian days” were marked on the calendar of 354: Jan 2, 6, 16; Feb 7, 25; Mar 3, 24; April 3, 21; May 3, 21; June 7, 20; July 6, 18; Aug 6, 21; Sept 2, 19; Oct 3, 20; Nov 2, 24; Dec 4, 14.³¹ To counter such observances Augustine preached that Christ chose the day of his nativity:

Mistaken people often choose days, one for tilling new fields, one for building, one for setting out on a journey, and sometimes even for taking a wife. When he does this, he does it so that anything born from it may be successfully brought up. But no one can choose the day on which to be born: but he could choose both, who was able also to create both. But he did not choose the day as they do who idly make human fates depend on the arrangement of the stars (*Sermon* 190.1).³²

Katarchic astrology is also criticized by Augustine in *City of God* 5.7³³ and *Sermon* 190.1.³⁴ Elsewhere, Augustine expounds on the theme of “observing days and months and seasons and years” from Gal 4.10–11 in terms of katarchic astrology.

That error of the gentiles is most common, that either when doing something or when awaiting the results of their life or business they observe days and months and years and times that are marked by astrologers and Chaldeans. ... Our churches are full of people who take the times for doing things from astrologers. Indeed they do not even hesitate to often warn us that anything—either a building or some such work—should be started on so-called “Egyptian days,” these people who do not know where they are walking, as the saying goes.... Now countless people from the number of the faithful tell us to our face with great assurance: ‘I will not set out

on a journey on the day after the Kalends' (*Exposition of the Letter to the Galatians* 34–35).³⁵

Augustine adds that when he and his fellow bishops hear of such behaviour they can scarcely restrain themselves from laughing.³⁶ Nevertheless, Augustine regards the observance of katarthic astrology as a serious problem. Even if Gal 4.10 may have originally been directed against Christians who were keeping the Jewish calendar,³⁷ Augustine nevertheless deemed it relevant to interpret the Pauline text in terms of katarthic astrology for Christians of his own day (*Exposition of Galatians* 34–35).³⁸ Indeed, from Augustine's perspective the magnitude of the problem is evident when he remarks on how different the reaction would be to persons observing the practices of Judaism in his congregation: "if someone, even a catechumen, were to be caught observing the sabbath according to Jewish rite the church would be in an uproar!" (*Exposition of Galatians* 35)³⁹

In *Enchiridion* 79–80, again discussing the practice of katarthic astrology among Christians with reference to Gal 4.10–11, Augustine notes that such practices have become so common among his congregation that laypersons who consult astrologers are no longer excommunicated, and clergy who practice astrology are not even demoted: "In our time so many evils have come into open usage that for such behaviour we not only do not dare to excommunicate a lay person, we do not even demote a member of the clergy" (*Enchiridion* 21.80).⁴⁰ This latter comment offers clear evidence that even the clergy consulted astrologers regarding daily undertakings. Jerome too refers to clergy who pay attention to the rising and setting of stars, and follow the errors of astrologers (*Commentary on Zephaniah* 1, on Zeph 1.4–6).⁴¹ We know that some clergy even practiced astrology themselves, since this was expressly forbidden to clergy in higher and lower orders by Canon 36 of the Council of Laodicea, along with practicing magic and the wearing of amulets;⁴² this council took place around 340.⁴³ The fourth Council of Toledo in 633, under the leadership of Isidore of Seville, also condemned clergy who consult magi and haruspices (which likely included astrologers).⁴⁴ Even some bishops were adherents of astrology. This accusation was levelled against Eusebius of Emesa (c. 340).⁴⁵ As well, at the Second Synod of Ephesus in 449 (the so-called Latrocinium or "Robber Synod") Sophronius, bishop of Tella (Greek Constantina) in Syria, was accused not only of Nestorianism but also of practicing divination, including astrology.⁴⁶ According to the acts of the Synod preserved in Syriac it was the clergy of Tella, including the pres-

byter Simeon and the deacons Cyrus and Eustathius, who composed and sent the letter of accusation against Sophronius, charging that the bishop “has been participating in ... ‘the table of Devils’ [1 Cor 10.21]: he has taken part in the numerical computations of Astrology, and in the motion of the Stars and in their variation, and in Divination, and in the vaticinative Art of the Pagans.”⁴⁷ The letter also asserted that Bishop Sophronius had composed astrological writings, of which copies had been made by Maras, a sub-deacon, and two deaconesses of the church named Adesia and Stronica.⁴⁸ Thus the bishop’s astrological interest was having an effect on the clerical staff of his church: indeed, a deacon of the church at Tella, Uranius, confessed to having read Sophronius’ astrological works and also that he saw the bishop “carrying and inspecting the brass-sphere destined for his criminal incantations (divination).”⁴⁹ (The latter may refer to an instrument used for astronomical calculations, perhaps an armillary sphere.⁵⁰) Since the synod removed the bishop of Edessa, Ibas, on account of his Nestorian views it was decided to refer the case of Sophronius to the next orthodox bishop of Edessa.⁵¹ In the sixth century Gabriel, bishop of Nisibis, was deposed from his see on account of his expertise regarding the motion of the stars and the zodiacal signs.⁵²

It is not surprising that Augustine’s writings (*On John* 8.8; *On Psalms* 61.23) attest a further penalty for astrology, i.e. the burning of astrologers’ books. This followed the apostolic precedent of burning books of magic (Acts 19.19) as well as the example of Augustus who had burned more than 2000 prophetic writings after he became Pontifex Maximus (Suetonius, *Augustus* 31).⁵³ Augustine’s testimony to the burning of astrologers’ books also reflects recent imperial legislation, CTh 9.16.12 of 409, which required astrologers to abjure their profession and burn their books in a bishop’s presence or face deportation.⁵⁴ This was actually a mitigation of the earlier sentence of capital punishment in CTh 9.16.8.⁵⁵ Book burning was related to the very fact that astrology was such a very “bookish” skill.⁵⁶ According to one commentator, the appearance of the astrologer portrayed by Augustine in *On Psalms* 61.23, with his books at hand ready for burning, was not a spontaneous act but quite deliberately orchestrated: this part of the homily should really be interpreted as “integral to the sermon, with the converted *mathematicus* lurking to be brought out as a show-piece.”⁵⁷

Notes

1. W. Gundel, "Astralreligion," RAC 1, 814; Klauck, *Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 249.
2. The dating of the *Didache* is notoriously difficult; see: Robert A. Kraft, "Didache," ABD vol. 2, 197; Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (Leiden, 1989), 16–18, 142–145; Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, 1998), 52–53 and n71.
3. p. 152.7–154.11 Rordorf–Tuilier (SC 248). The editors suggest that περικαθαίρων is perhaps a reference to purifications by fire; they also cite W.L. Knox in JTS n.s. 40 (1938–39): 146–49 who interprets it as an allusion to circumcision. The list in *Didache* 3.4, like similar lists of forbidden divinatory practices in earlier Jewish texts, was intended to separate the identity of the (here Christian) believer from pagan society (Jonathan A. Draper, "Christian Self-Definition against the 'Hypocrites' in *Didache* VIII," in Draper ed., *The Didache in Modern Research* [Leiden: Brill, 1996]. 228; cf. Gedaliah Alon, "The Halacha in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," in *ibid.*, 174–75).
4. Bradshaw et al., *Apostolic Tradition*, 90.
5. p. 238.33 Metzger (SC 336).
6. χρόνῳ δοκιμαζέσθωσάν, δυσέκνιπτος γὰρ ἡ κακία· παυσάμενοι οὖν προσδεχέσθωσαν, μὴ πειθόμενοι δὲ ἀποβαλλέσθωσαν (p. 238.37–39 Metzger [SC 336]). This parallels the verdict of *Apostolic Tradition* 16.14 that Christians must desist from practicing astrology or else be rejected from the community.
7. PG 43, 261C–D. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, rev. ed. by Geza Vermes et al., vol. 3/1 (Edinburgh, 1986), 494–95, doubting the veracity of Epiphanius' report, which is nevertheless accepted as historical by S. J. Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (Woodbridge, England, 1987), 55.
8. However, *On Idolatry* 9.3 is not directed against any particular group which claimed that astrology had "now become Christian" (contra Thee, *Julius Africanus*, 415).
9. CCL 46, 94.71–75.
10. Quomodo adduntur peccata peccatis? Cum peccata quae facta sunt, cooperiuntur aliis

peccatis. Furtum fecit, ne inveniatur quia fecit, quaerit mathematicum. Sufficeret furtum fecisse; quare vis adiungere peccatum peccato? Ecce duo peccata. Cum ad mathematicum prohiberis accedere, blasphemias episcopum; ecce tria peccata. Cum audis: Mitte illum foras de ecclesia; dicis: Duco me ad partem Donati; ecce addis quartum (CCL 36, 103.8–15). Cf. *On Psalms* 57.4 (CCL 39, 711.8–712.21).

11. Bardy, “Origène et la Magie,” 128; Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 318, 324. See e.g. *Commentary on Matthew* 13.6 (PG 13, 1108C–1109A); *Homilies on Joshua* 7.4 (p. 331.12–13 Baehrens); *Philocalia* 23.1 (p. 132.9–12 Junod).
12. Origen, *Philocalia* 23.1 (p. 136.29–31 Junod) and *Homilies on Jeremiah* 1.3.4 (p. 328.39–40 Nautin).
13. The anti-astrological background to Rufinus’ translation of *On First Principles* is emphasized by Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 9–13, 177; see also Lardet, *Commentaire*, 322–23. Macarius was a Roman and a “vir nobilis” according to Jerome, *Apology against Rufinus* 3.24 and 32 (CCL 79, 96.21–22 and 102.7).
14. Rufinus, *Apology against Jerome* 1.11 (CCL 20, 44–45).
15. Jerome, *Apology against Rufinus* 3.24, 29, 32 (CCL 79, 96.21–24; 101.11–13; 102.7–10).
16. On this see van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 66, and A.-G. Hamman, *La Vie Quotidienne en Afrique du Nord au Temps de Saint Augustin* ([Paris], 1985), 188–193.
17. CCL 36, 62.9–13.
18. CCL 39, 1244.38–40.
19. CCL 39, 763.16–20.
20. ne ab ebriosis, avaris, fraudatoribus, aleatoribus, adulteris, fornicatoribus, spectaculorum amatoribus, remediorum sacrilegorum alligatoribus, praecantatoribus, mathematicis, vel quarum libet artium vanarum et malarum divinatoribus, atque huiusmodi ceteris it facile seducatur (CCL 46, 132.21–25). In a note on this passage in his edition of *Catechizing the Simple* (Washington, 1926), 170, Joseph Patrick Christopher makes the following comment: “The Africans in particular were much given to superstitious practices and magical arts” (citing as support Augustine, *Confessions* 4.3.4 and Apuleius’ *Apology*). This unwarranted statement is repeated in Christopher’s edition in the ACW series (p. 107n79), and is recommended as

- “interesting” by Louis A. Arand in his edition of Augustine’s *Enchiridion* (*St. Augustine: Faith, Hope and Charity* [Westminster, 1947], 136n269).
21. CCL 46, 171.69–172.72.
 22. Multi enim mali christiani inspectores ephemeridiarum, et inquisitores atque observatores temporum et dierum [cf. Gal 4.10], cum coeperint ibi obiurgari a nobis, vel a quibusdam bonis melioribusque christianis, quare ista faciant, respondent: Haec propter tempus hoc necessaria sunt; christiani autem sumus propter vitam aeternam.... (CCL 38, 450.25–30). Cf. parallel texts discussed in Hamman, *Vie Quotidienne*, 183–84. The same way of thinking is condemned by Ambrosiaster, Qu. 115. 50–51 (CSEL 50, 334.18–336.4). See also Jerome’s *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1 (on Zeph 1.4–6) (CCL 76A, 662.239–49) referring to adherents of astrology as those who serve God and mammon.
 23. PL 38, 76.
 24. CCL 40, 1936.8–15.
 25. Nonnulli enim in haec mala labuntur, ut diligenter observent qua die in itinere exeant, honorem praestantes aut soli aut lunae aut Marti aut Mercurio aut Jovi aut Veneri aut Saturno (CCL 104, 785). Caesarius regards observing days of the week as the equivalent of venerating pagan deities, and goes on to express his preference for the terminology of Gen 1 for the days of the week, i.e. the first day, second day, etc. (*ibid.*) The pagan associations of the days of the week, and of celebrating the new year on the Kalends of January, are also attacked by Martin of Bracara in a sermon “On the Improvement of Peasants” 8–10 (PLS 4, 1397-98).
 26. Nullus ex vobis observet, qua die de domo exeat, qua die iterum revertatur: quia omnes dies deus fecit, sicut scriptura dicit.... (CCL 103, 236).
 27. CSEL 32/1, 139–40.
 28. Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.276–77: Ipsa dies alios alio dedit ordine Luna/ felicis operum. quintam fuge....
 29. Sed aliud est observare gentilico more ut qua luna quid adoriendum sit iudices, ut puta quintam esse fugiendam nihilque ea inchoandum, varios quoque cursus lunae obeundis negotiis commendare vel cavere quosdam dies, quemadmodum plerique posteros dies vel Aegyptiacos declinare consuerunt (CSEL 82/3, 223.39–224.44).
 30. See Bouché-Leclercq, 485–86 and the references at 486n1; Henri Stern, *Le Calendrier de 354* (Paris, 1953), 67–68. The days are listed in *Anthologia Latina*

680 (vol. 1/2, p. 156-57 Riese).

31. Stern, *Calendrier*, 67, who writes “...nous n’avons réussi à déceler le principe d’après lequel ces jours ont été fixés dans le Calendrier. Il ne nous est donc pas possible de définir leurs propriétés astrologiques et leur signification précise.”
32. Errantes homines plerumque eligunt dies, alius novellandi, alius aedificandi, alius proficiscendi, et aliquando etiam alius uxorem ducendi. Quod cum facit, ideo facit, ut inde aliquid natum feliciter nutriatur. Nemo tamen potest eligere diem, quo ipse nascatur. Sed ille potuit utrumque eligere, qui utrumque potuit et creare. Nec ita elegit diem, sicut eligunt qui fata hominum inaniter de siderum dispositione suspendunt (PL 38, 1007).
33. CCL 47/1, 134–35.
34. PL 38, 1007.
35. Vulgatissimus enim est error iste gentilium, ut vel in agendis rebus vel in expectandis eventibus vitae ac negotiorum suorum ab astrologis et Chaldaeis notatos dies et menses et annos et tempora observent.... plena sunt conventicula nostra hominibus, qui tempora rerum agendarum a mathematicis accipiunt. Iam vero ne aliquid inchoetur aut aedificiorum aut huiusmodi quorumlibet operum, diebus quos aegyptiacos vocant saepe etiam nos monere non dubitant nescientes, ut dicitur, ubi ambulat....Nunc autem innumbrabiles de numero fidelium cum magna confidentia in faciem nobis dicunt: die post Kalendas non proficiscor (CSEL 84, 102–104).
36. Et vix lente ista prohibemus aridentes, ne irascantur, et timentes, ne quasi novum aliquid mirentur (*ibid.*, 104.2–3).
37. Cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia, 1979), 217–19, who claims that Paul’s argument was directed against Christians who were considering adopting Jewish practices. Betz emphasizes the rhetorical nature of this Pauline text, that Paul was sarcastically depicting a type of scrupulous, indeed superstitious, observance of the Jewish calendar. More recently, J. Louis Martyn has argued that Gal 4.10 is opposing the universal (i.e. Jewish and Gentile) distinction between holy and profane times discerned through celestial observation (*Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York, 1997], 414–418).
38. CSEL 84, 102–103. Cf. the parallel exegesis of Gal 4.10–11 in *Letter 55.13* (CSEL 34, 183.18–184.7). Ambrosiaster, Qu 82, also applies the Galatians passage to both pagans and Jews, contrasting the pagans who worship the “elementa” with the Jews who are “sub elementa” as Paul says he had been (Gal 4.3) (CSEL 50, 139).

39. Et tamen si deprehendatur quisquam vel catechumenus Iudaico ritu sabbatum observans tumultuatur ecclesia (CSEL 84, 103.23–24).
40. Sic nostris temporibus ita multa mala...in apertam consuetudinem iam venerunt, ut pro his non solum excommunicare aliquem laicum non audeamus, sed nec clericum degradare (CCL 46, 94.71–75).
41. referunt ad ortus stellarum et occubitus, et mathematicorum sequuntur errores (CCL 76A, 662.242–43).
42. Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἱερατικούς ἢ κληρικούς, μάγους ἢ ἑπαιδοὺς εἶναι, ἢ μαθηματικούς ἢ ἀστρολόγους, ἢ ποιεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα φυλακτήρια, ἅτινα ἐστὶ δεσμοκτήρια τῶν ψυχῶν αὐτῶν· τοὺς δὲ φοροῦντας ῥίπτεσθαι ἐκ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐκελεύσαμεν (Hefele–Leclercq, vol. 1/2, 1018).
43. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 79.
44. So Jacques Fontaine, “Isidore de Séville et l’Astrologie,” REL 31 (1954): 280–82; repr. *Tradition et Actualité chez Isidore de Séville* (London, 1988).
45. Socrates, HE 2.9.8 says that Eusebius was accused of practicing astrology: ἐλοιδορεῖτο γὰρ ὡς μαθηματικὴν ἀσκούμενος (p. 99.3–4 Hansen [GCS]). It may be, however, that he was obliged to flee his see of Emesa because his congregation disagreed over his election; cf. the previous line: διαστασιάντων δὲ τῶν Ἐμεσηνῶν ἐπὶ τῇ χειροτονίᾳ αὐτοῦ. Following (and amplifying) Socrates, Sozomenus, HE 3.6.5 directly attributes Eusebius’ flight to his practice of (predictive) astrology: ἐνταῦθα τε στάσιν ὑπομείνας (διεβάρλετο γὰρ ἀσκεῖσθαι τῆς ἀστρονομίας ὃ μέρος ἀποτελεσματικὸν καλοῦσι) φυγὰς ἦλθεν εἰς Λαοδικεῖαν (p. 108.3–5 Bidez [GCS]). Bouché-Leclercq, 616, accepts that Eusebius was deposed because he was accused of being an astrologer, but this explanation is rejected by E.M. Buytaert, *L’Héritage Littéraire d’Eusèbe d’Émèse* (Louvain, 1949), 84.
46. On this see Ernest Honigmann, “A Trial for Sorcery on August 22, A.D. 449,” *Isis* 35 (1944): 281–284; Erik Peterson, “Die Geheimen Praktiken eines Syrischen Bischofs,” *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis* (Darmstadt, 1959; repr. 1982), 333–45.
47. Trans. of S.G.F. Perry, *The Second Synod of Ephesus* (Dartford, 1881), 190–91.
48. *Ibid.*, 195. In addition the text lists “Peter, the Chief Physician of the City”; rather than serving as a scribe, it is more likely that he is mentioned because he had read Sophronius’ astrological works (Peterson, “Geheimen Praktiken,” 343).
49. Perry, *Second Synod of Ephesus*, 196.

50. Peterson, "Geheimen Praktiken," 343–44. On such "sphaera" see Bouché-Leclercq, 265n2.
51. Perry, *Second Synod*, 198. According to the acts of the synod Sophronius was a relative of Ibas (*ibid.*, 189). According to Honigmann Sophronius' accusers were likely more interested in the bishop's purported Nestorianism; moreover, it is probable that his trial never took place since Sophronius remained bishop of Tella until 458 ("Trial for Sorcery," 284).
52. F. Nau, *Patrologia Syriaca* 1/2 (Paris, 1907), 501.
53. fatidicorum librorum Graeci Latiniq[ue] generis nullis vel parum idoneis auctoribus (p. 170 Rolfe).
54. p. 463 Mommsen. A sentence of exile may suggest that the accused were members of the nobility "since no tuppenny-ha'penny criminal suffered exile" (MacMullen, *Enemies*, 139).
55. p. 462 Mommsen (who dates the law to 370 or 373). This was noted by A.A Barb, "The Survival of Magic Arts," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford, 1963), 114.
56. MacMullen, *Enemies*, 136.
57. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 2, 213–14; he adds "Clearly there was much suspicion of the *bona fides* of this conversion, but A[ugustine] vouched for him."

Part B: Early Christian Accommodation of Astrology

It has been generally thought that early Christianity was ardently opposed to astrology right from the beginning.¹ However, there are numerous examples of early Christian writers and groups which held more or less positive views of astrology and which found ways to accommodate elements of astrology within their theological systems. It is to these that we will now turn, beginning with indirect evidence of interest in astrology among the early Christians from archaeological and non-literary sources.

12. Archaeological and Non-Literary Sources

Some ancient inscriptional evidence contains both Christian and astrological themes. For example, a burial inscription (ILCV 1336) dedicated by a soldier Fl. Ianuarius to his wife Ursa suggests that Christian as well as astrological beliefs may have coexisted in their household. The inscription informs us that the wife, a faithful Christian, had died in childbirth at the age of 38. Her husband laments that “she was taken to deepest Tartarus by the sudden leading of impious fate” while he has been left alone; astrological fate (genesis) has separated those who had shared their virginity together and did not allow them to continually enjoy heavenly love.² Several other Christian funerary inscriptions also contain references to fate, stating that the deceased has fulfilled the length of life that was their allotted fate, has returned their life that was owed to fate, has been taken by fate, etc. (ILCV 3305–14, 3330).³ An inscription from Aquileia (ILCV 176) attributes a wife’s death to sinister fate; that the author was a Christian is suggested by the reference to the wife’s “beautiful cheeks” (*pulcra genas*) which echoes “*pulchrae sunt genae tuae*” in the Vulgate of Song of Songs 1.9.⁴ Two epitaphs from Rome make mention of the fact that the deceased was born under the sign of Capricorn, ILCV 4377 for a child named Simplicius born in 364 C.E. and ILCV 4379 for a person born in 386.⁵ There are also numerous early Christian epitaphs on which stars and signs of the zodiac are portrayed.⁶ Such epitaphs demonstrate the continued use of traditional astrological language by Christians whether or not the deceased truly adhered to astrology.

The use of astrological imagery is also evident in a painting discovered on the north wall of the Christian baptistery which was excavated at Dura Europos. In this painting, which depicts the visit of the women to Christ’s tomb on the morning of Easter, the women stand near a sarcophagus which has a large, multi-rayed star at either side of its cover.⁷ The sarcophagus suggests that the scene is the indoor chamber of Christ’s tomb, which implies that the stars would have some symbolic, rather than literal, purpose in the composition. The author of the report on the excavation of the baptistery, Carl H. Kraeling, lists a number of explanations which have been offered for these stars and expresses his preference for the view that they represent the angels at Christ’s tomb, citing the influence of “astrological lore” on the Christians of Mesopotamia in support of this interpretation.⁸ There are also seven

abecedaria (alphabet inscriptions) inscribed on the walls of the baptistery, at least two of which were added when the original building was adapted into Christian use as a baptistery; one of these *abecedaria* (number 14) is in the form ABΓΔ immediately followed by a star. Kraeling relates these *abecedaria* to the “astrological lore” among the Christians of Dura he adduced in connection with the stars in the painting on the north wall; he sees the function of the *abecedaria* as apotropaic, intended to ward off the evil powers of the cosmos represented by the stars.⁹ Yet Kraeling denies that the Christians at Dura would have adhered to a belief such as that of Bardaisan that at least part of human life is under the power of astrological fate because “if they had we would have expected them to try to conciliate the astral powers.”¹⁰ However, this ignores the prevalence of astrology in eastern Christianity, of which Bardaisan’s system of thought was but one example. Rather than looking for evidence that the Christians at Dura sought to “conciliate the astral powers” it is possible that the stars in the painting of the women at Christ’s tomb on the north wall of the baptistery should be understood as representing astrological fate which has been defeated by Christ. As we have seen, the early Christians commonly believed that Christ’s death and resurrection triumphed over the power of astrological fate, and they often associated this theme with baptism; and it is therefore arguable that this theme was being expressed by the artist on the north wall of the Dura baptistery as well.

Less ambiguous is the evidence of papyri from Antioch in Egypt on which the horoscopes of two wealthy Christians have been preserved.¹¹

Further evidence of astrological interest among early Christians is provided by a variety of artifacts. For example, a bracelet on which symbols of the twelve zodiacal signs are engraved was found in a casket in the catacombs in Rome; as Cumont notes, even if this was manufactured by a pagan it was certainly worn by a Christian female.¹² On another amulet a crucified figure is portrayed, above whose head are seven stars and a crescent moon; around the lower half of the figure are the words ΟΡΦΕΟC ΒΑΚΚΙΚΟC. Evidently the owner believed that his or her soul would ascend to the astral heavenly realm through the syncretistically identified deities Orpheus, Bacchus and Christ, which had power over the stars.¹³ Of course, the wearing of such amulets was common in ancient Greco-Roman society. Another example of the incorporation of astrological motifs in early Christian iconography is a lamp on which is portrayed Christ the Good Shepherd, carrying a sheep over his shoulders, with seven more sheep around his feet; over his head are seven stars. A very similar depiction is also found on a gem made of gypsum, and on a terra cotta frag-

ment which has the head of the Good Shepherd against a sky backdrop of numerous stars.¹⁴ According to Leclercq, these pieces derive from

un modèle chrétien bien certain dans lequel nous trouvons un des exemples les plus anciens du rapprochement d'un type sacré, le Bon Pasteur, et d'un type emprunté à l'art profane sans amendement ni correction, et juxtaposés pour former une composition unique.¹⁵

Of course, the Biblical background for the image is the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15.3–7); presumably the seven stars in the sky represent the heavenly destination to which the faithful are borne by Christ. Similarly, according to Cumont, the depiction of the Dioscuri (i.e. Gemini) on a fourth century Christian sarcophagus from Arles is an expression of belief in a happy after-life.¹⁶

Notes

1. For example, W. Gundel, "Astrologie," RAC, vol. 1, 825: "Das Christentum sieht von Anfang an in der A[strologie] einen seiner grössten Feinde u. bekämpft sie u. ihre Anhänger auf das leidenschaftlichste."
2. Fl. Ianuarius mil. vivus fecit./ condita sepulcro hic pausat Ursa cretiana fidelis an. XXXVIII./ per partum subito ducente in pio fato est tradita Tartaris imis/ et me subito linquit sibi coniugem pro tempore iunctum. ... o, qui tribuat genesis, qui separat conuerginos dulcis,/ ut non licuit nobis iugiter supernam frunisci caritatem! (vol. 1, p. 256 Diehl).
3. vol. 2, p. 174–176, 179 Diehl (both fatum and genesis are mentioned).
4. nomine quae Solida vixit cum coniuge sanctae/ clara genus et pulcra genas, sed plena pudoris,/ hic iacet extremum fatis oppressa sinistris (vol. 1, p. 44 Diehl).
5. vol. 2, p. 412 Diehl.
6. H. Leclercq, s.v. "Astres," DACL vol. 1/2, 3005–08.
7. Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building*, Final Report VIII, Part II of *The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters*, ed. Bradford Welles (New Haven, 1967), 76–78 and plates XXVIII, XLIV and XLV.

8. *Ibid.*, 82. This interpretation derives from J. Villette, “Que représente la grande fresque de la maison chrétienne de Doura?” *RB* 60 (1953): 398–413.
9. Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 125–26.
10. *Ibid.*, 126.
11. Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993) 274.
12. F[rantz] Cumont, “Zodiacus,” *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, ed. M.E. Saglio, vol. 5, 1060.
13. The amulet, formerly in the Berlin Museum but now lost, is reproduced and discussed in Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 58–59, 65.
14. Leclercq, “Astres,” 3010–12.
15. *Ibid.*, 3012. (...surely a Christian model in which we find one of the oldest examples of the bringing together of a sacred type, the Good Shepherd, and a type borrowed from secular art without change or correction, and juxtaposed so as to form a unique composition.)
16. Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le Symbolisme Funéraire des Romains* (Paris, 1942), 103.

13. Matthew 2.1–12 and Its Interpretation in Early Christian Tradition

It was not only the presence of adherents of astrology in the church and in wider society which provoked a response from early Christians. Texts containing elements relating to astrology within their Scriptures also focussed the attention of the early Christians on the issue. Among these, perhaps the most pressing was the pericope of the Magi and the star in the Gospel of Matthew 2.1–12. That this account was included within the Scriptural account of the nativity story posed a very real problem for early Christian commentators, raising a number of questions: had some Magi actually managed to locate the Saviour by means of astrology? Did this Matthean pericope offer some sort of Scriptural warrant for the validity of astrology?¹ And, most significantly, what did it mean that the Saviour had been born under a star?

Such questions prompted early Christian writers to find creative and positive ways to deal with astrology in the course of interpreting Matt 2.1–12. Before turning to later interpretations, however, I shall first examine the text itself, and in particular the two motifs within the text that relate most directly to astrology, i.e. the Magi and the star.

The Magi and the Star in Matthew 2.1–12

The order of Magi (Μάγοι) was well known in Greco-Roman antiquity. In Book 1 of the *Histories* Herodotus refers to Magi as originally members of the priestly caste of the Medes and Persians who possessed special power to interpret dreams. During the Hellenistic period, the Magi developed a reputation as learned practitioners of magic and of various types of divination, especially astrology.² As such, they were esteemed or condemned according to the various views of such practices held by Greco-Roman writers.³

The portrayal of the Magi in Matt 2.1–12 is remarkably positive; there is no hint of explicit or implicit criticism of them in this pericope.⁴ Since in this text the Magi direct their attention to the rising of a star it seems evident that we are to take them to be professional astrologers. The text (2.1) says that they came from the east (ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν); while no exact place of origin is named, the phrase may refer to Arabia, Persia or Babylon.⁵ Moreover, they ask for “the newborn king of the Jews” whose star they have seen “at its rising” (ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ) (v. 2, cf. v. 9). (This translation is preferable to “in

the east” of older versions [so KJV and RSV], which would be properly ἐν [ταίς] ἀνατολαῖς.⁶) The statement of the Magi is not a reference to a time of day, but rather is calendrical (cf. the phrase “the time of the star’s appearing” [τὸν χρόνον τοῦ φαινομένου ἀστέρος] in 2.7⁷): “rising” means the star’s heliacal rising, i.e. the first time in the year that it was visible rising ahead of the sun before dawn.⁸ The usual technical term for this was ἐπιτολή but ἀνατολή could be used for the heliacal rising as well;⁹ the latter seems to be the case in Matt 2.2. According to the narrative, the heliacal “rising” of the star held significance for the Magi as an astrological omen. It was this more ancient form of astrology, rather than horoscopic astrology, in which the Magi were engaged.¹⁰

A recent study by Michael Molnar argues that the most likely horoscope in which professional astrologers such as the Magi would have been interested was the appearance of the Sun, Moon, Jupiter and Saturn (all regal signs) in Aries on April 17, 6 B.C.E.¹¹ However, Molnar’s conclusions are overly sophisticated: there is no need to interpret the Matthean text in terms of technical or sophisticated astrology such as that of Ptolemy and Firmicus Maternus. Rather, the star of Matthew 2.1–12 derives from the widespread belief (found already in Plato) that all people have a “natal star” which appears at their birth and passes away with them,¹² a belief which according to the elder Pliny was commonly held among the general population.¹³ Of course, the association of celestial phenomena with important terrestrial events is frequently found in the literature of antiquity: it seems most plausible to read the Matthean pericope as yet another example of this literary topos. Despite this common-sense view, however, over the centuries many attempts have been made to identify the star of Matthew with spectacular celestial phenomenon such as a supernova,¹⁴ a comet¹⁵ or a planetary conjunction.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the direct relevance of such scientific explanations to the Matthean text can be neither assumed nor demonstrated.

Furthermore, the text itself contains a number of uncertainties. For example, it is unclear how the contemporary ascent of two planets could be termed a “rising” (vv. 2, 9),¹⁷ or even strictly speaking a “star.”¹⁸ A related puzzle is the notion of the star “going before” the Magi “until it came to where the child was” (προῆγεν αὐτούς, ἕως ἔλθων οὗ ἦν τὸ παιδίον, v. 9):¹⁹ even granted that this refers not to the entire journey of the Magi but only to their trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem,²⁰ it is still unclear how any planetary movement (which was believed to correspond with the movement of the sun) could be understood as a guide for travelling in a southward direction from Jerusalem

to Bethlehem.²¹ Ultimately, Raymond E. Brown's emphasis is apposite: "Really no one, including the astronomers, takes everything in the Matthean account as literal history."²² Similarly, Nicola Denzey has recently written:

[T]o focus on a scientific 'explanation' for the star of Bethlehem is to move considerably beyond the interpretive horizons of the first four centuries of the common era. Early Christians rarely addressed the question of what exactly the star was, in terms of an astronomical event. For the most part, early Christian interpreters were far more interested in what the star meant.²³

The historical and astronomical data in the Matthean pericope are clearly subordinate to its overriding theological character and purpose.

Matt 2.1–12 has many parallels in ancient literature: the story of Astyages (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.107ff.), a king (of the Medes) who consults Magi and then tries unsuccessfully to kill his prophesied successor, a male child (Cyrus);²⁴ the story of the visit of the Armenian king Tiridates and his entourage to Rome in 66 C.E., told by Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 63.1–7) and Suetonius (*Life of Nero* 13);²⁵ and also the Biblical story of Moses.²⁶ In particular, scholars have long noted the connection between Matt 2.1–12 and Num 24.17b, "a star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel," found in one of the oracles of blessing upon Israel uttered by Balaam in Numbers 22–24.²⁷ Num 24.17 was clearly regarded as a messianic prophecy among some Jewish groups in the Second Temple period, including the early Christians. Already the Septuagint of Num 24.17 translates the term "sceptre" as ἄνθρωπος, and in the Targumim the "star" is rendered as "king" and the "sceptre" variously as "redeemer, ruler, or Messiah."²⁸ The best known instance of Jewish messianic interpretation of Num 24.17 occurred in the early second century C.E. when fulfilment of the text was ascribed by some Jews to Bar Kosiba, the leader of the last great Jewish revolt against Rome, who came to be known as Bar Kochba (meaning "son of a star"), an allusion to Num 24.17. It is also possible that Num 24.17 was invoked in the context of the first Jewish revolt against Rome of 66–70 C.E.: Martin Hengel claims that Josephus likely had this text in mind when he referred to Jewish belief in an oracular pronouncement found in Holy Scripture that prophesied a world ruler (*Jewish War* 6.312).²⁹ In the context of early Christianity, Matt 2.1–12 also clearly invokes the messianic prophecy of Num 24.17 by means of the motif of the star. With regard to this motif (which is also of course astrological), the theological point that is developed in the Matthean text is that the star's appearance signalled the birth of the "King of the Jews."

As with the star, the theological treatment of the Magi in the Matthean text also relates to the Balaam account in Numbers. Like Balaam, the Magi too are foreigners who appear in the text from outside the tradition of Israel. Indeed, the identical phrase is used of the origin of the Magi in Matt 2.1 and of Balaam in Num 23.7: both are said to come “from the east”³⁰ with all the exotic connotations that conveyed. Moreover, Balaam as well as the Magi were associated with divination: as astrologers, the Magi in Matthew would have been associated with divination, while Num 22.7 speaks of certain “fees for divination” that were paid to Balaam (cf. Num 23.23).³¹ There are further parallels between the story of Balaam and Matthew’s account of the Magi. In Numbers 22–24, Balaam honours Israel and prophesies the rise of its ruler despite the fact that he had originally been summoned by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. Similarly, in Matt 2.1–12 King Herod tries to use the Magi for his own purposes against the newborn “King of the Jews” but his evil plot is thwarted and the Magi pay honour to Herod’s enemy nevertheless.³²

These various parallels suggest strongly that the Matthean account was shaped by the story of Balaam in Num 22–24. The latter text also provided the background to Matthew’s theological point concerning the Magi, i.e. that the Magi (who are Gentile “outsiders”) are included among those who recognized and worshipped the “King of the Jews” at his birth.³³ The parallels between Balaam and Matthew’s Magi also prepared the way for interpretation of Matt 2.1–12 among the early Christians, enabling the astrological motifs of the Matthean text to be brought into line with earlier Biblical traditions regarding Balaam and thus rendered acceptable for exegetical and homiletical usage in the early church.

The Magi in Early Christian Interpretation of Matthew 2.1–12

Let us begin with various early Christian traditions which connected Balaam and the Matthean Magi. Not only did Num 24.17 provide a prophetic text for the coming of Christ, but establishing a line of association between Balaam and the Magi helped early Christian writers to justify the astrological knowledge by which, according to the Matthean pericope, the Magi recognized the significance of the star which led them to Bethlehem. Thus in his commentary on Luke 2.48, Ambrose of Milan writes:

But who are these Magi unless those who, as a certain history teaches, derive from the stock of Balaam, by whom it was prophesied “a star shall arise out of Jacob”

[Num 24.17]? Therefore these are heirs not less of faith than of succession. He saw the star in spirit, they saw it with their eyes and believed.³⁴

The reference to a “certain history” (*historia quaedam*), also mentioned by Eusebius of Caesarea,³⁵ suggests that there was a literary tradition in which Balaam was portrayed as an ancestor of the Magi of Matthew’s Gospel. Origen states the association explicitly:

If Balaam’s prophecies were included in the sacred books by Moses, how much more would they have been copied by those who were then living in Mesopotamia, among whom Balaam had a great reputation and who are known to have been disciples in his art. It is said that the race of Magi descends from him, and that their institution flourishes in eastern lands, and that they [the Magi] had copied among them all of Balaam’s prophecies, including “A star shall arise out of Jacob” [Num 24.17]. The Magi had these things written among themselves, and so when Jesus was born they recognized the star and understood that the prophecy was fulfilled (*Homilies on Numbers* 13.7).³⁶

The connection between Balaam and the Matthean Magi also appears in early Christian iconography in scenes of the adoring Magi, or Mary with the Christ child in her lap, which include the figure of Balaam pointing to a star shining overhead.³⁷ In early Christian literature Balaam himself came to be seen as an astrologer (so Diodore of Tarsus, *Against Fate*³⁸) and he was even identified with Zoroaster, the legendary figure who was widely regarded in antiquity as the founder and inventor of astrology.³⁹ In *Against Celsus* 1.60, Origen again presents the Matthean Magi as inheritors of the tradition of Balaam, adding that the reason that the prophecies of Balaam had been recorded in the books of Moses was that Moses himself had been “skilful in the same arts.”⁴⁰

By the fourth century the tradition connecting Balaam and the Magi of Matthew seems to have been well established, since it is referred to by Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrosiaster and Jerome. In a sermon on Christ’s nativity Gregory claims that the Magi were looking forward to the rising of the star because of the prediction of Balaam their forefather.⁴¹ As we have seen, the writings of Ambrosiaster frequently condemn astrology as a demonically inspired denial of human free will. Because of this, Ambrosiaster frankly admits in *Question* 63 that to him the Magi’s confirmation of Balaam’s messianic prophecy was unexpected: “[Balaam] received confirmation from a source that is usually condemned; for astrologers are enemies of the truth.”⁴² Jerome, for his part, portrays the Matthean Magi as righteous Gentiles who

responded to Balaam's prophecy in faith: the Magi's astrological learning thus receives at least tacit approval, in effect becoming a type of natural revelation. Jerome also praises the Magi by contrast with the Jews who did not believe in the coming of Christ (*Commentary on Matthew* 1).⁴³ Nevertheless, he does not want to encourage his audience to develop a favourable view of astrology. In his *Commentary on Isaiah* 13.47.12–15 Jerome admits that the Magi did follow the star either from their knowledge of astrology (“ex artis scientia”) or from the prophecy of Balaam in Num 24.17; however, he adds a warning to his readers against astrology and its practitioners.⁴⁴ Earlier in the Isaiah commentary (7.19.1) Jerome writes that no matter whether the Magi knew of Christ's birth from the teaching of demons or the prophecy of Balaam, the coming of God's Son meant the destruction of the whole power of astrology.⁴⁵ Jerome's view of the Magi indicates that the Magi were a theme within the *adversus Iudaeos* tradition of the early church.⁴⁶ Similar anti-Jewish readings of the Matthean pericope—in which the Magi serve as a foil to show up Jewish “faithlessness”—are found in Basil of Caesarea (*Homilies on the Birth of Christ* 5⁴⁷), Ephrem of Edessa (*Hymns on the Nativity* 24.20⁴⁸), Ambrose (*Exposition of Luke* 2.47⁴⁹), John Chrysostom (*Homilies* 6.3 and 6.6⁵⁰) and the *Unfinished Work on Matthew*, an anonymous Arian commentary on Matthew written in the fourth century.⁵¹ In the latter work the writer exclaims: “O blessed Magi, who before the gaze of the cruellest king were made confessors of Christ before they had even seen Christ!”⁵²

The Star in Early Christian Interpretation of Matthew 2.1–12

The other motif in Matt 2.1–12 which directly pertains to astrology is the star. The rehabilitation of this star—its being rendered positively useful for Christian exegetical and homiletical purposes—occurred by means of an anonymous tradition depicting one star that scores a decisive victory over the other stars and planets. This tradition seems to have been the source of an extended passage from Ignatius' *Letter to the Ephesians* 19.2–3 in which astral imagery features prominently:

[2] How then was he [Christ] revealed to the aeons?
 A star shone in heaven,
 brighter than all the stars,
 and its light was ineffable,
 and its novelty caused astonishment;
 all the other stars
 together with the sun and moon

became a chorus for the star,
 and it outshone them all with its light;
 and there was perplexity [as to] whence [came] this novelty so unlike them.
 [3] Thence was destroyed all magic,
 and every bond vanished;
 evil's ignorance was abolished,
 the old kingdom perished,
 God being revealed as human
 to bring newness of eternal life,
 and what had been prepared by God had its beginning;
 hence all things were disturbed
 because the destruction of death was being worked out.⁵³

It is unclear that Ignatius was drawing on Matthew 2.1–12 per se in this passage: in his commentary on Ignatius' letters, William Schoedel has argued that this passage derives from a version of the story of the star of the Magi which predated the Matthean account.⁵⁴ Another possible source was Gen 37.9, in which Joseph reports his dream that the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down before him.⁵⁵ What is most significant for our present purposes is the distinctive element of the tradition elaborated by Ignatius in the passage above, i.e., the star that was victorious over the other heavenly bodies.

Schoedel notes the tendency of earlier scholars to see in this Ignatian text evidence for a "Gnostic redeemer myth" concerning a redemptive figure who descends to earth and then ascends in victory to the heavens.⁵⁶ However, instead of a victorious ascent Ignatius actually portrays the confounding of the cosmic powers (αἰῶνες) at Christ's incarnation, which has mighty cosmological effects: to Ignatius, the birth of Christ was itself a victory over cosmic evil forces, corresponding to the later victory of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.⁵⁷ According to Schoedel, Ignatius' text, with its motif of the single star that is victorious over the other stars, is an example of "popular magic...being resisted in the name of a higher magic."⁵⁸ More specifically, it should be remembered that the ancient world widely held to a belief that pre-eminent among the cosmic αἰῶνες was fate (εἰμαρμένη), that is, the fatal domination exercised over the sublunar realm (including earth) by means of the planets and the fixed stars. The pernicious influence of fate's power is implied in Ignatius' reference to "every bond" (πᾶς δεσμὸς): in his classic study *The Origins of European Thought*, Richard Broxton Onians cites numerous examples in ancient Indo-European thought in which the concept of fate or destiny was conceived in terms of "binding" and related images (e.g. spinning or weaving ropes, cords, webs, nets, etc.).⁵⁹ It was from this power that the

early Christians believed the coming of Christ had set humanity free: Ignatius parallels the phrase “every bond of evil vanished” (πάς δεσμὸς ἠφανίζετο κακίας) with “all magic has been destroyed” (ἐλύετο πάσα μαγεία) to express the view that Christ had set people free from the bonds which held them fast, including magic and astrological fate.⁶⁰ This early Christian idea of liberation from astrological fate was expressed succinctly by John Chrysostom in *Homilies* 6.1: ἀστρολογίαν ἔλυσε, “[Christ] set [us] free from the power of astrology.”⁶¹

According to Schoedel, the particular issue that Ignatius addresses in *Ephesians* 19 relates to the larger polemic against docetism which pervades the Ignatian correspondence. How can the humble and ignominious event of Christ’s birth be construed as a victory over the αἰῶνες, the cosmic powers of the universe? How did the birth of Christ confound these powers, considering that it was also hidden from them? How did the incarnation as it were “slip by” the αἰῶνες so as to bring about their defeat?⁶² In *Ephesians* 19.2, Ignatius portrays the αἰῶνες as a chorus (χορὸς) of lesser stars which are outdone by the appearance of Christ’s single bright star. A comparable text is *Protevangelium of James* 21.2 (dating from the second half of the second century), where the Magi say to Herod: “We saw an immense star shining among these stars and making them dim, so that the stars no longer shone. And so we knew that a king was born for Israel.”⁶³ Prudentius also vividly portrays the signs of the zodiac quailing before the “new star”: Serpens withdraws; Leo flees; Cancer contracts its claws at its side as if maimed; the bull (Taurus) having been tamed groans with its horns broken; Capricorn withers, its coat torn to pieces; here the banished water boy (Aquarius) glides down, there too Sagittarius; Gemini wander, separated as they flee; shameless Virgo gives up her silent lovers in the vault of heaven; the other fiery orbs that hang in the terrible clouds are afraid before the new star (*Apotheosis* 617–26).⁶⁴ Elsewhere, in an Epiphany hymn Prudentius writes:

This star which surpasses the wheel of the sun in splendour and light...
 It alone possesses the sky [and] governs the course of the days...
 As soon as it began to shine the other stars withdrew,
 Nor did beautiful Lucifer dare show his form in comparison.
 (*Hymns for Every Day* 12.5–6, 11–12, 29–32)⁶⁵

For Ignatius, the *Protevangelium of James*, as well as Prudentius, the other stars serve as a foil for the brighter star which represents the appearance of

Christ: the lesser stars represent the αἰῶνες which the early Christians believed Christ had defeated. As Lietzmann notes:

The stars and their cosmic power, magic, and the pagan belief in daemons, were real to Ignatius, and not merely metaphors: and their conquest by the power of God in Christ was for him another real thing... he consciously describes it in a metaphorical analogy which...expressed graphically the victory of the Lord over the evil spirits.⁶⁶

The same could be said of the author of the *Protevangelium of James* and of Prudentius.⁶⁷ Moreover, whether or not these authors took it metaphorically, the imagery that they used in these passages is striking. Collectively, these texts provide evidence of a tradition which used the image of a star (appropriately) to express the early Christian conviction of the defeat of the power of fate mediated by the stars.

In his version of this “star tradition” reflected in *Ephesians* 19.2, Ignatius had referred to the “newness” of the star (ἡ καινότης αὐτοῦ). It is this wording in particular which is paralleled in several other early Christian writers. For example, Theodotus affirmed that

a strange and new star arose destroying the old order of constellations, shining with a new light that was not of this world, which turned toward a new and saving way—the Lord himself, guide of humanity, come to earth in order to transpose from Fate to his providence those who believe in Christ (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 74.2).⁶⁸

Here again, the image of a “new star” is used to convey the notion of Christ’s victory over astrally-mediated fate: in this passage “the Lord himself, guide of humanity” is in apposition to the image of the “strange and new star” which is victorious over fate (“the old order of constellations”, τὴν παλαιὰν ἀστροθεσίαν). Another text featuring similar terminology is *Sibylline Oracles* 8.475–76: “The heavenly throne laughed and the world rejoiced./ A wondrous, new-shining star was venerated by Magi.”⁶⁹ In turn, Origen understands the “new star” as a comet, a sensible interpretation of an astral phenomenon which makes a sudden appearance (*Against Celsus* 1.58).⁷⁰ The motif of the “new star” was still evident in a sermon of Gregory the Great (*Homilies on the Gospels* 10.4).⁷¹

The domination of the other stars/αἰῶνες by the one star representing Christ was also portrayed in early Christian iconography. For example, the

arcosolium vault of the tomb of Callistus I, bishop of Rome in the early third century, is decorated with numerous eight-rayed stars, and at the top the largest star is set apart and enclosed in a circle; the christological identification of this pre-eminent star is evident from the chi-rho monogram placed immediately beneath it.⁷² By the fourth century, the star of Bethlehem was used as an attribute in representations of Christus Basileus, the ruler of the world.⁷³

Indeed by the fourth century this theme of the “newness” of the star which appeared at Christ’s birth had become well established. Gregory of Nazianzus writes, “For this is not the kind of star dealt with by expounders of astrology, but rather a star without precedent which had never previously appeared” (*Poemata Arcana* 5.56–57).⁷⁴ In a Christmas sermon Gregory of Nyssa refers to the “rising of the new star” which was anticipated by the Magi.⁷⁵ Commenting on Luke 2.48, Ambrose writes: “the Magi saw a new star which had not been seen by any creature in the world, they saw a new creation and not only on earth but also in heaven.”⁷⁶ The tradition is also evident in the writings of Augustine: the star of Bethlehem was not an astrological sign nor an ordinary star,

one of those which from the beginning of creation keep the order of their way under the law of the Creator, [but] with the new birth from the Virgin appeared a new star, which demonstrated its service as a guide to those Magi who were seeking for Christ when it went before their face [cf. Matt 2.9] (*Against Faustus* 2.5).⁷⁷

John Chrysostom similarly claims that the star of Bethlehem was not to be classified with the other stars of the heavens. Its size and beauty were what drew the Magi to the Christ child: since they would not have paid attention to visions or prophetic writings alone, God showed them “a large and unusual star, so that by means of its greatness and the beauty of its appearance, and manner of its course, they would be amazed” (*Homilies* 6.3).⁷⁸ In his Epiphany sermons Leo the Great also makes mention of the “unusual star,” the “star of new splendour, brighter and fairer than the other stars.”⁷⁹

John Chrysostom further concludes that what appeared to the Magi only seemed to be a star, and was really “an unseen power altering its appearance” (*Homilies* 6.1).⁸⁰ Similarly, in *Homilies* 8.1 John says that the star as well as “the illumination produced by God in their minds” led the Magi to leave their home and travel to the Christ child.⁸¹ It is not far from this to John’s identification of the star as an angel: in *Homilies* 7.3 he writes that after the Magi

visited Herod in Jerusalem “an angel took them up again and taught them all things.”⁸² Similarly, Prudentius refers to the star as a “winged messenger, most like the rapid south wind” (*Apotheosis* 611–12).⁸³ The view of the star as an angel is also found in the so-called *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 7, a section that was part of the original stratum of the work which was composed in Syriac before the 5th century.⁸⁴ The association is also evident in iconography of the period: a Milan sarcophagus dating from the end of the fourth century depicts a male figure pointing towards the sky, i.e. in the stance of Balaam, which has been identified as an angel.⁸⁵ Of course, the association of angels with the stars and planets was widespread in the ancient world;⁸⁶ it is also possible that connecting the star of Matt 2 with an angel was prompted by the appearance of an angel in the other canonical nativity account (Luke 2.9–12).

