Raised to Newness of Life:
Resurrection and Moral Transformation in Second- and Third-Century Christian
Theology
by
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Graduate Program in Religion
Duke University

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Program in Religion in the Graduate School of Duke University

2015
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The New Testament contains two important and potentially conflicting understandings of resurrection. One integrates resurrection into salvation, suggesting that it is restricted to the righteous; this view is found most prominently in the Pauline epistles. The other understands resurrection as a prerequisite for eschatological judgment and therefore explicitly extends it to all; this view is found most prominently in the book of Revelation. In the former, moral transformation is part of the process that results in resurrection; in the latter, moral transformation only affects what comes after resurrection, not the event of resurrection itself. The New Testament itself provides no account of how to hold together these understandings of resurrection and moral transformation.

This dissertation is an investigation of the ways in which second- and third-century Christian authors creatively struggled to bring together these two understandings. I select key authors who are not only important in the history of early Christian discussions of resurrection but who also make extensive use of the Pauline epistles. For each author, I investigate not only how they develop or resist the Pauline connection between resurrection and moral transformation but also how they relate that connection to the doctrine of the resurrection of all to face judgment found in Revelation (if they do at all).

The results are remarkably diverse. Irenaeus develops the Pauline connection between resurrection and moral transformation through the Spirit of God but fails to
account for the resurrection of those who do not receive that Spirit in this life (although affirming that resurrection nonetheless). Tertullian begins from the model that takes resurrection to be fundamentally a prerequisite for judgment and struggles to account for Paul’s connections between resurrection and salvation. Two Valentinian texts, the Treatise on the Resurrection and the Gospel of Philip, adopt the Pauline model to the exclusion of the resurrection of the wicked. Origen connects resurrection to moral transformation in yet another way, making it an event that pedagogically reflects the moral transformation of all rational creatures—whether for the better or worse. For Methodius of Olympus, the resurrection of the body produces the moral transformation that is the eradication of the entrenched inclination to sin, but the moral transformation in this life that is the resistance of the promptings of that entrenched inclination produces reward after the resurrection. In each case, strategies for holding together the two views found in the New Testament reveal the fundamental theological commitments underlying the author’s overall understanding of resurrection.
For Linnea
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CHAPTER 1 | Introduction

1.1 Setting the Stage: Two Understandings of the Purpose of Resurrection

This dissertation is an investigation of the ways in which second- and third-century Christian authors creatively struggled to develop a coherent understanding of resurrection out of important and potentially conflicting themes found in the New Testament. It will therefore be helpful at the outset to trace the development of these themes and their place in the New Testament.

1.1.1 Two Understandings of the Purpose of Resurrection in Judaism

As belief in the resurrection of the dead emerged within Judaism, that belief was not monolithic. Many ambiguities surrounded the nature of resurrection: Does it involve a body? If no, then what is resurrected? If yes, then how does that body relate to the body of this life, the corpse in the grave?

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1 The term “New Testament” is used here and throughout this study as a shorthand, bearing in mind the anachronism of a firmly fixed canon for the entire period of study, yet also acknowledging the special authority that most of these texts came to have for many of later figures important for this study.

2 The precise origins of this belief within Judaism are murky, but they are not important for our purposes here. For discussions of the possible Zoroastrian background, see Alan F. Segal, Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 173-203. For the argument that resurrection fit comfortably within the broader structures and emphases of Jewish theology and the Hebrew Bible, regardless of the source of the particular idea that led to its eventual adoption by many, see Jon D. Levenson, Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

There were also, however, multiple understandings of the extent of resurrection. Who, exactly, will be resurrected? Will all people who ever lived be resurrected? Or will only a subset be resurrected? If only a subset, then what factors delimit this subset? Will only the righteous, those who have pleased God, be resurrected? Or will both righteous and wicked rise? The answers offered to all of these questions revealed underlying understandings of the purpose of resurrection.