In sum, the presence of the astrological motifs of the Magi and the star in Matt 2.1–12 presented the early church with an opportunity to develop creative responses to astrology. Such responses are evident in two larger traditions of interpretation of the Matthean pericope which can be discerned within early Christianity. In the first, by establishing a link between Balaam and the Magi of the Matthean nativity story, early Christian writers were able to develop an acceptable, even favourable, view of the practitioners of astrology depicted in Matt 2.1–12. In the second tradition, a myth in which a “new star” is victorious over the other heavenly bodies illustrated the Christian belief in Christ’s victory over the cosmic power of fate that held humanity in bondage, and that the star of the Matthean account signalled this victory already at Christ’s birth. In these ways the astrological content of the Matthean pericope was re-interpreted in a remarkably benign manner that stood in more or less explicit tension with the prevalent anti-astrological stance of early Christianity.

Notes

1. According to John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 6.1, people were claiming that the fact that a star appeared when Christ was born was a sign that astrology was true: Ἰδοὺ, φησὶ, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεννηθέντος ἀστήρ ἐφάνη, ὅπερ ἐστὶ σημεῖον τοῦ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν εἶναι βεβαίαν (PG 57, 61).
2. [G.] Delling, s.v. “Magos,” TDNT, vol. 4, 356–59; A.D. Nock, “Paul and the Magus,” *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1972), 308–24; see the references in W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical*

- Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1988), 227n9.
3. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 227–28. On the Greek view of the Magi see Beck, “Thus Spake Not Zarathustra,” 511–21.
 4. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, new updated edition (New York, 1993), 167–68, arguing against scholars who see an implicit apotheosis against false magi and astrology in the text; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 229; Engelbert Kirschbaum, “Der Prophet Balaam und die Anbetung der Weisen,” *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 49 (1954): 135: “...ohne sich in irgendeiner Weise über die Herkunft ihres Wissens zu äussern.”
 5. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 228; Brown, *Messiah*, 168–70. Persia reflects the historical origin of the Magi (as in Herodotus), while Babylon (Chaldea) reflects the background of astrology; Brown adds that gold, frankincense and myrrh would also have been associated with Arab traders (cf. Is 60.6).
 6. For references in which ἀνατολή has this meaning see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 236. The plural is more common when referring to the east (LSJ s.v. ἀνατολή, p.123), though this is disputed by Franz Boll, “Der Stern der Weisen,” *ZNW* 18 (1917): 44–45. The New RSV has “at its rising.” According to Krister Stendahl, since Num 24.17 is the only place in the Septuagint where the Hebrew verb תָּרַח (tread, march forth) is rendered by ἀνατέλλειν this text presumably lies behind the phrase ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ in Matt 2 (*The School of St. Matthew*, 2nd ed. [Lund, 1968], 136). The Lukan infancy narrative also mentions ἀνατολή (Lk 1.78), where it may carry an astrological sense (the rising of a heavenly body), a temporal sense (dawn), or may be a directly christological term (deriving from the Septuagint translation of the Davidic “branch” of Zech 3.8, 6.12 as ἀνατολή) (see Brown, *Messiah*, 373–74; Reginald Fuller, *He That Cometh* [Harrisburg, PA, 1990], 92–93). Cf. also the references to Jesus as the “morning star” in Rev 2.28 and 22.16 (ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ πρωϊνός) and in 2 Peter 1.19 (ἕως...φωσφόρος ἀνατείλει). On ἀνατολή as a Christian messianic title see [Heinrich] Schlier, s.v. “ἀνατολή,” *TDNT*, vol. 1, 352–53; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 236; and Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 4.17 and *Prophetic Eclogues* 3.23.
 7. Boll, “Stern,” 45–46.
 8. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 236; Mark Kidger, *The Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer’s View* (Princeton, 1999), 26–27. On the helical rising of the stars see

Robert Hannah, *Greek and Roman Calendars* (London: Duckworth, 2005), 11.

9. Geminus, *Introduction to the Phaenomena* 13.3 (and see p. 68n1 of Aujac's edition).
10. The all too common equation of astrology with horoscopy lies behind John Chrysostom's expression of surprise at this (*Homilies on Matthew* 6.1): "This is not the work of astrology, to see from the stars those who are being born, but rather from the time of those being born to proclaim beforehand the things that will occur, as they say" (Ὁὐ γάρ δὴ τοῦτο ἀστρονομίας ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀστρῶν εἰδέναι τοὺς τικτομένους, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας τῶν τικτομένων προαναφωνεῖν τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι, ὡς φασιν [PG 57, 62]).
11. *The Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1999), 64–101.
12. Boll, "Stern," 44–45. For Plato, see *Timaeus* 41D–E. Cf. Midrash on Ps 148.3: "every righteous man has his own star in heaven" (vol. 2, p. 375 Braude).
13. In *Natural History* 2.22 Pliny attributes to the common people belief that stars are "assigned to each of us...[that] they each rise with their own human being [and] their fall means that someone's life is extinguished" (sidera...ut existimat vulgus singulis attributa nobis...cum suo quaeque homine oriuntur ...[et] aliquem exstingui decidua significant [p.186–88 Rackham]).
14. See David H. Clark et al., "An Astronomical Re-Appraisal of the Star of Bethlehem—A Nova in 5 BC," *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society* 18 (1977): 443–49, citing Chinese astronomical records.
15. The identification of the star as a comet was already made by Origen (*Against Celsus* 1.58). See more recently William E. Phipps, "The Magi and Halley's Comet," *Theology Today* 43 (1986–87): 88–92.
16. See the discussion of these three possible identifications in Brown, *Messiah*, 171–73, 610–12. (On p. 610n110 Brown mentions a recent fourth proposal—a U.F.O.!) Brown (*ibid.*, 166–67, 172–73, 607–08, 611–12) suggests that the most reasonable of these proposals is a planetary conjunction: the best candidate is a triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn which occurred in 7–6 B.C.E., about the same time as Jesus' birth which took place some two years (cf. Matt 2.16) before the death of Herod the Great in 5–4 B.C.E. (On the latter date see T.D. Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," *JTS* n.s. 19 [1968]: 204–09). The triple conjunction hypothesis has been maintained, with some variations, by Roger W. Sinnott ("Computing the Star of Bethlehem," *Sky and Telescope* 72 [1986]: 632–35), Colin J. Humphreys ("The Star

- of Bethlehem—A Comet in 5 B.C.—and the Date of the Birth of Christ,” *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society* 32 [1991]: 389–407), and Struckrad, *Ringens*, 555–586. However, the triple conjunction took place in Pisces, a sign which only came to be associated with Judea in the Middle Ages. As Molnar (*Star*, 27–28) has shown, Greco-Roman astrologers did not associate Pisces with Judea. Thus Molnar’s point undermines the triple conjunction hypothesis. Molnar also argues persuasively that Matthew does not refer to a celestial phenomenon that was astronomically impressive (such as later astronomers have looked for), but rather to a sign whose significance was primarily astrological.
17. Brown, *Messiah*, 173.
 18. On this problem see, e.g., Struckrad, *Ringens*, 580–583. Boll, “Stern” 40–43, emphasizes that ἀστὴρ almost always refers to a single star.
 19. This is further complicated if we accept the reading of the “western” manuscript tradition which inserts ἐστάθη ἐπάνω (it stood over) after ἐλθὼν. According to Eusebius, to believe that the star came down and stood over the roof of Mary and Joseph’s house is madness (cave existimes eam de caelo in terram descendisse, et supra domus tectum stetit: nam qui ita credit, insanit); his solution is that the star still moved on high though not very far from the earth (ea alte quidem sed tamen a terra haud valde distans decurrebat) (*Supplementa Quaestionum ad Stephanum*; trans. of the Syriac in PG 22, 982B). However, Eusebius has not always been heeded: thus Humphreys (“Star,” 392–93) claims that Matt 2.9 can only be explained as a comet: he bases this not on astronomy but on ancient portrayals of comets as standing still or lying low over the earth. More plausible is Benedict T. Viviano, “The Movement of the Star, Matt 2:9 and Num 9:17,” *RB* 103 (1996): 58–64, which explains Matthew’s description of the movement of the star in 2.9 as modelled on the movement of the divine cloud and fire in Num 9.17; such a literary parallel finds precedents in Wisdom of Solomon 10.17 and 18.3 where the “fire” of Num 9.17 is described with astral/solar associations. See also Dale C. Allison, “What was the Star that Guided the Magi?” *Bible Review* 9/6 (1993): 20–24, 63, which identifies the star of Matt 2.9 with an angel comparable to the angel which went before the people of Israel in Exodus; cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 246–47.
 20. Brown, *Messiah*, 174.
 21. Boll, “Stern,” 46. Brown, *Messiah*, 176, merely notes that “the precision of leading them to a house is unusual.”
 22. *Messiah*, 612; the discussion that follows (p. 612–13) of how Biblical scholars and astronomers talk past each other on this issue is insightful. Similarly, Boll questions

the significance of identifying the star astronomically for understanding the Matthean account (“Stern,” 47–48). Two recent studies by astronomers (Michael Molnar and Mark Kidger) maintain the tradition of offering literal explanations for the star of Matthew despite the fact that they each recognize the value of a non-literal reading of the Matthean text (see Molnar, *Star*, 6–7 and Kidger, *Star*, 21–22).

23. “A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse,” in Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler, ed., *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Late Antique World* (University Park, PA, 2003), 208.
24. Note the term “anointed” one (i.e. messiah) applied to Cyrus in Is 45.1, and in the same context the reference to the wealth of nations being brought to Israel (Is 45.14; cf. Is 60.6); on this as background to Matt 2.1–12 see R.D. Aus, “The Magi at the Birth of Cyrus, and the Magi at Jesus’ Birth in Matt 2.1–12,” *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al., vol. 2 (Lanham, MD, 1987), 99–114.
25. Note particularly the description of Tiridates’ homage to Nero (according to Dio, Tiridates said “I have come to thee, my god, to worship thee as I do Mithras”) and that the king returned home by a different route than that by which he had come (cf. Matt 2.12). Pliny, *Natural History* 30.6.16–17, writes that Tiridates was accompanied on this journey by Magi.
26. Brown, *Messiah*, 110–19.
27. Jean Daniélou, “L’Étoile de Jacob et la mission chrétienne à Damas,” VC 11 (1957): 121–38; Daniélou, “The Star of Jacob,” *Primitive Christian Symbols*, trans. Donald Attwater (London, 1964), 102–23; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 234–35; Brown, *Messiah*, 190–96.
28. *Targum Neofiti 1: Numbers*, ed. and trans. Martin McNamara, and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers*, ed. and trans. Ernest G. Clarke (Collegeville, MN, 1995), 140, 261. The “sceptre” was also understood messianically in the Syriac versions (*ibid.*, 140n23). On the use of Num 24.17 at Qumran see Brown, *Messiah*, 195n47 and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 234 (preferable to Daniélou, “Star of Jacob”). The same exegetical tradition is also evident in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Testament of Levi* 18.3 and *Testament of Judah* 24.1; these passages may reflect the contexts in which early Christianity read these texts (see H. Dixon Slingerland, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* [Missoula, MT, 1977], 106–15).
29. *The Zealots* (Edinburgh, 1989), 237–40.
30. See Brown, *Messiah*, 193n43 for various suggestions regarding the origin of Balaam

and correspondences with possible identifications of the homeland of the Magi.

31. Philo explicitly refers to Balaam as a μάγος in *Life of Moses* 1.50. (On Philo's portrayal of Balaam in *Life of Moses*, see Harold Remus, "Moses and the Thaumaturges: Philo's *De Vita Mosis* as a Rescue Operation," LTP 52/3 [1996]: 671–74.) The view of Balaam as μάγος presumably lies behind the description of Balaam in Eusebius' *Questions* (PG 22.979C–982A).
32. Brown, *Messiah*, 193–94, who also notes the parallel between Balaam's being accompanied by two servants (Num 22.22) and the later Christian enumeration of the Magi as three.
33. Brown, *Messiah*, 178–79, 182–83, 196. Moreover, this positive behaviour of the Magi is implicitly contrasted with that of the Jews and of Herod.
34. sed tamen qui sunt isti magi nisi qui, ut historia quaedam docet, a Balaam genus ducunt, a quo prophetatum est: "orietur stella ex Iacob." isti ergo sunt non minus fidei quam successionis heredes. ille stellam vidit in spiritu, isti viderunt oculis et crediderunt (CSEL 32/4, 67–68.2).
35. *Supplementa Quaestionum ad Stephanum* (extant in Syriac) (PG 22, 979C–D).
36. Si enim prophetiae eius a Moyse sacris insertae sunt voluminibus, quanto magis descriptae sunt ab his, qui habitabant tunc Mesopotamiam, apud quos magnificus habebatur Balaam quosque artis eius constat fuisse discipulos? Ex illo denique fertur magorum genus et institutio in partibus Orientis vigere, qui descripta habentes apud se omnia, quae prophetaverat Balaam, etiam hoc habuerunt scriptum quod: "orietur stella ex Iacob, et exsurget homo ex Israhel." Haec scripta habebant magi apud semet ipsos et ideo, quando natus est Iesus, agnoverunt stellam et intellexerunt adimpleri prophetiam... (*Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung*, ed. Baehrens [GCS], vol. 2, 118.14–22).
37. Kirschbaum, "Prophet Balaam," 144–64; Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, "Zur Erscheinung des Sternes von Bethlehem," *Vivarium: Festschrift Theodor Klauser zum 90. Geburtstag* (Münster, 1984), 101–02.
38. Quoted in Photius, *Bibliotheca* cod. 223 (p. 47.26–32 Henry): the Magi were practitioners of the same arts (ἰσοτέχνου) as Balaam. In Eusebius' *Questions* Balaam is termed a *magus* (PG 22.979C–982A). Gregory of Nyssa calls Balaam an augur (οἰωνιστής) in a Christmas sermon (p. 245.12 Mann [GNO]). The early fifth century *Deliberations of the Christian Zaccheus and the Philosopher Apollonius* 2.4.12–13 refer to Balaam as the originator of the Magi's art (vol. 2, p. 30.70 Feiertag [SC

- 402]). In *On the Catholic Faith* 1.12 Isidore of Seville refers to Balaam as the first astrologer (PL 83, 471B).
39. Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque* (Paris, 1938), vol. 1, 48–49; David Winston, “The Iranian Component in the Bible, Apocrypha, and Qumran,” *History of Religions* 5 (1966): 213–14; Boyce and Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 3, 438; Beck, “Thus Spake Not Zarathustra,” 521ff. A parallel tradition also developed in which Zoroaster was credited with prophesying the star of Bethlehem and the coming of Christ: see Richard J.H. Gottheil, “References to Zoroaster in Syriac and Arabic Literature,” *Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler* (New York, 1894), 24–32; Bidez and Cumont, *Mages hellénisés*, vol. 2, 117ff.
40. vol. 1, p. 238–40 Borret (SC 132). Cf. the identification of Moses as a “Chaldean” in Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.5. See also the lines of Orphica quoted by Clement of Alexandria (OTP, vol. 2, 796) where the reference is to Abraham or Moses, as well as the fragment of Artapanus’ *On the Jews* preserved by Eusebius where Moses is identified with Mousaeus the teacher of Orpheus as well as with Hermes who gave the “interpretation of sacred letters” to the priests of Egypt (OTP, vol. 2, 898). Cf. Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 36–37; W. and H.G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 23n32.
41. ὄρας τοὺς ἀπ’ ἐκείνου τὸ γένος κατάγοντας μάγους ἐπιτηροῦντας κατὰ τὴν πρόρρησιν τοῦ προπάτορος τὴν τοῦ καινοῦ ἀστέρος ἐπιτολήν (p. 245.14–16 Mann [GNO]). Gregory uses the technical term for the star’s heliacal rising, ἐπιτολή.
42. inde enim testimonium accepit unde solet improbari; astrologi enim inimici sunt veritatis (CSEL 50, 112).
43. CCL 77, 12.128–13.134.
44. CCL 73A, 525.
45. intantum ut magi de oriente docti a daemonibus, vel iuxta prophetiam Balaam intellegentes natum Filium Dei, qui omnem artis eorum destrueret potestatem, venerint Bethleem (CCL 73, 278.19–279.22).
46. A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos* (Cambridge, 1935); Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York, 1974, 1979), 117–23.
47. PG 31, 1469.
48. “As it is written in the scripture, distant peoples saw the star that the near People might be put to shame. O the learned and proud People who by the peoples have

been retaught how and where they saw that rising of which Balaam spoke! A stranger declared it; strangers were those who saw it. Blessed is He Who made His kinspeople jealous!” (p. 197 trans. McVey)

49. CSEL 32/4, 67.22–23.

50. PG 57, 65 and 67–68.

51. PG 56, 641. Here the magi’s search for the Christ child confounds the Jews, and in particular, the priests who advise Herod.

52. O beati magi, qui ante conspectum crudelissimi regis, antequam Christum cognoscerent, Christi facti sunt confessores! (PG 56, 637) Cf. Leo the Great, *Sermon* 34.2, where the discovery of the Saviour by the Magi is deemed “a gift of divine honour” (CCL 138, 179).

53. Πῶς οὖν ἐφανερώθη τοῖς αἰώσιν; ἀστήρ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἔλαμψεν ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἀστέρας, καὶ τὸ φῶς αὐτοῦ ἀνεκκλάλητον ἦν καὶ ξενισμὸν παρεῖχεν ἢ καινότης αὐτοῦ, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ πάντα ἄστρα ἅμα ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ χορὸς ἐγένετο τῷ ἀστέρι, αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν ὑπερβάλλον τὸ φῶς αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντα· ταραχὴ τε ἦν, πόθεν ἢ καινότης ἢ ἀνόμοιος αὐτοῖς. Ὅθεν ἐλύετο πᾶσα μαγεία καὶ πᾶς δεσμὸς ἠφανίζετο κακίας· ἄγνοια καθηρεῖτο, παλαιὰ βασιλεία διεφθείρετο θεοῦ ἀνθρωπίνως φανερομένου εἰς καινότητα αἰδίου ζωῆς· ἀρχὴν δὲ ἐλάμβανεν τὸ παρὰ θεῷ ἀπηρτισμένον. Ἐνθεν τὰ πάντα συνεκινεῖτο διὰ τὸ μελετᾶσθαι θανάτου κατάλυσιν (p. 74–76 Camelot [SC 10]). The above trans. is from William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia, 1985), 87.

54. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 93. In “Ignatius and the Reception of the Gospel of Matthew in Antioch,” *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis, 1991), 156, Schoedel examines the relationship of *Ephesians* 19.2–3 to Matthew, concluding that both Ignatius and Matthew were independently responding to an earlier tradition regarding the appearance of a star at Jesus’ birth. John P. Meier’s response to Schoedel’s essay is critical of this point (*ibid.*, 184–85), but there is no evidence for Meier’s view that *Ephesians* 19.2–3 is an Ignatian “homiletic midrash” on the Matthean passage. Moreover, Meier’s claim that “By making the Gentiles in chapter 2 astrologers who bear the title μάγοι, Matthew may indeed be hinting at the overcoming of pagan magical belief by the light of Christian faith” ignores the absence of anti-astrological polemic in the Matthean text. A nuanced discussion of the evidence for Ignatian usage of Matthew is found in Wolf-Dietrich Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus* (Tübingen, 1987), 73–96; Köhler sees in *Ephesians* 19.2–3 a quite possible, though not probable, reference to the Matthew text.

55. This is denied by Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 92.
56. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 88, 91–92.
57. Jean Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 223. Cf. the version found in a “certain book of Scripture written in the name of Seth” (quaedam scriptura, inscripta nomine Seth) referred to in the *Unfinished Work on Matthew* according to which for generations the Magi had ascended a mountain (which is called in their language Mons Victorialis) to await the star: when at last the star appeared it contained the form of a tiny boy and was accompanied by the likeness of a cross above it (habens in se formam quasi pueri parvuli, et super se similitudinem crucis) (PG 56, 637–38; Boyce and Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 3, 448).
58. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 93. Cf. Daniélou, *Theology*, 221, who notes that Ignatius’ use of the term μαγεία may also imply a polemic against Magi; however, it does not necessarily follow that this passage provides evidence for polemic against Magi among Jewish Christians in Syria (contra *ibid.*, 222, cf. Daniélou, “Star of Jacob,” 121–23).
59. (Cambridge, 1951), 321–38, 349–51, 378–82, 425, 431–33. The image of “bonds” is used to refer to the power of astrological fate in particular in a papyrus (Berolinensis 8502) of the *Apocryphon of John* (72.2–12); see *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, ed. Walter C. Till (Berlin, 1955), 184.
60. According to Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 93n39, ἠφανίζετο here is a “stylistic variant” of ἐλύετο. The verb λύειν is regularly used for breaking the bonds of evil powers: see Mk 7.35; Lk 13.16; Ignatius, Eph 13.1; Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel* 4.33; and Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 3.27, where an example of the power of magic is δεσμεῖν τε ἱερούς τινας δεσμούς καὶ λύειν τούτους (p. 138.17–18 des Places).
61. PG 57, 61.
62. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 89. A clear parallel is Paul’s reference in 1 Cor 2.6–8 to the demonic powers that unwittingly accomplished their own defeat by crucifying the Lord of glory. With regard to the hiddenness of Christ’s birth, the *Ascension of Isaiah* 11 describes Christ’s incarnation as “hidden from all the heavens and all the princes and every god of this world... in Nazareth he sucked the breast like an infant, as was customary, that he might not be recognized” (11.16–17), with the result that at Christ’s ascension the angels and Satan recognize him and worship him but are forced to ask “How did our Lord descend upon us, and we did not notice the glory which was upon him?” (11.24) (trans. Knibb, OTP, vol. 2, 175; cf. Jonathan Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah* [Sheffield, 1995], 75–76). Ignatius’ view that Christ’s birth from Mary was hidden from the cosmic powers was taken up by later writers such as

- Origen, Eusebius and Jerome (see G. Bardy, “La littérature patristique des ‘Quaestiones et Responiones’ sur l’Écriture Sainte,” RB 41 [1932]: 233–34).
63. Émile de Strycker, *La Forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Bruxelles, 1961), 168–70. This passage is not found in Papyrus Bodmer V. On the date of the *Protevangeliium of James* see *ibid.*, 412–18, and Michael Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer V: Nativité de Marie* (Cologny-Genève, 1958), 23–26. Cf. the description of the Bethlehem star as a “great light” (φῶς μέγα) in *Protevangeliium of James* 19.2 (p. 154–56 Strycker).
 64. ...cessisse anguem, fugisse leonem,/ contraxisse pedes lateris manco ordine cancrum,/ cornibus infractis domitum mugire iuvenum,/ sidus et hirquinum laceris marcescere uillis./ Labitur hinc pulsus puer hydrius, inde sagittae; palantes geminos fuga separat, inproba virgo/ prodit amatores tacitos in fornice mundi,/ quique alii horrificis pendent in nubibus ignes/ luciferum timuere novum (CCL 126, 98–99).
 65. Haec stella, quae solis rotam/ vincit decore ac lumine.../ sed sola caelum possidens/ cursum dierum temperat.... /Quod ut refulsit, ceteri/ cessere signorum globi/ nec pulcher est ausus suam/ conferre formam Lucifer (CCL 126, 65–66).
 66. Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, vol. 1: *The Beginnings of the Christian Church*, trans. Bertram Lee Wolf (London, 1961), 245.
 67. Cf. the parallel between the “star over the stars” and the “human over the humans” in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.45.2 (Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 76).
 68. ἀνέτειλεν ξένος ἀστήρ και καινὸς καταλύων τὴν παλαιὰν ἀστροθεσίαν, καινῷ φωτὶ, οὐ κοσμικῷ λαμπόμενος, ὁ καινὰς ὁδοὺς και σωτηρίους τρεπόμενος, αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἀνθρώπων ὁδηγὸς ὁ κατελθὼν εἰς γῆν, ἵνα μεταθῆ τοὺς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν πιστεύσαντας ἀπὸ τῆς Εἰμαρμένης εἰς τὴν ἐκείνου πρόνοιαν (p. 86.650–54 Casey).
 69. οὐράνιος δ’ ἐγέλασε θρόνος και ἀγάλλετο κόσμος./ καινοφαῆς δὲ μάγοισι σεβάσθη θέσφατος ἀστήρ (p. 172 Geffcken [GCS]). The above trans. is that of Collins in OTP, vol. 1, 428. Note that the second half of book eight of the *Sibylline Oracles* (vv. 217–500) is of Christian provenance (see *ibid.*, 416).
 70. The star that they saw at its rising [Matt 2.2, 9] we consider to be new and resembling none of the usual [stars] either among those at the level of the fixed stars or those at the lower spheres, but it was of such a type as occur from time to time, comets... (Τὸν ὀφθέντα ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καινὸν εἶναι νομίζομεν και μηδενὶ τῶν συνήθων παραπλήσιον, οὔτε τῶν ἐν τῇ ἀπλανεῖ οὔτε τῶν ἐν ταῖς κατωτέρω σφαίραις,

ἀλλὰ τῷ γένει τοιοῦτον γεγονέναι, ὅποιοι κατὰ καιρὸν γινόμενοι κομῆται... [p.236.15-19 Borret])

71. PL 76, 1111–112.
72. H. Leclerq, “Astres,” DACL 1.2, 3017 and figure 1047. Leclerq argues that the pre-eminent star was replaced by other christological symbols in early Christian art: among examples he cites are pieces of art on which the chi-rho by itself, a lamb, and a cross are each portrayed dominating fields of stars.
73. Deichmann, “Erscheinung,” 104.
74. οὐ γὰρ τῶν τις ἔην ὅσσον φραστῆρες ἕασιν/ ἀστρολόγοι, ξείνος δὲ καὶ οὐ πάρος ἐξεφαάνθη (p. 24–25 trans. Moreschini–Sykes). In v. 61 Gregory refers to it as “a star newly shining” (ἀρτιφαῖ) (*ibid.*, 26–27).
75. τῆν τοῦ καινοῦ ἀστέρος ἐπιτολήν (p. 245.16 Mann [GNO]).
76. viderant novam stellam quae non erat visa a creatura mundi, viderant novam creaturam et non solum in terra, sed etiam in caelo (CSEL 32/4, 68.3–4).
77. non ex illis erat haec stellis, quae ab initio creaturae itinerum suorum ordinem sub creatoris lege custodiunt, sed novo virginis partu novum sidus adparuit. quod ministerium officii sui etiam ipsis magis quarentibus Christum, cum ante faciem praeiret, exhibuit (CSEL 25, 259.19–24).
78. ἄστρον μέγα καὶ ἐξηλλαγμένον, ὥστε καὶ τῷ μεγέθει καὶ τῷ κάλλει τῆς ὄψεως αὐτοῦ ἐκπλήξαι, καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς πορείας (PG 57, 65). The “manner of its course” refers to the curious movement of the star in Matt 2.9. John’s text of Matt 2.9 seems to have belonged to the “western” manuscript tradition, according to which the star guided the Magi to Bethlehem and then stood over the house of Mary and Joseph: in *Homilies* 7.4 he says that this “is itself also an indication of a greater power than was in keeping with an [ordinary] star, now to hide itself, now to appear, and when it appears to stand still” (ὅπερ καὶ αὐτὸ μείζονος δυνάμεως ἢ κατὰ ἀστέρα ἦν, τὸ νῦν μὲν κρύπτεσθαι, νῦν δὲ φαίνεσθαι, καὶ φανέντα ἴστασθαι [PG 57, 77]). Cf. the more didactic interpretation of Origen, *Homilies on Numbers* 18.4, that the star was like the dove which rested on Christ at his baptism [Matt 3.16–17 et par.], i.e. a sign of his deity (vol. 2, p. 173–74 Baehrens [GCS]); and of the anonymous author of the *Unfinished Work on Matthew*, that the star’s movement shows that the physical elements wait upon those who seek God, and the star’s stopping was its way of saying to the Magi “here he is” since it could not speak (PG 56, 641).
79. *Sermon* 31.1 “stella novae claritatis apparuit, quae inlustrior ceteris pulchriorque

- sideribus” (CCL 138, 161.13–14); *Sermon* 33.1 “novi sideris” (p. 171.33–34), “stellis ceteris stella fulgentior” (p. 172.36); *Sermon* 34.1 “Nova etenim claritas apud magos stellae inlustrioris apparuit” (p. 179.23–24) and 34.2 “fulgore insoliti sideris” (p. 180.37–38); *Sermon* 36.1 “novi sideris” (p. 195.5).
80. δύναμις τις άόρατος εις ταύτην μετασχηματισθεΐσα τήν ὄψιν (PG 57, 64). This interpretation was offered earlier by Diodore of Tarsus, who wrote that the star was not one of the many other stars of heaven but rather a divine power represented by a star (τὸν φανέντα άστέρα μὴ ἓνα τῶν πολλῶν καὶ κατ’ οὐρανὸν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ δύναμιν τινα θειοτέραν, εις άστρον μὲν σχηματιζομένην [p. 47.23–25 Henry])—a curious type of exegesis from a representative of the Antiochene school.
81. Τί οὖν τὸ πείσαν αὐτούς; Τὸ παρασκευάσαν οἴκοθεν ἀναστήναι καὶ τοσαύτην ἐλθεῖν ὁδόν· τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ὅ τε άστήρ καὶ ἡ παρά τοῦ θεοῦ γενομένη τῇ διανοίᾳ αὐτῶν ἔλλαμψις.... (PG 57, 83).
82. πάλιν άγγελος αὐτούς παραλαβὸν πάντα ἐδίδαξε (PG 57, 77). For a modern interpretation of the star as an angel see Davies, “What was the Star?” 24.
83. tam pinnatus rapidoque simillimus austro/ nuntius (CCL 126, p. 98).
84. p. 9 Peeters; on the date of this passage see *ibid.*, p. VII–XI, L–LIV.
85. J. Klausner, “Engel X (in der Kunst),” RAC 5, 299 (cf. col. 263, no. 25); see also Deichmann, “Erscheinung,” 98–99.
86. J. Michl, “Engel IV [christlich],” RAC 5, 136–37.

14. Astrological Themes Elsewhere in the Canonical Gospels and in Paul

The Canonical Gospels

The Magi and the star of Bethlehem in Matt 2.1–12 are the two motifs that most clearly derive from astrology in the New Testament Gospel accounts. Aside from these, other dramatic celestial phenomena that are portrayed in connection with significant events include the darkness that “came over the whole land” during Christ’s crucifixion (Matt 27.45; Mk 15.33; Lk 23.44–45)¹ and the darkening of the sun and moon and falling of the stars foretold for Christ’s return (Matt 24.29; Mk 13.24–25; cf. Lk 21.25).² These texts do not evince technical astrological doctrines or practices, though they may well reflect astrological theories regarding signs that would precede the destruction of the world;³ as with his nativity, so too it was believed that Christ’s death and parousia had cosmic repercussions for “the universe could not be indifferent to such happenings.”⁴ The influence of astrology also lies behind the association of demonic possession with the moon evident in the pairing of the terms δαίμονιζομένους καὶ σεληνιαζομένους in Matt 4.24 and in the verb σεληνιαζέται in the story of the epileptic boy in Matt 17.15; since the moon was associated with moisture as its elementary property, according to ancient astrological medicine (iatromathematics) it was believed that “lunacy” was caused by the sympathetic movement of moist humours in the head.⁵

The Pauline Writings

There are a few references that are relevant to astrology in the letters of Paul.

In 2 Cor 12.2–4 Paul’s description of being “caught up to the third heaven...to Paradise” (ἀρπαγέντα ... ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ ... εἰς τὸν παράδεισον) reflects a version of ancient Hellenistic cosmology in which the celestial spheres of the planets collectively were identified as the “first heaven,” the sphere of the fixed stars as the “second heaven,” and the third heaven was equated with paradise; this cosmological arrangement is also evident in 2 Enoch 3–8.⁶ In particular, the experience evoked in 2 Cor 12.2–4 is reminiscent of the notion of the “Himmelreise der Seele,” the ascent of the soul (usually, though not always, after death) through a series of planetary

spheres;⁷ often associated with this was the belief that the soul had to produce passwords which it had carefully learned beforehand in order to be permitted by the gatekeepers of the spheres to pass through during its journey.⁸ In 2 Cor 12 Paul's focus is not on the ecstatic experience per se; rather, his self-deprecating, almost playful tone indicates that he is merely recounting this experience as part of his paradoxical response to the opponents who were "boasting" and undermining his authority in the church at Corinth (see 2 Cor 10.1ff.).

In Gal 4.3 Paul writes that "we have been enslaved to celestial powers," that is, the rudimentary elements of creation (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἡμεθα δεδουλωμένοι).⁹ There is of course a long scholarly tradition of interpretation regarding the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.¹⁰ For our purposes it is sufficient to note that even though the specific use of the term στοιχεῖα with astral or demonic associations is usually held to be late (after the second century C.E.),¹¹ the view of the cosmic powers as hostile to humanity was prevalent much earlier, as we have seen. It is therefore quite likely that Paul has some notion of oppressive, cosmic fate in mind in this passage of Galatians.¹² It is especially significant that Paul's statements regarding the victory over the στοιχεῖα obtained through Christ's death closely parallel other early Christian affirmations of Christ's victory over astrological fate that I have discussed earlier. The main emphasis in Gal 4.3–11 (cf. 5.1) is on freedom from enslavement to the στοιχεῖα, and Paul similarly expresses the theme of victory over (astrological) powers in Rom 8.38–39: "For I am convinced that neither...angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth...will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹³ It is unlikely that in the terminology of the latter passage Paul had specifically astrological usages in mind:¹⁴ the "rulers" (ἄρχαι), like the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, are the spiritual powers in general while the "things present" (ἐνεστῶτα) and "things to come" (μέλλοντα) are best taken to as simply references to current and future events. The term "height" (ὑψωμα) was used in ancient astronomy to refer to: a) the position of a planet north of the celestial equator (its opposite position south of the equator being termed the ταπείνωμα); and b) in the theory of epicycles, a planet's position farthest from the earth (at the apogee), with the position closest to the earth on a planet's epicycle (the perigee) being termed the ταπείνωμα or βάθος.¹⁵ It is impossible to know if Paul had the astronomical meanings of "depth" (βάθος) and "height" (ὑψωμα) in mind in Rom 8.39; considering the general nature of the rest of his terminology in the passage, it seems doubtful. Certainly there is

no basis for the conclusion that Paul was using these words in their astrological sense: in ancient astrology, the “height” (ὑψωμα) (or “exaltation”) referred to the sign or degree of a sign in which a planet possessed its greatest influence, and once again the diametrically opposite “depth” (or planetary “depression”) was referred to as the ταπεινωμα (not βάθος).¹⁶

Of course, in the letter to the Galatians Paul interweaves the victory of Christ over the celestial powers with his larger argument regarding the Jewish Torah: in Gal 4.3–11 he portrays both the cosmic powers and the “Law” as forces which enslave humanity and from which Christ liberates. Thus Paul can claim that his readers’ observance of “special days, and months, and seasons, and years” (Gal 4.10)¹⁷ means that they are falling back into slavery. The temporal terminology of Gal 4.10, which likely originates from the context of Jewish calendrical observance, thus comes to also bear the meaning of

mythologized, i.e. personified elements of the cosmos for Paul and for early Christianity generally, redemption was the transcendence of all deterministic powers and authority that had its locus within the cosmic realm, whether celestial [i.e. the “powers”] or terrestrial [i.e. the “Law”].... For Paul, freedom from the deterministic powers of the world, whether historically manifest in Jewish law and philosophical tradition or cosmologically manifest in the astrological rule of the heavenly powers, was expressed by the image of the redemptive ascent/resurrection of Christ to the other-world of the Father.¹⁸

Thus in Gal 4.10 Paul integrates his view of Jewish sabbatical and festival observance with his affirmation of Christ’s victory over the heavenly powers;¹⁹ his polemic here is directed against “astrological powers of the celestial realm that determine the calendar and rule over ritual observances.”²⁰

As well, in the deutero-Pauline literature, references in Eph 2.2, 3.10 and Col 2.15 to the battle against heavenly “rulers and authorities” (τάς ἀρχάς, τὰς ἐξουσίας), which in Eph 6.12 are paralleled with the “cosmic powers of this [present] darkness...the spiritual beings of wickedness in the heavenly places” (τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου ... τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις), can similarly be understood against the background of ancient astrology. The derivation is not direct, however: all such terms derive from the view of the astrological powers as living beings that the early Christians personified as demons “mit eigener Handlungsfreiheit.”²¹ The letter to the Colossians develops the Pauline view of the cosmic powers in two ways. According to Col 1.16 the subordination of the powers to Christ is made retroactive to the beginning of creation, so that it is portrayed as

inherent within the structure of the universe: “in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.”²² Moreover, the writer of Colossians emphasizes that the victory over the powers of astrological fate is to be personally appropriated through “dying with Christ”; in 2.20 the reader is exhorted: “If with Christ you have died to the elements of creation, why do you live under the law as if you still belonged to the world?”²³

Notes

1. The phrase τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλείποντος (or ἐκλείποντος) in Lk 23.45, which has strong manuscript authority (it is present in P75, κ, B, C, etc.), is best seen as an expansion of the σκότος ἐγένετο of the previous verse; it is unnecessary to invoke a specific eclipse which the author of Luke may have witnessed prior to writing this (contra John F.A. Sawyer, “Why is a Solar Eclipse Mentioned in the Passion Narrative?” JTS n.s. 23 [1972]: 124–28). Other early writers recognized the primacy of the theological meaning of the text: in *Catechetical Lectures* 13.34 Cyril of Jerusalem explains that the sun was eclipsed because of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4.2) (Ἐξέλειπεν ὁ ἥλιος, διὰ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον [PG 33, 813B]).
2. Bouché-Leclercq, 610–11. Cf. also 2 Pet 3.10, 12. According to W. Gundel, “Astrologie,” RAC 1, 826 the reference to Satan falling from heaven like a flash of lightning in Lk 10.18 recalls such epiphanies of astral gods in the astrological tradition.
3. Gundel, “Astrologie,” 827: “Reflexe der astrologischen Theorien des Weltunterganges u. der ihm vorangehenden Schreckzeichen am gestirnten Himmel u. auf der Erd....”
4. George Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore, 1985), 315.
5. Bouché-Leclercq, 91–92, 499–500 (and p. 517–42 on astrological medicine); Schwenn, “Selene,” RE 2A, 1, 1139; Préaux, “Lune,” 91–92; Cumont, *L’Égypte des Astrologues*, 168 and n4, 169 and nn1–2.
6. Luther H. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions* (New York, 1987), 121–22. For the common Christian view of multiple “heavens” see the numerous ancient references cited in Adolf Lumpe, “Himmel,” RAC 15, 202–204.

7. Gundel, "Astrologie," 826. A similar view of the descent and ascent of the soul was held by Numenius of Apamea (H.J.W. Drijvers, "Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica," *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux* 21 [1970]: 207–08; repr. *East of Antioch* [London, 1984]) and is evident in Macrobius' *Commentary* on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* 1.11.6–12. On this theme the classic study is Wilhelm Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 4 (1901): 136–69, 229–73; see also: P Courcelle, "Flügel (Flug) der Seele I," *RAC* 8, 29ff.; C. Colpe et al., "Jenseitsfahrt I (Himmelfahrt)," *RAC* 17, 407ff.; A.F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," *ANRW* 2.23.2, 1333–94; I.P. Culianu, *Psychanodia I* (Leiden, 1983), 5–15; Roger Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras* (Leiden, 1988), 77–80, and "The Mithras Cult as Association," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21 (1992): 5–6.
8. See the discussion in Cumont, *Religions Orientales*, 164–65 and Culianu, *Psychanodia*, 11–14. On the belief in such a journey during this present life in the mysteries of Mithras see Beck, "Mithras Cult as Association," 4–7.
9. Cf. Col 2.8.
10. See the survey in Andrew John Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World* (Kampen, 1964), 5–30; though he discusses the meaning of στοιχεῖα in antiquity (p.31–46) Bandstra largely dismisses any connection between the στοιχεῖα and astral powers in Paul's thought. By contrast, Paul's use of astrological themes is strongly affirmed by D.E.H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Oxford, 1974), 23–25.
11. Festugière, *L'Idéal Religieux*, 107n1; Walter Wink, "The 'Elements of the Universe' in Biblical and Scientific Perspective," *Zygon* 13 (1978): 244n4; Richard E. De Maris, "Element, Elemental Spirit," *ABD* vol. 2, 445, though note that he concludes: "It may be anachronistic to equate the elements with angels...." (emphasis mine).
12. Betz, *Galatians*, 204–05; Martyn, *Galatians*, 412. Of course, this is not to say that Paul uses the term στοιχεῖα here in an exclusively astrological sense, any more than the writer does in Col 2.8 where the στοιχεῖα are associated with "philosophy and empty deceit." The polyvalence of meaning of the term στοιχεῖα, and thus the need to interpret it contextually, are emphasized by Wink, "'Elements of the Universe,'" 227–33.
13. πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε ... ἄγγελοι οὔτε ἀρχαὶ οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα οὔτε μέλλοντα οὔτε δυνάμεις οὔτε ὑψώμα οὔτε βάθος ... ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. The eschatological victory over such powers is also evident in 1 Cor 15.24.

14. Contra Wilfred L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge, 1961), 106 and nn4–6. Knox’s claim that these terms are astrological is accepted by Jung Young Lee, “Interpreting the Demonic Powers in Pauline Thought,” *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 62-63.
15. Bouché-Leclercq, 193–94.
16. Bouché-Leclercq, 192–93. Whiteley, *Theology of St. Paul*, 24 incorrectly claims that “hupsoma and bathos were technical terms in astrology, denoting the highest and lowest point reached by a heavenly body.” He may well be following Knox, *St. Paul*, 106–07 who also claimed that Paul “is borrowing his rhetoric from the language of astrology.” Knox and Whiteley are both right to doubt that Paul would have known the meaning of such terminology.
17. ἡμέρας ... καὶ μῆνας καὶ καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτοῦς.
18. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions*, 123. According to Jonathan Z. Smith, this is “the fundamental pattern of hellenistic Mediterranean religions—an astrological mystery involving the descent-ascent of a heavenly figure” (*Map is Not Territory* [Leiden, 1978], 62, emphasis his); Smith also refers to the theme of the “Himmelreise der Seele” but does not elaborate on the relation between the two.
19. Franz Boll (*Aus Der Offenbarung Johannis* [Leipzig, 1914], 23–24) and Gundel, “Astrologie,” 825 see the passage as polemic against the practice of determining times for certain activities (“die astrologische Tagewählerei”), i.e. katarchic astrology. Both Gundel and Boll ignore any reference to Jewish calendrical observance in Gal 4.10, preferring instead a purely astrological interpretation. By contrast, Festugière, *Idéal Religieux*, 107n1 excludes any astrological reference in Gal 4.3–11, though he is willing to grant that Eph 6.12 “ne s’inspire pas uniquement des croyances juives” (p.110–11n3). Similarly, J. Louis Martyn has argued that Paul had in view the distinction between “sacred” and “profane” times based on astrological observations in many traditions, and not just Jewish calendrical observance (*Galatians*, 412, 414–18).
20. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions*, 122.
21. Gundel, “Astrologie,” 826 (with a particular freedom of action).
22. ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται. Cf. also Col 2.15.

23. Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε;

15. The Book of Revelation

In this section I will focus on passages in the book of Revelation in which unambiguously astrological references are found. It is necessary to clarify this at the outset since of course many of the themes of Revelation can loosely be related to astrology. Indeed, one recent commentary on the book of Revelation seeks to interpret the book of Revelation entirely in celestial terms as a “sky vision,” resulting in a reading of the text that is all too often forced.¹ Astrology is no doubt the general background for elements in the text of Revelation such as the references to the numbers 4, 7, and 12 (as indeed it was to such number symbolism in ancient literature and culture at large).² Yet one cannot be sure that behind Revelation’s constant repetition of 4’s, 7’s and 12’s (and their multiples) the writer had in mind the planets, the signs of the zodiac, or other matters of technical astrology. Thus my present focus is on passages in which astrological features are clearly and unmistakably present: Rev 4.6b–7 (the four living creatures) and 12.1–17 (the woman clothed with the sun).

Revelation 4.6b–7: The Four Living Creatures

And in the midst of the throne and the circle of the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human being and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.³

The literary background to this passage is the vision of the divine throne chariot in the first chapter of Ezekiel with its description of the cherubim as “four living creatures” (Ezek 1.5–14) having the faces of a human being, lion, ox, and eagle (Ezek 1.10; cf. 10.14). In both Ezekiel and Revelation the four living creatures clearly correspond to four heavenly constellations.

According to the interpretation of Franz Boll, the lion corresponds to the constellation Leo, the ox to Taurus, the human being to Scorpio, and the eagle to Pegasus. Boll based his view on the bright stars that are located in these constellations: Leo’s brightest star is Regulus, the “little king”;⁴ Taurus contains Aldebaran; and Scorpio Antares. The latter two were often referred to together as lying diametrically opposite to (ἀντικείμενοι) each other.⁵ Citing a statement from Firmicus Maternus (*Mathesis* 6.2) that “royal stars” are found

in the four signs Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius and Taurus,⁶ Boll claimed that Regulus, Aldebaran and Antares were the royal stars of Leo, Taurus and Scorpio respectively. He further asserted that the royal star in Aquarius to which Firmicus refers must mean the star Alpha Pegasi, and so the fourth living creature of Revelation 4.6b–7 (the eagle) is Pegasus.⁷ (That, however, entails a departure from Firmicus’ statement; in fact, a better candidate for the royal star in Aquarius is Formalhaut [Alpha Piscis Austrini], which is located at the end of the stream of water poured out by Aquarius and which allows us to remain with the constellation actually referred to by Firmicus, Aquarius.⁸ Formalhaut is also brighter than Alpha Pegasi.) For Boll, the presence of these royal stars in Leo, Taurus, Scorpio and Pegasus explains why these constellations were chosen by the author of Revelation: such astrological imagery was useful to the author in portraying a heavenly throne and its surroundings. Moreover, the fact that these four signs are located more or less along the celestial equator sheds light on the bewildering phrase “in the midst of and in the cycle of the throne” (ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου) in Rev 4.6b, since the equator divides heaven in half and at the same time surrounds it completely.⁹

Boll’s interpretation has been followed by other scholars.¹⁰ R.H. Charles agreed with Boll regarding the first three beings in Rev 4.6b–7 (lion–Leo, ox–Taurus, human being–Scorpio) but identified the eagle with the constellation Aquila.¹¹ Surely Aquila is *prima facie* a more obvious candidate for the eagle; it is worth noting that Aquila too contains a bright star, Altair.¹² However, the identification of the human being with Scorpio is problematic. Since Scorpio’s associations with evil were well known, it would have hardly been seen as one of the attendants of the divine throne.¹³

Preferable to the reading of the four living creatures proposed by Boll and Charles is that offered by Austin Farrer. Farrer sees the lion as Leo and the ox as Taurus (like Boll) and the eagle as Aquila (like Charles), but Farrer claims that the human being refers to Aquarius—which is much more plausible:¹⁴ as we have seen, the best candidate for Firmicus Maternus’ “royal star” in Aquarius is Formalhaut (Alpha Piscis Austrini).

Farrer’s interpretation is zodiacal: Leo, Taurus and Aquarius are all zodiacal signs, and along with Scorpio they are the middle signs in the four quarters of the zodiac.

Aries	Libra
Taurus	Scorpio
Gemini	Sagittarius

Cancer	Capricorn
Leo	Aquarius
Virgo	Pisces

Farrer acknowledges that Scorpio's evil reputation would have made it unsuitable for use by the Biblical writers in describing the environs of the heavenly throne: he claims that Aquila was chosen as Scorpio's replacement because the heliacal risings of the two signs were equivalent.¹⁵ It is significant that in fact the images of the eagle and the scorpion are juxtaposed elsewhere in the text in Rev 8–9: in 8.13 the “eagle flying in midheaven” (μεσουράνημα, an astrological term) is followed by the appearance of locusts that are repeatedly compared to scorpions in 9.3–11.

Farrer's purpose in linking the four living creatures of Revelation with the signs of the zodiac is to connect the symbolism of the creatures with the annual festivals of the Jewish calendar.¹⁶ In this he is ultimately unsuccessful, however, because the order of the signs which derive from his astrological identification of the four living creatures is problematic: in neither Ezekiel nor Revelation do the four living creatures correspond to the signs in the usual zodiacal order, and indeed the order in Revelation (according to Farrer: Leo, Taurus, Aquarius, Aquila [i.e. Scorpio]) follows the circle of the zodiac backwards. Farrer states that the writer of Revelation

makes the minimum change in Ezekiel's order which will allow the four signs to be read straight around the Zodiacal ring. Lion (summer), Bull (spring), Man, the Waterer (winter) and Eagle, for Scorpion (autumn).¹⁷

However, this does not account for their being given in reverse order in Rev 4.6b–7.¹⁸ Similarly, in Farrer's reading of Rev 6.1–8, where the four living creatures give utterance at the opening of the first four seals, the usual order of the zodiacal circle is again not found.¹⁹ Moreover, Farrer's claim that the book of Revelation overall can be apportioned to the symbols of the four living creatures in the proper zodiacal order (and that therefore the book corresponds to the major Jewish festivals) cannot be substantiated: even if “St. John proceeds in the direct order of the seasons, advancing from summer to autumn, when he goes on from the Lion [of Judah in Rev 5.5] to the Eagle [in Rev 8.13],”²⁰ there is no basis in the text itself for assigning part of Revelation to the bull²¹ nor for identifying the “one of the four living creatures” of

Rev 15.7 with Aquarius.²² Farrer's calendrical reading of the book of Revelation does not arise from the text itself, but rather is superimposed on it. Moreover, despite his claim to have found astrological support from Revelation for his calendrical reading of the text, his zodiacal identifications of the four living creatures do not support his conclusions: the creatures and their signs cannot be referred to the Jewish festivals unless they actually follow the annual circle of the zodiac.

This does not invalidate Farrer's identification of the four living creatures per se, which is really more plausible than those suggested by Boll or Charles. It is significant that in all of these interpretations the astrological signs that are referred to the four living creatures lie far apart from each other; thus they may be seen as surrounding the heavens, just as the living creatures are said to surround the throne in Rev 4.6b. The astrological identification of the living creatures must be entirely in keeping with the cosmic significance of the throne and its surroundings that is being portrayed at this point in the text (Rev 4.1ff.).²³ The use of astrology in locating the four living creatures around the divine throne in Revelation is remarkably similar to the way that in the Mithraic mysteries the torchbearers (Cautes and Cautopates) can be identified with the bright stars Aldebaran (in Taurus) and Antares (in Scorpio) so as to relate to the figure of Mithras in the tauroctony scene as companions of the god.²⁴

Revelation 12. 1–17

At the outset of Rev 12 the writer portrays a great heavenly portent: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, bearing on her head a crown of twelve stars (v. 1).²⁵ The image of the heavenly crown was not uncommon in antiquity; it is found already in the description of Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18.485.²⁶ The crown of the woman in Rev 12.1, as well as her splendid garments and her footstool, are the trappings of royalty: she is a heavenly ruler, "regina caeli," like Isis who rules over the stars and fate.²⁷ Moreover, within the larger framework of Revelation she is a strong contrast to the female figure who wears the name of Babylon in Rev 17.

Of course, the crown of twelve stars immediately recalls the zodiac.²⁸ A literary parallel is Martianus Capella's description of a crown whose twelve flaming jewels are associated with the zodiacal signs and the annual seasons, worn by another heavenly female, Juno.²⁹ Ancient Greco-Roman iconography also featured the depiction of a figure (e.g. Jupiter, Heracles, Helios/Sol,³⁰

Pan³¹) or figures (e.g. Dionysus and Ariadne, Helios and Selene³²) encircled by the zodiac.³³ Such depictions appear frequently in the iconography of the Mithraic mysteries: here the central figure is usually Mithras himself, e.g. in the portrayal of his birth from an egg on the Housesteads relief (CIMRM 860), his birth from a rock on a relief from Trier (CIMRM 985), or in the tauroctony scene (CIMRM 75 [Sidon], 810 [London], 1472 [Siscia]); a zodiac may have surrounded the representation of the banquet of Mithras and Sol in CIMRM 1161 (from Stockstadt); and the serpent wrapped figure Aion on a relief from Modena (CIMRM 695) is also encircled by the 12 signs. Examples of zodiacs encircling a central figure are evident from the ancient Jewish tradition as well: for example, a mosaic from the Beth Alpha synagogue includes a figure in a chariot encircled by the 12 zodiacal signs with their names in Hebrew.³⁴ Female deities were similarly depicted. Examples include: Ephesian Artemis with the zodiac as a necklace or encircling her bodice;³⁵ Artemis in her temple surrounded by the zodiac;³⁶ a second century relief with Victory holding a zodiac which encircles another goddess;³⁷ a stele from Argos depicting Selene with seven stars surrounding her head and shoulders (as well as the zodiac surrounding the whole figure);³⁸ and grave paintings from El Salamuni, Egypt featuring Isis-Sothis encircled by the zodiac.³⁹ (Not all such representations were of benevolent goddesses: the head of Medusa could also be portrayed in this manner.⁴⁰) The presence of the zodiac on these representations had the effect of emphasizing the cosmic, universal aspect of the deity, highlighting the god's role as kosmocrator, "lord of the heavens, who controls the progression of time and events."⁴¹ The seven planets were also used to express the deity's cosmic power, as in the imagery of the Son of Man holding seven stars in his right hand (Rev 1.16, 20; 2.1; 3.1).⁴² Imagery of the planets and the zodiac were used together in the temple of Bel at Palmyra: in the northern thalamos of the temple, the ceiling of the cult-niche portrays the god (Bel-Jupiter) surrounded by the six other planets, around which in turn are the twelve zodiacal signs in a second ring.⁴³

More specifically, the circle of stars encircling the woman's head would have been readily understood in cosmological and astrological terms to signify that the woman is standing in the midst of the zodiac. The sun's annual journey through the signs of the zodiac confers upon her, as it were, a garment.⁴⁴ The imagery is similar to the Egyptian view of the moon (and sun) as a barque on which the gods traverse the sky and the underworld⁴⁵ and, in the Mithraic mysteries, the scene in the side panels to the tauroctonies in which the bull (likely to be identified with the moon) rides in a boat or lunar crescent. Boll

suggests that behind the image of the woman in Rev 12.1 may lie some such reasoning as follows: since in Egyptian religion the sun and moon were regarded as vessels travelling through the heavens, the entry of the sun-disc into one of the zodiacal signs entailed covering that sign with its rays, so that the sun thus became a “light garment.”⁴⁶ This is supported by the description of Isis in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 11.3: “the radiant image [perlucidum simulacrum] of her whole body...seemed to stand before me.”⁴⁷ However, Boll neglects some significant differences between the portrayal of the woman in Rev 12.1 and Apuleius’ description of Isis. The principal difference is that for Apuleius the moon is a manifestation of Isis, whereas the woman in Rev 12 is a separate being (as we shall see below, the constellation Virgo). Thus, while the woman is “clothed with the sun” in Rev 12.1, Apuleius’ description of the cloak of Isis features “stars gleaming here and there, and in their midst a half-moon breathed fire”;⁴⁸ there is no mention of the sun on Isis’ cloak. Later in the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius again puts the relationship between Isis and the sun in terms that are different from Rev 12.1: in the latter the woman is “clothed with the sun” (γυνή περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον), while in *Metamorphoses* 11.25 Lucius prays to Isis affirming “you illumine the sun” (luminas solem).⁴⁹ Apuleius’ use of lunar imagery with reference to Isis also differs from the description of the woman in Rev 12.1 as having the moon beneath her feet: in Isis’ theophany in *Metamorphoses* 11.3–4 lunar imagery only occurs in reference to Isis’ crown and cloak.⁵⁰ Egyptian religion (especially the myth of Isis) is of course a very useful resource for understanding the heavenly woman of Rev 12. Egyptian parallels are clearly evident in the use of the sun-disc as a divine attribute in traditional Egyptian iconography, and of the sickle shape of the moon found on Egyptian images of Aphrodite and Demeter from the Greco-Roman period.⁵¹ Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge not only parallels but also contrasts among these ancient traditions.

In terms of astrology, the woman portrayed in Rev 12 corresponds to the constellation Virgo. It does not matter that she who wears the zodiac as a crown is one of the twelve zodiacal signs herself: the writer is drawing special attention to her among the zodiacal signs in this way. (We would expect the number twelve to be retained as representing the zodiac in any case.⁵²) Boll emphasizes that such an astrological interpretation of the text would have been natural for both the writer of Revelation and his contemporaries: it should not be regarded as an esoteric reading restricted to a learned few but rather as readily accessible to a general audience.

Gelehrte Bildung setzt das weder bei dem Schriftsteller noch bei den Lesern voraus: die zwölf Tierkreisbilder und die wichtigsten Sternbilder des Himmels kannte einer damals so gut wie heute die zwölf Monate. Auf was für Leser würde denn auch sonst die wahrhaftig nichts weniger als vorgeschrittene, ja kindliche Kosmologie, die im Henochbuch und andern Apokalypsen einen so breiten Raum einnimmt, haben rechnen können!⁵³

Isis too was interpreted as Virgo in the Greco-Roman world, which offers a clear parallel to this identification of the woman of Rev 12 with Virgo. The earliest astral association of Isis was with Sothis (i.e. Sirius the Dog Star), whose heliacal rising marked the Egyptian new year.⁵⁴ That the Egyptian goddess also eventually came to be equated with Virgo is evident from descriptions of Isis with the ear of corn (“spica”), which was a basic feature associated with Virgo. (Spica is the name of the brightest star in Virgo.) While naturally the ear of corn often led to identifications of Virgo with Demeter, the same motif of the ear of corn was also used in portrayals of Isis.⁵⁵ For example, Boll refers to a gem which features Isis holding her son Horus in her arms; over her head there is a star, and Horus has an ear of corn; another ear of corn stands in a modius by the goddess’ side.⁵⁶ A first century astrological text from Teucros the Babylonian refers to Isis under the heading of Virgo: “At the first decan a certain goddess arises, sitting on a throne and nursing a child; some say this is the goddess Isis nursing Horus in the temple.”⁵⁷ J. Gwyn Griffiths argues that when Apuleius refers to Isis as “caelestis Venus” in *Metamorphoses* 11.2⁵⁸ he had in mind the goddess Dea Caelestis (derived from the Phoenician moon-goddess Tanit) worshipped in his native Carthage,⁵⁹ who combined the functions of virgin and mother.⁶⁰ The identification of Isis as Virgo was of course only possible after the latter was incorporated into Greco-Roman (and Egyptian) cosmography.⁶¹

Understanding the woman in Rev 12 astrologically as Virgo is also supported by the next image described in the text, a dragon, which corresponds to the constellation Hydra. The introduction of the dragon closely parallels the heavenly woman presented in 12.1:

And I saw another portent in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on its heads. Its tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman.... (12.3–4a).⁶²

Although the verb ἵστημι (and its compounds) was the technical term used in astronomical texts to position a constellation in relation to other constellations (e.g. in Aratus' *Phaenomena*), or to describe placing something in the heavens as a catasterism (e.g. in Ps-Eratosthenes' *Catasterisms*),⁶³ nevertheless the word ἕστηκεν in Rev 12.4a need not indicate any particular astrological position of Hydra in relation to Virgo. However, Boll writes that in some situations (such as Rev 12) the specific position of constellations cannot be calculated: "das hängt vollkommen in der Luft."⁶⁴ It is more likely that the verb ἕστηκεν in Rev 14.4a should be understood in terms of early Christian theology rather than astrology, i.e. it is meant to portray the dragon as the antagonist of the woman and her offspring in keeping with the curse upon the serpent in Gen 3.15; indeed, the writer of Revelation explicitly equates the great dragon with "that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev 12.9)⁶⁵ and describes the dragon's making war upon the woman's children in 12.17.⁶⁶ A similar allusion to Gen 3.15 is evident in the description of the relationship between Draco/the devil and Engonasin/Adam in Hippolytus' report concerning the Christian allegorizers of Aratus (*Refutation* 4.47.1–5).⁶⁷

The primary confrontation in Rev 12.1–6 takes place between the woman and the dragon.⁶⁸ This is paralleled in the ancient astrological location of Isis and Seth/Typhon in the northern hemisphere.⁶⁹ For example, a royal grave from Thebes refers to the "fore thigh of Seth located in the northern heaven" which is "the seat of Isis" who guards Seth in chains.⁷⁰ (In ancient Egyptian cosmology Seth was identified with the seven stars of Ursa Major.⁷¹) Like Isis guarding the seven-starred Seth, the writer of Revelation portrays the Son of Man holding seven stars in his right hand (Rev 1.16). The image of the "third of the stars" being swept down by the dragon's tail can be understood not only as an example of the frequent use of the number 3 in apocalyptic literature (cf. Rev 8.12) but also as a reference to the sheer extent of the constellation Hydra across the heavens: ancient astrological texts refer to Hydra stretching across four of the signs of the zodiac, from Cancer to Libra.⁷² Similarly, the seven heads, seven diadems and ten horns of the dragon are likely more than just examples of apocalyptic number symbolism:⁷³ it is significant that Corvus (the Raven) and Crater (the Cup), the two constellations lying immediately adjacent to Hydra and frequently associated with it (e.g. in the Mithraic tauroctony scene⁷⁴) have seven and ten stars respectively according to Ps-Eratosthenes' *Catasterisms* 41.⁷⁵ Of course, falling stars, like comets, were widely regarded in the ancient world as omens that signified momentous his-

torical events. According to Boll, the use of falling stars as an eschatological symbol belongs specifically to the apocalyptic tradition;⁷⁶ the same imagery is also evoked with regard to the ἐκπύρωσις, the Stoic doctrine of the periodic dissolution of the universe into fire, in Seneca's *Consolation to Marcia* 26.6.⁷⁷

Aside from the individual correspondences of the woman with Virgo and the dragon with Hydra, the narrative of Rev 12 also parallels ancient astrological myths.⁷⁸ The drama of Rev 12 begins with the woman giving birth: once she is introduced in 12.1 the author then relates that "she was pregnant and was crying out in birthpangs, in the agony of giving birth" (12.2).⁷⁹ This birth is envisioned as taking place in the sky, not on earth.⁸⁰ After the dragon has been brought on the scene in 12.3–4a, we are told:

Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. And she gave birth to a son, a male child [cf. Lk 2.7], who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [cf. Ps 2.9]. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days. And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon...was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (Rev 12.4b–9).⁸¹

The tradition of an astral battle was present in ancient Jewish sources (Judges 5.20), and became more common in apocalyptic texts (e.g. Dan 8.10; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.796–808, 5.206–13); a particularly vivid example is the end of *Sibylline Oracles* 5 (512–31) with its bleak vision of the future:

I saw the threat of the burning sun among the stars
and the terrible wrath of the moon among the lightning flashes.
The stars travailed in battle; God bade them fight.
For over against the sun long flames were in strife,
and the two-horned rush of the moon was changed.
Lucifer fought, mounted on the back of Leo.
Capricorn smote the ankle of the young Taurus,
and Taurus deprived Capricorn of his day of return.
Orion removed Libra so that it remained no more.
Virgo changed the destiny of Gemini in Aries.
The Pleiad no longer appeared and Draco rejected its belt.
The Pisces submerged themselves in the girdle of Leo.
Cancer did not stand its ground, for it feared Orion.
Scorpio got under the tail because of terrible Leo,

and the dog star perished by the flame of the sun.
 The strength of the mighty day star burned up Aquarius.
 Heaven itself was roused until it shook the fighters.
 In anger it cast them headlong to earth.
 Accordingly, stricken into the baths of ocean,
 they quickly kindled the whole earth.
 But the sky remained starless.⁸²

In contrast with a third of the stars being cast down in Rev 12.4, according to the writer of this portion of the Sibylline Oracles the eschatological battle will cause all the stars to fall. The theme of astral battle was also present in Greco-Roman literature: an example is the celestial attack waged by Typhon against the constellations described at length in Nonnos' *Dionysiaca* 1.163ff.⁸³ The motif of birth followed by flight in Rev 12 parallels the nativity story in Matt 2; in the latter, while of course the child is not snatched up to heaven nevertheless Herod's pursuit of Jesus and his family mirrors the dragon's attack on the woman and her child.

The identification of the woman of Rev 12 with Virgo is not contradicted by her giving birth to a son. Despite Manilius' description of Virgo as "sterilis,"⁸⁴ mother goddesses were not incompatible with Virgo in ancient Greco-Roman religion.⁸⁵ In the words of Frances Yates: "The... virgin is... a complex character, fertile and barren at the same time."⁸⁶ For example, as we have seen the figure of Isis holding her son Horus was identified with Virgo. Virgo was also associated with various other mother goddesses in antiquity, such as Juno,⁸⁷ Dea Caelestis,⁸⁸ Ceres, Magna Mater, the Syrian Atargatis,⁸⁹ and even Ilithyia, the Greek goddess of childbirth;⁹⁰ as Boll concludes "das alles ist eins."⁹¹ The paradox of the goddess being both virgin and mother prompted mockery from early Christian writers: in *Error of the Pagan Religions* 4.1, Firmicus Maternus ridicules the mother goddess (Dea Caelestis) worshipped by the Africans as "Venus Virgo—if virginity ever was pleasing to Venus!"⁹² Augustine too laughs at the identification of the virgin goddess Vesta with Venus:

If Vesta is Venus, how do virgins serve her duly by abstaining from the works of Venus? Or are there two Venuses, one a virgin, the other a wife? Or even three, one for virgins who is Vesta, another for married women, another for harlots? The Phoenicians used to give the latter a gift of their daughters for prostitution before they married them to husbands. Which of these is the noble wife of Vulcan? Certainly not the virgin, since she has a husband. Let it not be the harlot, lest we seem to insult the son of Juno and the fellow-worker of Minerva! Therefore it is

understood that she [Vulcan's wife] was concerned with married women: but let us wish that they do not imitate what she did with Mars! (*City of God* 4.10)⁹³

Augustine prefaces this mocking passage with a triumphalist reference to Christ: "It was right that all this vanity should be abolished and extinguished by him who was born of a virgin."⁹⁴ Despite such Christian responses, it is clear that the paradoxical image of the goddess who was both virgin and mother was used by the author of Rev 12, who must have felt it was also understandable to his Christian audience. Moreover, such a paradox also came to be affirmed of Mary in early Christian tradition: the notion of Mary's virginity not only "ante partum" but also "post partum" and "in partu" came to be developed by the fourth century.⁹⁵

In Revelation 12.5–6, the woman's flight to the wilderness in her plight recalls Isis' tragic pathos in the face of her loss of Osiris. Meanwhile, the threat posed by the dragon continues until the final defeat of the beast, which derives its power from the dragon (Rev 13.2), by Christ in Rev 19.19–20; similarly, in the myth of Isis the goddess' son Horus is the one who ultimately defeats their enemy Typhon.⁹⁶ Moreover, in the account of Horus' victory over Typhon in *De Iside* 19 Plutarch refers in passing to Horus' killing of a snake; again, we have a parallel with the defeat of the dragon of Revelation. The snake which Horus killed had been pursuing Thoueris, Typhon's former concubine who then came over to the side of Horus, so that here again we have the child defending a female divinity: indeed in Egyptian tradition Thoueris had been the protectress of pregnancy (cf. the connection between Isis and maternity) while in Greco-Roman times she was identified with Athene.⁹⁷

The woman's flight into the wilderness (Rev 12.6) implies her descent to earth. This descent is the exact opposite of the astrological myth of the catasterism of the goddess Dike related in Aratus' *Phaenomena* 96–136,⁹⁸ which says that at the beginning of the Age of Bronze Dike (i.e. Justice) had withdrawn herself from the earth to become the constellation Virgo in the heavens. Instead, since the woman's arrival on earth precedes the defeat of the dragon (Rev 12.7–9) and ultimately anticipates the triumphant coming of Christ (19.11–21) the writer of Revelation is reversing the myth of the catasterism of Dike in a similar way to Vergil's announcement of the return of the Golden Age:

Ours is the crowning era foretold in prophecy:
Born of Time, a great new cycle of centuries

Begins. Justice returns to earth, the Golden Age
 Returns, and its first-born comes down from heaven above.
 Look kindly, chaste Lucina, upon this infant's birth,
 For with him shall hearts of iron cease, and hearts of gold
 Inherit the whole earth—yes, Apollo reigns now (*Eclagues* 4.4–10).⁹⁹

Similarly, according to Hephaestion of Thebes, *Apotelesmatica* 1.24, the appearance of the comet named for Ilithyia (the goddess of childbirth) “signifies humanity’s weariness and a change of things for the better.”¹⁰⁰ It seems that the first Christian to claim that Vergil’s reference to Virgo’s return in the fourth Eclogue was a prophecy of Christ was Constantine, who in his *Speech to the Assembly of the Saints* (19–20), delivered at Nicomedia in April, 325, identified Vergil’s Virgo with Mary the mother of Christ.¹⁰¹ Constantine’s contemporary, Lactantius, read the fourth Eclogue more generally as looking forward to the coming kingdom of God, without any specific christological reference.¹⁰² Indeed, Lactantius does not follow the reversal of the myth of the ascent of Dike, but rather dismisses that myth altogether: “Why do you portray a hollow justice and wish for it to fall from the sky, as if it were formed as some kind of statue?” (*Divine Institutes* 5.8.2)¹⁰³ For Lactantius, since the reign of justice has come with Christianity there is no need to look for the return of Dike.¹⁰⁴

According to Rev 12.14 (reprising 12.6):

The woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.¹⁰⁵

As Boll notes, wings were a standard part of Virgo’s image in ancient cosmography.¹⁰⁶ An Egyptian inscription from a stele of the 18th dynasty describes the goddess Hathor (Isis) as producing wind with her wings while in flight.¹⁰⁷ The “great eagle,” with its definite article, must have a specific reference; while there is precedent for such imagery in Jewish tradition,¹⁰⁸ Boll sees the reference here to the constellation of the Eagle, Aquila.¹⁰⁹ (Certainly it is unlikely that it is an allusion to Rome, considering the negative portrayal of Rome as “Babylon” in Rev 17–18.) The eagle, i.e. the constellation Aquila, also appeared earlier in Revelation: as we have seen it is one of the four living creatures in 4.6b–7, and in 8.13 its position at midheaven is described using technical astrological terminology (ἐν μεσουράνημα).¹¹⁰ The narrative of the dragon’s opposition to the woman ends in Rev 12.17 when,

having failed to kill the woman herself, the dragon turns to attack her children. These latter are of course the Christians, among whom the author of Rev himself is numbered: they are “the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.”¹¹¹ If the woman corresponds to the “Light goddess” then her children are “children of light” (cf. Jn 8.12; 1 Jn 1.5–9). Thus in addition to her astrological and mythical correspondences, in Rev 12.17 the woman receives yet a further identification as the church. Of course, just as Israel was portrayed as the bride of God (Jer 31.32; Hos 1–2) the church was being portrayed as Christ’s bride in some early Christian texts (e.g. Eph 5.22–32). Such imagery is different from, but not contradictory to, the image of the church as mother derived from Rev 12.17: indeed, the latter represents a further level of meaning achieved by the incorporation of feminine imagery into early Christian theology.¹¹²

In Rev 12.15–16 the dragon tries to kill the woman utilizing water:

Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from its mouth.¹¹³

In the Isis myth, water also features in Typhon’s attack on Isis: the killing of Osiris takes place when, after trapping Osiris in a chest, Typhon and his fellow conspirators take it out to the river and let it go to the sea, which carries it to Byblos (*De Iside* 13, 15). The symbolism of the latter is also comparable to the myth of Rev 12: just as the land “swallows” the flooding of the Nile, so the earth rescues the woman from the dragon’s attempt to destroy her.¹¹⁴ Water also appears in the catasterism myth of the snake (Hydra/Anguis), raven (Corvus) and cup (Crater) reported by Ovid (*Fasti* 2.243–66) and Ps-Eratosthenes (*Catasterisms* 41): the raven takes too long fetching water with Apollo’s cup and returns carrying a snake on which it blames the delay, with the result that the god sets all three together in the heavens. Boll notes the similarity between the words of the raven in Ps-Eratosthenes’ version (αὐτὸν ἐκπίνειν καθ’ ἡμέραν τὸ γινόμενον ἐν τῇ κρήνῃ ὕδωρ¹¹⁵) and Rev 12.15 (καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ὄφις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ... ὕδωρ).¹¹⁶

From Rev 12.5 we know that the first born son (cf. Lk 2.7) of the woman is Christ; the allusion there to Ps 2.9 (“he will rule all nations with a rod of iron”), which will be repeated again in Rev 19.15, makes this clear.¹¹⁷ This birth took place in the past; the future coming of Christ is still ahead, at Rev

19.11ff. However, there is a tremendous difference—indeed, according to Boll, a contradiction¹¹⁸—between an “historical” focus on Jesus’ life (such as is evident in the Synoptic Gospels, for example) and the heavenly portrayal of Christ in the book of Revelation. The questions arise: how did the Christian writer of Revelation come to make use of the Greco-Roman myth of the “Light goddess”? And how did the astrological image of Virgo, the queen of heaven, become adapted for use in a Christian account of Christ’s birth in Rev 12?¹¹⁹ Boll argues that early Christian writers were faced with two possible avenues according to which Christ’s birth could be described. The point of departure for both of these was the Septuagint of Is 7.14: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold the virgin shall conceive in her womb and give birth to a son and you shall call his name Emmanuel.”¹²⁰ This text provided the essential connection between the virgin who becomes a mother and gives birth to the Messiah. The one avenue was that taken by Matt 1–2 (cf. Lk 1.27), i.e. to portray the woman as an earthly virgin; it was possible to develop such an approach along the lines of the traditional Jewish view which expected the Messiah to be a descendant of David. The other avenue saw the Messiah primarily as a heavenly being: from this perspective the author of Revelation was able to make the virgin of Is 7.14 to correspond with the celestial Virgo, which as we have seen was long identified with numerous other virgin and mother goddesses of Greco-Roman religion. There are other examples of the association of Mary with Virgo. For example, among certain spurious works attributed to John Chrysostom is a homily “On the Birth of Christ” in which the angel Gabriel greets Mary with a slightly altered form of the “Ave Maria” of Lk 1.28: “Greetings, favoured one, O unharvested land of the heavenly ear of wheat.”¹²¹ The “ear of wheat” (στάχυς) also refers to the image of the sheaf that is a regular characteristic of Virgo, and στάχυς is the Greek name of Virgo’s brightest star (Spica). It was by identifying Virgo with Mary that the author of Revelation was able to adapt elements of the myth of the “Light goddess,” as well as of the Isis myth, for his own purposes. Boll’s argument seems more plausible than that of R.H. Charles, who argued that the description of the Messiah in Rev 12 could not have been used by a Christian but must have been first adapted from its pagan source by a Jewish author.¹²² Aside from the phrase “blood of the Lamb” in Rev 12.11 which is obviously christological, there is also the example of Paul as another early Christian writer who betrays almost no interest in the “historical” details of Jesus’ life.

The Christian perspective of the author of Revelation is also evident in that the woman of Rev 12 is subordinated to Christ within the work overall.

Outside of chapter 12 she makes no further appearance. Moreover, while worshippers could ascribe the aretalogical statement “I am all that has been and is and will be” to the goddess herself (it was an inscription on a statue of Athene/Isis at Saïs according to Plutarch, *De Iside* 9¹²³), for the author of Revelation such a claim could only be uttered by Christ himself (Rev 1.4, 8) and not by the woman who is his mother in Rev 12. In the process of taking her over from Greco-Roman religion, the author of Revelation has subsumed the woman’s divine power to that of her son, with the result that she has become a lesser figure than she was before. The approach taken by the author of Revelation also represents quite a departure from the emphasis on history in traditional Jewish messianic expectation. However, the myth of the woman and the dragon in Rev 12 is an interesting example of the widespread tendency (emphasized, for example, by Franz Cumont) in Greco-Roman religion to situate the gods in the sky.¹²⁴ In Rev 12.6 the woman’s descent to the wilderness (on earth) allows for a minimum connection with the earth;¹²⁵ therefore, she can be the earthly mother for her other children, the Christians (12.17). Since she does not remain in the sky, the woman is both heavenly and earthly.¹²⁶ Perhaps one price of his use of Greco-Roman celestial myths was that the author was not able to affirm a similar balance in his portrayal of Christ in Rev 12. Aside from the reference to “the blood of the lamb” in 12.11, Christ is a predominantly heavenly being in this chapter, though of course elsewhere the author does affirm Christ’s human suffering on earth (Rev 1.5, 7; 5.9; 11.8).

For our present purposes, what is most remarkable about these passages from Revelation is that they demonstrate the author’s use of astrology. The author’s interest in, and use of, astrological imagery is not sophisticated. Rather, it is all “grist for the mill”—great symbolism, even if not well understood. Nevertheless, the author of Revelation shows none of the suspicion of things celestial that would become so fixed in later Christian writers.

Notes

1. Bruce J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation* (Peabody, MA, 1995). For example: it is doubtful that the clearly apocalyptic image of the Son of Man in Rev 1.12ff. refers to some sort of constellation (p. 52, 67–70); apart from a brief and biased report by Epiphanius we know nothing about “Pharisaic astrology” (p. 78);

except for the allegorizers of Aratus and the Peratae discussed by Hippolytus, an allegorical reading of the heavens was not “rather usual in the astronomicals of those deviants labelled as ‘heretics’” by the early Christians (p. 73); there is no evidence that the “giants” of Jewish legendary tradition (based on Gen 6.4) were “responsible for stone structures of gigantic proportion (Mediterranean dolmen and menhir, like Stonehenge) and [that] their skeletons are still found at times (dinosaur remains identified as the bones of giants)” (p. 64); Aries’ turning its neck backwards was understood to mean that it was looking back towards Taurus (Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.264) rather than that its neck was broken (p. 53, 111). It is also unclear what is the real advantage of translating ἄγγελος (angel, messenger) as “sky servant” or πνεῦμα (spirit) as “sky wind” (p. 61–63 et passim). A further problem with Malina’s book is its contention that Revelation should be interpreted cosmologically rather than in terms of apocalyptic eschatology when no such “either/or” is required (see the review by David A. deSilva in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 [1997]: 763–65). A similar approach to the book of Revelation is found in Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis, 2000).

2. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 20–23; Stuckrad, *Ringens*, 544, 588–590. Stuckrad rightly criticizes Boll’s exclusive focus on the Hellenistic background to Revelation to the point of sometimes losing sight of its Jewish background (*Ringens*, 589 n186).
3. Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῶα γέμοντα ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπίσθεν. καὶ τὸ ζῶον τὸ πρῶτον ὅμοιον λέοντι καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ζῶον ὅμοιον μόσχῳ καὶ τὸ τρίτον ζῶον ἔχον τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ζῶον ὅμοιον ἀετῷ πετομένῳ.
4. Regulus is actually a modern name, though it was called “stella regia” in antiquity (Pliny, *Natural History* 18.235, 271). Leo was also the astrological sign of royalty (Bouché-Leclercq, 139 and n2, 438–39).
5. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 37.
6. Claras stellas...in signis omnibus invenimus, sed regales in quattuor, in Leone scilicet, in Scorpione, in Aquario, in Tauro (p. 69.14–17 Kroll–Skutsch–Ziegler).
7. *Offenbarung*, 37 and n3. Boll bases this on Mesopotamian star lore. As well, the “scorpion men” of Mesopotamian lore are the warrant for his identification of the creature with a human face as Scorpio.
8. Roger Beck, “Cautes and Cautopates: Some Astronomical Considerations,” *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 2 (1977): 14 n16, who also points out that the passage in Firmicus Maternus is complicated by the mention of two more royal stars in *Mathesis*

6.3. Whether these are located in Taurus or Gemini (and hence likely equivalent to Castor and Pollux), these two other stars complicate the fourfold schema that is the basis of Boll's reading of the four living creatures.

9. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 38.
10. For example by Malina, *Revelation*, 99.
11. R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1920), 122–23.
12. While Boll does emphasize the close association between Pegasus and the constellation Aquila (*Offenbarung*, 38–39), he does not identify the eagle of Rev 4.7 with Aquila because of its proximity to Scorpio (p. 37n1).
13. Bouché-Leclercq, 143. Manilius, *Astronomica* 4.217–29 stresses the connection of Scorpio with war and military ardour. As well, Scorpio is the astrological house of Mars (Bouché-Leclercq, 185).
14. Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford, 1964), 91–92. For an example of the positive use of Aquarius in a Christian context, as an image of Christ and Christian baptism, see Zeno of Verona, *Sermon* 1.38 (discussed in chapter 22 below).
15. Farrer, *Revelation*, 91–92.
16. *Revelation*, 117. This connection between the book of Revelation and the Jewish festivals had been more central to in Farrer's earlier study of Revelation, *A Rebirth of Images* (Westminster, 1949).
17. *Revelation*, 92.
18. Elsewhere (*Revelation*, 117) Farrer acknowledges the anticalendrical order of the living creatures but again does not offer an explanation.
19. According to Farrer (*Revelation*, 9–99), the first living creature in Rev 6.1–2 is the Lion since it speaks "with a voice of thunder," like a lion's roar. In 6.3–4 the second creature is the bull, "a beast of slaughter" which heralds "the bearer of the sword." The third creature at this point in the text is not Aquarius, however; rather, since 6.5–6 seems to refer to economic inflation Farrer sees the living creature of v. 5 as Libra "the constellation of the scales, the sign of scarcity...in the very claws of the Eagle's zodiacal equivalent, the Scorpion" (Farrer elaborates on this further on p.

- 100). Finally “the Man (Aquarius) presides over the death of the year...so let him stand for *the* death (the pestilence)” in Rev 6.7–8. This latter order (Leo, Taurus, Eagle/Scorpio, Aquarius) is also found in Farrer’s astrological reading of those who are “sealed” from the twelve tribes of Israel in Rev 7.4–7 (*Revelation*, 107), but it is unclear from Rev 7.4–7 itself why an astrological reading of this passage is even warranted.
20. *Revelation*, 92.
 21. Contra Farrer, *Revelation*, 92, 117; it is by no means clear that the figure of the beast in Rev 13–19 is to be identified as “Behemoth” and so to correspond with Taurus the bull (*ibid.*, 144, 151, 162–66).
 22. Contra Farrer, *Revelation*, 172–75.
 23. The traditional attribution of the four living creatures to the writers of the canonical Gospels was first made by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.11.8).
 24. Beck, “Cautes and Cautopates,” 6–7.
 25. Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὄφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, γυνὴ περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 98n3 rightly points out that σημεῖον μέγα can indicate signs of future events as well as evidence of (divine) power (as in the Gospels).
 26. ἐν δὲ τὰ τεῖρεα πάντα, τὰ τ’ οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται (p. 324 Murray [LCL]) (“within all the signs with which heaven is crowned”). The same phrase is found in Hesiod, *Theogonis* 381–82: τοὺς δὲ μέτ’ ἀστέρα τίκτεν Ἐωσφόρον Ἡφιγένεια/ ἄστρα τε λαμπετόωντα, τὰ τ’ οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται (p. 106 Evelyn-White [LCL]) (Afterwards Erigeneia bore the star Eosphoros and the shining stars with which heaven is crowned.) The identification of the crown with the zodiac is explicit in a later astrological text: ...τῷ κεκοσμημένῳ στεφάνῳ, λέγω δὴ τὰ δώδεκα ζῳδία (CCAG 5.2, 134.4); in the preface to this text (p. 130–31) Cumont dates it to the Byzantine period, though Bidez claims that one can discern “astrologiae formam qualis Romana aetate praevalerat.”
 27. “Regina caeli” is the term used in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.2 (p. 267.4 Helm) by Lucius to address the goddess who turns out to be Isis. Isis’ sovereignty over fate is then affirmed in 11.6, since she is able to prolong Lucius’ life beyond its allotted span (p. 270.23–271.6 Helm). Her rule over the stars is also mentioned in aretologies from Cyme and from Ios which read “I show the way for the stars, I arrange the course of sun and moon” (Ἐγὼ ἄστρον ὁδοὺς ἔδειξα, Ἐγὼ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης

πορείαν συνεταξάμην [p. 18.13–14 Peek]; the version from Ios, identical except that the last word is συνέταξα, is on p. 19.10–11 Peek). See also the Isiac aretology from Andros, where Isis says “I give light to the star-bearers...and I direct the burning, bright-eyed sun, the leader of the circle, from pole to pole”(Ἀστροφόροις λάμπω ... καὶ πυροέντων Ἄελιον πώλων ἀγήτορα φαίνοπα κύκλων ἐς πόλον εἰθύνεσκον [p. 26.23, 30–32 Peek]).

28. In Greek ἀστήρ usually refers to a single star, and ἄστρον to either a star or a constellation. Boll emphasizes this at length in “Der Stern der Weisen,” 40–43; however, in *Offenbarung*, 99 he recognized that in practice the usages were often mixed, of which an example is στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα in Rev 12.1.
29. *Marriage of Mercury and Philology* 1.75: “Iuno...erat illi in circulum ducta fulgens corona, quae duodecim flammis ignitorum lapidum fulgorabat” (p. 34.5–9 Dick). Martianus’ ensuing description of the correspondences of these jewels with the signs and the seasons is summarized in Boll, *Offenbarung*, 40 n2. A more mundane parallel is the description by Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of the Philosophers* 6.102) of the philosopher Menedemos as wearing “an Arcadian hat on his head with the twelve στοιχεῖα woven on it” (πίλος Ἀρκαδικὸς ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἔχων ἐνυφασμένα τὰ δώδεκα στοιχεῖα [p. 106 Hicks]).
30. H. Gundel, s.v. “Zodiakos” RE 10A, 628, no. 49 (Jupiter); 629, no. 51 (Heracles); 625–26 no. 42, 44, 44a (Helios wearing a balteus with zodiac); 649, no. 129 (mosaic with Sol on quadriga). Jupiter was often portrayed surrounded by the zodiac on coins: see *ibid.*, 668–70, and A.B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1914), vol. 1, 752–53. A mosaic from Sentinum depicts a young man encircled by a zodiac (see the photograph in Joscelyn Godwin, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* [London, 1981], 45, plate 8); the young man may be Sol (Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, vol. 2, 419). Godwin claims that the mosaic derives from a “Mithraic temple,” but in the view of Cumont (*ibid.*, 257), followed by Vermaseren (CIMRM 686), it came rather from a Serapeum.
31. Konrad Wernicke, “Pan 15) Pan im Tierkreis,” in W.H. Roscher, ed. *Ausführliches Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, vol. 3/1 (Leipzig, 1897–1902), 1467–68 (Pan “als Personifikation des Weltalls, als der Allgott”).
32. Godwin, *Mystery Religions*, 168, plate 139 (Dionysus and Ariadne); Gundel, “Zodiakos,” 632, no. 59 (Helios and Selene); *ibid.*, 669 no. 188 (coin with Helios and Selene).
33. Cf. coinage with Constantine holding the zodiac (Gundel, “Zodiakos,” 666–67).

34. Gundel, "Zodiakos," 649, no. 131. Other synagogue mosaics are discussed in Lester J. Ness, "Astrology and Judaism in Late Antiquity," *The Ancient World* 26 (1995): 126–133. See also Charlesworth, "Jewish Astrology," 193–198, Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Period," ANRW 2.20.2, 940-947, and Lee I Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven, 2000), 572–75 et passim, with reproductions of the most important mosaics on p. 202 (fig.21), 448 (fig. 84), and 574 (fig. 92). On a possible horoscopic use of the zodiac in the synagogue at Sepphoris see Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, 2001), 258–259. For astral symbolism in ancient Judaism see Gen 37.9, where Joseph dreams that the sun, moon and 11 stars bow down to the ground before him. As well, there are "twelve rays" (δώδεκα ἀκτίνες) under the feet of Judah in *Testament of Naphtali* 5.4 (p. 119 de Jonge); the latter is part of a larger passage (5.3–6) featuring astrological imagery (Levi seizes the sun, Judah the moon; Levi becomes like the sun, Judah like the moon; a bull appears with eagle's wings on its back) which is comparable to that in Revelation (p. 812 trans. Kee [OTP]).
35. Gundel, "Zodiakos," 625, no. 41 and 642–44, no. 92-113; Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic* (Cambridge, 1989), 28. She was also associated with the moon goddess Selene (Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* [Missoula, 1976], 71).
36. Gundel, "Zodiakos," 670 no. 195.1 (a coin from Ptolemais).
37. Gundel, "Zodiakos," 628–29 no. 50; Godwin, *Mystery Religions*, 113, plate 75 suggests the goddess in the zodiac is Cybele; Nelson Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins* (New York, 1965), 108–10 plates 46, 48, and p.396 sees her as Tyche-Atargatis.
38. Stephen J. Patterson, "A Note on an Argive Votive Relief of Selene," *HTR* 78 (1985): 439–43; Patterson (p. 442) describes the woman's crown of stars in Rev 12.1 as "a slightly depaganized version of the zodiac which encircles Selene" on the Argive stele, and he writes (p. 443) that both the figure of Selene on the Argive stele and the woman of Rev 12 "provide a graphic representation of the universal Queen of Heaven."
39. Gundel, "Zodiakos," 662, no. 166.4 and 166.8.
40. *Ibid.*, 670, no. 195 (coin); 676–77, no. 213 (gem).
41. Patterson, "Note," 440. Patterson associates this "universalizing" of the deity with an "emerging interest in monotheism" in the second century C.E., but see the caveats regarding the use of the notion of monotheism in Greco-Roman religion expressed

by Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, 1981), 83–94 and Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 34–35.

42. Note also the seven stars surrounding Selene on the Argive stele (Patterson, “Note”).
43. H.J.W. Drijvers, *The Religion of Palmyra* (Leiden, 1976), 9 and plate II. The temple dates from the first century C.E.
44. The moon beneath the woman’s feet may be merely a mundane astrological reference, i.e. that the sun is in Virgo and that Virgo rules over a month (Farrer, *Revelation*, 141).
45. For example, the Pyramid texts describe the voyage of the sun-god Re across the heavens in the barque of the sun (Leonard H. Lesko, “Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmology,” in Byron E. Shafer, ed., *Religion in Ancient Egypt* [Ithaca, NY, 1991], 118–19).
46. *Offenbarung*, 100: “Wenn die grosse Scheibe der Sonne in ein bestimmtes Bild des Tierkreises tritt, so überzieht sie es mit ihren Strahlen und wird sein lichtiges Gewand.” The same image is applied to Yahweh in Ps 104.2.
47. *Offenbarung*, 100; for the text, see p. 267.2–268.2 Helm: paulatim toto corpore perucidum simulacrum...ante me constitisse visum est.
48. stellae dispersae coruscabant earumque media semenstris luna flammeos spirabat ignes (p. 268.17–19 Helm). J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Isis-Book* (Leiden, 1975), 130–32 cites other examples of Isiac dress with the stars and moon; because such representations always depict a half-moon Griffiths translates “semenstris” as “half-moon” rather than “full moon.” References to clothing with depictions of the zodiac are collected in Gundel, “Zodiakos,” 603–04.
49. p. 286.24 Helm. The subordination of the sun to Isis is much more pronounced in the Egyptian sources referred to in Griffiths’ comments on this passage (*Isis-Book*, 322).
50. Thus Boll’s complex explanation in *Offenbarung*, 100 (“...dass die Sonne wie der Mond durch den Tierkreis laufen und somit abwechselnd in jedem Monat einem der Tierkreisbilder ihr schimmerndes Kleid geben....”) is more relevant to the portrayal of Isis in *Metamorphoses* 11.3–4 than to the woman in Rev 12.1.
51. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 100 and n1. Lesko, “Cosmogonies,” 118 argues that the ancient Egyptians actually conceived of the sun not as a disc but a sphere suitable for divine

travel across the sky.

52. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 103.
53. *Ibid.* (It presupposes a learned education neither awith the writer nor the readers: a person knew the twelve signs of the zodiac and the most important constellations of the sky as well as the twelve months are known today. He can have reckoned on what for a reader would also be the true, no less advanced, indeed childish cosmology, which occupies so much space in the book of Enoch and other apocalypses!)
54. J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff, 1970), 371–73.
55. Ps-Eratosthenes, *Catasterisms* 9 says that there are many ways that people understand Parthenos (i.e. Virgo): some say she is Demeter because she has an ear of corn (οἱ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὴν φασιν εἶναι Δήμητρα διὰ τὸ ἔχειν στάχυν), but this is immediately followed by those who view her as Isis (οἱ δὲ Ἰσιν) (p. 84.10–12 Robert). This motif was also appropriated in Christian usage: Boll cites a portrayal of Mary and her child with ears of corn (*Offenbarung*, 115 n1).
56. *Sphaera* (Leipzig, 1903), 211. He adds “Diese Ähren sagen genugsam, dass hier die als Jungfrau im Tierkreis versternte Isis abgebildet ist....”
57. τῷ μὲν πρώτῳ δεκανῶ παρανατέλλει θεά τις ἐπὶ θρόνου καθεζομένη καὶ τρέφουσα παιδίον, ἣν τινες λέγουσι τὴν ἐν ἀτρίῳ θεὰν Ἰσιν τρέφουσαν τὸν Ὠρον (Boll, *Sphaera*, 210; *Offenbarung*, 109–10). Since it marked the beginning of the year, Sothis/Sirius was the first decan of the sign of Cancer (Bouché-Leclercq, 226); as we have seen, this star had been long associated with Isis. On ἀτρίον as “temple,” see Boll, *Sphaera*, 211–12. A sixth century Persian translation of the Teucros passage by Abu Ma’sar adds the two ears of corn that are characteristic of Virgo (since Spica is the brightest star of Virgo); moreover, it also adds that some people call the child Jesus (Boll, *Offenbarung*, 115).
58. p. 267.6 Helm.
59. Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, 116.
60. John Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 1970), 215.
61. Boll, *Sphaera*, 216.
62. καὶ ὄφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων μέγας πυρρὸς ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα. καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ οὐρεῖ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν. Καὶ ὁ

δράκων ἔστηκεν ἐνώπιον τῆς γυναικὸς....

63. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 101. The use of the same verb in 12.18 (the dragon standing on the seashore) is of course entirely different; there is no textual reason for Boll's doubt regarding ἑστάθη here (*ibid.*, 107).
64. *Offenbarung*, 101n4 (it completely hangs in the air).
65. ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὄλην....; cf. Rev 20.2.
66. καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ δράκων ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς....
67. p. 131–32 Marcovich.
68. Cf. the frequent opposition between God and a dragon (identified as Rahab, Leviathan, Behemoth, etc.) in the Hebrew Bible; the passages are listed in Charles, *Revelation*, 317–18. Such “combat myths” between two deities, one of which is usually a monster or dragon, were widespread in ancient Mediterranean cultures: for a discussion of such myths as the background to Rev 12 see Collins, *Combat Myth*, 57–100. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 114 describes the myth of Rev 12 as “der Mythus des jungen, über die Verfolgung des dunklen Feindes triumphierenden Lichtgottes.”
69. Cf. the identification of the constellation of the dragon in the Persian zodiac as a crocodile (Boll, *Sphaera*, 327). The crocodile was connected with Typhon according to Plutarch, *De Iside* 50.
70. Boll, *Sphaera*, 163; *Offenbarung*, 110–11.
71. *Sphaera*, 162. In Plutarch's *De Iside* 21 the Bear is said to be Typhon's “soul,” just as the Dog Star/Sothis is the “soul” of Isis; according to Griffiths' comment on this text (p. 373), the equation of Seth and the Great Bear was well established in ancient Egypt. Boll suggests that a comet which appeared at some point in Ursa Major was named Typhon (*Sphaera*, 164).
72. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 102. According to Vettius Valens, *Anthologies* 1.2, Hydra's head is at the claws of Cancer and its tail is at the claws of Scorpio (p. 9.21–23 Pingree). A scholium on Aratus' *Phaenomena* 443 states that Hydra contains three signs, Cancer, Leo and Virgo; another that Hydra's head (ἡ κεφαλὴ) is in Cancer, its middle (τὸ μέσον) in Leo, its last part (τὰ τελευταῖα) in Virgo and its tail ought to be over the head of Centaurus so that its end is under Libra (ἡ δὲ οὐρὰ αὐτῆς ὑπὲρ τὴν κεφαλὴν ὀφείλει εἶναι τοῦ Κενταύρου, ἵνα καὶ ὑπὸ τὰς Χηλᾶς ἦ τὸ τέλος αὐτῆς) (p. 280.10–

- 281.10 Martin). Cf. the image of the dragon bearing six of the zodiacal signs on its back in CCAG 5/2, 134.4–5; similarly, the dragon is said to be 180 degrees long (six signs or one half of the zodiacal circle) in a work by the seventh century C.E. Syrian bishop Severus Sebokt (F. Nau, “La Cosmographie au VIIe Siècle chez les Syriens,” *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien*, 2e série, 15 [1910]: 254).
73. As in the beast with 10 horns, with another growing alongside and three being plucked out, in Dan 7.7–8, 24, or the beast with seven heads, ten diadems and ten horns in Rev 13.1.
74. See Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, vol. 1, 202.
75. p. 190.19–36 Robert (with parallels from scholia on Germanicus and from Hyginus); Boll, *Offenbarung*, 102. Ovid’s version of the myth of the Snake, Raven and Cup in *Fasti* 2.243–66 mentions that the three were catasterized together, as also does Ps-Eratosthenes (p. 190.4–7 Robert).
76. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 103–4. In Revelation, see 6.13, 8.10, 9.1; according to Farrer (*Revelation*, 71) the angel of the church at Ephesus is addressed as a fallen star in Rev 2.5 (“Remember then from what you have fallen”).
77. It is also presumably evident in Seneca’s description of the fall of the stars in *Thyestes* 827–74; with its detailed listing of the constellations, the latter passage is remarkably similar to Sibylline Oracles 5.512–31 (cited below).
78. As Boll notes it is for this reason that the identification of the woman and the dragon is more than a matter “einer belehrenden, aber sachlich belanglosen Analogie” (*Offenbarung*, 10–06).
79. καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα, καὶ κράζει ὠδίνουσα καὶ βασιανιζομένη τεκεῖν.
80. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 104–05. Charles, *Revelation*, 319 incorrectly claims that the woman gives birth on the earth.
81. Καὶ ὁ δράκων ἔστηκεν ἐνώπιον τῆς γυναικὸς τῆς μελλούσης τεκεῖν, ἵνα ὅταν τέκη τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς καταφάγη. καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱὸν ἄρσεν, ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. καὶ ἠρπάσθη τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἔφυγεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, ὅπου ἔχει ἐκεῖ τόπον ἡτομασμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ἐκεῖ τρέφωσιν αὐτὴν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἐξήκοντα. Καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Μιχαὴλ καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ τοῦ πλεμῆσαι μετὰ τοῦ δράκοντος, καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπολέμησεν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν οὐδὲ τόπος εὐρέθη αὐτῶν ἐπὶ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ... εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ

ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐβλήθησαν.

82. trans Collins, vol. 1, p. 405 (OTP).
83. See also 2 Maccabees 5.2–4; Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.5.3. A later astrological text (CCAG 5/2, 134.11–17) portrays the planets falling in all directions as they flee before the constellation Draco. The mythical motif of a fall from heaven is evident in the story of Hephaistos (*Iliad* 1.590–94). On Satan's fall from heaven see also Jn 12.31 and Lk 10.18–19 (which features imagery of snakes as well as scorpions).
84. *Astronomica* 2.238; at 4.202 he claims that those born under her will not be “fecundus,” adding “quid mirum in virgine?”
85. Note Cicero's discussion of the various equivalencies of Venus and Minerva in *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.59 and the other texts cited in Pease's ed., p. 1125–31.
86. *Astraea* (London, 1975), 33.
87. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 6.4 (Juno addressed as the virgin Dea Caelestis, worshipped at Carthage).
88. [Franz] Cumont, s.v. “Caelestis,” RE 3/1, 1249–50. An inscription from North Africa (CIL 8.9796) is dedicated to the Great Virgin-Goddess Caelestis. According to Cumont, “L'origine de cette conception contradictoire du caractère de la Virgo Caelestis repose sur la très ancienne croyance des astrologues orientaux que la même déesse se manifestait dans la planète Vénus, le signe de la Vierge et l'étoile Sirius” (“Le Natalis Invicti,” *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* [1911]: 296n4); this view of Isis as Venus was Egyptian, and came to be replaced by the Greco-Roman identification of Venus with Juno (Bouché-Leclercq, 99 n2). Augustine sarcastically compares the fact that the morning star was attributed to Juno as well as Venus with the famous competition for the golden apple in the story of the judgment of Paris (*City of God* 7.15).
89. CIL 7.759 is an inscription to Virgo along with Caelestis, Magna Mater, Ceres and Atargatis; see Yates, *Astraea*, 34.
90. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 105. Hephaestion of Thebes, *Apotelesmatica* 1.24 (vol.1, p.75.27–76.5 Pingree) refers to a comet Ilithyia; due to its name, Boll suggests it may have appeared in Virgo (*Offenbarung*, 105n1). Boll (*ibid.*, 109) also emphasizes the syncretistic aspect of Virgo, noting that “die Παρθένος am Himmel” was associated “mit so vielen Gottheiten (Dike, Demeter, Magna Mater, Eileithyia, Tyche, Pax, Atargatis oder Dea Syria, Iuno [Venus] caelestis der Karthager).” On Isis as Ilithyia

see Boll, *Sphaera*, 210, 212; the two are the objects of prayer together in Ovid, *Amores* 2.13.