1.1.1.1 Resurrection as Prerequisite for Reward and Punishment

The question of the extent of resurrection reveals two basic understandings of the purpose of resurrection. According to one view, resurrection encompasses both the righteous and the wicked. Correspondingly, its purpose is to make possible the appropriate rewards for righteousness or punishments for wickedness that were not meted out in this life. Daniel 12:1-3—often cited as the one clear affirmation of resurrection in

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the Hebrew Bible[^4]—leaves many questions about the nature of resurrection frustratingly unanswered, but it does clarify that the rising it describes does not always have a happy ending:

Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [וּיצַקְיִרָפַע], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. ^[5]

Whether or not this passage affirms that all people who ever lived will rise is debatable; it affirms that “many” (רַבִּים/πολλοί), rather than “all,” will rise. Nevertheless, it is clearly not just a resurrection of the righteous. While some will rise to everlasting life and shine like stars, others will rise to shame and contempt. The passage’s driving concern, as several commentators have noted, is that justice be done: ^[6] those who deserve deliverance will receive it (12:1), post-mortem existence will be differentiated (12:2), and those who are “wise” or “lead many to righteousness” will be transformed into glorious brightness (12:3). The initial rising is not itself, then, the object of hope and source of consolation

[^4]: E.g., Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 23; Cavallin, *Life After Death*, 26; Collins, *Daniel*, 392, 394; Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 37; Levenson, *Resurrection*, 181. The other candidates are Isaiah 26:19-21 and Ezekiel 37. These passages are so closely tied to Jewish national hopes, however, that it is difficult to determine whether or not they are also talking about the bodily resurrection of dead human beings.

[^5]: Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Bible (including 2 Maccabees) are from the New Revised Standard Version.

for those facing difficult circumstances. Instead, this initial rising is the prerequisite for the subsequent differentiation that ensures that just recompense is received. By itself, the rising rights no wrongs.

The same view appears in two Jewish apocalyptic texts written in the wake of the first Jewish revolt, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Dated to the last decade of the first century C.E., 4 Ezra grapples with the theological problems raised by the failure of the Jewish revolt and destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Some of these issues relate to the eschaton and the afterlife, and the text offers an elaborate description of both. The angel Uriel explains to Ezra that, after a 400-year Messianic age and one week of primeval silence after all have died (including the Messiah),

the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused [excitabitur], and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn. … Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of Hell [gehenna] shall be disclosed, and opposite it the Paradise of delight. Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead [ad excitatas gentes], ‘Look now, and understand whom you have denied … Look on this side and that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments!’ (4 Ezra 7.31-33, 36-38)

The awakening of all from the dead is the precursor to the judgment. Consequently, it is important that all who have lived arise, for otherwise justice could not be served. Uriel

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7 George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 276-77.

thus describes the resurrection but passes quickly to the truly important event, the final judgment and the punishments and rewards that follow from it.

Uriel’s description of an intermediate state, the time between each individual’s death and the eschatological resurrection, reinforces this understanding of the purpose of resurrection. Ezra asks Uriel “whether after death, as soon as everyone of us yields up his soul, we shall be kept in rest until those times come when you will renew the creation, or whether we shall be tormented at once?” (7.75). In response, Uriel first assures Ezra that he will not be among those who are tormented after death (7.76-77), and then he gives a startlingly detailed description of what will happen to souls after they are separated from their mortal bodies at death (7.100-101). After all souls adore the glory of God (7.78), the souls of the wicked wander in grief. They finally understand their former errors, realize that they have missed the opportunity for repentance, and anticipate their final torment (7.79-87). The righteous, on the other hand, experience the opposite. They steadily increase in joy as they reflect on their faithfulness to the law, see the torment of the wicked, and anticipate their coming glorification (7.88-99). In this way, Uriel makes it clear that both the righteous and the wicked are awaiting resurrection, and that what is truly significant about resurrection is what lies beyond it: torment or glorification.

Second Baruch, an apocalyptic work roughly contemporary with and closely related to 4 Ezra,\(^9\) also takes up questions about the afterlife. As in 4 Ezra, the general

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context in which the detailed discussion of the resurrection appears is a description of a coming reality that is supposed to console those who are suffering for righteousness. In response to questions about the form of the resurrected body—questions suggesting that, for some, the idea of the resurrection had become associated with a transformation so radical that the raised would be unrecognizable to each other—God tells Baruch that

[t]he earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form. But as it has received them so it will give them back. And as I have delivered them to it so it will raise them. For then it will be necessary to show those who live that the dead are now living again, and that those who went away have come back. And it will be that when they have recognized each other, those who know each other at this moment, then my judgment will be strong, and those things which have been spoken of before will come. (50.2-4)

The function of resurrection here is to return all people to a state that is recognizably continuous with life in this present world. Crucially, however, this is important precisely because it is followed by judgment. At the time of this judgment,

both the shape of those who are found to be guilty as also the glory of those who have proved to be righteous will be changed. For the shape of those who now act wickedly will be made more evil than it is (now) so that they shall suffer torment. Also, as for the glory of those who proved to be righteous on account of my law, those who possessed intelligence in their life, and those who planted the root of wisdom in their heart—their splendor will then be glorified by transformations, and the shape of their face will be changed into the light of their beauty so that they may acquire and receive the undying world which is promised to them. (51.1-3)

God’s initial assurance to Baruch that the resurrection per se would not involve radical transformation clearly was not based on an aversion to transformation as such. Rather,
transformation in resurrection would be premature, for resurrection precedes judgment. Only after all have been raised and faced judgment can they be rewarded or punished with bodily transformations befitting their deeds.