91. *Offenbarung*, 111 (it is all one). An astronomical text in which Virgo is identified with Isis and other goddesses is Avienus, *Phaenomena* 273–92; Boll, *Offenbarung*, 109n6 also refers to a “für den Synkretismus ausserordentlich interessante” inscription (CIL 7.759) which reads “Virgo...eadem Mater divum, Pax, Virtus, Ceres, dea Syria, lance vitam et iura pensitans. in caelo visum Syria sidus edidit Libyae colendum....” The Greco-Roman image of Isis as the goddess of many names (according to Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 53 [p. 202.25 Griffiths] she was called $\mu\upsilon\pi\acute{\omega}\nu\upsilon\mu\omicron$) is evident in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.2 where the Queen of Heaven (Regina caeli), equated with Ceres, Venus, Diana and Proserpina, is addressed “quoquo nomine, quoquo ritu, quaquafacie te fas est invocare” (p. 267.15–16 Helm), and 11.5 where the goddess is identified with Pessinuntia (i.e. Magna Mater), Minerva, Venus, Diana Dictynna, Proserpina, Ceres, Juno, Bellona, Hecate and Rhamnusia (a form of Nemesis)—though her “true name” is Queen Isis (p. 269.14–270.2 Helm). See the discussion of these passages in Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, 114–119, 145–54; on the many identifications of Isis, see R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca, 1971), 111–129. The syncretism of Greco-Roman Isiac worship is also evident in other Isis aretalogies; for example, the aretalogy in POxy 1380 has Isis identified with over 50 deities in various locales.
92. Veneris virginis—si tamen Veneri placuit aliquando virginitas (p. 45.3–4 Ziegler).
93. Si enim Vesta Venus est, quo modo ei rite virgines a Veneris operibus abstinendo servierunt? An Veneres duae sunt, una virgo, altera mulier? An potius tres, una virginum, quae etiam Vesta est, alia coniugarum, alia meretricum? Cui etiam Phoenices donum dabant de prostitutione filiarum, antequam eas iungerent viris. Quae illarum est matrona Vulcani? Non utique virgo, quoniam habet maritum. Absit autem ut meretrix, ne filio Iunonis et cooperario Minervae facere videamur iniuriam. Ergo haec ad coniugatas intellegitur pertinere: sed eam nolumus imitentur in eo quod fecit illa cum Marte (CCL 47, 107.60–70).
94. Quam totam vanitatem aboleri et extinguere utique ab illo oportuit, qui natus est virgine (*ibid.*, 1.56–57).
95. Brown, *Messiah*, 518 and n2. In the *Instructor* 1.42.1, Clement of Alexandria writes that Mary “is at once virgin and mother; as a virgin she is undefiled, as a mother she is loving” ($\mu\alpha\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ δὲ ἅμα καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν, ἀκήρατος μὲν ὡς παρθένος, ἀγαπητικὴ δὲ ὡς μήτηρ [p.115.14–15 Stählin]).
96. It is possible to see further parallels between the two narratives as well. The connec-

tion between Christ's victory and resurrection is paralleled by Plutarch's reference at the beginning of *De Iside* 19 to the appearance of Osiris from the underworld (to train Horus for battle against Typhon): when Osiris asks what is the most useful animal when going out to battle, Horus replies "the horse," which is reminiscent of the image of Christ on a white horse in Rev 19.11. As well, the temporary release of the dragon for 1000 years following his defeat (Rev 20.3) is comparable to the recurrence of the drama of Typhon's battle against Isis and Horus in the annual festivals of the Isiac cult: both of these evoke the tenacity of the struggle against evil.

97. p. 146.8–11 Griffiths; on Thoueris, see Griffiths' comments in *ibid.*, 347–48.
98. Also briefly in Vergil, *Georgics* 2.474 (Iustitia excedens terris), and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.149–50 (where the goddess is named Astraea). Dike was identified with the constellation of the Virgin already in Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 256.
99. Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;/ magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo./ iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna./ iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto./ tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum/ desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,/ casta fave Lucina; tuus iam regnat Apollo (p. 11 Clausen; trans. Day Lewis). The name Lucina was applied to Diana and Juno in the context of childbirth (Cicero, *Nature of the Gods* 2.68). The return of Virgo at the destruction of the world (understood in the Stoic sense of periodic renewal) is also referred to in Seneca, *Thyestes* 855, "cadet in terras Virgo relictas" (vol. 2, p. 160 Miller [LCL]).
100. "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλος κομήτης ... ὃς καλεῖται Εἰληθυίας ... σημαίνει δὲ ἀνθρώπων κατακοπὰς καὶ μεταβολὴν πραγμάτων ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον...(vol. 1, p. 75.27–76.5 Pingree). In light of this text Boll asks whether the references to Virgo and Lucina (the goddess of childbirth) in Vergil's fourth Eclogue (v. 6, 10) might not be more closely connected than scholars have traditionally thought (*Offenbarung*, 105n1).
101. For the date, see T. D. Barnes, "Constantine's Speech to the Assembly of the Saints: Place and Date of Delivery," *JTS* n.s. 52 (2001): 26–36. Constantine seems to have based his comments on the Latin original of the poem (Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 75). Mary's perpetual virginity is also affirmed in this section of the speech.
102. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 7.24. On the difference in approach of Lactantius and Constantine to Vergil's fourth Eclogue see Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry* (Berkeley, 1998), 24–26.
103. Quid vobis inanem iustitiam depingitis et optatis cadere de caelo tamquam in aliquo simulacro figuratam? (p. 162 Monat [SC 204]). On Lactantius' use of Vergil's fourth

- Eclogue elsewhere see Pierre Courcelle, “Les Exégèses Chrétiennes de la Quatrième Éclogue,” REA 59 (1957): 294–95.
104. Yates, *Astraea*, 35.
105. καὶ ἐδόθησαν τῇ γυναικὶ αἱ δύο πτέρυγες τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, ἵνα πέτηται εἰς τὴν ἔρημον εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς, ὅπου τρέφεται ἐκεῖ καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἡμῖς καιροῦ ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ ὄφραως.
106. *Offenbarung*, 113. See the drawing of Virgo in Bouché-Leclercq, 140.
107. “Sie macht Luft mit ihren Federn/ Und erzeugt Wind mit ihren Flügeln” is the translation of Heinrich Brugsch, *Religion und Mythologie der Alten Aegypter*, zweite Ausgabe (Leipzig, 1891), 398.91–92.
108. Ex 19.4; Deut 32.11–13; Is 40.31; 1 Enoch 96.2; Testament of Moses 10.8–9 (which parallels Israel rising on the necks and wings of an eagle with being fixed in the heaven of the stars).
109. *Offenbarung*, 113. In the entry for this constellation Ps-Eratosthenes, *Catasterisms* 30 refers to the eagle which carried Ganymede up to Zeus (p. 156.1–3 Robert); Zeus himself is portrayed sitting on the eagle in manuscripts of Aratus (Boll, *Offenbarung*, 113n5; an example is given in *Sphaera*, 115). Within Revelation, a parallel image to the eagle bearing the woman is the horse bearing Christ (Rev 19.11); astrologically, the horse corresponds to Pegasus (i.e. the constellation Equus) which bore Bellerophon (identified with the constellation Heniochus/Auriga, the Charioteer [cf. Manilius, *Astronomica* 5.97–100]).
110. As we have seen, Boll equates the eagle of Revelation 4.6b–7 with the constellation Pegasus. Regarding Rev 8.13, he claims that since in ancient Mesopotamian cosmology Pegasus had been located at the head of the “zodiac of the equator” in the “thema mundi” (i.e. the horoscope at the beginning of the universe) Rev 8.13 can be read as an eschatological projection of the constellation’s position at creation (*Offenbarung*, 38; see also Malina, *Revelation*, 100).
111. τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. Cf. 1 Jn 3.9: Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει. Cf. the Pauline notion of the heavenly Jerusalem as the “mother” of the church in Gal 4.26.
112. Farrer’s view of the woman as representing the female figures of the Biblical salva-

tion history is a version of this type of approach (*Revelation*, 142–43).

113. καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ὄφις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ὀπίσω τῆς γυναικὸς ὕδωρ ὡς ποταμόν, ἵνα αὐτὴν ποταμοφόρητον ποιήσῃ. καὶ ἐβοήθησεν ἡ γῆ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἤνοιξεν ἡ γῆ τὸ στόμα αὐτῆς καὶ κατέπιεν τὸν ποταμόν ὃν ἔβαλεν ὁ δράκων ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ.
114. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 109.
115. p. 190.19–22 Robert.
116. *Offenbarung*, 109n3.
117. *Ibid.*, 116.
118. *Ibid.*, 119 and n1.
119. *Ibid.*, 119, 121.
120. διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουηλ (p. 147 Ziegler). Cf. the term σημεῖον in Rev 12.1.
121. Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, οὐρανόυ στάχυος ἀθέριστος ἄρουρα (PG 61, 737). For other examples of the identification of Mary with Virgo see W. Gundel, s.v. “Parthenos,” RE 18/4, 1950.20–28.
122. Charles, *Revelation*, 299–300, 308–10.
123. ἐγὼ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὃν καὶ ἐσόμενον (p. 130.9–10 Griffiths); the inscription continues with a sexual reference “and no mortal has ever lifted my mantle” (καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδεὶς πω θνητὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν). Another version of the inscription is recorded in Proclus’ commentary on the *Timaeus* 21E: τὰ ὄντα καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ τὰ γεγονότα ἐγὼ εἰμι· τὸν ἐμὸν χιτῶνα οὐδεὶς ἀπεκάλυψεν, and adds “the fruit which I bore became [the] sun” (ὃν ἐγὼ καρπὸν ἔτεκον, ἥλιος ἐγένετο [vol. 1, p. 98.19 Diehl]). The latter phrase in Proclus’ version is particularly comparable to the celestial woman who gives birth in Rev 12. Cf. the mention of “Isis, who they say is the origin of the world from whom all sprang and through whom all exist” (περὶ τῆς Ἰσιδος, ἣν φύσιν αἰῶνος, ἐξ ἧς πάντες ἔφυσαν καὶ δι’ ἧς πάντες εἰσίν, λέγουσιν....) in Athenagoras, *Legation* 22.8 (p. 52 Schoedel). The notion of the goddess as ruler of time is also found in Isis’ self predication as “elementorum omnium domina, saeculorum progenies initialis” in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.5 (p. 269.10 Helm [= p. 74 Griffiths]). Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* 1.11.5 refers to the rule of Isis and Osiris together over the seasons and nature.

124. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 114, 122. See Cumont's analysis of the development of a "solar theology" in *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, 92–110.
125. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann's acknowledgement of the need for an historical "dass" (i.e. the "that" of Jesus' historicity) as a basic minimum to anchor the Christ of faith within history (Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville, ed. and trans. *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* [New York, 1964], 20, 25; cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel [New York, 1955], vol. 2, 66).
126. Boll, *Offenbarung*, 123.

16. Bardaisan

Another example of early Christian incorporation of astrology is evident in the thought of Bardaisan of Edessa (154–222/3 C.E.), who has been described as “the first important astrologer within the wider sphere of Christianity.”¹ As we have seen, Bardaisan was an opponent of astrological fatalism; his teachings as recorded in the *Book of the Laws of Countries* feature extensive use of the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά against astrological fatalism as well as polemic against astrological geography. Nevertheless, Bardaisan did not reject astrology completely: in a unique and original combination of seemingly disparate currents of thought Bardaisan affirmed the influence of astrological fate, free will, and physical nature.

Little is known of Bardaisan’s life and career. During his early life he seems to have had some connection to the royal court of Osrhoene, and following the Roman defeat of Edessa in 216 he went into exile in Armenia, where he died.² That Bardaisan came to identify himself as a Christian at some point is evident from his statement referring to “the new people of us Christians.”³ Bardaisan was a prolific writer of hymns and other works in Syriac, although none of his writings have survived. Nevertheless, we have access to his thought from the *Book of the Laws of Countries* which, though written by his student Philippus, contains a record of Bardaisan’s teachings in dialogue form.

From the *Book of the Laws of Countries* it is clear that while Bardaisan was interested in theological and cosmological matters the central concerns of his thought were anthropological.⁴ Amand correctly points out that Bardaisan’s thought is characterized by the precise demarcation of the domains of nature, fate and freedom in human experience.⁵ On the one hand Bardaisan affirms human freedom of the will with regard to moral action. Free will is God’s gift which distinguishes humans (and the angels) from the rest of nature. Above all, Bardaisan emphasizes human free will as the basis of moral responsibility: it is because of free will that humans are able to fulfill the two fundamental aspects of morality, i.e. (negatively) to keep clear of all that is evil and (positively) to perform that which is good.⁶

Bardaisan also distinguishes between the natural constitution of humans and their freedom of the will. Under the purview of our natural constitution lie birth, growing to adulthood, having children, eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, old age and death. These are of course aspects of natural life which human beings also share with the animals; it is because of their natural con-

stitution that carnivores eat no grass while herbivores do not eat meat.⁷ However, unlike animals human beings also possess free will.

...in matters pertaining to their body they keep to their natural constitution like the animals do; as regards matters of their mind, however, they do what they will as free beings disposing of themselves and as God's image.⁸

Immediately following these words, in the *Book of the Laws of Countries* Bardaisan then reasserts his concern to connect free will with moral responsibility: he states that it is only because of free will that people are able to improve their moral behaviour, to avoid attributing the cause of evil deeds to God, and to take full responsibility for their actions.⁹

At this point in the text Bardaisan's student interlocutors introduce the topic of fate, saying: "Others aver that people are led by the decree of Fate, sometimes ill, sometimes well." In his reply to this, Bardaisan brings up astrology, a natural concomitant of belief in fate in antiquity: "I know there are people called Chaldeans, and others, who love the knowledge of this art, as I once cherished it also."¹⁰ There is no reason to doubt this statement regarding Bardaisan's practice of astrology.¹¹ Astrology was part of traditional Syrian religion, such as the cult of Hadad and Atargatis, the primary gods worshipped at Hieapolis in Syria whose cult also spread to Edessa.¹² The sun, moon, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter were worshipped at Edessa and nearby Harran.¹³ Bardaisan also says that he is personally familiar with "the books of the Babylonian Chaldaeans" and "the books of the Egyptians," and that in his view "the [astrological] doctrine of both countries is the same."¹⁴ Therefore, the immediate mention of astrology in connection with the topic of fate reflects not only the common cultural associations of antiquity but also Bardaisan's own experience with the practice of astrology.¹⁵ It is likely that he had even written on the topic: immediately following his statement that he "once cherished" astrology, he adds that "in another place" he had expressed his views regarding those who seek to know, and think they can attain, things the general populace does not know—which at this point in the context of the *Book of the Laws of Countries* is clearly a reference to astrologers.¹⁶ Considering the fluidity of the religious context of Edessa¹⁷ it is not necessary to see Bardaisan's adherence to astrology and to Christianity as mutually exclusive. Thus F. Stanley Jones has recently suggested that "it should be admitted as perhaps more than possible that astrology was part of the Christian heritage as it reached Bardaisan," and that the real development in Bardaisan's own

views was from a completely fatalistic form of astrology to the more modified teaching evident in the *Book of the Laws of Countries*.¹⁸

Aber es ist nicht angängig...eine allgemeine Ablehnung der Astrologie und der aus ihr hergeleiteten philosophischen Bestimmung des Sternenzwanges gegenüber einer früheren Periode der Astrologie-Freundlichkeit bei Bardesanes herzuleiten. Wenn er gegen die Chaldäer streitet, so tut er es nur in dem schon bezeichneten Sinne, so nämlich, dass er ihre Betrachtungsweise einschränkt, nicht im Sinne grundsätzlicher Ablehnung. Die unbedingte Astrologiefeindschaft der Kirche weist er ausdrücklich ab. ...ist Bardesanes zwar ein Kritiker der Astrologie, aber nicht ihr Gegner geworden.¹⁹

Indeed, as we shall see Bardaisan was able to transcend the common association of astrology with an absolute form of fatalism.

In the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, Bardaisan outlines three different perspectives regarding fate and free will.²⁰ First is the view of the astrologers themselves:

...man's soul strives to know something the general populace does not know. And these men think they can attain it. Everything in which they fail and everything good they do, everything that befalls them of riches and poverty, disease, health and physical injury, comes to them through the guidance of those stars which are called the Seven, and they are led by them.²¹

For Bardaisan, such traditional astrology involves submission to a thoroughgoing fatalism exerted by means of the seven planets. In contrast to this view of the astrologers Bardaisan next mentions those who completely reject the existence of fate altogether:

others maintain that this art is an imposture of the Chaldaeans, or even that Fate does not exist at all but that it is an empty name, and that all things, great and small, lie in the hands of man, and that physical injuries and defects eventuate and come to him by chance.²²

Dihle suggests that Bardaisan may be referring to Epicureanism here.²³ Then Bardaisan raises a third contrasting position which affirms human free will and responsibility while attributing the ills of life to divine punishment. Such a view, which corresponds to that of traditional Judaism and Christianity, is also what the reader expects Bardaisan himself to uphold—especially since he has already declared his belief in human free will and moral responsibility earlier in the text.

Yet in fact Bardaisan's own view concerning fate, presented at this point in the dialogue, comes as a surprise to the reader.

Now to me, in so far as I can judge, these three ways of regarding the matter seem to be partly right and partly wrong.... [T]hey are wrong because the wisdom of God surpasses them, the wisdom that established worlds, created man, gave the Guiding Signs their fixed order and gave all things the power due to each. Now I maintain that this power is in the possession of God, the angels, the Rulers, the Guiding Signs, the elements, mankind and the animals. Yet to all these orders I have named power is not given over everything. For he who has power over everything is One. But over some things they have power, and over others not.... So there exists something which the Chaldaeans call Fate.²⁴

By the "Rulers" and the "Guiding Signs" Bardaisan means the planets and the fixed stars.²⁵ Bardaisan's own view of the relation of divine power to that of the heavenly bodies and to human free will involves a nuanced delimitation of their respective domains. He holds that only God has power over everything; however, under that divine power there is a level of power accorded to fate (exercised through the planets and the fixed stars)²⁶ as well as freedom of the human will (which operates on the level of moral choice).²⁷ Bardaisan's affirmation of astrological fate (albeit in a limited sphere of influence under the ultimate power of God) is the most striking element in his Christian system of thought.²⁸

At this point in the *Book of the Laws of Countries* Bardaisan naturally seeks to offer evidence as proof for his belief in the existence and power of fate. He goes on to cite numerous examples from daily experience in which human desires and choices are frustrated by unexpected events. Not everyone has wealth or power or physical health. Sometimes the rich become poor, and the poor remain poor even though they desire to have wealth. Some people have children but do not bring them up; some bring up their children but may not keep them; as for others, their children bring them disgrace and sorrow. Sometimes people who are wealthy lose their health; others who are healthy are poor against their will. Thus Bardaisan says, "It is evident...that riches, honour, health, sickness, children and everything we covet depend on Fate and that we have no power over these matters."²⁹

At the same time, Bardaisan hastens to clarify the limits of fate's power. As we have seen, he subordinates the power of fate to God; as well, he separates fate from the power of physical nature. According to Bardaisan, it is from the power of nature that people grow and mature physically, have chil-

dren, require food and drink to stay alive, and so on. Then, at the limits of nature the influence of fate is manifested: the occurrence of changes and modifications of these basic natural processes is due to the power of fate.

But when the periods and modes of nature's work are ended, Fate manifests itself in this field and does things of diverse kind. Sometimes it aids and strengthens nature, and sometimes it hinders and impedes it.³⁰

Growing to adulthood derives from nature, but illnesses and physical defects are caused by fate; the procreation of children comes from nature, but it is through fate that children are sometimes deformed, miscarry or die prematurely; bodily health derives from nature, while fate brings hunger and other physical complaints.

Be convinced then, that whenever nature is deflected from her true course, it is Fate that is the cause, because the Rulers and Guiding Signs, from which every change called horoscope is deduced, are in opposition. Those of them called the right-hand ones assist nature and heighten her beauty, when their course is favourable and they take a high position in the sky in the sectors belonging to them. And those of them called the left-hand ones are malefic, and when they occupy a high position, they work against nature.³¹

The connection between fate and the horoscope reflects the view that the spirit and soul descend to the body specifically at the moment of birth.³² For Bardaisan the working of fate is conceived in terms that are clearly astrological: he says that fate is derived from the influence of benefic and malefic planets³³ (in astrology Jupiter, the Moon and Venus were regarded as "benefic" while Mars and Saturn were termed the "malefic" planets) when they occupy the "high position in the sky in the sectors belonging to them" (that is, when one of these planets is located in a zodiacal sign directly overhead at midheaven,³⁴ and at its "term," i.e., the part of the sign allocated to that planet³⁵), as well as from the signs of the zodiac when they are in the aspect of opposition. The terms "right-hand" and "left-hand" refer to signs to the right or left of a given point of the zodiac which affect the influence of a sign in aspect, such as opposition, to another sign.³⁶ It is interesting that Bardaisan does not explicitly identify the benefic planets as Jupiter, the Moon and Venus nor the malefic planets as Mars and Saturn: perhaps such knowledge was deemed obvious.³⁷ Many of the standard astrological associations of the planets (Venus with love, Mars with war, etc.) are also referred to in the latter section

of the *Book of the Laws of Countries* which deals with the νόμια βαρβαρικά,³⁸ moreover, this section also makes frequent mention of the position of the planets vis-à-vis the signs. Jones correctly points out that this latter section of the book is “a trove of astrological information” which “can (and should) be read as presentations of Bardaisan’s positive astrological beliefs.”³⁹

Even though Bardaisan regards morality as the realm of human free will, some of the events which Bardaisan regards as deriving from fate have a decidedly moral quality. Thus he claims that marriage and procreation come from nature, but disgust and divorce, impurity and immorality come from fate; so too “intemperance and unnecessary luxury stem from Fate.”⁴⁰ According to Bardaisan, it is nature which ordains that elders have superiority over young people, the wise over the foolish, strong people over the weak, and those with courage over cowards; the reversal of such norms of social order, however, is caused by fate.⁴¹ It is clear from his attribution of these latter situations to fate that Bardaisan will also have to clearly distinguish between the effects of fate and actions which are caused by free will. And indeed this distinction is the predominant point of the rest of the *Book of the Laws of Countries*:⁴² to demonstrate the power of free will against fate, Bardaisan cites the numerous examples of νόμια βαρβαρικά in the latter half of the work, which I have surveyed earlier.

To sum up, three spheres or domains are delineated in Bardaisan’s thought as expressed in the *Book of the Laws of Countries*:

...it is evident that we men are led in the same way by our natural constitution, in different ways by Fate, but by our liberty each as he will.... It is fitting, then, that these three things, nature, Fate and liberty keep each their own mode of being, until the course is completed and measure and number have been fulfilled. For thus has it been resolved by Him, who ordained what was to be the way of life and the manner of perfection of all creatures, and the condition of all substances and natures.⁴³

While I have emphasized the anthropological focus of Bardaisan’s thought, the eschatological aspect (evident, for example, in the previous quotation) should not be minimized.⁴⁴ For Bardaisan, the human condition of being under the mutual influences of nature and fate, and also possessing free choice at the same time, is temporary. He held that the world had been brought into being through the mixture of the four elements with evil darkness; however, this present condition will end after which a new mixture will come about without

the presence of darkness or evil.⁴⁵ (Amand notes here a “curieuse anticipation” of Origen’s doctrine of apocatastasis.⁴⁶) Paradise, the place of the soul’s origin and the final home to which it returns, also seems to have been identified by Bardaisan with the region of heaven among the fixed stars.⁴⁷ Because of its divine origin, the human spirit is ultimately free.⁴⁸ However, it becomes enmeshed with the soul and the body as it descends into the world through the seven planetary spheres; thus fate (mediated by the planets) as well as nature each affect the spirit so that in this world its freedom is limited.⁴⁹ Adam’s misuse of his spiritual freedom has meant that the soul is unable to ascend once again through the heavenly spheres; however, the coming of Christ has brought salvation, so that the soul can return to its divine origin.⁵⁰ Of course, belief in “die Himmelsreise der Seele,” that the soul or spirit comes under the influence of fate during its descent through the seven planetary spheres to the physical body, was widespread in antiquity.

Bardaisan’s interest in astrology is also referred to in other sources. In his *Hymns Against Heresies* Ephrem Syrus (306–73) attacks the teachings of Bardaisan frequently, alongside Marcionites and Manichaeans. The followers of Bardaisan were still active at Edessa during Ephrem’s lifetime.⁵¹ In Hymn 1.18 Ephrem says that Bardaisan and his followers read and expounded books about the signs of the zodiac rather than the prophets.⁵² In Hymn 6, Ephrem attacks Bardaisan’s view of astrological fate as subordinate to the power of God:

But him who proves to have no power over his own movement
Thou shalt not make out to be lord: he is a servant without feet.
Bardaisan is cunning, who put that Fate under restraint
Through a Fate that is greater, as it describes its course in liberty.
The thraldom of the lower, refutes him with the upper,
Their shadow refutes their body,
For that intent which restricted the lower,
Crippled the unrestricted freedom of the upper.⁵³

Ephrem’s argument here is that Bardaisan’s claim that God assigns the movements of the planets in effect binds and limits God’s own freedom.

The relationship between God and the planets is that of the body and its shadow; one depicts the other; if the shadow is not free, this shows that the body is not free. Ephrem sees in this a restriction of God’s sovereign power.⁵⁴

(Of course, such an argument could be used against the traditional Christian view of creation as well.) In the same hymn, Ephrem also condemns Bardaisan for allowing too much power to fate and nature; here Ephrem's words may imply knowledge of not only Bardaisan's ideas but even the terminology of the *Book of the Laws of Countries*.⁵⁵ In Hymn 51.13, Ephrem writes that Bardaisan has "established seven beings" (the planets), proclaims the zodiac, observes horoscopes, teaches the Seven (planets) and examines times (i.e. hours of birth⁵⁶).

In Hymn 55, Ephrem offers quotations from hymns of Bardaisan which shed light on the astrological aspect of Bardaisan's view of creation. These excerpts elaborate on Bardaisan's view of divine creation in mythological terms as a cosmogony.⁵⁷ They describe a cosmic Father and Mother of Life, identified with the sun and the moon respectively. Through their union the Mother became pregnant "with the mystery of the fish" and bore the Son of Life.⁵⁸ Drijvers notes that the life-giving aspect of the Mother is reminiscent of Atargatis, whose sanctuaries regularly included ponds of sacred fish to symbolize her character as a fertility goddess,⁵⁹ and he suggests that if the Mother derives from Atargatis the Father may represent Hadad, the ancient Semitic sun deity. Bardaisan was likely familiar with the cult of Atargatis and Hadad either at Hierapolis or Edessa.⁶⁰ Thus it is possible to see behind Bardaisan's creation myth archaic Semitic worship of the sun and moon combined with Christian and Biblical ideas of creation. Of course, the "mystery of the fish" also recalls early Christian imagery. According to Drijvers, the descent of the "Son of Life" into the human Jesus corresponds to Bardaisan's docetic christology.⁶¹

Parallels between Bardaisan's views of astrology and fate and aspects of ancient thought have been noted. That Bardaisan was influenced by the Stoic view of fate is plausible, though of course it would be incorrect to call him a Stoic.⁶² There are parallels between Bardaisan's view of the role of the planets and Hermetic cosmology evident in the *Poimandres*.⁶³ Bardaisan's attack on absolute astrological fatalism (i.e. the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά and his polemic against astrological geography) were also paralleled in Greco-Roman, Jewish and early Christian sources as we have seen already. The relationship of Bardaisan to Gnosticism is also discussed by Drijvers, who argues that it is a mistake to speak of Bardaisan as a Gnostic since, among other things, he did not see the heavenly bodies as evil powers.⁶⁴

The disciples of Bardaisan continued his interest in astrology.⁶⁵ Already in the time of Ephrem Syrus it seems that divisions had arisen among Bar-

daisan's followers.⁶⁶ Some of these groups fostered the astrological teachings and emphasis of Bardaisan. For example, there were the Quqites, whose founder, Quq, was apparently a contemporary of Bardaisan: according to the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Barhadbesabba (end of the sixth century) Quq

mixed the doctrine of the Scriptures with the notions of the Chaldean system. They all believe in the Seven and the Twelve. He borrowed various things from...Bardaisan....⁶⁷

The parallel between the astrological teaching of Bardaisan and of the Quqites is also supported by the report of Theodore bar Khonai (end of the eighth century) that the Quqites believed in the union of God and the "Mother of Life" from which were formed "seventy world (Aeons) and twelve rulers."⁶⁸ As well, a catalogue of heresies by Maruta of Maipherkat, a Syriac writer of the mid fourth century, relates the following among the doctrines and practices of the Quqites: "They have invented twelve evangelists with the names of the twelve apostles."⁶⁹ This does not indicate a putative "Gospel of the Twelve (Apostles)" but rather, as Hans Waitz has argued, Maruta's reference is best understood in terms of the Quqites' astrological beliefs, i.e. that they saw a correspondence between the twelve apostles and the twelve rulers in the heavens.⁷⁰ If we follow Waitz's explanation, this latter Quqite doctrine can be associated with both the Biblical allocation of the "Promised Land" to the twelve tribes (and the New Testament view of the twelve apostles as successors to the twelve tribes), and also the teaching of astrological geography which (in one form) held that the earth was divided among the rule of the twelve zodiacal signs.⁷¹

As we have seen, in the *Book of the Laws of Countries* Bardaisan held that fate, operating by means of the planets and zodiacal signs, influences the spirit as it descends to the soul and the soul as it descends to the body,⁷² while Ephrem informs us that Bardaisan identified the Sun and the Moon with the Father and the Mother of life. Some disciples of Bardaisan elaborated on such views with a myth that every thirty days (an obvious reference to the moon's synodic period) the Mother of Life unites with the Father which results in the birth of seven sons/archons, each of which were identified with one of the planets and also held to correspond to an organ of the human body: the brains come from the Sun, the bones from Saturn, the veins from Mercury, the blood from Mars, the flesh from Jupiter, the hair from Venus and the skin from the Moon.⁷³ Moreover, these followers of Bardaisan also connected the life of

Christ with astrology, holding that Christ was born under Bel [i.e. Jupiter], crucified under Mars, buried under Mercury and arose under Jupiter once again.⁷⁴ Bardaisan's astrological focus was maintained among his followers for generations: a Syriac manuscript from the seventh century gives the standard names of the signs of the zodiac as "according to the pupils of Bardaisan,"⁷⁵ while an eighth century writer says that Bardaisan's followers were interested in the calculation of ascensions (ἀναφοραί).⁷⁶

Notes

1. W. and H.-G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 326 (der erste bedeutende Astrologe im weiteren Bereich des Christentums).
2. On what is known of Bardaisan's life and career see Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 217–218.
3. *Book of the Laws of Countries* (p. 59 Drivers). Christians were still a minority in Edessa during Bardaisan's lifetime (Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 2d ed., translated by a team from the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel [Philadelphia, 1971], 33).
4. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 95.
5. Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 244–45.
6. p. 11–19 Drijvers ed. Thus the claim that Bardaisan "taught an astrological fatalism" (s.v. "Edessa," OCD, 3d ed., 505) is strictly speaking inaccurate.
7. p. 23 trans. Drijvers.
8. *Ibid.*, 23–25.
9. *Ibid.*, 25–27.
10. *Ibid.*, 27.
11. For example, there is no reason to think that it was inserted by some pupil who wished to give Bardaisan's views a more "orthodox" cast (Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 83).
12. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 150–51; on p. 188, 190–91 Drijvers discusses the tradition of a connection between Bardaisan and Hierapolis. See also H.J.W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden, 1980), 42 (on Bardaisan and Hierapolis), 26–27, 85–96

(on the cult of Atargatis and Hadad at Hierapolis), and 76–85 (on their cult at Edessa).

13. J.B. Segal, *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford, 1970), 44, 50. Drijvers (*Bardaisan*, 216, 222; "Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica," 193–95) had also noted a parallel based on a cultic site excavated at Sumatar Harabesi, some 60 kilometers southeast of Edessa, but more recently he has revised his interpretation of the worship that was practiced there (*Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, 122–45).
14. p. 39–41 trans. Drijvers. Chaldaea and Egypt were each regarded as the *fons et origo* of astrology. It is uncertain whether the "books of the Egyptians" is a reference to the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (see H.J.W. Drijvers, "Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica," *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux* 21 [1970]: 190–91, repr. *East of Antioch* [London, 1984]).
15. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 83 calls this a "genetic" explanation for the astrological component of Bardaisan's thought in the *Book of the Laws of Countries*.
16. p. 27 trans. Drijvers; F. Stanley Jones, "The Astrological Trajectory in Ancient Syriac-Speaking Christianity (Elchasai, Bardaisan, and Mani)," in Luigi Cirillo and Alois van Tongerloo, ed. *Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale di Studi Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico* (Louvain, 1997), 190. The statement recording Bardaisan's attribution of astrology to Enoch preserved in Theodore bar Khoni's *Liber Scholiorum* may be a quotation from a work of Bardaisan on astrology (*ibid.*). Ephrem Syrus also refers to Bardaisan's writings on the zodiac in *Hymns Against Heresies* 1.18.
17. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, 7; H.J.W. Drijvers, "The Persistence of Pagan Cults and Practices in Christian Syria," *East of Byzantium*, ed. Nina Garsoïan et al. (Washington, 1982), 35–43, repr. *East of Antioch* (London, 1984); Segal, *Edessa*, 41–61.
18. Jones, "Astrological Trajectory," 194.
19. H.H. Schaeder, "Bardesan von Edessa in der Überlieferung der griechischen und der syrischen Kirche," *Studien zur Orientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, hrsg. Carsten Colpe (Darmstadt, 1968), 122. (But it is not feasible...to derive a general rejection of astrology, and the philosophical determination of the compulsion of the stars which derives from it, over against Bardaisan's early period of friendliness toward astrology. When he argues against the Chaldeans he does so only in the sense...that he limits its ways of looking at things, not in the sense of a fundamental rejection. He

explicitly rejects the church's absolute hostility to astrology...it is true Bardaisan criticized astrology but he did not become its opponent.)

20. Cf. Eugnostos the Blessed (Nag Hammadi Codex III, 3) 70.8–71.5: “The wisest among them have speculated about the truth from the ordering of the world. And the speculation has not reached the truth. For the ordering is spoken of in three (different) opinions by all the philosophers (and) hence they do not agree. For some of them say about the world that it was directed by itself. Others, that it is providence (that directs it). Others, that it is fate. But it is none of these. Again, of the three voices I have just mentioned, none is true. For whatever is from itself is an empty life; it is self-made. Providence is foolish. (And) fate is an undiscerning thing” (p. 223 Parrott, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, third, completely revised ed. by James M. Robinson et al. [Leiden/New York, 1988, 1990]). On Bardaisan's relationship to Gnosticism see below at n63.
21. p. 27–29 trans. Drijvers.
22. p. 29 trans. Drijvers.
23. Albrecht Dihle, “Zur Schicksalslehre des Bardesanes,” *Kerygma und Logos: Beiträge zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, hrsg. Adolf Martin Ritter (Göttingen, 1979), 125.
24. p. 29–31 trans. Drijvers.
25. F. Nau, *Bardesane l'Astrologue: Le Livre des Lois des Pays: Texte syriaque et traduction française avec une introduction et de nombreuses notes* (Paris, 1899), 18–19. Cf. the terms διοικητάς τινας ἑπτὰ (seven rulers) in *Poimandres* 1.9 (Nock-Festugière, vol. 1, 9.16–20) and αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ διοικητικαί (ruling powers) in Clement of Alexandria's *Miscellanies* 6.16.148.2 (p. 507.33–508.4 Stählin).
26. Thus Bardaisan defines fate as follows: “For that which is called Fate is really the fixed course determined by God for the Rulers and Guiding Signs” (p. 33 trans. Drijvers).
27. It was this point for which Bardaisan came to be attacked in the Κατὰ Εἰμαρμένης of Diodore of Tarsus in the fourth century. According to Photius, *Bibliotheca* 223 (p. 8, 45–47 Henry), Diodore argued against Bardaisan that the body cannot be under the power of fate because its actions are controlled by the soul, and that neither the giving of the Law through angelic intermediaries (cf. the Septuagint of Deut 33.2, and also Gal 3.19, Acts 7.38, Heb 2.2) nor the incarnation and miracles of Christ

could have been accomplished under fate. Photius' report suggests that Diodore likely failed to fully understand Bardaisan's system of thought, especially the power he accorded to nature and his subordination of free will, fate and nature to God.

28. Bardaisan's qualified affirmation of astrological fate is omitted from the descriptions of Bardaisan's thought in David Bundy, "Christianity in Syria," ABD vol. 1, 972, and Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 119–123.
29. p. 31–33 trans. Drijvers.
30. p. 35 trans. Drijvers. The affirmation of fate's favourable effect on nature seems theoretical, however, since in fact Bardaisan only cites examples of fate causing disagreeable occurrences (Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 87–88).
31. p. 37 trans. Drijvers.
32. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 86, 91n3.
33. Cf. the opposition of malign and benign stars later in the *Book of the Laws of Countries* (p. 43 trans. Drijvers).
34. Nau, *Bardesane l'Astrologue*, 19; see also the reference to "midheaven" later in the text (p. 47 trans. Drijvers). We need not accept Nau's other suggestion (p. 43n5 of his French translation) that the "high position" refers to the "exaltation" of a planet (on which see Bouché-Leclercq, 192–99).
35. On the division of signs into parts which were allocated to the five planets (excluding the sun and moon) see Bouché-Leclercq, 206–215.
36. Bouché-Leclercq, 174 and n1.
37. Jones, "Astrological Trajectory," 192. As we shall see, the teachings of Elchasai also refrained from specifying the malefic planets by name.
38. p. 40–53 trans. Drijvers.
39. Jones, "Astrological Trajectory," 192.
40. p. 35 trans. Drijvers.
41. *Ibid.*, 35–37.
42. p.40–53 trans. Drijvers.

43. *Ibid.*, 33, 39.
44. See the editor's introduction (p. 1) and p. 33 and 63 trans. Drijvers (the conclusion of the *Book of the Laws of Countries*). Dihle, "Schicksalslehre des Bardesanes," 132 notes that the anticipation that the present human predicament involving freedom, nature and fate will conclude on the day of judgment is a distinctly Christian element of Bardaisan's thought.
45. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 89–90, 94–95, 194, 219–220. According to a letter of the Syriac writer Severus Sebokt (d. 666/7) to the Cypriot priest Basilius, Bardaisan held that the present world would last for 6000 years; this information was later quoted by Georgios bishop of Arabia (d. 724). The letter of Severus (edited and translated by F.Nau, "Notes d'Astronomie Syrienne," *Journal Asiatique* 2 [1910]: 210–214) deals with the question of whether there were conjunctions of the seven planets: according to the tradition cited by Severus, Bardaisan asserted that in the 6000 years of this age there would be 100 conjunctions of the seven planets, and he offered a justification of the number 6000 on the basis of the sum of the orbits of the planets that would be required for 100 conjunctions. In fact, the notion that the world would last 6000 years was common in the ancient world (Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 90n1). Nau's article also showed the dependance of Georgios of Arabia on Severus Sebokt for this point; thus Georgios' claim that Bardaisan wrote about his belief in the 6000 year duration of the world in a certain treatise on the conjunctions of the stars ("in quodam tractatus quem fecit de conjunctionibus astrorum coeli inter se") is unreliable. This undermines the use of Georgios' claim by W. and H.-G. Gundel (*Astrologumena*, 326), and more recently by Stuckrad (*Ringens*, 657), as evidence that Bardaisan wrote a work "On the Conjunction (σύνωδος) of the Planets" (Jones, "Astrological Trajectory," 189–90n25).
46. Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 244n2.
47. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 195; cf. the statement recorded by Severus Sebokt that Bardaisan and his adherents refer to the Isles of the Blest in the west as "Isles of Blisses" (i.e. Elysium) (Nau, "Notes d'Astronomie Syrienne," 215). The location of the heavenly afterlife among the stars is discussed by Cumont in *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans*, 109–10.
48. According to Drijvers (*Bardaisan*, 219), freedom is the central theme of Bardaisan's thought.
49. "For that which is called Fate is really the fixed course determined by God for the Rulers and Guiding Signs. According to this course and order the spirits undergo changes while descending to the soul, and the souls while descending to the bodies.

That which causes these changes is called Fate and native horoscope of that mixture which was mixed and is being purified to the help of that which, by the grace and goodness of God, was and will be helped till the termination of all.” (p. 33 trans. Drijvers)

50. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 219–27.
51. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 25.
52. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 157–58, also citing Hymn 22.22 where Ephrem attacks a teacher of false doctrine (likely Bardaisan) for adding astrology to the true faith.
53. *Hymns Against Heresies* 6.9,10; trans. of Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 158–59. In the lines preceding Ephrem maintains the divinely given free will of the stars themselves.
54. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 159.
55. *Ibid.*, 159–60.
56. The calculation of the horoscope at the moment of birth is assumed in many of the examples cited in the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά in the latter half of the *Book of the Laws of Countries* (p. 41–55 Drijvers ed.).
57. Drijvers emphasizes repeatedly that these themes are poetic (*Bardaisan*, 143–52), perhaps a poetic speculation on the Genesis story of creation (p. 150). The use of these images seems to have been maintained among Bardaisan’s followers (*ibid.*, 192–93) and were also found among the Quqites who were associated with the Bardaisanites (H.J.W. Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” *Numen* 14 [1967]: 125–26; repr. Drijvers, *East of Antioch* [London, 1984]).
58. Hymn 55.1 and 10, following the translation in Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, 79.
59. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, 78–80.
60. See above n12.
61. *Bardaisan*, 151.
62. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 222. He was likely influenced by various types of late classical philosophy (*ibid.*, 163). Albrecht Dihle has compared the threefold separation between free will, nature and fate in Bardaisan’s thought to the distinction between free will, nature and chance in the book on fate by Bardaisan’s contemporary, the

- Peripatetic philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias (“Schicksalslehre der Bardesanes,” 128–130; A. Dihle, “Astrology in the Doctrine of Bardesanes,” *Studia Patristica* 20, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone [Leuven, 1989], 166). However, Alexander avoids any mention of astrology, so that the two writings are really not comparable; as Teixidor, *Bardesane*, 92 writes: “le caractère hautement théorique du traité exclut toute comparaison avec le livre du philosophe syriaque.” See also Jones’ criticisms of Dihle’s approach to Bardaisan in “Astrological Trajectory,” 191n31 and 193n42.
63. Drijvers, “Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica,” 203.
 64. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 222–24. The charge that Bardaisan was an adherent of Valentinianism seems to have been an invention of the western heresiological tradition beginning with Hippolytus’ *Refutation of All Heresies* (*ibid.*, p.183–84). See also H.J.W. Drijvers, “Bardaisan von Edessa als Repräsentant des syrischen Synkretismus im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr.,” *Synkretismus im Syrisch-Persischen Kulturgebiet*, ed. A. Dietrich, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse* 3e Folge (96): 114–19, repr. Drijvers, *East of Antioch* (London, 1984), where he questions whether the opposition “Gnostic and non-Gnostic” is helpful for understanding the complexity of Bardaisan’s thought. On Bardaisan and Gnosticism see also Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 126–27 and 179n17, and Stuckrad, *Ringens*, 655–63.
 65. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 195–96, 227–28.
 66. *Ibid.*, 227.
 67. Cited in Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 109. The exact relationship between Bardaisan and the Quqites is unclear: Drijvers puts Quq’s floruit at c. 160 C.E., though Barhadbesabba claims that Quq “borrowed” from Bardaisan. What is relevant is that “the Quqites concerned themselves with astrology, as Barhadbesabba also relates, while he also links Quq with Bardaisan” (*ibid.*, 118).
 68. Cited in Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 113–14; Drijvers believes Theodore bar Khonai is quoting from Quqite writings here.
 69. The translation of Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 108, of the Syriac edition of I.E. Il Rahmani in *Documenta de antiquis haeresibus*, *Studia Syriaca* 4 (1909), 111. Similar statements are found in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Barhadbesabba and in the Arabic *Book of the Lamp of Darkness* of Abu ‘l-Barakat (d. 1325) (Drijvers, “Quq and the Quqites,” 108–10), as well as in a description by Abraham Echelensis referring to “Phocalites” (H.-C. Puech and Beate Blatz, “The (Kukean) Gospel of the Twelve,” in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, rev.

- ed. trans. R. McL. Wilson [Louisville, 1991], 375).
70. Hans Waitz, "Das Evangelium der Zwölf Apostel," ZNW 14 (1913): 46–48; Puech and Blatz, "(Kukean) Gospel of the Twelve," 375.
 71. Drijvers, "Quq and the Quqites," 123–24.
 72. p. 33 trans. Drijvers.
 73. This is taken from a biography of Bardaisan included in the writings of Agapius of Mabbug (tenth century), presumably the source of similar accounts by the patriarch of Antioch Michael Syrus (d. 1199) and Bar Hebraeus (1225–86); see the discussion in Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 188–93, who despite the late date of these sources nevertheless concludes "with every reserve" that these ideas were held by the Bardesanites.
 74. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 190; this derives from Michael Syrus (cited in the preface to Nau's edition of the *Book of the Laws of Countries, Patrologia Syriaca* 1.2, 523–4). Like his Babylonian predecessor Marduk, the Syrian god Bel was traditionally associated with the power of the stars; in Greco-Roman times Bel was assimilated to Jupiter (Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, 57–61, 73–75). In his description of the ruins of Babylon Pliny, *Natural History* 6.30.121, refers to Bel as the founder of astral knowledge (p. 430 Rackham [LCL]: "inventor...sideralis scientiae").
 75. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 193–94, citing a manuscript in the British Museum (Ms. BM 14,658); the date is given by Jones, "Astrological Trajectory," 189. Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 194 notes that the same names are mentioned in connection with the Bardesanites by Georgios the bishop of Arabia (d. 724).
 76. This is from a letter of Georgios bishop of Arabia, cited in Nau, *Patrologia Syriaca* 1.2, 513. On the calculation of ascensions (ἀναφοραί) see Bouché-Leclercq, 259–69.

17. Groups Identified in Hippolytus' Refutation of All Heresies

Astrological themes are present in the beliefs of three early Christian groups described in the *Refutation of All Heresies* attributed to Hippolytus: an anonymous group of allegorizers of Aratus; the Peratae; and the Elchasaites. Of these groups, the first two featured a remarkably systematic interpretation of the constellations in terms of Christian doctrine,¹ while the third practiced a type of katarchic astrology.

Allegorizers of Aratus ("Arateans")

In *Refutation* 4.46–50 Hippolytus refers to a certain group that had developed a Christian interpretation of the constellations as they were conventionally delineated. By identifying the constellations with the dramatis personae of the Christian schema of fall and salvation, this group achieved a Christian "reading" of the heavens which featured the following correspondences:

Draco — the Devil, also termed the Beast²

Engonasin, i.e. Hercules³ — Adam

Lyra — the divine Law

Corona Borealis — the crown attained by those who follow the divine Law

Serpens — the lesser Draco, offspring of Draco

Ophiuchus — God's Logos, which restrains Draco and the Serpent; Christ

Ursa Major/Helice — the first creation according to Adam; the tradition of Greek learning and wisdom

Ursa Minor/Cynosura — the second or new creation according to Christ; the Christian tradition

Canis Major; also Sirius — the Logos (alternative symbol)

Cepheus — Adam

Cassiopeia — Eve

Andromeda — the soul of both Adam and Eve

Perseus — the Logos (alternative symbol); the axis around which the cosmos revolves

Cetus — the Beast (parallel to Draco and the Serpent)

Cygnus — the divine spirit.

It should be noted that this system need not have been restricted to only these constellations found in the report of Hippolytus. The group may well have utilized all the constellations discussed in Aratus' *Phaenomena*; cf. the mention of "crabs and bulls and lions and rams and goats and kids and whatever other animals are named throughout the stars" (καρκίνοι δὲ καὶ ταῦροι καὶ λέοντες καὶ κριοὶ καὶ αἴγες καὶ ἔριφοι καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα θηρία διὰ τῶν ἄστρον ὀνομάζονται), evidently a reference to the zodiacal signs, at the end of the discussion of the group in the *Refutation* (49.4). The constellations listed here are the major circumpolar ones, which would have been visible throughout the year; they are also the constellations described in the earlier portion of Aratus' *Phaenomena* (19–87).

Indeed, it seems that Aratus' great astronomical poem was the source of the group's knowledge of the heavens.⁴ (Hence, for our present purposes we shall refer to them as "Arateans" though it is impossible to know whether Hippolytus has in mind a group or just one author.⁵) According to the account in the *Refutation*, the group made no appeal to direct observation of the sky; instead, they derived their celestial knowledge, including the designation and ordering of the constellations, from Aratus' *Phaenomena*. It seems there was no tension in the group's adherence to Aratus' *Phaenomena* along with the Christian Scriptures. Assuming that Hippolytus was, as usual, closely following his source,⁶ it seems that the Arateans cited both the *Phaenomena* and the Bible in support of their views, though of the two Aratus' poem was appar-

ently regarded as more authoritative by the group. The report in the *Refutation* suggests that references to the *Phaenomena* were more frequent and more prominent in the author's Aratean source, and that citations from the *Phaenomena* also received further explanatory commentary; these are indications of the authority ascribed to Aratus' poem by the group. In a very real sense, Aratus was their prophet and the *Phaenomena* their sacred text.⁷

From the above list of celestial identifications it is evident that those who formulated the Aratean system did not attempt a simple series of direct one-to-one correspondences. Instead, they allowed for a certain amount of repetition in their view of the constellations, such that the basic Christian story could be retold in various ways by means of different groupings of constellations. The choice of which constellations would be utilized and in which order was also dictated by Aratus' *Phaenomena*. In the early part of the poem (19–87) the general direction of movement is southward from the top of the northern hemisphere, though as we shall see one encountered a certain grouping of constellations by proceeding from north to south in the general direction of Scorpio, and a different set of constellations came into play when one went in the direction of Aries.

The report on the Aratean group in the *Refutation* includes three “retellings” of the Christian drama in terms of the constellations; each account commences at the top of the northern hemisphere.

After an initial quotation from Aratus (*Phaenomena* 19–23), the first retelling begins with Draco, the constellation lying between Ursa Major and Ursa Minor⁸ (explication of the Bears themselves is deferred for the moment). As noted above, the Arateans identified Draco with the devil, ὁ διάβολος,, of course equivalent to Satan, God's opponent in the book of Job. A proof-text from Job supported this identification of Satan with the winding, sinuous Draco,⁹ Job 1.7: “I have been wandering to and fro under heaven and going round about” (ἔμπεριπατήσας τὴν ὑπ' οὐρανὸν καὶ περιελθὼν). The quotation only works by omitting the original object of the second verb (i.e. “the earth”, τὴν γῆν, in Job 1.7), and perhaps recognizing the awkwardness an exegetical phrase is provided immediately after: “that is, spinning around and observing what is happening” (τουτέστι περιστροφεῖς καὶ περισκοπήσας τὰ γινόμενα).¹⁰ Moreover, a further quotation from Aratus regarding the lofty vantage point of Draco's head¹¹ allows for the initial “location” of evil within the Arateans' view of the cosmos.

For they think that the Dragon, the serpent, is placed near the arctic pole; from this highest pole he looks upon and observes all things, so that nothing of what is done may escape him.... For the head of the Dragon lies against the setting and rising of the two hemispheres so that, he says, nothing may escape him according to the same, neither from the things that are in the west nor the things that are in the east, but the beast knows everything altogether (*Refutation* 47.2).¹²

Immediately south of Draco is Engonasin (“the Kneeler,” ὁ ἐν γόνασιν) whose position is also established by a citation of Aratus (*Phaenomena* 70): “[over the middle of the head] of crooked Draco, he holds the tip of his right foot.”¹³ Also quoted at this point in *Refutation* 47.4¹⁴ are Aratus’ descriptions of Engonasin as a “form that has toiled” (κεκμηκὸς εἶδωλον) and “like one who is labouring” (μογέοντι ἔοικός) (cf. *Phaenomena* 63–64, 73).¹⁵ Following Aratus’ *Phaenomena* 63–66, the Arateans emphasized the mysterious quality of this sign: “Therefore Aratus said that he did not know what this toil is and this wonder turning in the heaven” (47.5).¹⁶ An allusion to Gen 3.15 supports the identification of Engonasin in Christian terms as Adam, even though Gen 3.15 is concerned with the relationship of Eve’s offspring and the serpent in the garden; the underlying connection of Eve’s offspring (humanity) and Adam (i.e. ἄνθρωπος, also humanity) is not made explicit,¹⁷ nor is the connection between Adam and Engonasin (47.5).

Next, the constellations Lyra and Corona are brought into play. The identification of Lyra with the divine law has associations deriving from both Greco-Roman and Christian mythological symbolism. In Greek myth Lyra had been created and set in the sky by Hermes;¹⁸ the recollection of this myth is supported with another quotation from Aratus: “While he was still in his cradle, Hermes bore through it and said it was to be called ‘Lyre’” (*Phaenomena* 268–69).¹⁹ The symbolism of the seven strings of the lyre representing the harmony of creation is also referred to in Lucian’s satirical work *On Astrology*: “the seven-stringed lyre threw together the harmony of the moving stars.”²⁰ However, it was the Biblical association of the number seven with the divine creation which influenced the Arateans’ view that the seven strings of Lyra represent all the harmony with which the cosmos is provided (48.2).²¹ Most significant for the Arateans is the identification of Hermes with the Logos,²² which allowed for Greco-Roman myth to be adaptable to Christian purposes: the Arateans saw Hermes/Logos as the originator of Lyra which is to be imitated, i.e. the law which is to be obeyed (ἡ ἐκμημήσεται τὴν Λύραν...τουτέστι πειθόμενος τῷ νόμῳ) (48.1).²³ No explication of the symbolism of Corona is given in the *Refutation*’s report on the Arateans; that it refers to the reward of salvation was presumably

obvious.²⁴

Once the Christian signification of these constellations has been established, the plot of the drama begins to unfold, centering first on the figure of Engonasin/Adam. Because of his kneeling posture and outstretched hands he is seen to be engaged in confessing his sins,²⁵ as well as reaching with one hand toward the lyre (a gesture of obedience to the divine law) and with the other hand toward the crown (48.1, 3–4):

If therefore...Adam makes confession and guards the head of the beast [cf. the reference to Gen 3.15 in 47.5] according to God's command, he will faithfully imitate the Lyre, that is to thoroughly follow [the commands] of God which is obeying the law, [then] he will take the Crown which is beside it.²⁶

Corona is meanwhile portrayed as under attack from its neighbour to the south, Serpens, which is of course an ally of Draco. Serpens is, however, restrained by Ophiuchus, whose name (derived from ὄφις and ἔχων) reflects the conventional view according to which these two constellations were traditionally related;²⁷ the Arateans added the further identification of Ophiuchus as the Logos, Christ. At this point the first retelling of the Christian story expressed in terms of the constellations ends. It can be characterized as basically an “existential” scenario, portraying the present situation of the Christian disciple confronted with evil: no final victory is discerned in the heavens as yet.

In the second Aratean retelling of the Christian drama reported in the *Refutation*, we are at first returned to the top of the northern celestial hemisphere. Several of the interpretations of the constellations which have already been presented are brought into this account as well, and again the number seven, symbolizing harmony and wholeness, is featured: because the two Bears (Ursa Major and Ursa Minor) are each made up of seven stars they are used to symbolize two distinct “wholes,” two creations.²⁸ However, these values of “great” and “less” are inverted in light of Matt 7.14, a text which seems to exercise some control over the Arateans' interpretation of the two Bears and what they symbolize.²⁹ It is noteworthy that the Arateans seem to have ignored basing any interpretation on the Bears as bears, as the two wagons (the alternate identification of the constellation), or as the catasterisms of the bears that had nurtured Zeus as a child in classical myth.³⁰ To the Arateans, Ursa Major represents the first creation, that according to Adam; that this condition is fallen is evident from the description of Adam as being

“in labour” (ἐν πόνοις, an allusion to Gen 3.17–19).³¹ By contrast, the second creation represented by Ursa Minor is that “according to Christ, by whom we are born anew” (δευτέρα δὲ κτίσις ἐστὶν ἢ κατὰ Χριστόν, δι’ ἧς ἀναγεννώμεθα) (48.7).³² Alternative titles for the Bears are also introduced: Ursa Major is known as Helice, because of its “winding” around the north pole, while Ursa Minor is also called Cynosura (cf. *Phaenomena* 36–37). Aratus had written that Helice is used by the Greeks in navigation (*Phaenomena* 37–38),³³ and from this Helice comes to stand for Greek culture in general: for the Arateans, the old creation of Adam, the natural human state, is best represented by the culture of the Greeks.³⁴ However, from a Christian perspective that old creation is fallen and inferior. This is the motivation behind the Arateans’ denigration of Greek culture (and thus the whole Adamic creation) by means of a word play on the name Helice. According to the Arateans, Greek learning and wisdom lead their adherents backwards (εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω), for indeed the very name Helice (from ἑλιξ, spiral or coil) is a turning and circling back upon itself (48.8);³⁵ therefore, if those who follow Helice/Greek culture merely “go around in circles” then that the old Adamic creation is ultimately pointless for it leads nowhere.³⁶

By contrast, the common early Christian view was that the old creation is superseded by the new creation in Christ,³⁷ which as we have seen is represented in the system of the Arateans by Ursa Minor. Citing Matt 7.14 on the “narrow way” which is only found by the “few,” the superiority of Ursa Minor is reinforced by the claim (based on Aratus, *Phaenomena* 39, 44) that it was the constellation relied on for navigation by the Sidonians, i.e. the Phoenicians, who of course were renowned as the preeminent sailors of antiquity (48.9).³⁸ As with Ursa Major/Helice, so the Arateans also developed a word play on the alternative name of Ursa Minor, Cynosura, which literally means a “dog’s tail”:³⁹ whereas Helice leads one in circles, Cynosura displays a straight line leading those who follow it on the straightforward way.

Speaking of the dog’s tail naturally leads to the constellation of the Dog itself (Canis Major) and the Dog Star (Sirius). No matter that this entails an abrupt switch to the southern hemisphere of the sky, the Aratean allegorizers could not resist the symbolism of Canis Major and Sirius. The image of the dog itself symbolized for them the Logos, Christ, who guards the flock against the wolves (cf. Jn 10.11–12). Furthermore, the word κύων is both the common word for dog and the present participle of the verb κύω (to conceive); from this the identification of Christ as κύων supports the Christian notion of the Logos as life-giver (48.10).⁴⁰ The Arateans then further connected the Dog

Star with the theme of Christ as judge. Though this may at first seem contradictory, the logic derives from Aratus' own derivation of the name of the Dog Star from the verb *σειριάω* "to be hot and scorching" (*Phaenomena* 330–32);⁴¹ Aratus' etymology for Sirius also reflects the fact that the rising of Sirius took place at midsummer, the time of greatest heat, when the sun appears to destroy natural growth. In turn, the Arateans readily associated the Dog Star of the withering summer with Christ's judgment.

From this...Aratus speaking of the rising of the Dog [Star], says "When the Dog has arisen the plants no longer deceive." This is what he says: plants which have been planted in the earth until the rising of the Dog [Star] often do not take root yet bear leaves, and it appears to on-lookers that they will bear fruit and they seem alive, not having life from the root in them. But when the rising of the Dog [Star] occurs, the living are judged by the Dog [Star] from the dead; for he dries up those who have no root [cf. Matt 13.5–6]. Therefore...this Dog [Star], being a certain divine Logos, has been appointed "judge of the living and the dead" [Acts 10.42, cf. 1 Pet 4.5, 2 Tim 4.1], and just as over the plants the Dog is seen as the star set over creation, so the Logos [is] over the heavenly plants..., that is human beings (48.11–12).⁴²

This retelling closes with a reminder that Draco stands between the two Bears, hindering movement from the first creation to the second.⁴³ In particular, Draco watches Engonasin in the first creation to keep him from seeing what is in the second creation, while Draco is itself watched by Ophiuchus (48.13–14); these reflect the positions and orientations of the constellations as they were set forth by Aratus (*Phaenomena* 63–87).

The third Aratean retelling of the Christian story in terms of constellations again opens with a quotation from Aratus: "Nor the wretched race of Iasid Cepheus" (*Phaenomena* 179).⁴⁴ Again we begin at the top of the northern hemisphere, though this time the direction of the account goes southward in the direction of Aries. Near Draco are located the four constellations Cepheus, Cassiopeia, Andromeda and Perseus; according to Hippolytus, the Arateans described these as "great letters of creation to those who are able to see" (*μεγάλα τῆς κτίσεως γράμματα τοῖς ἰδεῖν δυναμένοις*) (49.1).⁴⁵ The Christian identification of these constellations is immediately made clear: Cepheus is Adam, Cassiopeia Eve, Andromeda is the soul of both, Perseus is the Logos⁴⁶ and Cetus is the "treacherous Beast."⁴⁷ The traditional myth of Perseus' rescue of Andromeda from the sea monster,⁴⁸ paralleling the story of Christ's defeat of Satan to redeem humanity, meant that the catasterized figures of the myth were readily adaptable to Christian use. Next we proceed to another

northern constellation, Cygnus; as with Canis Major and Sirius in the previous section, here too the imagery of the swan is irresistible to the Arateans, even though it is actually a digression from the Perseus theme. (Note that *Phaenomena* 275–81 refers to this constellation as the Bird [ὄρνις]; the term Cygnus was only used later.⁴⁹) Cygnus is described as a musical animal and a symbol of the divine spirit, because when the swan nears the end of its life its nature is only to sing as it is set free from the evil creation “with good hope” and it sends up hymns to God.⁵⁰ The words “with good hope” (μετὰ ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος) echo Socrates in *Phaedo* 67B–C (cf. 85B) expressing his attitude to death and the separation of the soul from the body.⁵¹

What is most striking about the Arateans’ system is the addition of Christian meanings to the constellations of established convention which, of course, were laden with ancient mythological significance. According to the *Refutation*, the Arateans saw the theomorphic constellations as “images and models from which the mutable creation [i.e. nature] takes the forms [and] becomes full of such animals.”⁵² Yet the philosophical “forms” (τὰς ἰδέας) were not the chief obstacle to Christian appropriation of the constellations: rather, it was the traditional mythological associations connected with them. It is in this light that the creative genius of the Arateans is most evident: they took the traditional mythological associations of the constellations and replaced them with meanings deriving from the Christian drama of the fall and salvation of humanity. In effect, in the Aratean system of beliefs the old meanings of the constellations came to be subsumed to new religious doctrine. However, ultimately the new Christian interpretation failed to displace the earlier views of the constellations entirely: the traditional mythological meanings were still present, if only in the names of the constellations which were still retained. Nevertheless, the innovative formulators of the Aratean system enlisted the ancient veneration of the heavens in the service of early Christianity, which would surely have augmented the appeal, as well as the authority, of the new religion in the wider Greco-Roman society.

The Peratae

Book 5 of the *Refutation of All Heresies* discusses together groups that are “Ophitic” (cf. ὄφις, “serpent”), that is, according to the author these groups each venerate an image of a serpent. Among the teachings dealt with in this section are those of groups such as the Naasseni, the Peratae and the Sethiani, as well as of individuals such as Justin the Gnostic. It is the discus-

sion of the Peratae in *Refutation* 5.12–17 which contains elements of astrology.

The structure of this section has been analysed by Josep Montserrat-Torrents as follows:⁵³

- a) Opening description of the Peratic system (*Refutation*. 5.12);
- b) Exposition of the Peratae as heretical based on Hippolytus' claim that their system is astrological:
 - 1) Resumé of astrology (5.13);
 - 2) Transcription of a Peratic source (5.14);
 - 3) Demonstration of astrological character of their system (5.15);
- c) Exegetical section (5.16);
- d) Second description of the Peratic system (5.17).

Whereas in the account of the Arateans the *Refutation* seems to have made use of only one source, two sources can be detected behind the attack on the Peratae in *Refutation* 5.12–17, i.e. Sextus Empiricus on astrology in 5.13 and an authentic Peratic source listing a series of cosmic Προάστειοι⁵⁴ in 5.14.

With regard to the astrological content of this section of the *Refutation*, it is important to recognize the author's own evident lack of expertise in astrology; this was no doubt the reason for the extensive quotation of Sextus Empiricus on the subject. *Refutation* 5.13.1 makes the following contention regarding the astrological character of the doctrines of the Peratae: “Let us therefore first learn how they have taken this teaching from the astrologers [and] neglect Christ...”⁵⁵ This is followed by an explanation of the zodiac whose main purpose seems to be word play rather than information:

...they work destruction to those who follow them in such error. For having said that the cosmos is one, the astrologers divide it into the twelve parts of the fixed signs, and they call the cosmos of the fixed signs one fixed cosmos. And they say that the other is that of the planets, and the other is toward us, which they also say is the cosmos in power and position and number, which is the part as far as the moon.⁵⁶

The repetition of “wandering/error” (πλάνη) and “unwandering/fixed signs” (ἀπλανῶν ζῳδίων), deriving from the common etymology of the planets as “wanderers” (πλάνητες), is the most prominent feature of this passage.⁵⁷ The text next goes on to the commonplace notion of cosmic sympathy which underlay ancient astrology, i.e. the correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm.⁵⁸ Then the author claims that he will use the very words

of the astrologers against them to remind his readers of what he had written earlier against astrology,⁵⁹ though the “resumé” of Peratic astrology here is not taken from any astrologer but (like the earlier anti-astrological polemic in *Refutation* 4) is really an almost verbatim transcription of passages from Sextus Empiricus' *Against the Astrologers*.⁶⁰ At the end of 5.13 the author then introduces the passage of genuine Peratic material (5.14) which he claims, by comparison with his earlier description of astrology, will show that the “words of the Peratae are admittedly those of astrologers, not Christ.”⁶¹ Indeed, Hippolytus seeks to portray the teachings of this group as nothing but astrological; having already shown astrology to be a heresy in *Refutation* book 4, a fundamental purpose of his treatment of the Peratae in book 5 is to taint them with the same brush. However, elements of genuine Peratic doctrine in the account in *Refutation* 5.14 which are clearly not astrological falsify the author's attempt to reduce Peratic teachings to mere astrology.

An example of this reductionist approach to the Peratae is evident in *Refutation* 5.15, where the author focusses on a particular astrological theme which featured in their doctrinal system. In ancient astrology the four cardinal points of the zodiac were located where it crosses the eastern horizon (called the Ascendant, or Horoscopos proper), at its zenith (called midheaven, “Medium Caelum”), at the setting point on the western horizon (the Descendant) and at its nadir (lowest heaven, “Imum Caelum”).⁶² It is clear that at any given time four of the twelve zodiacal signs occupy each of these cardinal points; the sign preceding the sign at the centre of a particular cardinal point is termed the apoklima (the “declining” sign), while the sign that follows is the epanaphora (the sign which “rises after”).⁶³ According to Hippolytus, the Peratae allegorize this ordinance of the astrologers (ἀλληγοροῦντες τὴν διαταγὴν τῶν ἀστρολόγων) by regarding (ὑποτυποῦσι, literally “sketching”) the centre as a god and monad and lord of all genesis, with the apoklima on his left and the epanaphora on his right (5.15.4).⁶⁴ That such astrological doctrine had a place in the system of the Peratae is significant in and of itself. However, Hippolytus goes on to assert what is, according to him, the only interpretive key to the Peratic system as a whole:

Therefore when reading their writings if anyone finds a certain power called “right” or “left” let him refer to the centre and its apoklima and epanaphora and he will clearly see that their whole practice is established on astrological teaching (5.15.5).⁶⁵

This latter statement clearly reflects the reduction of Peratic doctrine to astrology which Hippolytus presupposes. Ironically, this approach prevents him from offering other evidence of their actual use of specific astrological doctrines and themes. One wonders how the Peratae may have further adapted the cardinal points, the apoklimata and epanaphorai, to their system of beliefs, as well as how they developed other teachings or practices of ancient astrology.

When we look at the section deriving from an authentic Peratic source, i.e. the list of Προάσταιοι in *Refutation* 5.14, we see that it contains far more than just astrological material. According to Marcovich, this passage contains one of several otherwise unknown original Gnostic texts which have fortunately been preserved for us by the zealous plagiarist Hippolytus.⁶⁶ For our purposes it is significant that this passage, with its abundant naming of the various Gnostic powers identified with numerous figures from Greco-Roman, Egyptian and Biblical traditions, does feature some astrological content, especially the notion of astrological fate. From 5.15.1–3 it is clear that the fatalism of the Peratae, evident in the “faithful stewards” (πιστοὶ οἰκονόμοι) which are called the “wandering stars, from which is taken perishable fate” (5.14.5⁶⁷), was decisive in Hippolytus' identification of Peratic doctrine with astrology. (Hippolytus' focus on the theme of fate is also evident in 5.16, where it is connected to Kronos in particular.⁶⁸) The use of the term δωδεκάωρος in 5.14 has been connected with ancient Egyptian astrology and myth by Boll.⁶⁹ Hippolytus writes that the Peratae used this term as follows:

And the ruler of the twelve hour night is Soclas, which ignorance calls Osiris; according to his image were born Admetus, Medeia, Hellen, Aithousa. The ruler of the twelve hour day is Euno, who is steward of the eastern and etherial Protokamaros [?] which ignorance calls Isis. The latter's sign is the Dog star, after whose image was born Ptolemy son of Arsinoë, Didyma, Cleopatra, Olympias (5.14.5–7).⁷⁰

According to Boll, this reflects the ancient Egyptian doctrine of the twelve hours (δωδεκάωροι) of the day and of the night during which the sun god Ra was believed to travel through heaven and the underworld respectively. The Peratae retained the Egyptian belief that Osiris rules over the δωδεκάωρος of the night while that of the day is ruled by his sister Isis, who was traditionally associated with the Dog star Sirius (or Sothis), the rising of which signalled the Egyptian new year. The Peratae also associated various figures of history and legend with the rule of Osiris and Isis over the δωδεκάωροι. It is unlikely that Hippolytus was aware of this astrological element in Peratic doctrine; instead, it was the fatalism of the Peratae that was his chief concern and that

led him to identify their teachings as astrological.

Hippolytus connects the name of the Peratae with their belief that their gnosis enabled them to escape astrological fate:

But they call them Peratae, thinking that nothing which has its foundations in generation can escape the fate determined for the begotten from birth. For if anything, they say, is begotten it also perishes wholly—as was also determined by the Sibyl.⁷¹ Only we, he says, who know the fatal necessity of birth, and the ways through which humanity enters into the cosmos, having been carefully taught—we alone are able to go through and pass [περάσαι] destruction (5.16.1).⁷²

Not surprisingly, the Exodus event, i.e. the Israelites' "passing through" the Red Sea, held a prominent place in Peratic doctrine (see 5.16.4–5). This leads Montserrat-Torrents to suggest that in light of the traditional Jewish derivation of the word "Hebrew" from עבר "to pass over"⁷³ the Peratae may have seen themselves as the "true Hebrews."⁷⁴ The confidence of the Peratae that they were able to find salvation from the oppression of the astral powers of fate was founded upon gnosis;⁷⁵ Hippolytus emphasizes the significance of this gnosis for the Peratae elsewhere in his discussion of the group.

For if anyone, he says, is strong enough to understand from the things here that he is the image of the father (πατρικός χαρακτήρ) transferred from above to here and made into a body...he becomes wholly of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the father in the heavens, and will go up to there; but if anyone does not happen on this teaching (ἐὰν δὲ μὴ τύχη τῆς διδασκαλίας ταύτης) and does not find out the fatal necessity of birth (μηδὲ τὴν ἀνάγκην τῆς γενέσεως ἐπιγῶ), like an untimely birth [1 Cor 15.8] "he is brought forth in a night and perishes in a night" [Jonah 4.10] (*Refutation* 5.17.6).⁷⁶

The rest of *Refutation* 5.16 reflects the Peratic interest in Biblical typology. Among other correlations they identified the astral powers which control the fate of all who are born with the serpents which attacked the Israelites in the desert (Num 21.6–9). As for the bronze serpent which according to the Biblical account Moses then set up to heal the people, this was interpreted by the Peratae as "the true and perfect serpent" (τὸν ἀληθινὸν ὄφιν, τὸν τέλειον) which, when the people looked upon it, prevented them from being bitten at all, that is, it saved them from the astral powers of fate.

Therefore, he says, no one can save and set free those brought out from the land of Egypt—that is from the body and from this world—except the perfect serpent

alone, the full of the full. The one who hopes on this, he says, is not destroyed by the serpents of the desert—that is by the gods of fate [τῶν θεῶν τῆς γενέσεως] (5.16.7-8).⁷⁷

This Ophitic confession of faith in the salvific serpent is elaborated by means of further Biblical correspondences, such as the staff of Moses which defeated those of the Egyptian magicians at Pharaoh's court (Ex 7.8–12) (5.16.8).⁷⁸ And the salvific serpent is also identified with Christ, who is not named but only referred to periphrastically: “This is, he says, he who in the last days [cf. Acts 2.17; 2 Tim 3.1; James 5.3] appeared in the form of a man [cf. Phil 2.7] in the time of Herod...” (5.16.10).⁷⁹ Naturally, Jn 3.14 (“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up”) is also cited in support of the christological connection (5.16.11).

The astrological interest of the Peratae⁸⁰ is most evident in yet a further correspondence: the salvific serpent/Christ was also identified by the Peratae with the constellation Draco.

The likeness of this alone, he says, is always seen in heaven in light. This is the great beginning.... And, he says, if the eyes of any are blessed [Matt 13.16; Lk 10.23] he will see when he looks up into heaven the lovely image of the serpent in the great beginning of heaven rotating and becoming the source of all motion to all that is coming into being, and he will know that nothing is put together separate from him among things either in heaven or on earth or under the earth—neither night, nor moon, nor fruits, nor fate, nor wealth, nor the ability to walk—nor entirely is there anything of things that are which is apart from his pointing out (5.16.12–14).⁸¹

Hippolytus also reports that the Peratae interpreted the constellations Engonasin, Serpens, Ophiuchus, Corona and Lyra allegorically in terms of their doctrines:

on each side of [Draco] are placed the Crown and Lyre, and next to him above the top of his head, a piteous man, called the Kneeler, is seen.... in back of the Kneeler is imperfect Serpens, grasped with both hands by Ophiuchus and hindered from laying hold of the Crown lying by the perfect Serpent (5.16.16).⁸²

Therefore, both the Arateans and the Peratae allegorized the constellations. However, unlike the Arateans the Peratae based their celestial knowledge on direct observation of the heavens; as such their use of astrology/astronomy was more “scientific” than that of the Arateans.⁸³ As well, there is a stark

contrast between the Aratean and Peratic interpretations of the constellations, most evident in their view of Draco, who is seen as an image of evil in the Aratean system while the Peratae identified Draco with Christ the saviour. Behind this difference lies their disparate theological systems, especially their understanding of the image of the serpent: the Peratae viewed the serpent as salvific while for the Arateans it represented Satan, the adversary.

The two groups also drew different implications from the position of Draco at the very top of the northern hemisphere. It is interesting that according to Hippolytus the Peratae made explicit reference to Aratus' *Phaenomena* in connection with the location of Draco, though there is no evidence that the Peratae shared the Arateans' high regard for Aratus' poem. At the end of *Refutation* 5.16, three citations from Aratus are given in quick succession: Draco's head is where "setting and rising mingle with one another" (*Phaenomena* 62);⁸⁴ "the great wonder of the Dragon, a dread portent" (*Phaenomena* 46, 57);⁸⁵ and "[Engonasin over the middle of the head] of crooked Draco, he has the sole of his right foot" (*Phaenomena* 70).⁸⁶ As we have seen, for the Arateans Draco's position was associated with the inescapability of evil in the cosmos. However, the Peratae connected Draco with divine creation and the source of life, with the Logos of the prologue to the Gospel of John and with Eve the mother/source of all life (*Refutation* 5.16.12–13).⁸⁷

The Elchasaites

Astrology also features as a theme in the discussion of the Elchasaites in *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.13–17.

The founder of this group, Elchasai, was active in the early second century C.E. According to *Refutation* 9.13.3–4, Elchasai appeared proclaiming a new remission of sins in the third year of the reign of Trajan (ruled 98–117). As well, a quotation from the book of Elchasai cited in *Refutation* 9.16.4 refers to Trajan's subjugation of the Parthians, following which (according to Elchasai's prophecy) after three years there would be a great war between the wicked angels of the north. Once again, Hippolytus' habit of plagiarism has preserved for us parts of a valuable source document, the book of Elchasai.⁸⁸

In *Refutation* 9.14.2 Hippolytus condemns the Elchasaites for their devotion to astrology: "They follow mathematici and astrologers and magicians as if they were true."⁸⁹ He provides evidence for this assertion a few lines later by quoting from the book of Elchasai.⁹⁰

Thus he says: "There are evil stars of impiety; this is now spoken to you, pious disciples; beware the days of the power of their beginning, and do not begin your work on the days of their beginning, and do not baptize men and women on the days of their power. Whenever the moon journeys beside them and conjoins with them, beware that day, until it completely goes away from them, and then baptize and undertake all the beginnings of your work (9.16.2–3).⁹¹

This clearly reflects the type of astrology known as katarthic astrology, the determination of the most favourable time to undertake certain activities based on the reading of the heavens. The "evil stars of impiety" may be identified as the traditional malefic planets Saturn and Mars.⁹² Elchasai's teaching seems to have been that one should avoid beginning activities on days when the moon entered into conjunction with these planets.⁹³ Since the moon's orbit entails that the moon "visits" the other planets each month,⁹⁴ the Elchasaite days of observance of lunar conjunctions with Mars and Saturn would have each taken place once a month.

Moreover, the book of Elchasai continued: "Also honour the day of the Sabbath, for it is one of those days. But guard also against commencing anything on the third day of the week..." (*Refutation* 9.16.3–4).⁹⁵ The observance of the Sabbath (i.e. Saturday) reflects the Jewish Christian character of the Elchasaite.⁹⁶ The "third day of the week" mentioned here is to be identified with Monday (counting three days inclusively) because it is the day of the week traditionally assigned to the moon; this parallels the earlier injunction to avoid activities on days when lunar conjunctions occur, and suggests that the moon was a central concern in Elchasaite astrology.⁹⁷

It is evident that Elchasaite teaching featured a relatively simple type of katarthic astrology which did not require expert astrological calculation.⁹⁸ Since the instruction as recorded by Hippolytus seems complete in itself, it may well have been the sum of astrological teaching that was contained in the book of Elchasai.⁹⁹ Of particular interest is that the Elchasaite seem to have practiced ritual washing on the basis of katarthic astrology;¹⁰⁰ in *Refutation* 9.16.3 (cited above) βαπτίζειν refers not only to a rite of initiation but also the repeated ritual of bathing which Elchasai enjoined on his followers.¹⁰¹ Like the observance of Saturday as the Sabbath, the ritual bath reflects the Jewish Christian character of the Elchasaite.¹⁰² Indeed, the Elchasaite's astrology itself may also derive from the group's Jewish background.¹⁰³

The Elchasaite's adherence to astrology proved to be long-lived. The *Kitab al-Fihrist* of Al-Nadim (written 987/98) describes a group of spiritual descendants of the Elchasaite, the Mughtasilah of the lower Tigris–

Euphrates region. This source informs us that the Mughtasilah venerated the stars, which was one of the characteristics that distinguished them from the Manichees.¹⁰⁴ Thus the use of astrology that was inaugurated by the Elchasaïtes still existed in the tenth century.¹⁰⁵

Notes

1. Bouché-Leclercq, 609n1 implies that these two groups which Hippolytus attacked were one and the same. Without any basis for identifying them it is methodologically preferable to keep the allegorizers of Aratus and the Peratae distinct as they are treated separately in the *Refutation*.
2. πάντα γινώσκει τὸ θηρίον ὁμοῦ (p. 132.19 Marcovich, cf. p. 133.15–16), presumably referring to the figure of the Beast in the book of Revelation.
3. The identification of Engonasin as Hercules exhausted after his labours is not found in Aratus or Manilius and derives from later antiquity (s.v. “Constellations and Named Stars,” OCD, 3d ed., 382).
4. Written about 275 B.C.E., it was based on a lost prose treatise of Eudoxus of Cnidus (s.v. “Aratus,” OCD, 3d ed., 136–37, which describes the *Phaenomena* as “the most widely read poem, after the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in the ancient world”). Its continued popularity is attested to by the fact that it was translated into Latin by Varro, Cicero, Germanicus Caesar and Avienus (s.v. “Aratea,” OCD, 3d ed., 136). It is uncertain whether the Arateans made use of the *Phaenomena* in its entirety or only in part; there is no evidence for the suggestion of M.J. Edwards (“Quoting Aratus: Acts 17,28,” ZNW 83 [1992]: 267 and n5) that rather than the *Phaenomena* itself the Arateans depended instead on a commentary on Aratus by Euphrates (mentioned in *Refutation* 4.2 and 5.13.9 along with one Celbes the Carystian, whom Edwards simply ignores). The Arateans’ use of the *Phaenomena* is omitted in the survey of Annewies van de Bunt-van den Hoek, “Aristobulos, Acts, Theophilus, Clement: Making Use of Aratus’ Phainomena: a Peregrination,” *Bijdragen Tijdschrift vor Philosophie en Theologie* 41 (1980): 290–99.
5. As Beck notes “These unnamed and otherwise unattested heretis may be no more than a fictional construct for Hippolytus to locate the teachings of an anonymous Gnostic writer and to furnish notional converts back to orthodoxy.” (Roger Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire* [Oxford, 2006], 170 n.23)
6. From his use of Sextus Empiricus, we have already seen evidence of Hippolytus’

slavish adherence to his sources; on p. 36 of his edition of the *Refutation* Marcovich terms this author an “unscrupulous and reckless plagiarist” (cf. p.50). That Hippolytus was using a source for his discussion of the Arateans is evident from the repetition of φησὶν throughout *Refutation* 4.46–50. In the view of Marcovich, 20 and 37, Hippolytus here is directly excerpting from or summarizing a “Gnostic (Ophitic?) commentary” on Aratus.

7. Beck, *Religion of the Mithras Cult*, 172–74.
8. The simile of Draco “circling the bears like the stream of a river” (εἰλεῖσθαι δὲ κατὰ τὰς ἄρκτους αὐτὰς ... οἶον τι ποταμοῦ ῥεῦμα [p. 131.3–4 Marcovich]) parallels Aratus, *Phaenomena* 45–46.
9. Cf. the description of Draco in Aratus, *Phaenomena* 45–47: “Between the two Bears, in the likeness of a river, winds a great wonder, the Dragon, writhing around and about at enormous length” (trans. Kidd, 75–77).
10. p. 131.6–7 Marcovich.
11. Draco’s head is set “exactly where settings and risings blend with one another” (ἦχι μάλιστα/ μίσιγονται δύσιές τε καὶ ἀντολαὶ ἀλλήλησι [p. 132.14–15 Marcovich]) which corresponds to *Phaenomena* 61–62, though in the latter (p. 76 Kidd) the end of the line 61 reads ἦχι περ ἄκραι.
12. p. 131.7–132.10, 132.16–19 Marcovich: τετάχθαι γὰρ νομίζουσι κατὰ τὸν ἀρκτικὸν πόλον τὸν Δράκοντα, τὸν ὄφιν, ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑψηλοτάτου πόλου πάντα ἐπιβλέποντα καὶ πάντα ἐφορῶντα, ἵνα μηδὲν τῶν πραττομένων αὐτὸν λάθῃ... κατὰ γὰρ τὴν δύσιν καὶ ἀνατολὴν τῶν δύο ἡμισφαιρίων κεῖται τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦ Δράκοντος, ἵνα, φησί, μηδὲν αὐτὸν λάθῃ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ μήτε τῶν ἐν τῇ δύσει μήτε τῶν ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ, ἀλλὰ πάντα γινώσκῃ τὸ θηρίον ὁμοῦ. This view of cosmic evil is reinforced by the fact that the north pole (and hence Draco near it) does not set: “though all the heavenly stars set, this [i.e. north] pole never sets, but rising high above the horizon he carefully observes and looks over everything, and nothing of what is done can escape him” (πάντων γὰρ δυνόντων τῶν κατὰ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀστέρων μόνος οὗτος ὁ πόλος οὐδέποτε δύνει, ἀλλ’ ἄνω ὑπὲρ τὸν ὀρίζοντα ἐρχόμενος πάντα περισκοπεῖ καὶ ἐπιβλέπει, καὶ λαθεῖν αὐτὸν τῶν πραττομένων ... δύναται οὐδέν [p. 132.10–13]). Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 18.489 (= *Odyssey* 5.274); Gundel, RE 2nd series 9A, 1040–41; Kidd, p. 199–200.
13. δεξιτεροῦ ποδὸς ἵχνος ἔχων σκολιοῖο Δράκοντος (p. 132.29 Marcovich); this is preceded by μέσσω δ’ ἐφύπερθε καρῆνῳ in line 69 of Aratus’ original (p. 76 Kidd). Aratus’ line 70 reads ἄκρον instead of ἵχνος found in the quotation of this line in

Refutation 5.16.16 in connection with the Peratae.

14. p. 132.21 Marcovich.
15. On the constellation Engonasin see the notes on p. 200–201 in Kidd's edition of the *Phaenomena*.
16. p. 132.22–23 Marcovich: ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἄρατος οὐκ εἰδέναι φησίν, οὗτος τις ἐστὶν ὁ πόνος καὶ τὸ θαῦμα τοῦτο στρεφόμενον ἐν οὐρανῷ. Cf. Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.315, “*nixa venit species genibus, sibi conscia causae*” which Goold (p. 29) aptly translates “comes a figure on bended knee, the reason for whose posture is known to none but him.”
17. Hence it does not matter that the allusion to Gen 3.15 is garbled, referring to the man and the dragon as guarding one another (φυλάσσοντα τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ Δράκοντος, καὶ τὸν Δράκοντα τὴν πτέρναν αὐτοῦ [p. 132.26–28 Marcovich]).
18. For this myth see the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, 25ff. Bouché-Leclercq, 8 suggests Pythagorean influence behind the image of a celestial lyre. Hippolytus' description (whether his own or deriving from his Aratean source) of Hermes/the Logos creating the lyre (ὑπὸ νηπίου ἔτι παντελῶς κατεσκευασμένον [p. 133.4–5 Marcovich]) parallels scholium 268 on the *Phaenomena*: “When he was exceedingly young and small Hermes built the lyre” (p. 211.10–11 Martin: σφόδρα νήπιος ὢν καὶ βραχὺς ὁ Ἑρμῆς τὴν κιθάραν κατεσκεύασεν). On the constellation Lyra see Kidd, p.281.
19. p. 133.7–8 Marcovich: τὴν δ' ἄρ' ἔτι καὶ παρὰ λίκνω/ Ἑρμείης ἐτόρησε, Λύρην δ' εἶπεν καλέεσθαι.
20. p. 354 Harmon (LCL): ἡ δὲ λύρη ἐπάμιτος ἐοῦσα τὴν τῶν κινεομένων ἀστέρων ἀρμονίην συνεβάλλετο. On the symbolism of the lyre see the references collected in Cumont, *Recherches sur le Symbolisme Funéraire des Romains*, 18–19n4 and p. 499.
21. p. 133.9–11 Marcovich: ἐπάχορδος [δέ] ἐστι, διὰ τῶν ἐπτά χορδῶν τὴν πᾶσαν ἀρμονίαν καὶ κατασκευὴν ἐμμελῶς ἔχουσαν τοῦ κόσμου [] ἐν ἑξ ἡμέραις γὰρ ἐγένετο ὁ κόσμος, καὶ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ καταπέπαιται. (There is a lacuna after κόσμου.)
22. On the identification of Hermes and the Logos, which Fowden (*Egyptian Hermes*, 24) describes as Hermes' “characteristic function in the Hellenistic period...the interpreter of the divine will to mankind,” see Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismegiste*, vol. 1, 68–73, and Leisegang, RE 13, 1061–65. Cf. the interpretation of Hermes/Logos imposing harmony on the universe by tearing out the sinews of Typhon and using them as lyre strings in Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* 55 (373D): τὸν

Ἐρμῆν μυθολογοῦσιν ἐξελόντα τοῦ Τυφῶνος τὰ νεῦρα χορδαῖς χρήσασθαι, διδάσκοντες ὡς τὸ πᾶν ὁ λόγος διαρμυσάμενος σύμφωνον ἐξ ἀσυμφώνων μερῶν ἐποίησε (p. 206.4–7 Griffiths).

23. p. 133.13–14 Marcovich. At the ellipsis the reading is *τουτέστι κατακολουθήσει τοῖς [] τοῦ θεοῦ*, to which Marcovich notes “*expectes προστάγμασι*” at the lacuna. Bouché-Leclercq, 609n1 neglects the identification of the Lyre with the divine law.
24. See 1 Cor 9.25, 2 Tim 2.5, 1 Pet 5.4. On this constellation see Kidd, p. 204–05.
25. p. 132.31–133.1 Marcovich: *αὐτὸν δὲ γόνυ κλίνειν [καί] ἐκτετακότες ἀμφοτέρας τὰς χεῖρας, οἰοῦντι περὶ ἀμαρτίας ἐξομολογούμενον*; cf. p. 133.11–12.
26. p. 133.11–15 Marcovich: *εἰ οὖν ... ἐξομολογούμενος ὁ Ἀδὰμ καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν φυλάσσων τοῦ θηρίου κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκμμήσεται τὴν Λύραν, τουτέστι κατακολουθήσει τοῖς [] τοῦ θεοῦ [τουτέστι πειθόμενος τῷ νόμῳ], παρακείμενον αὐτῷ τὸν Στέφανον λήψεται*. (again following Marcovich's suggestion of *προστάγμασι* at the lacuna).
27. On the constellations Serpens and Ophiuchus see Kidd, p. 206.
28. p. 134.29–30 Marcovich: *Αὐταὶ δὲ αἱ Ἄρκτοι ... ἑβδομάδες εἰσὶ δύο, ἐξ ἑπτὰ ἀστέρων συγκείμεναι, δισσῶν κτίσεων εἰκόνες*.
29. Matt 7.14b is expressly quoted in *Refutation* 48.9: *ὀλίγοι γάρ ... εἰσὶν οἱ διὰ τῆς στενῆς ὁδοῦ πορευόμενοι* (p. 134.42 Marcovich).
30. See Aratus, *Phaenomena* 26–35.
31. p. 134.31 Marcovich.
32. p. 134.32 Marcovich.
33. Cf. scholium 39 on Aratus: “And the Greeks being in ignorance of the Little [Bear], they used to sail and do sail better when they looked toward Helice” (p. 89.2–4 Martin: *οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες ἐν ἀγνωσίᾳ τῆς μικρᾶς ὄντες πρὸς τὴν Ἑλικὴν ὄρωντες ὡς μείζονα διέπλεον καὶ πλέουσιν*). Kidd, p. 189, connects this with Odysseus using the Great Bear as a guide to navigation in *Odyssey* 5.276–77.
34. Though note that in 48.13 it is Cynosura, identified with the new creation, that is described as “the image of rational creation in heaven” (*ἡ δευτέρα κτίσις, ἡ Κυνόσουρα, λογικῆς κτίσεως εἰκὼν ἔστηκεν ἐν οὐρανῷ* [p. 135.67–68 Marcovich]).

35. p. 134.37–40 Marcovich: ἑλίκην τινὰ οὖσαν τὴν τοιαύτην κτίσιν - ἢ διδασκαλίαν ἢ σοφίαν -, εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω ἄγρουν τὸς ἐπομένους τῇ τοιαύτῃ κτίσει· στροφή γάρ τις [ἡ] τῆς Ἑλικῆς προσηγορία, καὶ ἀνακύκλωσις ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ εἶναι δοκεῖ. On the derivation of Helice see G. Gundel, s.v. “Helike,” RE 7, 2859.
36. Beck, *Religion of the Mithras Cult*, 173.
37. So e.g. 2 Cor 5.17, Eph 4.24. The old/new dichotomy was more often used to claim the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.
38. See Kidd, p. 189–90. According to the *Refutation* the Greeks were originally Phoenicians who moved away from the Red Sea to the land where they now dwell (Φοίνικας δὲ εἶναι Ἑλληνας λέγουσι τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς θαλάσσης μετοικήσαντας εἰς τοῦτον τὸν χώρον, οὗ καὶ νῦν οἰκοῦσι· τοῦτο γὰρ Ἡροδότῳ δοκεῖ [p. 134.46–48 Marcovich]). The reference to Herodotus is to *Histories* 1.1, which discusses the origins of the Phoenicians, though Herodotus does not say that these Phoenicians became Greeks. The latter idea was likely prompted by Christian logic (expressed either by the Arateans or by Hippolytus) regarding the old Adamic creation, i.e. the “Greeks” who, being fallen, must have “removed” themselves at some point from original goodness. The contrast between the Greeks navigating by Helice and the Sidonians by Cynosura was reiterated by several Latin poets (see Kidd, p. 190); on referring to the Phoenicians as Sidonians see Kidd, p. 191.
39. s.v. “κυνόσουρα,” LSJ, 1011.
40. Cf. the Mithraic association of the Dog Star with genesis into the cosmos evident in Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs* 24.
41. “That which is hot and scorching, which people call Sirius” (ὅς ῥα μάλιστα/ ὄξεα σειράει· καὶ μιν καλέουσι ἄνθρωποι/ Σείριον [p. 96 Kidd]), and see Kidd’s notes on p. 307–08 and also s.v. σειράω, LSJ, 1588. In fact, the etymology of Sirius is uncertain (H. Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* [Heidelberg, 1960–70], vol. 2, 688).
42. p. 134.55–135.66 Marcovich: ἐντεῦθεν ... ὁ Ἄρατος περὶ τῆς τοῦ Κυνὸς ἀνατολῆς λέγων εἶρηκεν οὕτως· Κυνὸς δὲ ἀνατεῖλαντος οὐκέτι φυταλιαὶ ἐψεύσαντο. τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν ὃ λέγει· τὰ φυτευόμενα φυτὰ εἰς τὴν γῆν μέχρι τῆς τοῦ Κυνὸς ἀνατολῆς πολλακίς μὴ ῥιζοβολήσαντα ὁμως τέθηλε φύλλοις καὶ ἐνδείκνυται τοῖς βλέπουσιν ὅτι ἔσται τελεσφόρα καὶ φαίνεται ζῶντα, οὐκ ἔχοντα δὲ ζῶην ἀπὸ ῥίζης ἐν αὐτοῖς· ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἡ τοῦ Κυνὸς ἀνατολὴ γένηται, ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυνὸς τὰ ζῶντα ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν διακρίνεται· μαραινεται γὰρ ὄντως ὅσα οὐκ ἔρριζοβόλησεν. οὗτος οὖν ... ὁ Κύων, Λόγος τις ὢν θεῖος, “ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν κριτὴς” καθέστηκε, καὶ καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν

φωτῶν ὁ Κύων τὸ ἄστρον ἐπιστάτης τῆς κτίσεως θεωρεῖται, οὕτως ἐπὶ τῶν οὐρανίων φωτῶν ... τουτέστι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁ Λόγος. The initial quotation derives from *Phaenomena* 332–33.

43. Presumably because of the influence of the constellation names, the text literally has “from the great creation to the less” (ἀπὸ τῆς μεγάλης κτίσεως κωλύων ἐπὶ τὴν μικρὰν κτίσιν μετελθεῖν [p. 135.69–70 Marcovich]).
44. p. 135.77 Marcovich: Οὐδ' ἄρα Κηφῆος μογερὸν γένος Ἰασίδαο. The last word is Marcovich's emendation, derived from Aratus' original, of the reading εἰς αἶδαο in the *Refutation*.
45. p. 135.2–3 Marcovich. Cf. Tertullian's allusion to Aratus' treatment of the constellations in *Scorpiace* 10.4: “But if I should demand that those heavenly people [i.e. the martyrs] be shown to me, Aratus will sketch more easily Perseus and Cepheus and Erigone and Ariadne among the stars.” (Illos autem caelestes homines si expostulem mihi ostendi, facilius Aratus Persea et Cephea et Erigonam et Ariadnam inter sidera deliniabit [CCL 2, 1087.22–24].)
46. The exegetical phrase “winged offspring of Zeus” (περωτὸν Διὸς ἔγγονον) is conveniently applicable to both Perseus and Christ. In 49.2 Perseus/Logos is described as the winged axis which extends to both poles through the middle of the earth and causes the cosmos to revolve. Cf. Justin, *First Apology* 22.5 and *Dialogue with Trypho* 67.2, 70.5 where Perseus and Christ are paralleled based on their respective “virgin births” from Danaë and Mary.
47. τὸ ἐπίβουλον θηρίον (p. 136.1 Marcovich).
48. See, for example, Apollodorus, *Library* 2.34ff. and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.610ff.; on the catasterisms of these figures see Ps-Eratosthenes, *Catasterisms* 15–17 and Manilius, *Astronomica* 5.540–618.
49. Kidd, p. 284–85. Ptolemy still refers to it as “Ὀρνις in *Tetrabiblos* 1.9 (p. 64 Robbins).
50. p. 136.10–14 Marcovich: ἔστι δὲ παρὰ τὰς Ἄρκτους καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ὃ ἔστιν ὁ Ὀρνις, ὁ Κύκνος, μουσικὸν ζῷον, τοῦ θεοῦ σύμβολον πνεύματος, ὅτι πρὸς αὐτοῖς ἤδη τοῖς τέρμασι γινόμενον τοῦ βίου μόνον ἄδειν πέφυκε, “μετὰ ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος” τῆς κτίσεως τῆς πονηρᾶς ἀπαλλασσόμενον, ὕμνου ἀναπέμπον τῷ θεῷ.
51. On the motif of the “swan song” in mythology see Gossen, s.v. “Schwan,” RE 2nd

- series 2A, 785–87.
52. p. 136.15–19 Marcovich: καρκίνοι δὲ καὶ ταῦροι καὶ λέοντες καὶ κριοὶ καὶ αἶγες καὶ ἔριφοι καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα θηρία διὰ τῶν ἄστρον ὀνομάζεται κατὰ τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰκόνες δὴ, φησίν, εἰσὶ καὶ παραδείγματα, ἀφ' ὧν ἡ μεταβλητὴ κτίσις λαμβάνουσα τὰς ιδέας τοιούτων ζῶων γίνεται πλήρης.
 53. “Les Pérates,” *Pléroma Salus Carnis: Homenaje a Antonio Orbe*, ed. Eugenio Romero-Pose et al. (Santiago de Compostela, 1990), 230.
 54. The term literally means “suburban dwellers” (s.v. LSJ, 1469); Montserrat-Torrents, “Pérates,” 233 renders it as “maires.” In the context, the term likely refers to various celestial ruling powers of the Peratic system; cf. the conclusion of 5.14 (οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ προάστειοι ἕως αἰθέρος [p. 180.55 Marcovich]) and the phrase καλοῦντες τοπάρχας καὶ προαστείους in 5.13.12 (p. 177.61–62 Marcovich).
 55. p. 174.1–2 Marcovich: Μάθωμεν [μὲν] οὖν πρῶτον πῶς ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν παρὰ τῶν ἀστρολόγων εἰληφότες ἐπηρεάζουσι Χριστόν. The claim is repeated in 13.9 and 12, and 15.1ff. In 5.17.1 Hippolytus describes the wisdom of the Peratae as “crooked” (σκολιὰν, perhaps with their veneration of the serpent in mind) because it is enmeshed with astrology.
 56. p. 174.2–175.6 Marcovich: ἐργαζόμενοι φθορὰν τοῖς ἐπομένοις αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ τοιαύτῃ πλάνῃ. οἱ γὰρ ἀστρολόγοι ἓνα τὸν κόσμον εἰρηκότες διαιροῦσιν αὐτὸν εἰς τὰ τῶν ἀπλανῶν ζῳδίων μέρη δώδεκα, καὶ καλοῦσι τὸν κόσμον τῶν ζῳδίων τῶν ἀπλανῶν ἓνα κόσμον ἀπλανῆ· ἕτερον δὲ εἶναι τὸν τῶν πλανωμένων, [καὶ ἕτερον τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς, ὄν] καὶ δυνάμει καὶ θέσει καὶ ἀριθμῷ κόσμον λέγουσιν, ὃ ἔστι μέρος [μέχρι] σελήνης.
 57. Cf. another word play in 13.12: the Peratae “unsystematically systematize” (ἀτέχνως τεχνολογούντες) the ideas of the astrologers, having believed in a supposition of “great error” (μεγάλῃς πλάνης) (p. 177.64 Marcovich).
 58. p. 175.8–9 Marcovich: λαμβάνειν δὲ κόσμον ἀπὸ κόσμου δυνάμιν τινα καὶ μετουσίαν, καὶ μετέχειν [ἀπὸ] τῶν ὑπερκειμένων τὰ ὑποκείμενα.
 59. p. 175.9–12 Marcovich: ἵνα δὲ ἔσται τὸ λεγόμενον ἐμφανές, αὐταῖς ἐκείναις ταῖς τῶν ἀστρολόγων ἐκ μέρους χρῆσθαι φωναῖς, ὑπομνήσων τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας τὰ προειρημένα ἐν τῷ τόπῳ οὗ ἐξεθέμεθα τὴν τῶν ἀστρολόγων πᾶσαν τέχνην. Cf. the similar claims to use the *ipsissima verba* of the astrologers against them in Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 6.5, and Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 4.4.17.
 60. *Refutation* 13.3–9 (p. 175.15–176.40 Marcovich) = *Against the Astrologers* 5.5–11;

Refutation 13.10–11 (p. 176.45–52) is derived from *Against the Astrologers* 5.29, 37 and 39. Marcovich, p. 34, 50, also shows as evidence of Hippolytus' hasty or mechanical copying the fact that he twice repeats the misplaced phrase τὸ μὲν ἐν μέρος from the Peratic source he is citing (in *Refutation* 5.12.2 and 10.10.1–2). In 13.9 there is a brief insertion from the author himself, where he reminds his readers that he has already dealt with astrology earlier, and asserts that “Euphrates the Peratic and Celbes the Carystian, the founders of the [Peratic] heresy” who “paid attention to this art immoderately” really wrote about astrology, changing only the names (of the stars and planets): Ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὸν περὶ τούτων λόγον λεπτομερῶς ἐξεθέμεθα ἐν τῇ πρὸ ταύτης βίβλῳ· ὅθεν ἔστι μαθεῖν τὸν φιλομαθῆ ὡς οἱ τῆς Περαιτικῆς αἰρέσεως ἀρχηγοί, Εὐφράτης ὁ Περαιτικός καὶ Κέλβης ὁ Καρύστιος, μεταγαγόντες ὀνόμασι μόνον διήλλαξαν, δυνάμει δὲ τὰ ὅμοια ὑπέθεντο, καὶ αὐτοὶ τῇ τέχνῃ κατακόρως προσέχοντες (p. 176.41–45 Marcovich). Nothing further is known of these ἀρχηγοί.

61. p. 177.67–68 Marcovich: ὡς οἱ Περαιτικοὶ λόγοι τῶν ἀστρολόγων ὁμολογουμένως εἰσίν, οὐ Χριστοῦ.
62. Bouché-Leclercq, 257–59. Hippolytus uses the proper Greek terminology ὠροσκόπος, μεσουράνημα, δύσις, ἀντιμεσουράνημα (p. 181.14 Marcovich).
63. Bouché-Leclercq, 273–74. Again these Greek terms are used by Hippolytus (p. 181.16–24 Marcovich).
64. p. 181.17–20 Marcovich.
65. p. 181.20–24 Marcovich: ὅταν οὖν τοῖς γράμμασιν αὐτῶν ἐντυχόν τις δύναμιν εὐρίσκη παρ' αὐτοῖς λεγομένην δεξιάν ἢ ἀριστεράν, ἀνατρεχέτω ἐπὶ τὸ κέντρον καὶ τὸ ἀπόκλιμα καὶ τὴν ἐπαναφοράν, καὶ κατόψεται σαφῶς πᾶσαν αὐτῶν τὴν πραγματείαν ἀστρολογικὴν διδασκαλίαν καθεστῶσαν.
66. Marcovich, p. 33.
67. p. 179.27–28 Marcovich: τοὺς πλάνητας ἀστέρας, ἐφ' ὧν ἡ φθαρτὴ γένεσις ἠώρηται.
68. On Kronos (i.e. Saturn) as setting the limit of life and determining death see Bouché-Leclercq, 94, 422–43. Cf. the role of Kronos as one of the Προάστειοι in *Refutation* 5.14.1–2.
69. *Sphaera*, 309–10; cf. Stuckrad, *Ringens*, 634.
70. καὶ ἀρχῶν δωδεκαώρου νυκτερινῆς Σοκλάν· ὃν ἐκάλεσεν ἡ ἀγνωσία Ὅσπριν. τούτου κατ' εἰκόνα ἐγένοντο Ἄδμητος, Μήδεια, Ἑλληνη, Αἰθουσα. ἀρχῶν ἡμερινῆς

δωδεκαώρου Εὐνώ· οὗτος οἰκονόμος τῆς πρωτοκαμάρου ἀνατολικῆς καὶ αἰθερίου· ὃν ἐκάλεσεν ἡ ἀγωνασία Ἰσιν. τούτου σημεῖον Κυνὸς ἄστρον· οὗ κατ' εἰκόνα ἐγένοντο Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Ἀρσινόης, Διδύμη, Κλεοπάτρα, Ὀλυμπιάς (p. 179.32–37 Marcovich).

71. See *Sibylline Oracles* fragment 3.1 (p. 230 Geffcken): εἰ δὲ γενητὸν ὄλωσ καὶ φθείρεται. Geffcken notes several similar references among early Christian writers.
72. p. 181.1–182.7 Marcovich: Καλοῦσι δὲ αὐτοὺς Περάτας, μηδένα δύνασθαι νομίζοντες τῶν ἐν γενέσει καθεστηκότων διαφυγεῖν τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως τοῖς γεγενημένοις ὀρισμένην μοῖραν—εἰ γάρ τι, φησί, γενητὸν, ὄλωσ καὶ φθείρεται, καθάπερ καὶ Σιβύλλη δοκεῖ—μόνοι δέ, φησίν, ἡμεῖς οἱ τὴν ἀνάγκην τῆς γενέσεως ἐγνωκότες, καὶ τὰς ὁδοὺς δι' ὧν εἰσελήλυθεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἀκριβῶς δεδιδαγμένοι, διελεθεῖν καὶ περᾶσαι τὴν φθοράν.... Cf. the similar emphasis on “we/us” who have been saved from fate in Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks* 9.2 and in *Excerpts from Theodotus* 72.1, 76.1–4.
73. BDB, 720, s.v. אַבְרָם. Thus in the Septuagint of Gen 14.13 “Abram the Hebrew” is Ἀβραμ τῷ περάτῃ (p. 163 Wevers). The same etymology is found in Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* 20: “Egypt...the domain of the body, it is recorded that he [Abraham] boasted that he was of the people of the Hebrews, whose habit is to remove themselves from he things of sensible perception to those of the mind, for ‘Hebrew’ means ‘migrant’....” (Αἰγύπτου ... τῆς σωματικῆς χώρας, ἀναγραφῆναι, τὸ αὐχεῖν ἐπὶ τῷ γένος εἶναι Ἑβραίων, οἷς ἔθος ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ μετανίστασθαι—περάτης γὰρ ὁ Ἑβραῖος ἐρμηνεύεται.... (vol. 4, p. 142 Colson–Whitaker [LCL]). See also the references cited in Lampe, 1060, s.v. περάτης 1.
74. “Pérates,” 229.
75. *Ibid.*, 242.
76. p. 186.24–30 Marcovich.
77. p. 183.36–41 Marcovich. The phrase “full of the full” parallels the phrase “pleroma of all pleromas” in *Pistis Sophia* 1.9 (applied to the teaching of Jesus) and 1.19 (applied to Maria) (p. 16, 28 Schmidt–Macdermot).
78. In Ex 7.8–12 it is actually the staff of Aaron which swallows up those of the Egyptian magicians; the staff of Moses features earlier in Ex 4.1–5 where Moses is given the ability to turn his staff into a serpent. The latter passage functions as a preface to the contest at Pharaoh’s court.
79. p. 183.52–53 Marcovich: οὗτος ἐστι, φησίν, ὁ ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις ἐν ἀνθρώπου

μορφή φανείς ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις Ἡρώδου....

80. There is a passing mention in 5.16.11 of Nimrod (citing Gen 10.9), a figure who as we have seen was sometimes associated with the demonic origins of astrology in Judaism and early Christianity. In Peratic doctrine Nimrod seems to have undergone a transvaluation into another salvific figure.
81. p. 184.67–82 Marcovich: Τούτου, φησί, μόνου τὸ ὁμοίωμα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ διὰ παντός ἐστιν ἐν φωτὶ ὀρώμενον. οὗτος, φησίν, ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη ἀρχὴ ... καὶ εἶ τινας, φησίν, "οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ μακάριοι", οὗτος ὄψεται ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν τοῦ ὄψεως τὴν καλὴν εἰκόνα ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ ἀρχῇ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ στρεφομένην καὶ γινομένην ἀρχὴν πάσης κινήσεως πᾶσι τοῖς γινομένοις, καὶ γινώσεται ὅτι χωρὶς αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν οὔτε τῶν ουρανίων οὔτε τῶν ἐπιγείων οὔτε τῶν καταχθονίων συνέστηκεν—οὐ νύξ, οὐ σελήνη, οὐ καρποὶ, οὐ γένεσις, οὐ πλοῦτος, οὐχ ὁδοιπορία—οὐδ' ὄλωσ τι τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶ δίχα σημαίνοντος ἐκείνου.
82. p. 185.87–94 Marcovich: ἐκατέρωθεν δὲ αὐτοῦ παρατέτακται Στέφανος καὶ Λύρα, καὶ κατ' αὐτὴν ἄνωθεν τὴν κεφαλὴν ἄκραν ἐλεεινὸς ἄνθρωπος, ὁ Ἐν γόνασιν καλούμενος, ἐστὶν ὀρώμενος.... κατὰ δὲ τὸν νότον τοῦ Ἐν γόνασιν ἐστὶν ὁ ἀτελής Ὅφις, ἀμφοτέρας ταῖς χερσὶ κατεσφιγμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀφιοῦχου καὶ κωλυόμενος ἐφάσασθαι τοῦ Στεφάνου, παρακειμένου τῷ τελειῷ Ὄφει. Cf. *Refutation* 4.47–48 for the allegorization of these constellations by the Arateans.
83. Again, I owe this observation to Roger Beck.
84. p. 185.85–86 Marcovich. Aratus' original (p. 76 Kidd; so too the quotation in *Refutation* 4.47.3) has the plural nouns δύσιές τε καὶ ἀντολαί. Cf. *Refutation* 4.47.1–3 (p. 131–32 Marcovich) on the Arateans.
85. p. 185.87 Marcovich.
86. p. 185.91 Marcovich: δεξιτεροῦ ποδὸς ἄκρον ἔχων σκολιοῖο Δράκοντος; the words μέσσω δ' ἐφύπερθε καρῆνῳ appear in Aratus' line 69 (p. 76 Kidd). Cf. *Refutation* 4.47.5 (p. 132.29 Marcovich) on the Arateans.
87. p. 184.68–76 Marcovich. Jn 1.1–4 and Gen 3.20 are explicitly cited. The basis of this interpretation is the word γέγονεν (Montserrat-Torrents, "Pérates," 238). The serpent as the source of life is elaborated on in Hippolytus' second description of the Peratic system (5.17.1–5), and also lies behind the fascinating metaphor of the anatomy of the brain in 5.17.11–13.
88. See the summary description by Georg Strecker in ABD, vol. 2, 430–31. F. Stanley

- Jones has reconstructed and translated into English the fragments from, and closely related witnesses to, the Book of Elchasai found in ancient writers in “The *Book of Elchasai* in its Relevance for Manichaean Institutions, with a Supplement: The *Book of Elchasai* Reconstructed and Translated,” *ARAM* 16 (2004): 179-215.
89. p. 359.11–12 Marcovich: οὔτοι καὶ μαθηματικοῖς καὶ ἀστρολογικοῖς καὶ μαγικοῖς προσέχουσιν ὡς ἀληθεῖσι.
90. It is likely that this derives from a book or preaching of Elchasai himself rather than from the “doctrines of the Elkesaites in general, taken from some source dealing with the Elkesaites” as asserted in A.F.J. Klijn and G. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects* (Leiden, 1976), 58.
91. p. 362.7–14 Marcovich: φησὶ γὰρ οὕτως· "εἰσὶν ἀστέρες πονηροὶ τῆς ἀσεβείας· τοῦτο νῦν ὑμῖν εἴρηται, εὐσεβεῖς καὶ μαθηταί· φυλάσσετε ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμερῶν τῆς ἐξουσίας ἀρχῆς αὐτῶν, καὶ μὴ ποιεῖτε τὴν καταρχὴν τῶν ἔργων ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτῶν, καὶ μὴ βαπτίζετε ἄνδρα ἢ γυναῖκα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς ἐξουσίας αὐτῶν. ὅποταν οὖν διαπορεύηται παρἔξ αὐτοῦ ἡ σελήνη καὶ συνοδεύῃ αὐτοῖς, ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν φυλάσσετε, ἕως οὗ ἐκπορεύεται ἀπ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ τότε βαπτίζετε καὶ ἐνάρχεσθε ἐν πάσῃ ἀρχῇ τῶν ἔργων ὑμῶν....”
92. Bouché-Leclercq, 422–23.
93. Jones, “Astrological Trajectory”, 187. Based on autopsy of the Paris manuscript Jones follows the original reading ὅποταν διαπορεύηται ἐξ αὐτῶν ἡ σελήνη (whenever the moon traverses one of them [i.e. Saturn or Mars]), understanding ἐξ αὐτῶν as a partitive construction. On conjunctions, see Bouché-Leclercq, 245–47.
94. Bouché-Leclercq, 245.
95. p. 362.14–16 Marcovich: ἔτι δὲ τιμήσατε τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ σαββάτου, ἐπειδὴ ἐστὶν ἡμέρα μία ἐξ αὐτῶν. ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν τρίτην σαββάτου φυλάσσετε μὴ κατάρχεσθαι....
96. Marcovich’s identification of this Sabbath with Saturday (p. 362n) is likely correct. On the Elchasaites as Jewish Christians see Stephen Wilson, *Related Strangers* (Minneapolis, 1995), 149–50.
97. Contra Jones, “Astrological Trajectory,” 187 who identifies the “third day of the week” as Tuesday; the earlier mention of lunar conjunctions suggests that the Elchasaites most likely observed Monday.
98. Jones, “Astrological Trajectory,” 187–88.

99. *Ibid.*, 188.
100. See the discussion in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 57.
101. See the references to frequent baptisms in 9.15–16. These were received after committing sins, as well as for healings and exorcisms. Again, the practice of ritual bathing may reflect the group's Jewish origins.
102. See Georg Strecker, "Elkesai," RAC 4, 1181.
103. Jones, "Astrological Trajectory," 188.
104. Strecker, "Elkesai," 1178. It is interesting that Mani's father, Fattik, had been a member of the Elchasaites as had Mani himself as a youth; this is corroborated by the Cologne-Mani codex (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 65). The Cologne-Mani codex makes no mention of astrological elements (A.J.F. Klijn and G.J. Reinink, "Elchasai and Mani," VC 28 [1974]: 283).
105. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 65.

18. Tertullian

In general, anti-astrological polemic and the nativity story of the Magi and the star (Matt 2.1–12) appear as separate themes within early Christian literature. The first Christian author to explicitly deal with the Matthean story in the context of arguing against astrology was Tertullian in *On Idolatry* 9.¹ The juxtaposition of these themes leads Tertullian to grant a limited validity to astrology in this text.

Tertullian's discussion of astrology in *On Idolatry* 9 was provoked by a certain astrologer who, having converted to Christianity, had then claimed the right to continue in his profession (9.1). As we have seen, such occupations were traditionally forbidden to Christians.² Therefore, from Tertullian's perspective, the proper response to the Christian astrologer was presumably self-evident, and so at the outset of *On Idolatry* 9 he announces that he will only deal with it briefly.

About astrologers one should not even have to speak; but since the other day somebody challenged us by claiming the right to continue this profession, I shall devote a few words to it (9.1).³

In fact, in the remainder of the chapter Tertullian deals with the topic of astrology at some length. Initially, he focusses on the demonic origin of astrology, noting that the banishment of astrologers from Rome parallels the expulsion of the fallen angels from heaven (9.1–2). Then in 9.3, he introduces the Biblical story of the Magi, quoting Matt 2.1: "But Magi [and astrologers] came from the east."⁴ After noting the connection between magic and astrology,⁵ Tertullian returns to the Matthean story of the Magi and presents its implications for his Christian view of astrology.

From Tertullian's perspective, the Matthean story poses a problem because of its positive, approving portrayal of the Magi. In light of such a depiction of these Magi in the context of the Scriptures, he cannot help but acknowledge that they had discovered the Christ child on the basis of their astrological knowledge:

Interpreters of stars, then, were the first to announce Christ's birth, the first to honour him with gifts. In this way, I think, they established a pious bond between themselves and Christ. But what of that? Will, therefore, the piety of those magi protect today's astrologers? (9.3).⁶

Presumably the reason he referred to the Matthean text in the first place was because of the way it was being used by others in the church to argue that astrology was not opposed to Christianity after all.⁷ The Matthean text could well have been used to support the position of someone like the new convert who wanted to continue in his profession as an astrologer.⁸ To those who would maintain such a position, Tertullian poses the dismissive question: “But what of that?” (*Quid tum?*) Beyond this, however, Tertullian’s task is to find a way to balance his respect for the Biblical story with his insistence that Christians were not to occupy themselves with astrology: he has to draw limits to how the Matthean text might be misused as well as to demonstrate its relevance to his own adamant repudiation of astrology. Tertullian’s solution is to make a simple temporal distinction in the history of astrology, to separate “those magi” from “today’s astrologers”:

In fact that science [astrology] was only permitted until the Gospel, in order that after Christ’s birth no one should thenceforth interpret a person’s nativity from the stars (9.4).⁹

This position involves a remarkably generous compromise of Tertullian’s otherwise steadfast rejection of astrology.¹⁰ He admits that astrology was valid in the time before Christ, before the coming of the Gospel—and the last instance of this was the coming of the Magi to the Christ child; since the coming of Christ, however, astrology is to be rejected. (As is common among early Christian writings, astrology here is exclusively equated with genethliology.) Of course, the emphasis is on the separation between astrology and Christianity after Christ—and its present implications: “After the Gospel you will nowhere find...astrologers...unless as clearly punished” (9.7).¹¹ Nevertheless, Tertullian’s position represents a significant concession: under the pressure of the Matthean nativity account, with its implicit recognition of astrology, Tertullian is forced to admit that astrology had a limited validity, i.e. it was permitted by God before the coming of Christ. This is an interesting variant of the “old/new” distinction which appears frequently in early Christian writings, most often with reference to the “old covenant” of Judaism and the “new covenant” of Christianity. Indeed, Tertullian’s “*astrologia usque ad evangelium concessa*” clearly echoes the theme that “the law and the prophets were in effect until John” (Matt 11.13; Lk 16.16).¹² Tertullian’s position also has some parallels with another early Christian notion, the “harrowing of hell,” i.e. the belief that after the crucifixion Christ descended to hell to rescue

the righteous persons of the Old Testament. The latter, of course, while not having had explicit faith in Christ were nevertheless part of the history of salvation into which Christianity was incorporated; since in various ways (e.g. prophecy) they had anticipated the coming of Christ a way had to be found to include them in the salvation that Christ accomplished, and the doctrine of the “harrowing of hell” was geared to “salvage” those Old Testament righteous for Christianity. The notion of the “harrowing of hell” is already evident as early as 1 Peter 3.19–20 and Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9.2—and was opposed by Tertullian himself in *On the Soul* 55.4. The idea of the “harrowing of hell” came to be more widely accepted in the Christian tradition than Tertullian’s admission of the validity of astrology before Christ; nevertheless, in effect both of these ideas were ways of coming to a more positive view of matters external to Christianity for which there was warrant within Christianity that they should not be rejected.

In *On Idolatry* 9 Tertullian reinforces his view that astrology was valid until the coming of Christ, but no longer, in three ways. First he notes that even if in Matthew’s Gospel the Magi did search for Christ, contemporary astrology concerns itself with him no longer.

Shall we say that nowadays astrology occupies itself with Christ, that it observes and proclaims the star of Christ, not those of Saturn and Mars and anyone else from that same class of dead people? (9.3).¹³

This rhetorical question—with its unstated, obviously negative, answer—supports Tertullian’s thesis that astrology and Christianity are to be separated after the coming of Christ. Moreover, he also engages in polemic in the very same question: not only is the star of Christ contrasted with the malefic planets Saturn and Mars, he also makes a passing jab at the Greco-Roman identification of the planets with deities by alluding to the euhemerist view that the gods were really dead human beings who had been deified¹⁴

Second, drawing on elements of the Matthean story itself Tertullian interprets the gifts of the Magi as a metaphor of the end of “pagan” religion in general (including, of course, astrology): “For they also presented the incense, myrrh and gold to the then new-born Lord as a termination of worldly offerings and glory, with which Christ was about to do away” (9.4).¹⁵ In Matthew itself the worship of the Magi had already signified the acceptance of Christ by Gentiles; Tertullian uses the image of the Magi offering gifts to the Christ child to refer to the Gentiles’ turning from “pagan” religion to Christianity.¹⁶

The old religion's "worldly offerings and glory" (*sacrificatiois et gloriae saecularis*), evident in the gifts of incense and myrrh (corresponding to "sacrificatio") and gold (corresponding to "gloria"), are turned away from the gods and now offered to Christ.¹⁷ (The tradition in which gold is identified with Christ's kingship, incense with his divinity, and myrrh with his suffering, was either unknown to Tertullian or was unmentioned in this text.¹⁸)

Finally, in a creative piece of exegesis Tertullian interprets the statement that the Magi returned to their homeland "by another road" (Matt 2.12) to signify that they abandoned their previous profession as astrologers.

So it was what the dream advised those magi, no doubt in accordance with the will of God, saying that they should go to their country, but by another way and not the one by which they had come, i.e. that they should leave the 'path' of (their) old (doctrine)—that dream was not intended to prevent Herod from pursuing them; he did not pursue them, since he did not even know that they returned by another way, because he was also ignorant of the way by which they had come—; therefore we have to understand by "way": 'doctrine and discipline'. So the magi were commanded to walk another path of life from then on (9.5–6).¹⁹

The interpretation which Tertullian here rejects, that the dream which warned the Magi to travel home by another way (Matt 2.12) was given to prevent Herod from persecuting them, is curious: a more natural reading of the Matthean text is that the dream was intended to prevent Herod from finding out about the birth of the child.²⁰ The point of Tertullian's exegesis of Matt 2.12 is that the other "way" by which the Magi returned to their homeland has an allegorical meaning, referring to the altered "way of life" of the Magi after encountering Christ which would not include the practice of astrology.²¹

At the end of his treatment of astrology in *On Idolatry* (9.8) Tertullian turns to directly attack the Christian astrologer who provoked him in the first place. Tertullian sarcastically points out that if astrology had any merit, it ought to have let the fellow know that he would have to give up this profession when he converted to Christianity.

You know nothing, astrologer, if you did not know that you would become a Christian. If you did know it, you should also have known this, that you would have nothing to do with this profession. The profession itself, which presages the critical moments of others, would have taught you about the danger bound up with itself... He can never entertain hopes for the Kingdom of heaven, whose finger or rod abuses the heaven.²²

It is ironic that in this passage in which he derides this particular astrologer as ignorant Tertullian cannot avoid inserting evidence of his own knowledge of astrology. This hardly supports his assertion that astrology was only permitted before the coming of Christ. In fact, Tertullian too made use of certain astrological ideas when it suited his purpose, though it is not evident that he had more than a smattering of knowledge of the subject.²³ In the above passage, the “critical moments” (climacterica) originally derived from the context of medicine, referring to times that were considered “critical” by physicians during the course of an illness. This notion then came to be combined with katarchic astrology. In particular, astrologers regarded the seventh and ninth years of a person’s life as “critical,” as well as the square of these, the forty-ninth and eighty-first years; above all, the sixty-third was regarded as the most dangerous period of a person’s life.²⁴ Tertullian also mentions the finger (digitus) used in calculation²⁵ and the rod (radius) with which an astrologer could draw diagrams on a board strewn with fine sand;²⁶ such references suggest that Tertullian may have been slightly familiar with the practice of astrologers.²⁷

Elsewhere, Tertullian affirms that a recent solar eclipse²⁸ observed at Utica in north Africa was a warning of divine judgment. His stated reason for this view is that it could not have been an ordinary eclipse, since the sun was standing “in its exaltation and in its house” (in suo hypsomate et domicilio) (*To Scapula* 3.3²⁹). Strictly speaking this is incorrect: yes, the “house” over which the sun rules is Leo but the exaltation of the sun is the 19th degree of Aries.³⁰ Perhaps Tertullian’s use of the term “hypsomate” here is a rhetorical exaggeration.³¹ Nevertheless, his point is that the sun was at a position of greatest astrological influence; the astrological fact that it was at the site of its own power that the sun was eclipsed is the logical basis for Tertullian’s view of the eclipse as a divine warning. Tertullian does not qualify his explicit use of astrology here in any way, merely adding that he is sure his knowledge can be confirmed by the professionals: “You have the astrologers” (habetis astrologos), i.e. consult them about it. What is striking in this passage is that Tertullian betrays no hesitation concerning the use of astrology: his willingness to see the eclipse as a divine warning is so strong that he is even willing to justify it on the basis of astrology.

Further evidence that Tertullian was familiar with astrological notions is found in a passing sarcastic comment in his polemic against Marcion (*Against Marcion* 1.18.1): he claims that Marcion’s deity

appeared when his fatal hour arrived. Perhaps an Anabibazon hindered him, or some types of malefics— either Saturn in square or Mars in trine. For the Marcionites are very much astrologers, nor do they blush to make a living from the very stars of the creator.³²

Tertullian refers to three points of astrological doctrine in this passage: the “Anabibazon”; the malefic planets Saturn and Mars; and the aspects of square and trine, which were understood respectively as unfavourable and favourable relations between signs.³³ The reference to the “Anabibazon” is of particular interest. The term ἀναβιβάζων refers to the ascending node of the moon’s orbit at the point where the moon crosses the ecliptic into the northern hemisphere. The καταβιβάζων, the corresponding point of the moon’s orbit where the moon “descends,” crossing the ecliptic from north to south, is not mentioned by Tertullian.³⁴ Since eclipses can take place only when the sun and moon are both at or near the same node (i.e. when the moon comes between the sun and the earth in the case of a solar eclipse) or at opposite nodes (i.e. when the earth comes between the sun and the moon during a lunar eclipse), a necessary relationship obtains between the Anabibazontes and eclipses. This helps to account for the development of the view of the Anabibazontes as sinister, evil powers.³⁵ In ancient astrological texts the Anabibazontes generally feature as quasi-planets occupying celestial positions that were taken into account in horoscopic calculations. Later, in Arabic and Byzantine astrology they were regarded as the head and tail of a great celestial dragon which was believed to extend in a vast arc of 180 degrees across half the heavens and to produce eclipses. There are a few instances, however, in which the Anabibazontes were evidently seen as evil powers already in antiquity, for example in Mithraism (based on the evidence of the Ponza Zodiac³⁶) and Manichaeism (*Kephalaia* 69³⁷). Another instance is implied in the above quoted passage from Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 1.18.1) since Tertullian here parallels the Anabibazon with the malefic planets, suggesting that according to his knowledge of astrology (such as it was) the Anabibazon was regarded as an evil power as well.³⁸

In sum, it is evident that while Tertullian sought to restrict the validity of astrology to the historical period before the coming of Christ, his writings also suggest that he possessed some awareness of astrology himself. He thus exemplifies the situation of ancient Christians who even as they tried to repudiate astrology inevitably found themselves having some contact with it by virtue of their membership in Greco-Roman society.³⁹

Notes

1. Leo Koep, “Astrologia Usque ad Evangelium Concessa (zu Tertullian, De idololatria 9),” *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, hrsg. Alfred Stuißer und Alfred Hermann (Münster, 1964), 200–01: “wie es scheint, als erster.”
2. This is evident already in an early text such as *Didache* 3.4.
3. De astrologis ne loquendum quidem est, sed quoniam quidam istis diebus provocavit defendens sibi perseverantiam professionis istius, paucis utar (p. 34.2–3 Waszink and van Winden).
4. Sed magi [et astrologi] ab oriente venerunt (p. 36.12 Waszink and van Winden); the words “et astrologi” were presumably inserted later (see *ibid.*, 163).
5. Scimus magiae et astrologiae inter se societatem (p. 36.12–13 Waszink and van Winden). Later, in 9.7 Tertullian explicates this relationship as that of genus to species.
6. Primi igitur stellarum interpretes natum Christum annuntiaverunt, primi muneraverunt. Hoc nomine Christum, opinor, sibi obligaverunt. Quid tum? Ideo nunc et mathematicis patrociniabitur illorum magorum religio? (p. 36.13–16 Waszink and van Winden; the above trans. is from p. 37. On “hoc nomine” in an instrumental or causal sense see the editors' note on p. 165.)
7. For evidence that people were making precisely this argument see John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 6.1: “Look, they say, a star also appeared when Christ was born, which is a sign that astrology is certain” (Ἴδού, φησὶ, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεννηθέντος ἀστὴρ ἐφάνη, ὅπερ ἐστὶ σημεῖον τοῦ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν εἶναι βεβαίαν [PG 57, 61]).
8. Koep, “Astrologia,” 201: “...wir dürfen vermuten, dass der von ihm nicht gennante christliche Verteidiger der Astrologie ebenfalls, nun aber in seinem Sinne, auf diese Erzählung aus dem Evangelium sich berufen hat.”
9. At enim scientia ista usque ad evangelium fuit concessa, ut Christo edito nemo exinde nativitatem alicuius de caelo interpretetur (p. 36.18–19 Waszink and van Winden); cf. “ad evangelium usque” in 9.6 (p. 36.28–29).
10. Koep, “Astrologia,” 199 (“eine so merkwürdig grosszügige Auffassung...noch bei einem so rigoristischen Schriftsteller wie Tertullian”) and 202 (“diese merkwürdige,

überraschend grosszügige Auffassung Tertullians”).

11. Post evangelium nusquam invenias...aut Chaldaeos...nisi plane punitos (p. 36.36–37 Waszink and van Winden). In 9.6 he cites the stories of Simon Magus (Acts 8.9–24) and of the magician Elymas (Acts 13.6–11) as examples of persons practicing magic after the coming of Christ, who thereby received divine punishment when they encountered the apostles.
12. Waszink and van Winden, p. 166. The term “clausula” in 9.4, referring to the end of “worldly offerings and glory” signified by the Magi’s gifts, is used by Tertullian for John the Baptist as the end of the Law and the prophets (ipse clausula legis et prophetarum) in *Scorpiace* 8.3 (CCL 2, 1083.4–5).
13. De Christo scilicet est mathesis hodie, stellam Christi, non Saturni et Martis et cuiusque ex eodem ordine mortuorum observat et praedicat? (p. 36.16–18 Waszink and van Winden).
14. The use of “stella” with the name of a god in the genitive (rather than simply “Saturnum” and “Martem”), which parallels the “stellam Christi,” also reflects Tertullian’s view of the gods as “mortui” (Waszink and van Winden, 165).
15. Nam et tus illud et myrram et aurum ideo infanti tunc domino obtulerunt quasi clausulam sacrificacionis et gloriae saecularis, quam Christus erat adepturus (p. 36.19–22 Waszink and van Winden).
16. Cf. the affirmation of Maximus of Turin that the Magi gave up their “curiosity” when they found the Christ child: “Invenientes enim curiositate superstitionis suae Christum omnibus regnaturum detulerunt.... Magi ergo curiositate sua reppererunt a nativitate Christi curiosos esse ulterius non debere; et hoc illis magica ars profuit, ut scirent eam sibi ulterius non prodesse” (*Homily* 21 [PL 57, 270AB]), and “in thure autem et daemoniorum superstitione cessatura et futurus verae religionis cultus aperitur” (*Homily* 26 [PL 57, 283A]).
17. Waszink and van Winden, 167.
18. *Ibid.*, 168; see e.g. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.9.2, Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.60.
19. Quod igitur isdem magis somnium sine dubio ex dei voluntate suggesit, ut irent in sua, sed alia, non qua venerant via, id est ne pristina secta sua incederent, non, ne illos Herodes persequeretur, qui nec persecutus est etiam ignorans alia via digressos, quoniam et qua venerant ignorabat; adeo viam sectam et disciplinam intellegere debemus. Itaque magis praeceptum, ut exinde aliter incederent (p. 36.22–27 Waszink and van Winden). The initial “Quod” here refers not to what comes after (i.e. “ut

irent”) but is best understood instead as a relative conjunction referring to what was said in the previous sentence (i.e. quod = et id): Tertullian had said that the old “pagan” practices had come to an end, and now he goes on to say that therefore (igitur) the dream of Matt 2.12 must be interpreted allegorically. “The allegorical interpretation is presented here as a confirmation of the previous argument” (Waszink and van Winden, 169).

20. Waszink and van Winden, 170, who also note parallel early Christian texts in which the dream was understood to have been for the protection of the Magi from Herod.
21. So too, Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* 187f. interprets Abraham’s journey from Haran in Chaldea (Gen 12.4) as an allegory of giving up astrology (vol. 4, p. 410 Colson-Whitaker [LCL]). Cf. Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* 2.48: “therefore the magus knew to bring his arts to an end” (magus ergo intellegit suas cessare artes [CSEL 32/4, 68.9–10]) and the references discussed in Piotr Paciorek, “L’Adoration des Mages (Mt 2, 1-12) dans la Tradition Patristique et au Moyen Âge jusqu’au XIIIe Siècle,” *Augustiniana* 50 (2000): 137–138.
22. Nihil scis, mathematice, si nesciebas te futurum Christianum. Si sciebas, hoc quoque scire debueras, nihil tibi futurum cum ista professione. Ipsa te de periculo suo instrueret, quae aliorum climacterica praecanit.... Non potest regna caelorum sperare cuius digitus aut radius abutitur caelo (p. 38.39–43 Waszink and van Winden). So too Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 39.5 refers to the “Astronomy and genethliology of the Chaldeans...who are able to know neither what they are nor [what they] will be” (καὶ Χαλδαίων ἀστρονομία καὶ γενεθλιαλογία ... τῶν μηδὲ αὐτοὺς ὃ τί ποτε εἰσὶν, ἧ ἔσσονται, γνῶναι δυναμένων [PG 36, 340B]). Cf. Diodore of Tarsus’ quip that astrology—if it were true—must have constrained him to write his attack against it, which means that astrology fights against itself better than those who oppose it from the outside: Κάγω δὲ ... ὁ ταῦτα γράφων ὑπὸ γενέσεως καθ’ ὑμᾶς ἠναγκάσθην γράφειν τοὺς κατ’ αὐτῆς ἐλέγχους, ὥστε καὶ οὕτως αὐτὴ καθ’ ἑαυτῆς πλέον τῶν ἔξωθεν αὐτῇ μαχομένων ἐπανίσταται (p. 39.23–26 Henry).
23. René Braun ed., *Tertullien: Contre Marcion* (SC 365), 303: “Notre auteur a donc quelque teinture de cette astrologie qu’il a condamnée....” Eric Junod’s claim in the preface to his edition (SC 226) of *Philocalia* 21–27 (*Origène: Philocalie 21-27: Sur le Libre Arbitre* [Paris, 1976], 40) that “rien dans l’oeuvre de Tertullien ne laisse entrevoir une quelconque connaissance de l’astrologie” is an overstatement.
24. Bouché-Leclercq, 527–32. The theory of climaterica is also mentioned by the fifth century Christian writer and bishop Sidonius Apollinaris in *Letter* 8.11.9-10, where Sidonius refers to his friend Lampridius having consulted certain African astrologers just before his death; the fact that both Lampridius and the addressee of Sidonius’ let-

ter were interested in astrology is significant.

25. Tertullian's view that the use of the finger in astrological calculation is fraudulent is paralleled by Pliny's description in *Letter* 2.20 of the scheming of his enemy, the ex-consul M. Aquilius Regulus, to obtain money from Piso's widow Verania by playing the part of an astrologer: "Daily, he asked at what hour she was born. When he heard, he composed his face, raised his eyes, moved his lips, shook his fingers [and] made lengthy calculations" (...quo die qua hora nata esset, interrogavit. Ubi audiit, componit vultum intendit oculos movet labra, agitat digitos computat [p. 150 Radice, LCL]). On the other hand, in *Apology* 19.5 Tertullian also writes that the lengthy Biblical history requires "explanation by means of many records with the fingers' gestures of computation" (Multis instrumentis cum digitorum supputatoriis gesticulis asserendum est [CCL 1, 121.68–69]).
26. s.v. "Radius, 2" RE 25, 39.9–18. Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.849–50: "those who draw the movement of the sky with a rod and tell the rising stars" (caelique meatus/ descriptent radio et surgentia sidera dicent), and Vergil's reference to an astronomer (likely Eudoxus) who described the heavens for humanity with a rod (descripsit radio totum qui gentibus orbem) in *Eclogue* 3.41.
27. Waszink and van Winden, 179; Lorenz Stager, *Das Leben im Römischen Afrika im Spiegel der Schriften Tertullians* (Zürich, 1973), 88–89. Note that in *On the Pallium* 6.2 he refers to astrologers as among those who wear the pallium (CCL 2, 750).
28. It took place on 14 August 212 (Boll, s.v. "Finsternisse," RE 6/2.2361–62). Roger Beck, "The Anabibazontes in the Manichaean Kephalaia," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 69 (1987): 196n12 identifies this as the eclipse commemorated on the ceiling of the Ponza mithraeum.
29. CCL 2, 1129.15–18.
30. See the table in Bouché-Leclercq, 195.
31. Beck, "Anabibazontes," 196n12.
32. Processerit...quando hora fatalis advenit. Fortasse enim anabibazon ei obstabat aut aliquae maleficae aut Saturnus quadratus aut Mars trigonus. Nam et mathematici plurimum Marcionitae, nec hoc erubescetes, de ipsis etiam stellis vivere creatoris (CCL 1, 459.4–8). On taking "vivere" here in the sense of "make a living" see the note in Braun, ed. *Contre Marcion*, t. 1 (SC 365), 303–04. There is no other evidence that the Marcionites particularly adhered to astrology; it is likely that Tertul-

lian grouped them together with others that he condemned as heretical for their “curiositas” (*ibid.*, 303).

33. Bouché-Leclercq, 169–71.
34. Beck, “Anabibazontes,” 193. So too the Manichaean *Kephalaia* 69 refers only to Anabibazontes. Another image for these points of crossing is that of “tying” the moon’s orbit to that of the sun; hence the nodes were also termed σύνδεσμοι.
35. Beck, “Anabibazontes,” 193–94, who argues that another reason was that the nodes themselves move along or around the ecliptic and hence can be treated astrologically as quasi-planets.
36. Roger Beck, “Interpreting the Ponza Zodiac,” *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 1 (1976): 1–19 and 2 (1977–78): 87–147.
37. Beck, “Anabibazontes,” 193, 195–96; trans. in p. 176–79 Gardner.
38. Beck, “Anabibazontes,” 194: “Here the node itself is treated as an agent on a par with the ‘stars’ Saturn and Mars.”
39. The remarks of Junod, 52n1 concerning Origen are also applicable to Tertullian: “Dans quelle mesure l’astrologie a-t-elle effectivement impressionné le théologien alexandrin? ... En fait sa position n’a rien d’extraordinaire. Chez certains prédécesseurs et contemporains chrétiens d’Origène...comme chez Plotin, on retrouve cette condamnation sévère du fatalisme astrologique accompagnée d’une reconnaissance de l’astrologie.”

19. *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions*

Astrology in the Pseudo-Clementine Narrative

Study of the parallels between the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* and *Homilies* has shown that the two works drew on a common source known as the “Basic Writing” (Grundschrift).¹ According to F. Stanley Jones, this Basic Writing contained a focus on astrology such that astrology remains crucial to understanding the narrative structure of the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*.²

A passage of the *Recognitions* ascribed to the Basic Writing source contains a horoscope, that of Mattidia, the mother of the hero of the narrative, Clement. In the words of her husband:

Hear my wife’s horoscope and you will find the pattern whose outcome has occurred. For she had Mars with Venus in midheaven, the Moon at the setting point in the house of Mars and in the terms of Saturn. This pattern makes women to be adulterers and...to finish on a journey and in waters, which has also happened (*Recognitions* 9.32.5).³

Indeed the text provides the correct astrological interpretation of Mars and Venus together at midheaven as indicating adultery and illicit sexuality.⁴ Moreover, in the second half of the horoscope, the Moon in the malefic planets Mars and Saturn presages violent death.⁵ When we as readers encounter this horoscope near the end of the *Recognitions* we realize that earlier in the narrative the first part of the horoscope (Mars and Venus in midheaven) had been fulfilled when the mother of Clement, Mattidia, became the recipient of unwanted amorous advances from her husband’s brother (*Recognitions* 7.15).⁶ Following this, in order to avoid telling her husband of his brother’s behaviour and to avoid scandal she decided to sail from Rome. However, once on the boat she then experienced shipwreck (*Recognitions* 7.16), which seems to fulfill the second half of her horoscope (the Moon in the malefic planets Mars and Saturn). Thus the revelation of Mattidia’s horoscope in 9.30.5 makes it clear to the reader in hindsight that the starting point of the whole dramatic course of events in the life of Clement’s family was when Mattidia’s horoscope began to be fulfilled. And by the end of the narrative, as Jones writes, Mattidia’s “horoscope seems confirmed. Is the Basic Writer, a Christian author, truly assigning such life-determining power to the

stars and astrology?"⁷ Since the events presaged in Mattidia's horoscope came true, the answer seems to be yes.

Yet the writer does not subsume everything that happened to Mattidia to astrological fate because her horoscope was not fulfilled completely. Although the moon was in Mars and Saturn, Mattidia did not die in the shipwreck; instead she survived to be reunited with her family and to be baptized as a Christian by Peter (*Recognitions* 7.38). In this way we see that ultimately the power of fate is thwarted in the narrative. According to Jones, this overcoming of the power of fate is explained in 7.38 where Peter says that Mattidia's chastity had been so pleasing to God that divine grace was conferred on her even though she was still in error. "In other words, because of Mattidia's chastity, God actually stepped in and blocked the effects of the stars."⁸ The narrative affirms the validity of Mattidia's horoscope, but with allowance for her free will and only under the final sovereignty of God.

Jones believes that this view of the relationship of astrological fate, human free will and divine power in the Pseudo-Clementine narrative derives from Bardaisan. Indeed, it is evident that the thought of Bardaisan had significant influence on the Pseudo-Clementine literature because the section of the *Book of the Laws of Countries* dealing with the argument of νόμιμα βαρβαρικά⁹ is paralleled at length in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 9.19–29. Moreover, we have seen Bardaisan's nuanced distinction of the realm of human experience in which astrological fate is operative over against the realms in which nature and human free will are effective.¹⁰ There are certainly strong similarities between this view of Bardaisan and that found in the Pseudo-Clementine narrative which affirms the power of Mattidia's horoscope but only in a qualified way, subject to Mattidia's free will (her choice of chastity) and divine intervention (her baptism by Peter); it is quite plausible that behind this lies the thought of Bardaisan as revised by the author of the Basic Writing. Yet there is also at least one significant difference between these two Christian views which each incorporated astrology: Bardaisan's thought maintained an important role for the operation of nature in its own realm, but this role of nature is not explicitly evident in the Pseudo-Clementine narrative.¹¹

What is striking is that, as in the case of Bardaisan, the Christian writer of the Pseudo-Clementine Basic Writing affirmed the positive role of astrology and this is still reflected in the final redacted versions of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* and *Homilies* which have come down to us. From Mattidia's baptism as well as the baptism of her husband (*Recognitions*

10.72), it is clear that as with other early Christian writers such as Theodotus (*Excerpts* 75.1, 78.1) the Pseudo-Clementine narrative places significant emphasis on baptism in the liberation from fate.¹² Another aspect of astrology can be discerned in the title Περίοδοι Πέτρου referred to by Origen (*Philocalia* 23.21–22) and Epiphanius (*Panarion* 30.15.1) which according to scholarly consensus was most likely the title of the Pseudo-Clementine Basic Writing.¹³ Given the astrological interest of the author of the Basic Writing it is plausible that this title should be translated in an astrological sense: among other things περίοδος refers to the orbit of a heavenly body¹⁴ (it has this meaning in *Homilies* 6.10.1, the one occurrence of the word in the Pseudo-Clementine literature), which leads Jones to suggest that the title Περίοδοι Πέτρου “might carry an astrological ring, signifying that with the arrival of Peter, astrological determinism ends.”¹⁵

Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1. 27–71

A positive view of astrology is also evident in a section of Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (1.27–71) that has recently been shown to derive from a Jewish Christian source document of about 200 C.E.¹⁶ For example, the creation of the sun, moon and stars is described as follows in *Recognitions* 1.28.1–2:

After these things, he adorned the heaven with stars. He made the sun and the moon that they might give forth light, the one during the night and the other during the day, and also [that they might] point out the things that are, the things that are to come, those things that are temporal, and the things that are eternal. Then, for this reason they also served as signs for both times and seasons. They are seen by all, but they are comprehended by the diligent.¹⁷

As we shall see, the portrayal of the sun and moon as “indicators” is reminiscent of the Origenian view of the heavenly bodies as signs, but not causes, of events on earth. Moreover, the final sentence suggests that not everyone is able to understand what the sun and moon indicate, to read them properly and interpret their meaning as signs; that proficiency is exclusively reserved to the “diligent.” That this latter designation must refer to those who have some sort of astrological knowledge is evident from Rufinus’ Latin version of this passage, which says that “they were made as signs of times and of days, which are in fact seen by all but are understood by the learned and intelligent alone.”¹⁸ *Recognitions* 1.28.1–2 thus presents a reading of Gen 1.14 in decidedly astrological terms.¹⁹

The positive view of astrology in this section of the *Recognitions* extends also to the portrayal of Abraham as an astrologer in 1.32.3–4. Of course, the ascription of the practice of astrology to Abraham in this text is not new but reflects an already existing tradition. It is found, for example, in fragments of two Jewish writers (3d–1st century B.C.E.) preserved in Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel*: according to Artapanus, Abraham taught astrology to the king of Egypt ("Pharethothes"), and according to fragments of the historian Ps-Eupolemus Abraham learned astrology while still in Ur, excelled in it, and taught it to the Phoenicians and the Egyptian priests.²⁰ Ps-Eupolemus also says that Abraham attributed the discovery of astrology and other sciences to Enoch, whom Ps-Eupolemus equates with Atlas.²¹ Such associations of Abraham and Enoch with astrology reflect attempts to supplant the traditional ancient view that astrology had been invented by the Egyptians.²² They are Hellenistic Jewish parallels to the attribution of the invention of astrology to figures such as Atlas, Prometheus, Orpheus and Heracles in Greco-Roman²³ and early Christian texts.²⁴

The specific background to the tradition of Abraham the astrologer was presumably Gen 15.5, where Abram is commanded to look toward the sky and count the stars if he is able.²⁵ This text certainly seems to lie behind *Jubilees* 12.16–20, where Abram observes the stars "from evening until daybreak so that he might see what the nature of the year would be with respect to rain"; then a "word came into his heart" that the "signs" of the sun, moon and stars, and thus the sending of rain, are in the hand of the Lord. This salutary reminder shakes Abram from his astro-meteorological reverie, and he prays to be saved from evil spirits that would lead him astray.²⁶ The tradition is also present in a later Christian text, *Question* 117.5 of Ambrosiaster, who says that before Abraham became an example of faith (cf. Heb 11.8–19) he had been "by nature a Chaldean master" and "expert in astrology."²⁷

It is possible that *Jubilees* 12.16–20 was the source for the description of Abraham the astrologer in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.32.3–4.²⁸ However, unlike the version in *Jubilees* where Abraham rejects the observation of the heavens, and unlike other polemical versions of this tradition reflected in Philo²⁹ and Josephus,³⁰ what is significant about *Recognitions* 1.32.3–4 is that it is precisely Abraham's knowledge and practice of astrology which enables him to ascend to the knowledge of God. According to this text, when after the flood sin again became rampant upon the earth and there loomed once again threat of divine destruction, it was Abraham who "by his knowledge of God and his love for him...saved the whole world from being

destroyed.” And it is explicitly pointed out that the source of Abraham’s knowledge of God was astrology: “he recognized, through the art of the Chaldeans and from the pattern of the stars, the one who arranged them” (1.32.2–3).³¹ This affirmation was not diluted in any way in Rufinus’ version:

From the beginning, however, when everyone else was in error, since he [Abraham] was a skilled astrologer, he was able to recognize the maker from the pattern and order of the stars, and he understood that everything is governed by his providence.³²

Such a view of astrology as the means of access to the knowledge of God of course reflects the Platonic view of the stars as divine because of their perfect order of movement (evident in the *Timaeus*, for example). It is quite unusual in early Christianity, however—though it parallels some of the views of Clement of Alexandria and Origen—because of the positive role accorded to astrology in this text.

The positive view of other cultures and religions in this section of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* continues with the discussion of Abraham’s sons. Rufinus’ version says:

But while Abraham was still involved in ignorance, as we have already also told you, two sons were born to him of whom one was called Ishmael and the other Eliezer. From the one the barbarian nations descend, while from the other the peoples of the Persians descend. Of these some have imitated the life of the Brahmins and related customs, while others took up residence in Arabia, some descendants of whom were even dispersed into Egypt. Hence certain of both the Indians and the Egyptians learned to be circumcised and to be of a purer observance than the others, though with the passing of time most of them have changed the symbol and indication of purity into impiety (1.33.3–5).³³

It is significant that having just described the positive significance of astrology for Abraham, the text goes on to the theme of “barbarian customs,” the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά. Whereas (as we have seen) other Christians such as Bardaisan, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa brandished the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά as a weapon against astrology, a much more positive use of the νόμιμα is evident in this passage from the *Recognitions*. Here the Persians, Brahmins and Egyptians are identified as descendants of Abraham and the “pure observances” of their customs (including circumcision) are implicitly paralleled with those of the Jews. It is quite likely that among the “pure observances” of the nations we should also include astrology, since the text has just portrayed Abraham, the father of these nations, as an astrologer himself.

This early source document evident in *Recognitions* 1.27–71 featured a remarkable affirmation of other “pagan” religions in general, including astrology, within early Christianity. In its portrayal of the important role of astrology in Gen 1.14, and especially in Abraham’s coming to know God

[t]he author is thus assigning astrology a crucial role both in the history of humankind and in the very founding of the trajectory of true religion that extends to his own Christianity.³⁴

Notes

1. See F. Stanley Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research, *Second Century* 2 (1982): 8–14, repr. *Studies in Early Christianity* vol. 2, *Literature of the Early Church* (New York, 1993), 202–08. For an outline of the Basic Writing see Jones, “Eros and Astrology in the Περίοδοι Πέτρου: The Sense of the Pseudo-Clementine Novel,” *Apocrypha* 12 (2001): 58–61.
2. Jones, “Eros and Astrology,” 77.
3. audi coniugis meae thema, et invenies schema cuius exitus accidit. habuit enim Martem cum Venere super centrum, Lunam vero in occasu in domo Martis et finibus Saturni. quod schema adulteras facit et ...in peregre et in aquis defungi, quod et ita factum est (p. 319.10–14 Rehm [GCS]). I follow the lead of Jones’ trans. in “Eros and Astrology,” 63.
4. On Mars and Venus, in addition to the references cited in Jones, “Eros and Astrology,” 63n9 from Firmicus Maternus (*Mathesis* 6.24.2 and 3.6.21–22) see also the final section of Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.14.
5. Jones, “Eros and Astrology,” 63–64.
6. Note the wording of the parallel version in *Homilies* 12.15.3: “driven not a little mad, he was smitten with love for me” (μανείς οὐκ ἔλαττον ἠράσθη μου) (Jones, “Eros and Astrology,” 75).
7. “Eros and Astrology,” 64.
8. *Ibid.*, 76. Liberation from astrological fate is connected with the vow to virginity in Methodius of Olympus, *Banquet* 8.13–16; see Musurillo’s note in his ACW edition

(New York, 1958), 231n89.

9. p. 40–53 trans. Drijvers.
10. See above chapter 16.
11. Jones ignores this difference between the thought of Bardaisan and the Pseudo-Clementine narrative (“Eros and Astrology,” 62–63 and n8; cf. p.76 where he claims the author of the Basic Writing was “glossing Bardaisan”).
12. On the significance of baptism in relation to liberation from fate see above Part A chapter 10.
13. Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 122 and n38.
14. s.v. “περίοδος,” LSJ, 1380.
15. “Eros and Astrology,” 78. Note that the apostles are correlated with the twelve months of the year in *Recognitions* 4.35.3 and *Homilies* 2.23.
16. F. Stanley Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*; on the positive view of astrology in this source see p. 162–163.
17. The trans. of the Syriac is from Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 54.
18. pro signis enim temporum facta sunt ac dierum, quae videntur quidem ab omnibus, intelleguntur autem ab eruditis et intellegentibus solis (p. 24.20–22 Rehm). The trans. of the Latin is from Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 54.
19. Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 162–63.
20. Artapanus: trans. Collins, vol. 2, 897 (OTP); Ps-Eupolemus: trans. Doran, *ibid.*, 880–82. The latter text also gives an alternate name for the city of Abraham’s birth, Camarina. Cf. Ps-Hecataeus’ reference to Abraham having taught the Egyptians astronomy (cited in Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.8.2).
21. vol. 2, p. 881 trans. Doran (OTP).
22. Charlesworth, “Jewish Astrology,” 190. On ancient Judaism and astrology see also Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol.1, 236–39, and Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 275-78.
23. Bouché-Leclercq, 575–78.

24. For example, in *City of God* 18.8 Augustine refers to Atlas, the brother of Prometheus, as a great astronomer at the time of Moses.
25. On the tradition of Abraham the astrologer see George W.E. Nickelsburg, “Abraham the Convert,” in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren (Harrisburg, PA, 1998), 151–75.
26. vol. 2, p. 81 trans. Wintermute (OTP). Opposition to astrology in the book of *Jubilees* is also evident in 2.9 which in rehearsing Gen 1.14 omits mention of the moon (*ibid.*, p.56 and n; Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 139), and in 8.3 which condemns observing “the omens of the sun, moon and stars within all the signs of heaven” (vol. 2, p. 71 trans. Wintermute [OTP]).
27. natura Chaldeus magister...astrologiae peritus (CSEL 50, 353.11–12).
28. Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 139.
29. Referring to the renaming of Abraham in Gen 17.5, in *On Abraham* 81–84 Philo says that “Abram” signifies “one called astrologer and meteorologist, one who takes care of the Chaldean teachings as a father would of his children” (τὸν ἀστρολογικὸν καὶ μετεωρολογικὸν ἐπικαλούμενον, οὕτως τῶν Χαλδαϊκῶν δογμάτων ἐπιμελούμενον, ὡς ἂν τις πατὴρ ἐγγόνων ἐπιμεληθείη), while the new name “Abraham” means that he had left behind his earlier belief that things were caused immanently within the universe and had come to recognize God (p. 44–46 Colson [LCL]). In *On the Migration of Abraham* 176–87 (p. 234–40 Colson–Whitaker [LCL]) Philo expounds on Abraham’s departure from Chaldea, claiming that Abraham accepted only the idea of cosmic sympathy but rebuked the Chaldeans for attributing the causes of things to the heavens rather than to the creator. A shortened version of this latter view also appears in Philo’s *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3.1 (p. 175–76 Marcus [LCL]).
30. In *Jewish Antiquities* 1.154–57, Josephus writes that already in Chaldea, Abraham had realized that if the sun and moon were causes they themselves would exhibit only orderly behaviour (εὐταξία); since they do not (e.g. there is variation in the length of day and night, and in the lunar phases) and yet their movements are for our benefit, the celestial bodies must be under divine control. Because of Abraham’s views the Chaldeans disagreed with him and he emigrated to Canaan. However, Josephus quotes without qualification an excerpt of Berosus in which Abraham is described as “skilled in celestial matters” (τὰ οὐράνια ἔμπειρος) (1.158), while a few paragraphs later (1.167) he echoes Eumolpus and Artapanus to the effect that it was Moses who first introduced the Egyptians to astronomy (περὶ ἀστρονομίαν παραδίδωσι; later quotations of this passage, e.g. by Eusebius, have ἀστρολογίαν) (p.

76–78, 82 Thackeray [LCL]).

31. Trans. of the Syriac in Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 58–59.
32. ab initio tamen ceteris omnibus errantibus, ipse cum arte esset astrologus, ex ratione et ordine stellarum agnoscere potuit conditorem eiusque providentia intellexit cuncta moderari (p. 26.20–22 Rehm). The trans. is of Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 58–59.
33. p. 27.10–19 Rehm (GCS): verum cum adhuc Abraham in ignorantia versaretur, sicut tibi et ante iam diximus, nati sunt et filii duo, quorum unus Ismahel, alius Heliesdros appellati sunt, et ex alio barbarae gentes, ex alio Persarum populi descendunt. ex quibus nonnulli Bragmanorum vitam et vicina instituta sectati sunt, alii apud Arabiam consederunt, ex quorum posteris nonnulli etiam in Aegyptum dispersi sunt. inde denique et Indorum quidam et Aegyptiorum circumcidi didicerunt ac purioris observantiae esse quam ceteri, licet processu temporis quam plurimi eorum ad impietatem verterint argumentum et indicium castitatis. The above trans. is from Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 60, where the Syriac version is also translated in a parallel column; while the Syriac is less detailed than Rufinus' version it too contains the notion that the practices of Arabs, Persians, Brahmins, Indians and Egyptians (all descendants of Abraham) were originally good but became evil over time.
34. Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 162.

20. Origen

Another early Christian writer who attacked astrological fatalism yet also granted some validity to astrology was Origen.

As we have seen, Tertullian's view that astrology was acceptable before the coming of Christ is expressed in historical terms. A similar view is implied by Origen in *Against Celsus* 1.36¹ where he parallels the role played by diviners and astrologers among "pagans" to that of the Hebrew prophets in ancient Judaism, and in his *Commentary on John* 2.25–26² where he seconds the view of Clement of Alexandria before him that the worship of the sun, moon and stars was a divine gift to keep humanity from worshipping idols and demons.³ Origen's high regard for the celestial bodies is also evident in *Against Celsus* 5.6–13: while in this passage he is primarily engaged in a lengthy refutation of Celsus' promotion of astral worship, at the same time Origen affirms that Christians view the heavenly bodies very highly—though under the exclusive sovereignty of God. This latter passage also demonstrates that Origen shared the common ancient view of the stars as living, spiritual beings: he writes that hypothetically

if they [Christians] ought to worship them [the sun, moon and stars], they ought not to do so because of the visible light which amazes the masses but because of the intellectual and true light, supposing that the stars in heaven are also rational and good beings and have been enlightened by the light of knowledge from the wisdom which is 'an effulgence of eternal light' [Wisdom of Solomon 7.26]. Furthermore, their visible light is the work of the Creator of the universe, while it is probable that their intellectual light comes from the freedom of choice which they possess (5.10).⁴

Of course, he goes on to assert that even on account of their intellectual light the stars should not be worshipped by Christians who have perceived the true light of Christ (5.11).⁵ Within his Christian perspective, however, it is evident that Origen did esteem the heavenly bodies very highly: he saw them as intermediate beings between God and the world, like the angels. Moreover, it can be argued that in this passage of *Against Celsus* Origen is also conscious of the role of astral worship in other cultures: referring to the nearness of divine providence and to the eternal presence of the Son of God with human beings, Origen writes "He is with those everywhere who cling fast to him and furthermore is even with those everywhere who do not know him" (5.12).⁶ Considering that the topic under discussion at this point is the sun, moon and stars it is

not hard to think that in this text, as in *Commentary on John* 2.25–26, Origen is implicitly conceding some validity to “pagan” worship of the heavenly bodies. In sum, Tertullian, Clement and Origen each came to see worship of the heavenly bodies as representing a positive “step up” from idolatry, as a sort of “praeparatio evangelii”⁷ or instrument of divine pedagogy for humanity in general.⁸

Within the corpus of Origen’s writings which have come down to us,⁹ however, Origen’s approach to astrology is more often expressed in cosmological rather than historical terms in that he situated a type of astrology within his overall view of the heavens as a vehicle of divine revelation. As we have seen, Origen frequently affirmed his opposition to astrological fatalism. Nevertheless, he reserved a positive cosmological role for celestial phenomena through his belief that the planets and the stars do not cause earthly events but act as signs of those events. This distinction between causation (ποιεῖν) and signification (σημαίνειν) allowed Origen to avoid fatalism and at the same time to retain a role for celestial phenomena as signs which function as letters in the sky as it were, legible by those to whom God has given the capacity to comprehend them.

...il [Origène] accepterait l’astrologie, non plus comme γενεθλιαλογική, mais comme ἀστεροσκοπική... déchiffrement de l’écriture symbolique dont les astres sont les caractères.¹⁰

As with Tertullian, the Matthean story of the Magi and the star was of central importance in Origen’s view: for Origen, the appearance of the star (which he identified as a comet) to the Magi furnishes a superb example of a God using a heavenly sign to announce a great event, the birth of Christ (*Against Celsus* 1. 58–59).¹¹

This theory of the stars as signs was held by earlier writers, including Philo,¹² Theodotus¹³ and Clement of Alexandria;¹⁴ it was also discussed by Origen’s contemporary Plotinus in *Ennead* 2.3,¹⁵ and is found in Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.28.1–2¹⁶ as well as the fourth century treatise *On the Gods and the Universe* 9.¹⁷ It likely originated in ancient astro-meteorology, the prediction of natural (e.g. atmospheric or agricultural) events on the basis of observation of the heavens.¹⁸ Among his extant writings Origen’s most extensive discussion of it is found in the remains of his commentary on Genesis 1.14 preserved in book 23 of the *Philocalia*. Origen here focusses exclusively on the last part of Gen 1.14, where after the creation of

the stars the text adds “and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and and for years.” Of course, the reference to “signs” in the Biblical text provides an opportunity for Origen to expound on his view of the stars as signs but not causes of events.¹⁹ The opening words of *Philocalia* 23.1 indicate the significance that Origen accorded to this topic: “It is absolutely necessary to grasp that the created lights, which are nothing else than the sun and moon and the stars, are to be for signs.”²⁰ Parallel to this theme is Origen’s view of divine foreknowledge, which he distinguishes from divine causation: for Origen, that God knows all things in advance (a universally held predicate of divine nature which is also evident from the prophecies of Scripture) does not mean that God produces everything which takes place (23.3–5, 8–13²¹). Both of these views—of the stars as signs and of divine foreknowledge—are emphasized by Origen because they secure human freedom of the will and moral responsibility (23.7–9). Much of the rest of *Philocalia* 23 is taken up with arguments against astrological fatalism, which I have already surveyed; as well, in this text Origen consistently reiterates the primary theme of his comments on Gen 1.14, i.e. his view of the stars as signs.

At one point, drawing on a seemingly unusual reference for a Christian exegete, Origen compares other types of Greco-Roman divination which parallel his view of the stars. If the practice of augury, offering sacrifices and the observation of shooting stars do not contain the efficient cause of events why should people have different expectations from astrology? Rather, the stars and planets should be regarded as signs of events, just as the flight of birds, animal entrails and shooting stars are regarded in these other forms of divination (23.16).²² Origen’s theory of the stars as signs, therefore, reflects his acceptance of the ancient belief in cosmic universal sympathy. Where Origen really parts company with the traditional Greco-Roman view of divination is his assertion that celestial phenomena cannot be correctly interpreted by human beings: only spiritual powers that are superior to humans have this ability. He justifies the inadequacy of human observation of the stars by arguing that astrologers cannot observe the horoscope with sufficient precision, and that in their calculations they do not adequately take into account the procession of the equinoxes and the influences caused by the planets being in various aspects with one another and with the zodiacal signs (23.17–18). It should be emphasized that these Origenian arguments regarding astrological technique, which I have already surveyed,²³ were not directed against astrology as a whole but were intended to establish a proper place for astrology within Origen’s overall system of thought, that is, astrology—in Origen’s

sense, i.e. reading the signs of the heavens—as an exclusively angelic, not human, science. This is the one significant point of difference between Origen’s view and that of Plotinus: Plotinus held that astrologers were able to discern the signs in the heavens, while Origen reserved this to the angels.²⁴

What is Origen’s reason for this restriction of astrology to the angels? He argues that divine foreknowledge, which perfectly grasps all reality, can only be comprehended by

superhuman beings and holy souls which have been set free from the present bond [i.e. the body]; God has made such beings in the sky which have learned and will learn to read the signs of God, as if they were letters and characters through the revolution of heavenly things (23.20).²⁵

The purpose of this revelation to the angels is sometimes to share the joy of such knowledge with the angelic powers and at other times to instruct them in activities God requires them to do (23.20–21). Elsewhere, in his *Commentary on John* (1.68) Origen writes that it is the Gospel itself which is written on the heavenly tablets, which “those deemed worthy of knowing all things are able to read.”²⁶ Of course, like human beings the angelic powers possess free will, and some have chosen evil. These fallen angels still possess some knowledge of what is revealed in the stars, but only what they had obtained before their fall; as fallen angels, they can no longer read the heavenly signs.²⁷ It is the fallen angels that deceive human beings into believing that the stars are causes of events (23.6).

It is evident that Origen’s theme that the stars are signs but not causes was closely connected with the image of the sky pictured as a text or book, a heavenly text (“Himmelsschrift”) in which divine revelation may be read.²⁸ For the angelic powers, the sky has an analogous role to Scripture among humans: “Le ciel est la Bible des anges.”²⁹ This well-known image, which is also used by Plotinus,³⁰ was of great antiquity in the near east.³¹ Within the Biblical tradition, the picture of the sky as a book is especially common in Jewish apocalyptic literature. The image is used frequently in the book of *Jubilees*, for example.³² Origen adapts the image from its eschatological context to illustrate his cosmological perspective on the stars as signs. For example, in *Philocalia* 23.15 he quotes a text which originally conveyed the threat of eschatological judgment, Is 34.4 (“the sky will be rolled up like a scroll”³³) and changes its meaning to fit his theme that the stars are signs. In the same passage of the *Philocalia* Origen also cites a relevant excerpt from the

apocryphal *Prayer of Joseph* (thereby preserving one of the rare fragments of this work): “For I have read in the tablets of heaven all that shall befall you and your sons.”³⁴ However, since in the *Prayer of Joseph* this saying was ascribed to the patriarch Jacob, Origen concedes that some could interpret it to mean that human beings do have the capacity to read the heavenly signs after all. To this Origen responds that Jacob and others of “our sages” (οἱ καθ’ ἡμᾶς σοφοί) learned divine secrets “given by a spirit that is beyond human nature” (πνεύματι περισσοτέρῳ χρησάμενοι τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως).³⁵ Aside from Jacob, Origen writes that another example of such a unique individual who was in touch with spiritual powers was Paul, who “learned things that are not permitted to be told” (2 Cor 12.4) while he was caught up to Paradise in the third heaven (23.19).

While Origen was not a systematic writer, his theory that the stars are signs but not causes was his most characteristic view of astrology. His location of astrology within his cosmology was not shared by many later Christian writers. Diodore of Tarsus objected to this theory in the course of his prevasive attack against astrology,³⁶ as did Procopius of Gaza in his Commentary on Genesis.³⁷ Augustine mentions the view that the stars are signs but not causes, and remarks that such a view was held by people of no mean learning (*City of God* 5.1); nevertheless he dismisses it because it is not the usual way that astrologers view the stars.³⁸

Notes

1. vol. 1, p. 174 Borret (SC 132); p. 35 trans. Chadwick.
2. p. 222–24 Blanc (SC 120).
3. For Clement’s view see *Miscellanies* 6.110.3 where, in addition to the gift of philosophy, the worship of the sun, moon and stars is seen as God’s gift to the nations so that they would not become atheists and perish: ἔδωκεν δὲ τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὴν σελήνην καὶ τὰ ἄστρα εἰς θρησκείαν, ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ... ἵνα μὴ τέλειον ἄθειο γινόμενοι τελέως καὶ διαφθαρήσιν (vol. 2, p. 487.12–14 Stählin). Both Clement and Origen (*Commentary on John* 2.25, *Against Celsus* 5.10) base this view of “pagan” celestial worship on Deut 4.19, according to which God allotted the sun, moon and stars to the nations everywhere under heaven; the same interpretation of this verse is also evident in Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 55.1, 121.2.

4. οὗς εἰ ἄρα προσκυνεῖσθαι ἐχρῆν, οὐ διὰ τὸ θαυμαζόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν αἰσθητὸν φῶς ἐχρῆν προσκυνεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ νοητὸν καὶ ἀληθινόν, εἴπερ καὶ οἱ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀστέρες ζῶά εἰσι λογικὰ καὶ σπουδαῖα καὶ ἐφωτίσθησαν τῷ φωτὶ τῆς γνώσεως ὑπὸ τῆς σοφίας, ἥτις ἐστὶν "ἀπαύγασμα φωτὸς αἰδίου". Καὶ γὰρ τὸ μὲν αἰσθητὸν φῶς αὐτῶν ἔργον ἐστὶ τοῦ τῶν ὄλων δημιουργοῦ· τὸ δὲ νοητὸν τάχα καὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἐν αὐτοῖς αὐτεξουσίου ἐλληλυθός (vol. 3, p. 38.53–40.61 Borret [SC 147]). The above trans. is that of Chadwick, p. 271–72. A similar view of the stars as living beings was held by Philo (*On the Creation* 24.73, *On Dreams* 1.135, *Concerning Noah's Work as a Planter* 12). Origen's expresses his view of the stars as living beings in *On Prayer* 7 (the sun, moon and stars have free will and reason, they possess ethereal bodies), and discusses it extensively in *On First Principles* 1.7 (celestial bodies are living rational beings in ethereal bodies). On Origen's view see also: Jerome, *Letter* 124.3 and *Against John of Jerusalem* 17; Chadwick's comment in his trans. of *Against Celsus* (p. 271n8) ; Paul Lebeau, "L'Interpretation Origenienne de Rm 8.19-22," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Jungmann (Münster, 1970), 336–45; and Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars* (Oxford, 1991), 113–49. This view of Origen was condemned among 15 anathemas against Origen at a Council at Constantinople in 543 (canon 3) (Hefele-Leclercq, vol. 2/2, 1192).
5. In 5.11 Origen also uses the image of the personified Sun that protests to those who worship it that they should worship God instead, just as the Sun and his fellow celestial bodies worship and serve him (vol. 3, p. 42.35ff. Borret); the same image is also found in Origen's *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 7 (p. 8–9 Koetschau [GCS]), and in both the Sun is said to follow the words "Why do you call me good? None is good but only God the Father" (Mk 10.18 and parallels). The personified Sun makes a similar, though longer, speech against solar worship in Firmicus Maternus, *Error of the Pagan Religions* 8.1–3 (p. 52.1–31 Ziegler).
6. p. 273 trans. Chadwick.
7. Cf. Wink, "'Elements of the Universe'," 239.
8. Amand, *Fatalisme et Liberté*, 306n2.
9. On Origen's writings and what has survived of them see Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A.S. Worrall (San Francisco, 1989), 37–49.
10. Bouché-Leclercq, p. 614–15n2. (He would accept astrology no longer as "genethliological" [i.e. horoscopic] but as "astroscopic" [i.e. observation of the stars] ... deciphering of the symbolic text whose letters are the stars.)

11. In antiquity comets were more often regarded as signs of calamities rather than of positive events. Origen claims a book of Chaeremon the Stoic as his authority for the view that comets can appear when good events are about to occur (*Against Celsus* 1.59).
12. In *On the Creation of the World* 45–46 (vol. 1, p. 34–36 Colson–Whitaker [LCL]) and *Special Laws* 1. 13–20 (vol. 7, p. 106–110 Colson [LCL]) Philo denied that the sun, moon and stars are causes of events.
13. *Excerpts from Theodotus* 70.2 (p. 84.625–26 Casey).
14. *Prophetic Eclogues* 55.1 (vol. 3, p. 152.14–19 Stählin [GCS]).
15. See the discussion of this text in Henri Crouzel, *Origène et Plotin: Comparaisons Doctrinales* (Paris, 1991) 470–72; on the similarities between Plotinus’ presentation of the theory and that of Origen see *ibid.*, 480–81 and Junod, p. 54–55, who argues that they each made use of a common source.
16. See the trans. of the Syriac as well as of Rufinus’ Latin version in Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 54.
17. p. 18.24–27 Nock. On the author of the treatise *On the Gods and the Universe* see chapter 2n36 above.
18. Junod, p. 58–60.
19. Also relevant for Origen was Jer 10.2 “Fear not the signs of the sky” (*Philocalia* 23.15) (p. 182.45–46 Junod: Ἀπὸ τῶν σημείων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μὴ φοβείσθε). This latter verse was commonly cited against astrology by early Christian writers, as also was Is 47.13 “let those stand up and save you, those who gaze at the stars, let them announce what will happen to you”; see the references cited in Junod p. 183n2 and p. 194n1.
20. Περὶ τοῦ εἰς σημεῖα γεγονέναι τοὺς φωστῆρας, οὐκ ἄλλους ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ τῶν ἀστέρων τυγχάνοντας, τῶν σφόδρα ἀναγκαιοτάτων ἐστὶ διαλαβεῖν (p. 130.9–12 Junod).
21. In 23.8 he asserts paradoxically that God’s knowledge is not the cause of an event in the future, rather future events are the cause of divine foreknowledge (p. 156.17–20). Note that *Philocalia* 23.12–13 does not derive from Origen’s Genesis commentary but rather corresponds to *Against Celsus* 2.20.12–96.

22. p. 186 Junod; Theodotus (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 70.2) and Plotinus (*Ennead* 2.3.7) compare astrology and augury in a similar way.
23. See Part A chapter 2 above.
24. Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la "Connaissance Mystique"* (Bruges, 1961), 238– 39; *Origène et Plotin*, 480–81.
25. Ἴν' οὖν τῇ πείρᾳ τοῦτο καταλαμβάνηται ὑπὸ τῶν μειζόνων ἢ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον καὶ τῶν ἀγίων ψυχῶν τοῦ ἐνεστηκότος δεσμοῦ ἀπηλλαγμένων, ὡσπερὶ γράμματα καὶ χαρακτηῖρας καὶ διὰ τῆς τῶν οὐρανίων περιφορᾶς ἐποίησεν ἐν οὐρανῷ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς δεδιδαγμένους καὶ διδασθησομένους ἀναγινώσκειν τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ. (p. 200.14–19 Junod).
26. p. 94 Blanc (SC 120): τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ... τὸ ἐν ταῖς πλαξὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ γραφόμενον καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν ἡξιωμένων τῆς τῶν ὄλων γνώσεως ἀναγινωσκόμενον.
27. Crouzel, *Origène et la "Connaissance Mystique"*, 237n5; on Origen's view of the limitations of demonic knowledge, see p. 421–25.
28. On the notion of "Himmelsschrift" see Franz Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 2e Auflage (Leipzig, 1925), 89–90. Cf. Tertullian's rather less positive view in *On Idolatry* 9.1 that since astrologers are idolators they inscribe the names of the idols on the heavens (quod idola honoret, quorum nomina caelo inscripsit [p. 34.4 Waszink and van Winden]).
29. Crouzel, *Origène et la "Connaissance Mystique"*, 238. (The sky is the Bible of the angels.) In *Origène et Plotin*, 480, Crouzel also changes the metaphor: "le ciel est ainsi comme un immense tableau d'affichage, dirions-nous."
30. Crouzel, *Origène et Plotin*, 471, 474–76. In *Enneads* 3.3.6 Plotinus says that the art of divination is "reading the letters of nature" (καὶ ἡ τέχνη [τοῦ μάντεως] ἀνάγνωσις φυσικῶν γραμμάτων [vol. 3, p. 132.18–19 Armstrong]).
31. Junod, p. 61–62.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 181n2.
33. Εὐλιγῆσεται ὁ οὐρανὸς ὡς βιβλίον (p. 182.36–37 Junod). Junod notes: "...Ésaïe, dans une perspective apocalyptique, annonce de façon imagée qu'à la fin du monde le ciel sera roulé comme un livre qu'on a fini de lire. Origène a-t-il conscience de proposer

une interprétation peu évidente?” (p. 183n1).

34. Ἐνέγων γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πλαξὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὅσα συμβήσεται ὑμῖν καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς ὑμῶν (p. 180–82.35–36 Junod). The above trans. is of Jonathan Z. Smith in OTP vol. 2, 714. Smith’s thorough study of the *Prayer of Joseph* is found in *Map is Not Territory*, 24–66.
35. p. 194.7–9 Junod. Later in 23.19 Origen offers another view of Jacob and provides more details of the *Prayer of Joseph*. Of course Jacob had supplanted his brother Esau (Gen 25.22–34, 27.1–38). It seems that in the *Prayer of Joseph* Jacob recognized that he was a chief military officer of the power of the Lord and had already acquired the name of Israel (cf. Gen 32.28) when he was serving God in a body and was reminded by the archangel Uriel (εἶναι ἀρχιχιλίαρχος δυνάμεως κυρίου, καὶ ὄνομα πάλαι κεκτημένος Ἰσραήλ· ὅπερ ἐν σώματι λειτουργῶν ἀναγνωρίζει, ὑπομνήσκοντος αὐτὸν τοῦ ἀρχαγγέλου Οὐριήλ [p. 196.19–21 Junod]). In his *Commentary on John* 2.188–90 (p. 334–36 Blanc) Origen again cites this work in connection with the superhuman status of Jacob.
36. Cited in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 223 (p. 42.34–45 Henry).
37. PG 87/1, 96.
38. CCL 47, 129.41–44: (non enim mediocriter doctorum hominum fuit ista sententia): non quidem ita solent loqui mathematici, ut verbi gratia dicant: ‘Mars ita positus homicidam significat,’ sed: ‘homicidam facit’.

21. *Priscillian and the Priscillianists*¹

The *Commonitorium*, or *Letter of Instruction concerning the Error of the Priscillianists and of the Origenists*, addressed by Orosius to Augustine in 414 includes a report of certain astrological ideas held by Priscillian and his followers. The second chapter of this work contains material from an authentic Priscillianist text which shows how astrology was combined with Christian theology among the Priscillianists.²

From this text it seems that Priscillian taught that the soul which is born of God comes from a certain storehouse, promises before God that it will fight, and is instructed by the adoration of angels; then, as it descends through certain spheres it is taken captive by evil powers, and according to the will of the victorious leader [of the powers] is thrust into various bodies and inscribed on a written bond as their property.³ The image of the “written bond” (chirographum) derives from Col 2.14, and indeed Orosius writes that this Biblical text was specifically quoted by Priscillian to affirm the liberation from astrological fate brought about through the death of Christ.

From this he [Priscillian] also affirmed the validity of astrology, asserting that “Christ cancelled this written bond and affixed it to the cross” [Col 2.14] by his passion....⁴

On the basis of this text, Davids concludes that astrology appears to have been of the greatest importance to Priscillian.⁵

It is clear that Priscillianist doctrine featured the common theme of the soul’s descent through the planetary spheres which also appears in several other ancient religious contexts including Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity, the Egyptian hermetic literature, certain mystery religions and Gnosticism, as well as philosophers such as Porphyry and Proclus;⁶ indeed the descent and ascent of the soul was so widespread that it has been described as “the dominant mythical constellation of late classical antiquity.”⁷ According to this doctrine, the soul takes on various accretions as it descends through the spheres of the planets: for example, Macrobius writes that the soul is endowed with reason and understanding from Saturn, the power to act from Jupiter, boldness from Mars, sense perception and imagination from the Sun, passion from Venus, the ability to speak and interpret from Mercury, and physical growth from the Moon.⁸ These planetary accretions could also be seen as negative and pernicious: thus in the Hermetic treatise *Poimandres* the soul yields

up the following qualities as it ascends through the planetary spheres: at the sphere of the Moon, the force of increase and decrease; at Mercury, the machinations of evil cunning; lust at Venus; domineering arrogance at the Sun; unholy daring and rash audacity at Mars; evil strivings after wealth at Jupiter; and falsehood at Saturn.⁹ (The order in both Macrobius and the *Poimandres* reflects the so-called “Chaldean” order of the planets.) The doctrine of the soul’s descent and ascent was also commonly associated with the notion of customs or doors at the planetary spheres, which were believed to be under the control of terrible gate-keepers; in this view, during its arduous ascent the soul had to produce passwords which it had carefully learned beforehand (i.e. during this earthly life) in order to proceed through the spheres and gain access to its eternal home at the level of the fixed stars.¹⁰ It is interesting that in the mysteries of Mithras, as well as those of Isis, the celestial journey of the soul apparently took place not only posthumously but during the life of the initiate as well.¹¹

The doctrine of the soul’s descent and ascent clearly reflected cosmic and anthropological dualism such as is commonly associated with Gnosticism.¹² Thus it is not surprising that following Orosius’ report that Priscillian held the doctrine of the soul’s descent through the planetary spheres, and that this was the basis of the Priscillianist affirmation of astrology, Orosius then quotes an excerpt from one of Priscillian’s letters which, among other things, refers to the tension between the soul and the body: the former derives from God while the latter is aligned with the forces hostile to God.

For the first circle and the divine record of souls to be sent into the flesh are made by the co-operation of the angels and of God and of all souls, and are in the control of the patriarchs. Those on the opposite side who control the force of the zodiacal host....¹³

In this passage I follow Chadwick’s translation of “*formalis militiae opus*” as “force of the zodiacal host.” Chadwick justifies this using parallels in ancient Latin texts in which “*militia*” is used to refer to the hosts of heaven (including the sun, moon and stars) and “*forma*” to mean a zodiacal sign or constellation.¹⁴ Moreover, Chadwick’s translation of the phrase is supported by Orosius’ earlier reference to Priscillian’s affirmation of astrology (mathesis) and the other astrological teachings of Priscillian which Orosius proceeds to reveal next.

Following the quotation from Priscillian's letter, Orosius describes a series of correspondences in Priscillianist theology which incorporate the astrological system of melothesia. It seems that the Priscillianists identified the names of the twelve patriarchs of ancient Israel with the parts of the soul (Reuben in the head, Judah in the chest, Levi in the heart, Benjamin in the thighs, and so on).¹⁵ On the other hand, they drew similar correlations between the signs of the zodiac and the parts of the body, Aries in the head, Taurus in the neck, Gemini in the arms, Cancer in the chest, etc.¹⁶ This latter set of correspondences reflects the ancient astrological doctrine of melothesia, i.e. the allotment of influences of the zodiacal signs (or the planets) to various parts of the human body, as if the body were extended along the zodiacal circle, with the head placed at Aries and the feet at Pisces.¹⁷ The doctrine of melothesia clearly reflects the notion of the universal sympathy of the cosmos, and particularly the fundamental belief in what Bouché-Leclercq terms "cette forteresse centrale de l'astrologie," the correspondence of the macrocosm to the microcosm of the human body.

Il fut...permis de chercher dans le corps humain, dans l'âme humaine, des correspondences de toute sorte entre les membres de l'un, les facultés de l'autre, et les planètes ou les signes du Zodiaque.¹⁸

The report of Orosius in the *Letter of Instruction* was likely a source for Augustine's attribution of the doctrine of melothesia to the Priscillianists in his work *On Heresies* 70.¹⁹

An example of this doctrine in an ancient astrological text is the zodiacal melothesia found in Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.453–65, in which the following correspondences are reported:²⁰

- Aries — head (caput)
- Taurus — neck (colla)
- Gemini — arms and shoulders (aequalia bracchia...conexa umeris)
- Cancer — chest (pectus)
- Leo — sides and shoulder-blades (laterum regnum scapulaeque)
- Virgo — belly (ilia)
- Libra — buttocks (clunes)
- Scorpio — groin (inguen)
- Sagittarius — thighs (femina)
- Capricorn — knees (utrisque genibus)
- Aquarius — legs (crurum fundentis)

Pisces — feet (pedum...iura)

Most of these associations are elementary, even naive: the head is referred to Aries, the leading sign at the “head” of the zodiac (and “head of the world” in the more sophisticated astrological doctrine of the “thema mundi,” or horoscope of the world, which located Aries at midheaven at the moment of creation²¹); the neck with Taurus, since the bull has a strong neck; the arms and shoulders, which come in pairs, with Gemini; the chest with the Crab and its shell; the buttocks, seat of the body’s equilibrium, with Libra; the knees with the kneeling figure of Capricorn; the feet with the two fish of Pisces.²² This type of zodiacal melothesia in which the signs rule over the parts of the body was adapted into the later version of the doctrine, such as is found in Priscillianism, according to which the signs were believed to reside in the body.²³ (The exact meaning is unclear: perhaps the divinities of the signs were believed to come and reside within the parts of the body.) According to Sextus Empiricus, it was believed that the presence of malefic stars in one of the signs at the horoscope would produce a disability in the corresponding part of the body (*Against Astrologers* 5.21–22).²⁴ In *Against Celsus* 8.58, Origen quotes from Celsus a version of melothesia in which the body was apportioned among the 36 decans; “by invoking these they heal the sufferings of the various parts.”²⁵ There are parallels in the Hermetic literature,²⁶ and zodiacal melothesia is also elaborated in the Manichaean *Kephalaia*, 70.²⁷ The positive affirmation of the doctrine of melothesia by the Priscillianists provides a further example in our survey of the incorporation of astrological views within early Christianity.

According to the text in Orosius’ report, the signs of the zodiac (associated with the parts of the body) were paralleled with the Israelite patriarchs (which correspond to the parts of the soul) in Priscillianist doctrine. This is in keeping with the view of the soul as superior to the body implied in the doctrine of the soul’s descent Orosius had referred to earlier; as we shall see, the soul/body dichotomy was a basic characteristic of Priscillianist thought. The parallel of the patriarchs with the zodiacal signs may be compared to a doctrine of Theodotus reported by Clement of Alexandria in which the signs are replaced by the 12 apostles in the life of the Christian.

He [Theodotus] says the apostles were substituted for the twelve signs of the zodiac, for, as birth is directed by them, so is rebirth by the apostles (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 25.2).²⁸

The implication is that mortal birth is subject to the astrological powers of the zodiac while spiritual rebirth is connected to the new Christian dispensation. Again, this is remarkably similar to the doctrine of the soul's descent and rebirth which is found in many religious systems of Greco-Roman antiquity: for example, Theodotus' use of the terms γένεσις (birth) and ἀναγέννησις (rebirth) is very close to Porphyry's terminology regarding the soul's descent (γένεσις) through Cancer and its ascent (ἀπογένεσις) through Capricorn in *On the Cave of the Nymphs* 21–24.²⁹ Moreover, in effect for both Theodotus and the Priscillianists the twelve apostles have taken over the role of guardian (tutela) of the zodiacal signs that had traditionally been held by the twelve gods of the Olympian pantheon.³⁰ The same association may be discerned in iconographic representations on Christian sarcophagi from Palermo, Manosque and Arles on which the twelve apostles are depicted each with a star above his head.³¹

As we have seen, the report in Orosius' *Letter of Instruction* suggests a continuity between the astrological doctrine of melothesia and Priscillian's view of the descent of the soul through the celestial spheres into the physical body. The relationship of the latter view to astrology is also evident in the anonymous Priscillianist tractates discovered in a manuscript at the University Library at Würzburg by G. Schepps in 1885. Since these tractates derive from within the Priscillianist movement, they provide our most direct source for the doctrines of Priscillian and his followers.³² The Würzburg tractates, which antedate Orosius' *Letter of Instruction*, support the evidence of Orosius concerning astrological doctrine in Priscillianist thought:³³ they demonstrate that Orosius' account cannot be simply dismissed as deriving from a hostile witness. While the tractates do not yield further information about specifically astrological doctrines of Priscillianism they do contain general astrological ideas, and thus shed light on the Priscillianist astrology described by Orosius. Indeed, according to Gabriella Bianco astrological themes offer a key to reading ("chiave di lettura") the Würzburg tractates.³⁴

In the Würzburg tractates, astrological themes primarily function as a way to understand and explain the human condition.³⁵ While the Priscillianists affirmed that the human body is created by God, nevertheless they viewed the human predicament as profoundly negative because it entails having to undergo physical birth and living in a physical body. The Priscillianists connected birth itself with dirt (cf. Gen 3.19b), and living in the body with subjection to time (the "days and seasons and years and months" of Gal 4.10) and to the "vices of nature": in short, the physical, earthly "trap" of the body was

seen as weakening the divine spirit within (*Tractate* 6.97).³⁶ It is not surprising that the Priscillianists also included astrological fate as part of this oppressive burden of human existence, part of the “wheel of generation” [cf. James 3.6] from which Christ has liberated the baptized.

[Christ] is who, as it is written in the prophet, alone is able to “bind the chain of the Pleiades and to open the enclosures of Orion” [Job 38.31]; knowing the change of the firmament and undoing the wheel of generation [James 3.6] he vanquished the day of our nativity with the reparation of baptism (*Tractate* 1.31).³⁷

In this passage it is evident that the Priscillianist author has revived the originally fatalistic connotation of the “wheel of generation” which was not evident in the phrase τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως used in passing in the letter of James itself.³⁸

The emphasis on “days and seasons and years and months”³⁹ in the Würzburg tractates illustrates the influence that Pauline themes, especially the notions of calendrical-astral “powers” (i.e. the στοιχεῖα and parallel terms) in Gal 4.3–11 and Rom 8.38–39,⁴⁰ had on Priscillianist theology. Indeed, Bianco suggests that the astrological themes in the Würzburg tractates are fundamentally a reflection on these “powers” which Paul asserted had been defeated by Christ.⁴¹ Similarly, as we have seen Orosius reports that the Priscillianists affirmed the power of astrology in connection with the “chirographum” of Col 2.14.⁴² It is reasonable to conclude that, like Paul himself, the Priscillianists too associated the “powers” behind the “wheel of generation” with astrological fate.⁴³ Therefore, in the Würzburg tractates the Priscillianist writer extolls the

true knowledge of all things which exist, that I might know the disposition of the world and the power of the elements, the beginning and end and middle of months, the changes and divisions of the seasons, the course of the year and the position of the stars.... (*Tractate* 1.10).⁴⁴

Moreover, as Orosius informs us, such knowledge also encompassed zodiacal melothesia, assigning the parts of the human body to the signs: presumably this doctrine lies behind the statement in *Tractate* 6.97 that the nature of the body is the “figura mundi” made by the hand of God.⁴⁵

In sum, the Priscillianists shared in the early Christian confession of the defeat of astrological fate through Christ that was appropriated through baptism. At the same time, they also incorporated astrological doctrines into their theological system, in particular zodiacal melothesia. The astrological themes

evident in the Würzburg tractates and the report of Orosius' *Letter of Instruction* both serve to underscore the fact that astrology had a prominent place in Priscillianist doctrine, as also did magic and numerology.⁴⁶ Chadwick ventures the generalization that "orthodox" Christians in the Latin west were more inclined to reject astrology as fraudulent than to say that the valid power of the stars had been defeated by Christ, and therefore the Priscillianist affirmation of astrology "would seem unusual and dangerous to pious ears in the West."⁴⁷ However, it was not merely the Priscillianists' acceptance of astrology (for other Christians did so in comparable ways) but also the degree to which they recognized the relevance of astrology for the human condition which was unique within the history of early Christianity.

With the condemnation of Priscillianism as a heresy, astrology came to be emphasized as one of its constitutive and distinctive components. A passage of a letter of Jerome (133.4 to Ctesiphon) written the same year as Orosius' *Letter of Instruction*⁴⁸ lists a series of heretical teachers, among which Jerome refers to Priscillian as "very devoted to Zoroaster the magi";⁴⁹ since of course Zoroaster was traditionally associated with astrology this letter indicates that Jerome was aware of an association between Priscillian and astrology. A list of Priscillianist doctrines condemned by Leo the Great in a letter of 21 July 447 to Turibius, bishop of Asturica in Spain,⁵⁰ includes belief in astral fate as well as that parts of the soul or body are assigned to zodiacal signs. (The original Priscillianist connection of the Israelite patriarchs with the parts of the soul has been lost in the anti-astrological fervour of these condemnations.) These same astrological views were formally anathematized in the condemnation of Priscillianism at the first council of Braga in 561.⁵¹ Gregory the Great also associated belief in astrological fate with "Priscillianistae haeretici" in a sermon of 591.⁵²

Notes

1. It should be noted that the sources for our knowledge of Priscillianist astrology do not enable us to distinguish the astrological notions of Priscillian himself from those held by his followers, and so I have refrained from attempting to do so.
2. Davids, *De Orosio*, 200: In secundo enim capite Commonitorii Orosiani prae manibus habemus epitomam ex opere sive operibus Priscilliani compositam. Haec epitoma nobis ostendit quomodo ... [Priscillianus] doctrinas astrologicas cum theologica Christiana coniungere conatus sit.

3. ...docens animam quae a deo nata sit de quodam promptuario procedere, profiteri ante deum se pugnaturam et instrui adoratu angelorum: dehinc descendentem per quosdam circulos a principatibus malignis capi et secundum voluntatem victoris principis in corpora diversa contrudi eisque adscribi chirographum (CSEL 18, 153.2–7). The trans. is adapted from that of Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila* (Oxford, 1976), 191–92.
4. Unde et mathesim praevalere firmabat, adserens quia hoc chirographum solverit Christus et adfixerit cruci per passionem suam.... (CSEL 18, 153.7–9)
5. *De Orosio*, 179: Mathesim, astrologiam, Priscilliano rem maximi momenti fuisse apparet.
6. See the literature cited in chapter 14 n7 above.
7. Segal, “Heavenly Ascent,” 1388.
8. *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, 1.12.13 (p. 136–37 Stahl).
9. vol. 1, p. 128.7–14 Scott. Several examples of such systems are summarized in table form in Culianu, *Psychanodia*, 51.
10. Culianu, *Psychanodia*, 11–14.
11. *Ibid.*, 14–15; Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras*, 77–80; Beck, “Mithras Cult as Association,” 5–6.
12. Segal, “Heavenly Ascent,” 1383–85 describes the synthesis of the descent and ascent of the soul with dualism in Gnosticism.
13. Nam primum circulum et mittendarum in carne animarum divinum chirographum, angelorum et dei et omnium animarum consensibus fabricatum patriarchae tenent; qui contra formalis militiae opus possident.... (CSEL 18, 153.15–18). The above trans. is that of Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 192, who defends the authenticity of the quotation on p.202. The term “chirographum” is used here positively to refer to the relation between God and humanity, which is quite a contrast to the use of the term that Orosius had ascribed to Priscillian earlier based on Col 2.14.
14. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 194.
15. Tradidit autem nomina patriarcharum membra esse animae, eo quod esset Ruben in capite, Iuda in pectore, Levi in corde, Benjamin in femoribus, et similia (CSEL 18, 153.19–21). Jewish texts in which the patriarchs correspond with the signs of the

zodiac are listed in Jean Daniélou, “The Twelve Apostles and the Zodiac,” *Primitive Christian Symbols*, trans. Donald Attwater (London, 1964), 132–34 and Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 196n3.

16. ...contra autem in membris corporis caeli signa esse disposita idest arietem in capite, taurum in cervice, geminos in brachiis, cancrum in pectore et cetera (CSEL 18, 153.21–154.3). Similarly, the Gnostic teacher Mark assigned two letters of the alphabet to each of the 12 parts of the “body of Truth” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.14.3; Hippolytus, *Refutation* 6.44); this led to accusations that Priscillian was a follower of Mark the Gnostic (Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 201).
17. Bouché-Leclercq, 31–320 (on zodiacal melothesia), 320–25 (on planetary melothesia).
18. Bouché-Leclercq, 76–77. (It was ... permitted to search in the human body, in the human soul, for all sorts of correspondences between the parts of the one, the faculties of the other, with the planets and the signs of the zodiac.)
19. Astruunt etiam fatalibus stellis homines colligatos, ipsumque corpus nostrum secundum duodecim signa caeli esse compositum, sicut hi qui mathematici vulgo appellantur, constituentes in capite Arietem, Taurum in cervice, Geminos in humeris, Cancrum in pectore, et cetera nominatim signa percurrentes ad plantas usque perveniunt, quas Piscibus tribuunt, quod ultimum signum ab astrologis nuncupatur (CCL 46, 334.13–19). Augustine had responded to Orosius’ *Letter of Instruction* with his *To Orosius Against the Priscillianists and Origenists* of 415 (Brown, *Augustine*, 280); in this work he quickly dismisses Priscillianism, claiming that his anti-Manichaean writings are sufficient to combat it and only briefly discussing the origin of the soul before proceeding to deal with Origenism (see PL 42, 669–71). Thus it is *On Heresies*, written to Quodvultdeus in 428, which offers “Augustine’s principal account of Priscillianism” (Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 199, 207). G. Bardy, “Le ‘De Haeresibus’ et ses Sources,” *Miscellanea Agostiniana* vol. 2 (Rome, 1931), 415 attributes the information in *On Heresies* 70 to Augustine’s discussions with Priscillianist teachers or bishops and reading of their works, and makes no mention of Orosius’ report.
20. p. 118 Goold (LCL). Cf. also *Astronomica* 4.701–09 (p. 278 Goold).
21. Bouché-Leclercq, 129n1, 185n3, 197n1, 319.
22. *Ibid.*, 319.
23. “Aber die astrologischen Texte haben aus diesem Schema den religiösen Grund-

- begriff völlig gestrichen, wonach die Tierbilder nicht nur den menschlichen Organismus beherrschen, sondern auch in ihm wohnen” (Wilhelm Gundel, *Sterne und Sternbilder im Glauben des Altertums und der Neuzeit* [Bonn, 1922; repr. Hildesheim, 1981], 199).
24. p. 332 Bury (LCL).
 25. vol. 4, p. 304–06 Borret (SC 150); καὶ δὴ ἐπικαλοῦντες αὐτοὺς ἰώνται τῶν μερῶν τὰ παθήματα is on p. 306.10–11.
 26. Festugière, *Révélation*, vol. 1, 92–94; cf. the Hermetic texts discussed in Chadwick’s trans. of *Against Celsus*, 496n1 and references cited there.
 27. p. 183–84 Gardner. The Manichaean teaching here is twofold: there is the one-to-one correspondence of Aries with the head, Taurus with the neck, etc.; and there is a second series in which the first six signs are related to the right side of the body going down from the temple to the right side of the genitals, then the remaining six signs to the left side of the body going up from the hip to the head. This latter series is similar to the correlation of the 24 letters of the alphabet (2 to each part of the “body of Truth,” 12 ascending and 12 descending) in the teachings of Mark the Gnostic (Bouché-Leclercq, 320n1).
 28. οἱ ἀπόστολοι, φησί, μετετέθησαν τοῖς δεκαδύο ζῳδίοις, ὡς γὰρ ὑπ’ ἐκείνων ἡ γένεσις διοικεῖται, οὕτως ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἡ ἀναγέννησις (p. 58.277–78 Casey); the trans. is from p. 59 Casey. Cf. the connection of the apostles with the twelve months of the year in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 4.35 and *Homilies* 2.23; in the latter text this is contrasted with the 30 followers of John the Baptist, which Jones, “Eros and Astrology,” 78 sees as a correlation of John’s disciples with the 29 1/2 day cycle of the moon. The other references cited in Daniélou, “Twelve Apostles and the Zodiac,” are either Jewish texts connecting the signs with the 12 patriarchs or associations of the apostles with the months (and with the 12 daylight hours) in Christian texts; Daniélou’s essay therefore does not really live up to the promise of its title.
 29. p. 20–24 Arethusa. Porphyry attributes this doctrine to Numenius of Apamea and his associate Cronius.
 30. Gundel and Gundel, *Astrologumena* 324, 338n29. (The evidence of Orosius is ignored in the Gundels’ discussion of Priscillianism [p. 331, 338].) For the assigning of the Olympian gods as “tutelae” of the signs of the zodiac see Manilius, *Astronomica*, 2.433–52 (p. 116–18 Gould) and Bouché-Leclercq, 183–84.
 31. Leclercq, “Astres,” DACL vol. 1/2, 3014: on the sarcophagus from Manosque the

stars above the two central apostles are replaced by the sun and moon, which are found on alternate sides of a large chi-rho symbol atop a cross (figure 1044).

32. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 57; regarding the date (c. 385–400) and authorship (unknown) of the collection of tractates in the Würzburg codex, see *ibid.*, 62–69.
33. Davids, *De Orosio*, 206–07, 213–16.
34. M. Gabriella Bianco, “Tematiche Astrali nei Trattati di Würzburg,” *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 13 (1989): 223–24.
35. *Ibid.*, 226–27.
36. ...natura corporis...etsi dei manu facta est, tamen, quia terrenae nativitati limi adprahensione germana est et diebus et temporibus annis mensibus omnibusque quae sub sole sunt vitiorum divisa naturis divinum genus hominum muscipulis terrenae habitationis hebetavit (CCL 18, 73.3–8).
37. ipse est qui, sicut scriptum est in profeta, solus potens est colligere vinculum Pliadae et Orionis septa reserare, sciens demutationem firmamenti et destruens rotam geniturae reparatione baptismatis diem nostrae nativitatis evicit (CSEL 18, 26.19–22). The significance of this passage is noted by Benedikt Vollman, “Priscillianus,” RE Suppl. 14, 537; Davids, *De Orosio*, 214–15; Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 72; and Bianco, “Tematiche Astrali,” 228. Cf. Job 38.31 in the Vulgate: “numquid coniungere valebis micantes stellas Pliadis aut gyrum Arcturi poteris dissipare.” In the Old Latin version of James 3.6 both “rotam geniturae” and “rotam nativitatis” are found (p. 39 Thiele, *Vetus Latina* 26/1), while the latter phrase is used in the Vulgate.
38. Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, revised by Heinrich Greeven, trans. Michael A. Williams (Philadelphia, 1975), 196–98, writes that the phrase in James 3.6 itself is nothing more than “a familiar expression for the up’s and down’s of life.”
39. Christian calendrical observances, especially the astronomically calculated date of Easter, posed a particular problem for the Priscillianists (Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 74–75).
40. Bianco, “Tematiche Astrali,” 230–232. As I have discussed earlier (chapter 14 above), these “powers” are also referred to in deutero-Pauline texts such as Eph (2.2, 3.10, 6.12) and Col (1.16, 2.15, 2.20).

41. Bianco, "Tematiche Astrali," 231: "...possiamo ipotizzare che alla base delle tematiche astrali dei *Trattati* vi sia una riflessione sugli esseri che S. Paolo considera sottoposti alla signoria di Cristo..." Cf. *Tractate* 6.98: Christo adfixus sum cruci et vivo iam non ego, sed vivit in me Christus [Gal 2.19–20]. Qui enim haec intellegit, confirmatus ad fidem et consequutus Christo in baptismum per mortem [Rom 6.4, Col 2.12] absolutus diebus temporibus mensibus numerum dei meretur esse non saeculi... (CSEL 18, 73.17–21).
42. CSEL 18, 153.7–9.
43. Bianco, "Tematiche astrali," 228; Vollman, "Priscillianus," 537, 541. Cf. the polemic against astrology and worship of the planets in *Tractates* 1.15–20 (CSEL 18, 14.5–17.28), 1.26 (CSEL 18, 22.20–23.4), and 5.84 (CSEL 18, 63.25–64.5), identified with Manichaeism in 2.47 (CSEL 18, 39.8–11).
44. ...omnium quae sunt scientiam veram, ut sciam dispositionem orbis terrarum et virtutem aelementorum, initium et consummationem et medietatem mensuum, mutationes et divisiones temporum, anni cursus et stellarum dispositiones.... (CSEL 18, 10.10–14) quoting Wisdom of Solomon 7.17ff. The trans. is that of Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 202; see also Vollman, "Priscillianus," 538.
45. ...natura corporis quae per apostolum figura mundi et vetus homo dicitur, etsi dei manu facta est (CSEL 18, 73.3–5), quoting 1 Cor 7.31. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 202–03 refers to this as a "revealing sentence" *vis-à-vis* Orosius' description of Priscillianist melothesia.
46. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 202 compares the Priscillianist astrological focus described by Orosius to a passage in Würzburg *Tractate* 1 defending the use of an amulet inscribed with the divine name in Hebrew, Latin and Greek and bearing the legend "rex regum et dominorum dominus" (CSEL 18, 26). See also Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 17–20, 51–55, 97, 139–40 (on magic in Priscillianism); 74–77, 82–84 (on number mysticism); and 97 (on occultism and demonology). Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon* 2.46.5 portrays Priscillian as puffed up with "profanarum rerum scientia" and refers to the belief that he had practiced "magicas artes ab adolescentia" (CSEL 1, 99.27–29); moreover, according to *Chronicon* 2.50.8 (CSEL 1, 103.25–31) it was on a charge of sorcery (maleficium) that he was tried and condemned by the prefect Evodius, and then sentenced to death by Magnus Maximus. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 33–34 claims that Priscillian was a bishop but his election to the see of Avila was invalid; see Klaus Girardet, "Trier 385: Der Prozess gegen die Priscillianer," *Chiron* 4 (1974): 577–608, and T.D. Barnes, "Religion and Society in the Age of Theodosius," in Hugo A. Meynell, ed., *Grace, Politics and Desire* (Calgary, 1990), 163, repr. *From Eusebius to Augustine* (London, 1994).

47. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 200–01, though on p. 202 he adds that the attribution of parts of the body to the zodiacal signs and of the parts of the soul to the patriarchs was not yet “necessarily and formally heretical in both will and deed.” Vollmann suggests that it was the combination of asceticism, martyrdom and astrology in Priscillian’s public persona which fascinated the people of Galicia and made them almost fanatical in following him (“Priscillianus,” 538).
48. The letter is dated to 414 by J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome* (New York, 1975), 314n24.
49. CSEL 56/1, 248.12–13: Zoroastris magi studiosissimum.
50. Turibius had first written to Leo with his own refutation of a list of Priscillianist beliefs, to which Leo replied with an authoritative condemnation (Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 211–12). Leo’s letter is number 15 in the collection in PL 54. The paragraphs condemning Priscillianist astrology are sections 10–11; see the critical edition in Julio Campos, “La epístola antipriscilianista de S. León Magno,” *Helmántica* 13 (1962): 283.225–285.259. That Leo’s letter led to a council of bishops at Toldeo in 447 (so Hefele-Leclercq, vol. 2/1, 482– 83) is questioned by Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 176–79, 217–18.
51. Hefele-Leclercq, vol. 3/1, 177–78 (canons 9 and 10); Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 225; Bouché-Leclercq, 624n2. The tenth anathema lies behind the wording of the condemnation of zodiacal melothesia in Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* 3.27.2 (PL 82, 170A–B) (Fontaine, “Isidore de Séville et L’Astrologie,” 280).
52. *Forty Homilies on the Gospels* 1.10.4 (PL 76, 1111D–1112A).

22. *Zeno of Verona, Tractate 1.38*

One of the most sustained examples of the positive use of astrological themes in early Christian literature is found in a baptismal sermon of Zeno, bishop of Verona in northern Italy during the 360s.¹ This sermon, listed as Tractatus 38 of book 1 in the latest edition by Löfstedt,² was originally directed to a group of recent converts to Christianity who had just undergone the rite of baptism.

Indeed, it is in Zeno's theology of baptism that the Christian reading of the symbols of the zodiac that he offers in this sermon is rooted. Although his listeners come from diverse backgrounds, nevertheless he says that in baptism they have all been born of the same mother (i.e. the church) and they have shared together in a common spiritual birth (1.2).³ In the opening sentence of the sermon he speaks of the "whiteness of your shining spiritual birth," using the word "ortus" which is also a regular term for the "rising" of a celestial body in the heavens (as opposed to "occasus," the word for "setting") (1.1).⁴ He continues:

Behold children, teenagers, young people, old people of either sex, you who were guilty, who were unclean by worldly birth, are now pure infants free from all guilt, and, what is wonderful and pleasing, suddenly you who were of different ages are in one moment made the same age (1.1).⁵

The paradoxical affirmation of unity in diversity was present both in traditional Christianity (e.g. the Pauline image of the church as one body with many members) as well as in ancient astrology (e.g. in that the twelve signs make up the one zodiac). As we have seen, the theme of unity and diversity had also long been used—by Greco-Roman as well as Christian writers—as grounds to attack astrology, for example in the arguments of common destinies, of different destinies, and of twins.⁶ Such arguments reflect the traditional philosophical debate concerning the relationship of the one and the many which had long been a topic of discussion in the Greco-Roman world. What is interesting in Zeno's sermon is his use of the theme of unity in diversity with reference to his newly baptized audience; as we shall see, Zeno returns to this theme at the end of this sermon as well.⁷

Baptism signified leaving behind the old life of sin including, of course, any attachment to astrology. However, in this sermon Zeno makes surprisingly positive use of notions connected with astrology.

But I know well your curiosity. With the taking away of your old life, which is no longer permitted to you, perhaps you would like to also know from us under which

natal constellation or which sign your one mother bore you—so varied, so many, and so different—in a single birth. As if for small children, I shall gratify [your wish], and I shall briefly unfold the whole secret of the sacred horoscope. Therefore, brothers, your natal horoscope is as follows (1.2–2.3).⁸

Of particular interest here is the reference to “curiosity” (*curiositas*). In his study of Zeno’s Easter sermons, Gordon Jeanes connects this “curiosity” to the fact that during their catechumenate Zeno’s audience would not have been informed about the meaning of certain elements of Christian worship and belief (i.e. the so-called “*disciplina arcani*”).⁹ However, it seems more likely that in the context of this sermon Zeno is referring instead to the traditional Christian association of curiosity with astrology. As we have seen, for many early Christians curiosity (*curiositas*) was an impious, deadly motivation that led human beings to become involved in astrology and other forms of divination in the first place. Indeed, following the traditional interpretation of Gen 6:1–3 and 1 Enoch, writers such as Tertullian and Augustine attributed the invention of astrology and divination to the original “*curiositas*” of Satan and his followers, the demons.¹⁰ Accordingly, “*curiositas*” ought to be included within what Zeno means by “your old life, which is no longer permitted to you,” and this is the background which makes evident the rhetorical effect of Zeno’s words. Trading on the negative associations of “*curiositas*” Zeno uses the term here in a positive sense, proclaiming to his audience “I know well your *curiositas*” and thereby creating among them a reversal of expectations.

Indeed, Zeno positively feeds the “*curiositas*” of his listeners by promising to reveal to them their “sacred horoscope.” Not only does Zeno apparently betray a remarkably positive view of “*curiositas*” in the above passage, he also makes explicit reference to a number of technical astrological terms: “natal constellation” (*genitura*) and “sign” (*signum*) referring to the particular constellation under which a person is born, as well as two words for “horoscope” (*horoscopus*, *genesis*). The very idea of a “sacred horoscope” is particularly striking, since the term “sacer” here refers to Christian notions of the sacred that were most often pitted against astrology in early Christian literature. The inherent contradictions involved in a Christian bishop striking the pose of an astrologer and proposing to reveal to the newest initiates of his congregation their “sacred horoscope”¹¹ no doubt provoked reactions of surprise among those listening to this sermon. Such an unusual—indeed startling—pronouncement coming from a Christian bishop would have had a dramatic effect on Zeno’s congregation. In fact, the use of astrological terminology and

imagery fuels Zeno's rhetorical purposes throughout this sermon, in which Zeno employs astrological as well as Biblical themes in order to provide a fresh perspective on the Christian life upon which his listeners have just embarked. Zeno's use of astrological terminology in this sermon may be regarded as an extended rhetorical trope, and there is no evidence for the view that the bishop "had to make allowances for certain newly baptized Christians who rather childishly asked him under what horoscope their recent new birth out of Mother Church had taken place."¹²

As was noted above, in the opening lines of his sermon Zeno establishes the "one birth" (*uno partu vestra*) of his listeners understood in a spiritual sense in their baptism. Zeno then proceeds to provide them with the corresponding reading of their spiritual "horoscope": "therefore, your natal horoscope is as follows" he says (2.3),¹³ exploiting the various levels of meaning inherent in the term "genesis." On the one hand, genesis was connected in early Christianity with ideas of creation, generation and birth, including the "new creation" and "new birth" of believers through their baptism.¹⁴ As well, genesis was a technical term in ancient astrology that referred to the birth horoscope. Zeno's double entendre is no doubt deliberate.¹⁵ Of course, despite the terminology in fact Zeno does not really follow through on what he has promised: what he offers his listeners is not a specific "horoscope," that is, a given reading of the heavens at a particular moment in time; instead, in the remainder of his sermon Zeno runs through all twelve of the signs of the zodiac in order, referring each of the signs to the larger themes of Christian faith and life.

The annual circle of the zodiac begins with the spring sign of Aries, the Ram. Zeno says:

First it was not Aries but the Lamb who received you; he refuses no one who believes in him. He has clothed your nakedness with the white splendour of his wool and tenderly poured his own blessed milk into your lips which were wide open with crying (2.3).¹⁶

Presumably, Zeno switches from Aries the Ram to the image of the Lamb because the latter is a more obviously christological symbol. A Biblical precedent for the exchange of ram and lamb is the parallelism of Ps 113.4 and 6: "The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs."¹⁷ Moreover, it has also been argued that the apocalyptic image of the Lamb in the book of Revelation has clear iconographic parallels with the sign of Aries in ancient

astrology.¹⁸ As well, in the ancient world there was a folk etymology connecting the Ram (Κρίος) with the verb to judge (κρίνειν).¹⁹ Zeno's portrayal of Christ the Lamb clothing the newly baptized with the shining whiteness of his wool also has Biblical²⁰ as well as astrological parallels. According to Greco-Roman astrology each sign of the zodiac imparted certain characteristics to those who were born under it and endowed them with various skills and callings in life; for example, Manilius writes that the sign of Aries is related to the production of wool and wool products (*Astronomica* 4.124–136). Such naive associations were often mocked by early Christian writers: Basil of Caesarea (*Hexaemeron* 6.6),²¹ followed by Ambrose of Milan (*Hexaemeron* 4.4.15),²² wrote that they contradict astrology because they assign the ultimate causes of things not to the heavens but rather to earthly phenomena (because wool production is then really derived not from the sign of Aries, but from wool-producing sheep here upon the earth). By contrast, Zeno takes advantage of the astrological association between Aries and wool, asserting that the Lamb (Christ) clothes the baptized with the “white splendour of his wool”;²³ as Zeno preached this, his point would have been symbolized by the white garments in which the newly baptized in the audience before him were clothed. The same word “niveus” is also used once in Manilius' *Astronomica* (3.445) with reference to the fleece of Aries the Ram, though elsewhere in the same work he retains the traditional view, drawn from the myth of Jason and the Argonauts, that the Ram had golden fleece.²⁴ It is interesting that when Manilius describes Aries' fleece as “niveus” he also uses the image of a yoke in the same passage, portraying the spring equinox, which occurs in Aries, as Aries “forcing day and night to bear the yoke equally” (*Astronomica* 3.446–447).²⁵ Zeno too turns to the image of the yoke in the next section of his sermon. There are no real astrological parallels to Zeno's notion of Christ the Lamb providing milk as nourishment, in addition to clothing, for the new-born Christians; such imagery most likely derives from Biblical sources such as 1 Pet 2.2.

After Aries, Zeno turns to the sign of Taurus, the Bull.

You are admonished not by Taurus with his massive neck, grim face and threatening horns, but by the delightful, gentle, tame and mild Calf, so that you will not seek after divination by any means but, taking on his yoke without malice and making the ground of your flesh fruitful by subduing it, you may bring into the heavenly barns a rich harvest from divine seed (2.3).²⁶

Zeno had just transposed Aries the Ram into the image of the lamb; similarly here Taurus the Bull is turned into a calf (vitulus). Hübner notes that Zeno's lamb and calf are as it were "domesticated" versions of their astrological counterparts, the Ram and the Bull. More significantly for Zeno's purposes, the lamb and the calf are both sacrificial animals and thus both can be mentioned in a Christian context to stand for Christ²⁷ (though Zeno does not specifically mention the sacrifice of the lamb or of the bull).²⁸ An obvious source of Zeno's exhortation to take on Christ's yoke, and to bring a rich spiritual harvest into the heavenly barns, is the Gospel of Matthew, especially Matt 11.29 ("Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart") and the various agricultural parables of Matt 13 (e.g. 13.30: "Bring the wheat into my barn").

There are also parallels in other early Christian literature for Zeno's identification of the image of the Bull with Christ. For example, in a fragment of a commentary on Genesis Hippolytus identifies Christ as a bull: referring to Genesis 49:6b, where in blessing his sons Simeon and Levi the patriarch Jacob says "in their anger they killed men, and at their whim they hamstrung bulls," Hippolytus writes that Christ was "the strong bull" foreseen in the Genesis text: οὗτος γὰρ ἦν ὁ "ταῦρος" ὁ ἰσχυρός.²⁹ Christ is again equated with a bull in a work entitled "On the Blessings of the Patriarchs" attributed to Rufinus of Aquileia:³⁰ "We read that the Bull is called the Son of God in the Scriptures' figural sense...we learn that the bull itself is said to be the Lord, who was killed for the salvation and return of the repentant son" (*On the Blessings of the Patriarchs* 2.8 and 2.16).³¹ The latter is an allusion to the so-called "Prodigal Son" at whose return the Father killed "the fatted calf" (Luke 15.11–32). In the same context (*On the Blessings of the Patriarchs* 2.8) Rufinus uses this imagery to express his sense of Christian superiority over Judaism: he writes that Christ, who is both the "bull" (taurus) of Gen 49:6 and the "fatted calf" (vitulus) of Luke 15, "hamstrung the Scribes and the Pharisees with his wisdom."³² The image of the Bull/Calf also appears as one of the faces of the four living creatures in Ezekiel 1.10 and Rev 4.7; indeed the Vulgate of Rev 4.7 uses the same word as Zeno, vitulus.³³ Hübner notes a further classical parallel for Zeno's view of the Bull image in the *Fasti* of Ovid (4.716), where the Bull is termed a "greater victim" (victima maior); the implication is that Taurus is a "greater victim" than the preceding sign, Aries.³⁴ Such a view of Taurus the Bull as a sacrificial animal is rare in classical literature, however, and indeed in general ancient Greco-Roman astrological texts much more commonly associate Taurus with notions of strength,

hard work and endurance.³⁵ The social background of such associations is the longstanding practice of using bulls for agricultural labour.³⁶ Zeno's further admonition to his listeners to "make the ground of your flesh fruitful by subduing it" may be an indirect reference to the astrological association between Taurus the Bull and sensual lust, Taurus being the house of the planet Venus.³⁷ Also worth noting is the fact that Zeno here issues an incidental warning against divination (auguria); perhaps this is intended to reassure his listeners that despite his apparent familiarity with astrological notions their bishop still holds to the more commonly accepted Christian repudiation of such matters.

Zeno introduces the next sign which follows Taurus as "the following Gemini," claiming that the twins of the constellation Gemini represent the "two testaments/covenants that sing of salvation" (2.4).³⁸ This parallels Zeno's later identification of another biform sign, Pisces, with the two people of God—the Jews and the Gentiles—at the very end of the sermon (2.7). The duality of Gemini and Pisces is the key to Zeno's interpretation of these signs; similarly, the "Arateans", i.e. the group of Christian interpreters of the constellations described by Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* 4.48.7–10³⁹) had identified the two constellations of the Bears, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, with the old creation according to Adam and the new creation in Christ respectively.

After Gemini follows Cancer, which for Zeno is a symbol of evil, specifically idolatry, indecency and greed against which the two testaments of Scripture (i.e. Gemini) warn (2.4).⁴⁰ The profit-seeking nature of those born under Cancer is especially emphasized by Manilius (*Astronomica* 4.165–175).

By contrast the next sign, Leo, had a much more positive function in ancient astrology. Leo's status is reinforced by the fact that its brightest star came to be known as Regulus, the "Little King"; as well, Leo itself was seen as the astrological sign of royalty. In Zeno's sermon, Leo becomes another sign of the zodiac that is directly identified with Christ.

But our Leo, as Genesis bears witness, is a "lion's whelp" [Gen 49.9] whose gracious mysteries we celebrate, who "lay down and slept" [Gen 49.9] so that he might conquer death, [and] kept vigil to confer upon us the gift of immortality from his blessed resurrection (2.4).⁴¹

As he had done earlier with Aries (transposing Ram and Lamb) and with Taurus (transposing Bull and Calf), so again with the constellation Leo Zeno

renders a fierce image into a milder, more domesticated one by referring to “our Lion” (*Leo autem noster*) as a “whelp” (*catulus*).⁴² This description derives once again from Jacob’s blessing upon his sons recounted in Gen 49, a text which seems to have been in the back of Zeno’s mind throughout the development of this sermon. In particular, behind the lion imagery lies Jacob’s blessing on Judah in Gen 49.9–10:

Judah is a lion’s whelp...
 He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,
 like a lioness—who dares rouse him?
 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
 nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet....

These lines immediately follow the blessing on Simeon and Levi in Gen 49.8 which features the image of the bull. It has been argued that such imagery of a bull and a victorious lion, which is found extensively in ancient near eastern iconography, reflects an archaic myth of combat between a bull and a lion, from which the lion emerges victorious. Moreover, this myth was also connected with the position of the constellation Taurus at its heliacal setting and of Leo high above in the sky at the zenith at the time for spring plowing at the beginning of the agricultural year, 6–8 weeks after the winter solstice.⁴³ For Christian authors such as Zeno the imagery of the victorious Leo especially attracted christological notions of death and resurrection; a parallel Christian text is the following passage from Gregory the Great’s commentary on Ezekiel 1.10:

[Christ] was worthy to die in sacrifice for our redemption like a young calf (*vitulus*); through his strength and power he also rose again like a lion (*leo*). The lion is reputed to sleep with its eyes open, so that in that very death in which our redeemer was able to sleep as a result of his humanity, by remaining immortal as a result of his divinity he kept watch over his own. He himself after his resurrection ascended to heaven, he was raised up to the heights like an eagle (*aquila*). Therefore he became completely like us, in being born as a human being, in dying as a young calf, in rising up as a lion, and in ascending to heaven as an eagle (*Homilies on Ezekiel 1.4.1*).⁴⁴

Both Zeno and Gregory exploit the motif of the lion’s sleeping and waking, drawing on an interesting item of ancient zoological folklore, i.e. the curious belief, widespread in the ancient world, that lions sleep with their eyes open. This folkloric belief was also reflected in ancient astrology in the association

between the constellation Leo and the Sun, for the Sun has its house in Leo. Also, in astrology Leo was connected with the theme of birth (genesis) since Leo comes immediately after Cancer which Porphyry tells us was the gate through which souls enter the sublunar world (*On the Cave of the Nymphs* 20–24),⁴⁵ similarly, Macrobius writes “the first steps of birth...are found in Leo” (in Leone sunt rudimenta nascendi).⁴⁶

The close connection between the next two signs, Virgo and Libra, is evident from ancient iconography, in which Virgo is often depicted holding a pair of scales in her hand. As with the preceding sign of Leo, Virgo and Libra are both interpreted in a positive Christian sense in Zeno’s sermon. Zeno’s statement that “Virgo follows [Leo] suitably and that Virgo [in turn] announces Libra” (2.5)⁴⁷ is to be understood both astrologically and theologically at the same time. Virgo does indeed “follow” Leo and “precede” Libra in the customary order of the signs of the zodiac. Hübner notes that according to the seasonal division of the zodiac (Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.11) Virgo is one of the four “biform” signs that precede (or “announce”) the tropic signs in each quarter of the zodiac.⁴⁸ (Gemini, Sagittarius, and Pisces, the other three signs that precede tropic signs, are truly biform; Virgo was included among them.) Of course Zeno identifies Virgo with Mary the Virgin mother⁴⁹ who brings forth Christ, himself identified with Libra, the sign of justice. The ideal of justice had been the basis of the traditional association of Libra with Italy and Rome (Manilius, *Astronomica* 4.769–777).⁵⁰ The association of Libra with justice is also mentioned by Basil of Caesarea (*Hexaemeron* 6.6): if the form of Libra is patterned after scales here on earth then, he says derisively, “The one born under Libra is just because of the equality of our scales: can anything be more ridiculous?”⁵¹ By identifying Christ with Libra, Zeno illustrates the Christian belief that divine justice has come to earth through Christ’s incarnation and birth from the Virgin Mary. Zeno encourages his listeners to “constantly hold onto and faithfully serve” Libra (that is, Christ) (*Quam qui constanter tenuerit ac fideliter ministraverit*); the feminine relative pronoun “quam,” referring to the antecedent Libra, reinforces the identification of Libra/Christ as the object of his listeners’ devotion and commitment.⁵²

Zeno goes on to say that by adhering to Libra/Christ they will be victorious over the powers of evil, and will tread underfoot not Scorpio (i.e. the next zodiacal sign), but all serpents, as the Lord had promised—and the soles of their feet will remain unharmed (2.5).⁵³ The Biblical background for this statement is of course Luke 10.19: “See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing

will hurt you,” which in turn recalls Ps 91.13. However, an astrological allusion may also be evident in this text, or at least in Zeno’s use of it. After Libra, with Scorpio the zodiacal circle moves into the southern hemisphere. Scorpio is related to notions of enmity and war, being the astrological house of Mars: according to Manilius (*Astronomica* 4.220–229) people who are born under Scorpio are bellicose and ardent for battle, “with minds that greatly rejoice in bloodshed and in slaughter rather than plunder.”⁵⁴ (Indeed, while the Romans associated their own rule with Libra they assigned Scorpio to their traditional enemy, the city of Carthage [*Astronomica* 4.778].) The sign of Scorpio was related to not only scorpions but all reptiles, according to a fifth century commentary on the astrological treatise of Paul of Alexandria which says, “If the aspect belongs to Ares...it will be threatened by fire...if in Scorpio, by reptiles...”⁵⁵ The image of “treading” may also derive from astrology, since the sign of Scorpio is located immediately beneath the feet of the anthropomorphic constellation Ophiuchus (whose name literally means “serpent-holder”); a similar logic is evident in the identification of Ophiuchus with the Logos/Christ among the “Arateans” who Christianized the constellations as described by Hippolytus (*Refutation* 4.48.5–6⁵⁶).

In Zeno’s sermon, the mention of Scorpio inaugurates a series of signs associated with evil. Zeno explicitly equates the next sign of the zodiac, Sagittarius, with the devil.

Nor will they ever fear even the devil himself who is indeed the very sharp-stinging Sagittarius, armed with all sorts of fiery arrows and wounding at every moment the hearts of the whole human race. Because of this the apostle Paul says: ‘Put on the armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, taking the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the arrows of the evil one which are full of fire’ [Eph 6.12, 16] (2.6).⁵⁷

Sagittarius’ arrows, a standard characteristic of this sign (see Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.240) and the source of its name, are here identified with the “arrows” of the evil one referred to in the 6th chapter of the letter to the Ephesians. Zeno’s description of Sagittarius as “very sharp-stinging” (*acerimus*) is also etymologically related to a root meaning “arrow” (cf. Greek ἀκίς, “pointed dart, arrow”). Manilius refers to the positive influence of Sagittarius’ sharp arrow: “And since it bears an arrow aimed on its curved bow, it gives strength to limbs and keenness to the mind, swift movement and a heart that cannot be wearied out” (*Astronomica* 4.240–242).⁵⁸ However, Sagittarius functions as an image of evil for Zeno. The association of Sagittarius with fire (*igneis sagittis*) may also derive from astrology: it shares in the

aspect of trine (with Aries and Leo) that is related to the element of fire.⁵⁹ According to Zeno, Sagittarius in turn sends out (“inmittit,” another image of shooting) the next zodiacal sign, which Zeno also identifies as a figure of evil, Capricorn. The relationship between Sagittarius and Capricorn parallels that of Virgo and Libra: in the seasonal division of the zodiac (see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.11) mentioned above: just as the biform sign Virgo “announces” the tropic sign of Libra so also Sagittarius is the biform sign that precedes Capricorn. Thus the phrase “Virgo who announces Libra” (Virgo praenuntians Libram) in 2.5 is balanced by Zeno with “[Sagittarius] sends Capricorn” (inmittit Capricornum) in 2.6.⁶⁰ Indeed, the procession of evil figures in this portion of the sermon (2.5–6), i.e. Scorpio–Sagittarius–Capricorn, mirrors antithetically the earlier procession of positive signs Leo–Virgo–Libra which Zeno had referred to Christ and Mary in 2.4–5. For Zeno, Capricorn’s association with evil is illustrated by his ugly appearance: his face is misshapen, his horn protrudes, his pale lips bubble with foaming poison,⁶¹ and he rages miserably throughout all his limbs at the ruin of his trembling captive (2.6).⁶²

The theme of unity versus diversity is again evident in Zeno’s homiletical and rhetorical contrast between the signs referring to Christ and those referring to evil beings: the positive signs always return to the one and the same Christ,⁶³ while the evil signs proliferate and produce increasing varieties of sin and suffering. Thus, as we have seen, in 2.4 Cancer is identified by Zeno with the three sins of idolatry, indecency, and greed (avaritia); with the appearance of Capricorn, the evil multiplies to six types of sin and suffering as Capricorn is said to drive people to madness, frenzy, others to murder, or adultery, or impiety, or to be blind with greed (again, avaritia) (2.6).⁶⁴ It would be too long to recount all the many works of evil, Zeno says: “he [Capricorn] has countless ways of inflicting injury” (2.7).⁶⁵ For Zeno, these multifarious and multiplying forms of evil are only overcome through the one baptism provided by Christ; the imagery of the next zodiacal sign, Aquarius, Zeno especially relates to the waters of baptism. It is interesting that throughout this sermon Zeno only refers to salvation in connection with Aquarius and (earlier) with Gemini. In 2.4, Gemini had been contrasted with the evil sign immediately following it, Cancer; now, in 2.7 Zeno juxtaposes evil Capricorn and saving Aquarius— though the order has been reversed: earlier Gemini was followed by Cancer (i.e. evil succeeded good), but now, as we approach the end of the sermon and the end of the zodiac, the good sign Aquarius succeeds the evil sign of Capricorn. (According to Manilius’ *Astronomica* 4.568–72, people

who are born under Capricorn, especially its fishtail, will live extremely dangerous lives, always close to death, while those born at the beginning of Aquarius are pious, pure and noble.) Moreover, since Aquarius is related to baptism, with this sign Zeno's sermon is about to come full circle, back to the beginning of the Christian life—and back to the beginning of the circle of the zodiac.

The final zodiacal sign, Pisces, Zeno refers to the Jewish-Gentile duality within the church (though it is unclear to what extent that duality was actually present within Zeno's congregation at Verona). According to Manilius, just as fish can only live because of water so Pisces follows Aquarius (Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.272–273); similarly, Zeno affirms that both Jewish and Gentile Christians derive the new life in Christ from baptism.⁶⁶

...but our Aquarius is used to wiping out all these [injuries] without great effort, pouring forth the stream of salvation. Inevitably, the two Pisces follow in one sign, that is, the two peoples from Jews and Gentiles who live by the water of baptism, sealed by one sign into one people of Christ (2.7).⁶⁷

Manilius also refers to Pisces in his discussion of astrological geography (*Astronomica* 4.800–805): here the opposition within Pisces is related to the diversity of nations in various geographical locations. In Zeno's Christianized version of the zodiac, Pisces is identified with the diversity of nations within the church, i.e. Jews and Gentiles. (The traditional association of Pisces with the Jews is not ancient but rather derives from the Renaissance period;⁶⁸ on the other hand, the use of the sign of the fish within Christianity is well known.) There is a contrast between the two “biform” zodiacal signs with inherent duality, Gemini and Pisces: Gemini is usually depicted harmoniously, with arms entwined or joined together at the hands or shoulder, while the two fish in Pisces are generally pointed in the opposite direction to one another.

Look among the constellations for the two Fishes and the Twins of like number with limbs unclad. The arms of the Twins are for ever linked in mutual embrace; but the Fishes face opposite ways and have different courses (Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.162–165).⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the two fish in Pisces are encircled by a unifying band, which also symbolizes the continuity of the zodiac as one moves from Pisces back to Aries.⁷⁰ For Zeno, the unity created out of the two fish in the sign of Pisces parallels the sign by which Christ creates unity out of plurality in the church:

“two Pisces...in one sign, that is, the two peoples from Jews and Gentiles who live by the water of baptism, sealed by one sign into one people of Christ.” The notion of being “sealed” has parallels in both astrological and early Christian texts;⁷¹ in the context of Zeno’s sermon it specifically relates to the anointing and signing of the baptized with the cross.⁷² As Hübner notes, according to Zeno’s Christian reading of the zodiac it is not the band surrounding Pisces which draws things together, but the unifying water of baptism best symbolized by the penultimate sign, Aquarius.⁷³ Despite the plurality of the signs of the zodiac, despite the proliferation of evil in the world, ultimately instead of the promised “horoscope” Zeno points his audience to the one sign (signum) of baptism into Christ.⁷⁴ Zeno’s sermon affirms that in Christ—who combines in himself the four-footed animal signs Aries, Taurus and Leo, as well as the sign of justice, Libra, and the sign of life-giving water, Aquarius—diversity gives way to the unity of a new genesis, a new creation.

Notes

1. See the discussion of the date of Zeno’s life and career as bishop of Verona in Gordon P. Jeanes, *The Day Has Come! Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona* (Collegeville, MN, 1995), 7–11.
2. CCL 22, 105–06 (= book 2, number 43 in PL 11.492–96). References below to Zeno’s sermon are taken from Löfstedt’s edition.
3. tam diversos, tam plures, tam dispares una uno partu vestra vos peperit mater (CCL 22, 105.12–13).
4. spiritalis ortus vestri candorem (CCL 22, 105.3); see Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 81–82.
5. Ecce pueri, adolescentes, iuvenes, senes utriusque sexus, qui eratis rei, eratis et inmundi mundana nativitate, contra omni reatu iam liberi mundi estis infantes et, quod est admirabile et gratum, subito uno momento facti aetatibus diversis aequaevi (CCL 22, 105.5–9).
6. See above Part A chapters 3 and 4.
7. The theme of unity in diversity in Zeno’s sermon is emphasized in Wolfgang Hübner,

“Das Horoskop der Christen (Zeno 1.38 L.),” VC 29 (1975): 120–37. My analysis of Zeno’s sermon has greatly benefitted from Hübner’s helpful essay.

8. Sed curiositatem vestram bene novi. Veteris vitae usurpatione, quod quidem vobis ulterius non licebit, fortassis requiratis et a nobis, qua genitura quove signo tam diversos, tam plures, tam dispares una uno partu vestra vos peperit mater. Sicut parvulis morem geram sacrique horoscopi pandam tota brevitate secreta. Igitur, fratres, genesis talis est vestra (CCL 22, 105.9–15).
9. Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 104.
10. On the Greco-Roman background see Robert Joly, “Curiositas,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 30 (1961): 33–44. On early Christian views of “curiositas” see Junod’s comments in his edition of Origen’s *Philocalia* 21–27 (SC 226), 196–98n2.
11. That the phrase “horoscopi pandam...secreta” entails a promise of revelation is noted by Hübner, “Horoskop,” 122n2a.
12. Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, trans. Brian Battershaw (New York, 1963), 173. Beck, *Religion of the Mithras Cult*, 175 describes Zeno’s sermon as “patently a contrivance, a conceit.”
13. Igitur, fratres, genesis talis est vestra (CCL 22, 105.15).
14. Cf. 2 Cor 5.17; Jn 3.3–5; 1 Pet 1.23; Tit 3.5.
15. Hübner, “Horoskop,” 122–23.
16. Primus vos, qui in se credentem reprobatur nullum, non Aries sed agnus excepit, qui vestram nuditatem velleris sui niveo candore vestivit, qui suum lacte beatum vagitu hiantibus vestris labris indulgenter infundit (CCL 22, 105.15–19).
17. In the Septuagint of these verses, κριοὶ parallels ἀρνία προβάτων; in the Vulgate, “aries” parallels “agni ovium”.
18. Boll, *Aus der Offenbarung Johannis*, 44–46; cf. Stuckrad, *Ringens*, 593–94. However, Zeno’s association of Aries with the image of the Lamb clothing and suckling its young goes counter to Malina’s claim that the Lamb in Revelation is simply to be identified as the “powerful, young male...ram” Aries (contra Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 101–02).
19. Crios autem ideo a Graecis dictum est hoc signum, quod, cum [in] eo Sol fuerit, inter diem et noctem quodammodo iudicat, quod crinein dicitur, et quod in eo signo inter

- hiemem positus et aestatem ipse rursus iudicetur (Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 2.10.3; vol. 1, p.53.5–9 Kroll–Skutsch).
20. See Is 61.10, etc.
 21. p. 354–56 Giet.
 22. CSEL 32, 122–23. Ambrose adds sarcastically that in this way astrologers say that human food and sustenance are caused by the very animals that humans use as food and sustenance.
 23. qui vestram nuditatem velleris sui niveo candore vestivit (CCL 22, 105.17–18).
 24. Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.263. The stars of Aries appear faint to the eye, which is elsewhere explained as due to the Ram having been sheared of its fleece in the myth (Bouché-Leclercq, 132).
 25. aequum luces cogentia et umbras/ ferre iugum.
 26. Idem non tumidus cervice, non torvus fronte, non minax cornu Taurus, sed optimus, dulcis, blandus ac mitis vos admonet vitulus, ut nulla ullo in opere captantes auguria, eius sine malitia succedentes iugo terramque vestrae carnis domando fecundantes laetam divinorum seminum messem caelestibus horreis inferatis (CCL 22, 105.19–24).
 27. “Horoskop,” 125–26.
 28. Since Zeno does not mention the death of the Bull in his sermon, he is not comparing sacrificial death in Taurus with resurrection in Leo in 2.3–4; thus it is unlikely that he had in mind the astrological datum that Taurus and Leo have the aspect of square to one another. As well, Zeno does not connect Virgo with harvest (2.5), so it is doubtful that he had in mind that Taurus and Virgo have the aspect of trine (contra Hübner, “Horoskop,” 128).
 29. Fragment XIII (vol. 2, p. 57 Bonwetsch–Achelis [GCS]).
 30. CCL 20, 186–87. This text previously appeared with the collection of Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s sixteen sermons on Genesis in the edition of L. Barraeus (1580) and in PG 12. Hübner, “Horoskop,” 127 is thus misled into attributing this text to Origen.
 31. Taurum apellari Filium Dei legimus in Scripturarum figuris...taurum etiam ipsum dici Dominum invenimus, illum qui occisus est pro salute et reditu filii paenitentis

- (CCL 20, 208.21 and 214.24–25).
32. Istum ergo taurum sive vitulum consilio suo Scribae et Pharisei subnervasse dicuntur (CCL 20, 208.27–28).
 33. So too Gregory the Great in his *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1.4.1–3 (CCL 142, 47–49).
 34. “Horoskop,” 126.
 35. In Aratus’ *Phaenomena*, Taurus is described as “crouching” (πεπτηότα) (v. 167) and with “widely visible legs bent” (σκελέων ... περιφαίνεται ὀκλάς) (v. 517). This refers to the way Taurus was usually represented with only the front half of its torso and front legs bent (Bouché-Leclercq, 133–34); as Hübner (“Horoskop,” 126n12) points out, this position had nothing to do with seeing the Bull as poised ready for sacrifice.
 36. In astrological texts, along with Virgo and Capricorn the sign of Taurus was specifically connected with the agricultural cycle of seed time and harvest (Hübner, “Horoskop,” 125).
 37. terramque vestrae carnis domando fecundantes (CCL 22, 105.22–23). On Taurus and lust see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.17 (p. 80–81 Robbins [LCL]). As well, Manilius notes that Cupid dwells under Taurus’ forehead (i.e. the brightest star in the Hyades, Aldebaran): “habitatque puer sub fronte Cupido” (*Astronomica* 4.151). See also Bouché-Leclercq, 134n1, who exclaims “tout est à Venus dans ce signe.”
 38. Et admonet prosequentibus Geminis, id est duobus salutare canentibus testamentis (CCL 22, 105.24–26).
 39. p. 134.29–52 Marcovich. See the discussion in Part B chapter 17 above.
 40. ...ut principaliter idolatriam, inpudicitiam avaritiamque fugiatis, quae est incurabilis Cancer (CCL 22, 105.26–27).
 41. Leo autem noster, sicut Genesis protestatur, leonis est catulus, cuius ista pia sacramenta celebramus, qui ad hoc recubans obdormivit, ut vinceret mortem, ad hoc evigilavit, ut beatæ resurrectionis suae in nos munus immortalitatis conferret (CCL 22, 105.27–31).
 42. The word “catulus” was used in the Old Latin of Gen 49.9 (p.503–04 Fischer).
 43. Willy Hartner and Richard Ettinghausen, “The Conquering Lion, the Life Cycle of a Symbol,” *Oriens* 17 (1964): 161–71; see also Willy Hartner, “The Earliest History of

- the Constellations in the Near East and the Motif of the Lion-Bull Combat,” JNES 24 (1965): 1–16; Beck, “In the Place of the Lion,” 29–50.
44. CCL 142, 47.22–31.
 45. p. 20–24 Arethusia.
 46. *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.12.4 (cited in Hübner, “Horoskop,” 128; trans. p. 134 Stahl).
 47. Quem competenter sequitur Virgo praenuntians Libram (CCL 22, 105.31–32).
 48. Hübner, “Horoskop,” 129; on this way of dividing the zodiac see Bouché-Leclercq, 152–53.
 49. Other examples of this identification in astrological texts are listed in W. Gundel, s.v. “Parthenos,” RE 18/4, 1950. 20–28.
 50. Bouché-Leclercq, 42. Libra as a symbol of justice is connected with Augustus in Vergil, *Georgics* 1.33–35, since Libra was Augustus’ birth horoscope.
 51. Ὁ δὲ ζυγיאνοὺς δίκαιος, διὰ τὴν παρ’ ἡμῶν τῶν ζυγῶν ἰσότητα. Τούτων τί ἂν γένοιτο καταγελαστότερον; (p. 354 Giet).
 52. The translation of Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 70 as “Whoever steadfastly observes these virtues and faithfully carries them out” is therefore incorrect and misleading; the antecedent of “quam” is not “aequitatem iustitiamque” but “Libram.”
 53. ...non dicam Scorpionem, sed, sicut dominus ait in evangelio, omnes omnino serpentes inlaesa planta calcabit (CCL 22, 106.35–36).
 54. multo gaudentem sanguine mentem/ nec praeda quam caede magis (v. 221–22) (p. 238 Goold).
 55. εἰ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ Ἄρεώς ἐστὶ τὸ σχῆμα [aspect]...διὰ πρὸς κινδυνεύσει...εἰ δὲ ἐν τῷ Σκορπίῳ δι’ ἐρπετῶν... (p. 135.28–136.1 Boer); see Hübner, “Horoskop,” 130. This commentary has come down to us under the name of Heliodorus (Bouché-Leclercq, 569n5; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 81).
 56. p. 133.24–26 Marcovich. See the discussion in Part B chapter 17 above.
 57. Sed nec ipsum quoque diabolum, qui vere est acerrimus Sagittarius, formidabit umquam, variis atque igneis sagittis armatus, totius humani generis omni momento

- corda destringens; propter quod sic Paulus apostolus ait: Induite vos armaturam dei, ut possitis vos constare adversus nequities diaboli accepto scuto fidei, per quod poteritis omnes sagittas illius mali, quae sunt igne plenae, exstinguere (CCL 22, 106.37–43).
58. quodque intenta gerit curvato spicula cornu./ et nervos tribuit membris et acumina cordi/ et celeris motus nec delassabile pectus (p. 240 Goold).
59. Hübner, “Horoskop,” 131; on the trigonal aspects and the elements see Bouché-Leclercq, 169 and figure 19.
60. Cf. Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.187–88: ...Arcitenens, qui te, Capricorne, sub ipso/ promittit.
61. Reading “venenis” for “venis” as suggested by Hübner, “Horoskop,” 133.
62. Is enim infelicibus nonnumquam inmittit Capricornum vultu deformem, qui cornu exsiliens, labra liventia spumantibus venis ebulliens palpitante ruina captivi tota miserabiliter per membra desaevit (CCL 22, 106.43–47).
63. Hübner, “Horoskop,” 129–30 claims that the association of Christ with Libra, Aquarius and Gemini derives from the aspect of trine that these signs share, which was also related to the air (on the four trigonal aspects and their attribution to the four elements see Bouché-Leclercq, 169 and figure 19). However, Zeno also connects Christ with Aries, Taurus and Leo.
64. Alios amentes, alios furiosos, alios homicidas, alios adulteros, alios sacrilegos, alios avaritia efficit caecos (CCL 22, 106.47–48).
65. Longum est ire per singula: varias atque innumerabiles nocendi artes habet (CCL 22, 106.48–50). The phrase “nocendi artes” parallels Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.337–38, where Juno says to Allecto, “You have a thousand deadly arts” (tibi nomina mille/mille nocendi artes).
66. Hübner, “Horoskop,” 134. On Aquarius providing water (salt or fresh) for Pisces see Bouché-Leclercq, 146–47.
67. ...sed has omnes salutari profluens amne non magno opere noster Aquarius delere consuevit. Quem necessario uno sequuntur duo Pisces in signo, id est duo ex Iudaeis et gentibus populi baptismatis aqua viventes, in unum populum Christi uno signo signati (CCL 22, 106.50–54). The antecedent of “has” is “varias atque innumerabiles nocendi artes” of evil Capricorn.

68. For the traditional association see Roy A. Rosenberg, "The 'Star of the Messiah' Reconsidered," *Biblica* 53 (1972): 105–09; Molnar, *Star of Bethlehem*, 27–28, notes that this association was not held by the ancients but was a midrashic interpretation developed by Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508).
69. duos per sidera Pisces/ et totidem Geminos nudatis aspice membris./ his coniuncta manent alterno brachia nexu,/ dissimile est illis iter in contraria versis (p. 94–95 trans. Goold). Therefore, those born under Pisces lead many different types of nautical careers (*Astronomica* 4.273–291).
70. W. Gundel, s.v. "Pisces," RE 20/2, 1776.1–32; Hübner, "Horoskop," 135.
71. Hübner, "Horoskop," 135n37. Hübner's citation of *Astronomica* 1.355 depends on using the variant reading "signata" rather than "resupina" (p. 32 Goold).
72. Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 182.
73. Hübner, "Horoskop," 135, and see further p. 123 and n3 on the connection between Christians and Aquarius.
74. Hübner, "Horoskop," 137.

23. Conclusion

It is well known that the early Christians condemned, and at the same time exploited, elements of Greco-Roman culture and religion.¹ This assessment is borne out by the present study of early Christian attitudes to Greco-Roman astrology. As we have seen, numerous early Christian writers attacked astrology; however, it is inaccurate to depict Christian views of astrology as solely or exclusively polemical. The early Christians did not live in isolation from the culture of antiquity: rather, they were people who had been raised in Greco-Roman society, who were largely nurtured and shaped by traditional culture, and who daily interacted with that culture. Since astrology was part and parcel of that traditional culture, we should expect a range of attitudes toward astrology among the early Christians; and, as shown in this study, the early Christians did indeed approach astrology in a variety of ways. The goal of this study has been to sketch out an accurate historical picture which takes into account the full range of early Christian attitudes toward Greco-Roman astrology.

The survey of arguments against astrology in Part A prompts reflection on the motivation of the early Christians in their opposition to this aspect of Greco-Roman culture. The use of stock anti-fatalist arguments which had been developed by Carneades merely indicates that early Christian writers knew where to look for ammunition against astrology, i.e. to the doxographical literature in which the traditional arguments of the philosophers were preserved. By and large the Christians' use of traditional arguments was not accompanied by an awareness of earlier philosophical debates concerning fate and free will. Why did early Christian polemicists avail themselves of such arguments? It is most unlikely that writers such as Hippolytus, Basil of Caesarea, and Ambrose made use of them against contemporary astrological practices or practitioners, or that they took seriously the counter-arguments of the adherents of astrology; and there is little evidence that they had any profound awareness of ancient astrological literature. That is to say, early Christian writers who attacked astrology tended not to engage their opponents directly. (One exception is Tertullian's attack on a Christian astrologer in *On Idolatry* 9.) Instead, for the most part the astrology which early Christian writers attacked was a superficial caricature (e.g. unmitigated fatalism) of what could be (e.g. in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*) a complex and sophisticated branch of learning. In the anti-astrological passages of Tatian, Diodore of Tarsus, Basil, Ambrose or Epiphanius it is hard to discern that any real

astrologers were being addressed, except perhaps as straw figures to be demolished.

In order to properly understand the motivation behind Christian arguments against astrology it is best to situate this polemic within the context of the early church. By and large, Christian writers were not fundamentally interested in refuting the astrologers themselves. Instead, Christian anti-astrological polemic was primarily directed to the faithful in the church in order to dissuade them from astrological pursuits and to reassure them of the truth of Christian doctrine over against astrology. This ecclesiastical function of anti-astrological polemic holds true for the use of both traditional arguments that were drawn from the doxographical literature as well as arguments that were drawn from Christian theology itself, such as the attribution of astrology to Satan and the demons. As is evident in the final section of Part A above, Christian polemic against astrology was closely related to the pastoral problem which ecclesiastical leaders perceived that astrology posed for members of the church.

Part B of this study establishes that the early Christians were not universally opposed to astrology and demonstrates that Christian attitudes to astrology involved more than just apologetic refutation. In spite of the polemic against astrology by early Christian writers, the evidence surveyed in Part B clearly shows that some Christians made use of astrology in their beliefs and practices. In the words of Cumont: “[T]outes les figures du cycle cosmique... furent adoptées par le christianisme...et...continuèrent à se multiplier.”² The very anti-astrological polemic itself provides evidence of this: the extensive polemic against astrology in early Christian literature is best seen as a response to the fact that Christians were exhibiting an on-going interest in astrology despite official opposition by church leaders.

Der Kampf der christlichen Kirchenväter und Theologen gegen die Astrologie ist allgemein ein...Zeugnis für das Bestehen und Blühen von Sternglaube und Sterndeutung und für die Gefahr, die von dort dem Christentum drohte. Aber auch in den eigenen Reihen gab es bis in das 6. Jahrhundert hinein immer wieder Freunde der Astrologie, die es zu überzeugen oder durch Verbote abzuschrecken galt.³

Part B also delineates some of the variety of ways that early Christians incorporated elements of astrology into their theology and practice. In terms of Tester’s distinction between “hard” astrology (i.e. determinism) and “soft” astrology (which allows for some measure of human freedom), the examples of Christianized astrology surveyed in Part B fall into the “soft” category.⁴

Again, this is not surprising: fatalistic determinism was ultimately impossible to reconcile with Christian views of divine and human free will, but beliefs concerning the planets and the stars proved to be less intractable.

This more benign, positive use of astrology by early Christians is of special interest to the student of ancient religions. On the one hand, it is significant that several of the writers and groups surveyed in Part B were sooner or later identified as heterodox. Our primary source for information concerning three of the groups (the allegorizers of Aratus, the Peratae, and the Elchasaites) is the hostile account of them in Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies*. Others such as Bardaisan, Origen and the Priscillianists were condemned for heresy, though not primarily on account of their use of astrology; nevertheless, in the case of each of these advocating astrology was one of the charges that was levelled against them by their opponents. Thus the incorporation of astrological themes into Christianity was an issue (though not a major one) in the task of early Christian self-definition and in the emergence of normative Christianity.

On the other hand, Part B above leads to the conclusion that early Christianity was not exempt from the religious syncretism of its Greco-Roman social milieu. Ramsey MacMullen has expressed the view that conversions to Christianity in the ancient world involved "the least possible tear in the fabric of already held beliefs,"⁵ and the religious syncretism of ancient Greco-Roman culture certainly supports such a view. For scholars of the religions of antiquity it is essential to realize that "Christianity" and "paganism" (and, for that matter, "Judaism" or "philosophy") cannot be understood as isolated and discrete phenomena. The evidence surveyed in Part B of this study, which exhibits the remarkable variety of ways in which early Christians incorporated astrological themes into their beliefs and practices, reminds us that eclecticism and syncretism were fundamental to religious life and experience in Greco-Roman antiquity.

Notes

1. Martin, "Pagan Religious Background," 62–63; see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 671–681.
2. Cumont, "Zodiacus," 1059. (All the figures of the cosmic cycle...were adopted by

Christianity...and continued to multiply.)

3. W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 336. (The struggle of the Christian church fathers and theologians against astrology is in general ... evidence for the existence and flourishing of belief in the stars and astrology and for the danger which threatened Christianity from there. But in their own ranks, until the sixth century there were always still friends of astrology whom it was necessary to convince or to deter through prohibitions.)
4. Tester, *History of Western Astrology*, 2.
5. *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven, 1984), 21.

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