It is not entirely clear in the case of Daniel that all people who have ever lived will be resurrected, but there are certainly some people still deserving of further punishments and some deserving of further rewards; these are the “many” who will be resurrected. For 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, Daniel’s ambiguous “many” becomes a clear “all,” and a judgment intervenes between the resurrection from the dead and the new life of glory or shame. But although far more elaborate, the understanding of resurrection articulated in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra is fundamentally the same as that already found in Daniel: resurrection is the preliminary step necessary for righteous and wicked people to receive the fitting rewards and punishments they did not receive during their mortal lives. Thus, anyone to whom rewards or punishments are still due at death must be resurrected.

1.1.1.2 Resurrection as Reward for the Righteous

The second view of the extent of resurrection that can be found in Jewish sources is that resurrection is restricted to the righteous. Corresponding to this view is an understanding of resurrection itself as a reward, even if it is not necessarily the only reward awaiting the righteous.

Second Maccabees is a case in point. Although it never states that resurrection is a reward restricted to the righteous, several aspects of the text suggest that this is in fact its view. Thus, the tortured brothers’ speeches invoke resurrection as an event that will right
the wrong caused by the wicked king. The second brother’s last words are a confident cry that “the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life [εἰς αἰώνιον ἀναστήσει], because we have died for his laws” (7.9). The third offers his tongue and hands to the torturers, proclaiming that the God who gave him those parts of his body will faithfully restore them to him (7.11). Likewise, the fourth brother tells the king that “[o]ne cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him” (7.14). Their mother, whose death is mentioned but not described (7.41), encourages her sons by telling them that “the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath [καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν] back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws” (7.23). Similarly, her last words of encouragement to the seventh brother are: “Accept death, so that in God’s mercy I may get you back along with your brothers” (7.29). The elder named Razis, who, rather than be captured by Nicanor’s men (14.37-46), commits suicide in a spectacular and gruesome way, entrusts himself to the God who returns body parts: “[W]ith his blood now completely drained from him, he tore out his entrails, took them in both hands and hurled them at the crowd, calling upon the Lord of life and spirit to give them back to him again” (14.46). In each of these cases, resurrection is not a preliminary step on the way to judgment and reward or punishment, along with possible transformation. Instead, 2 Maccabees repeatedly underlines the fact that resurrection is God’s powerful reversal of
the torture and dismemberment inflicted by the wicked upon those who remain steadfastly faithful to the law of God.\textsuperscript{11}

If 2 Maccabees had the same understanding of the purpose of resurrection as Daniel, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, one would expect it to use resurrection not only to comfort the righteous but also to threaten the wicked. It does not do so. In fact, the only threat invoking resurrection is the threat of failure to receive a resurrection. The fourth brother, after telling the king that he can die at the king’s hands because he knows that God will resurrect him again, declares, “But for you there will be no resurrection to life [ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωήν]!” (7.14). To be sure, this is not an explicit denial that the king will be resurrected at all. One could argue that the specification of resurrection to life implies that the king will receive a different kind of resurrection, one to shame and torment.

Additionally, given the brothers’ emphasis on the reversal of the king’s violence effected by resurrection, a sudden declaration that the king, too, will be resurrected might seem

\textsuperscript{11} Second Maccabees does not say when God will resurrect the martyrs. This silence opens the door for the view that it describes a resurrection of each martyr soon after his death in which he receives a new, heavenly body that is discontinuous with the mangled corpse remaining on earth. This reading is advocated by Ulrich Kellermann, Auferstanden in den Himmel: 2 Makkabäer 7 und die Auferstehung der Märtyrer, SBS 95 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1979), who uses it to distinguish between two Jewish understandings of resurrection: (1) vindication for a martyr, following soon after death; (2) resurrection of a group of people at the end of time. Assuming this taxonomy, Joost Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul’s Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15, NovTSup 84 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), argues that Christians initially understood Christ’s resurrection as an example of understanding (1). Paul, in 1 Cor. 15, was the first to argue that Christ’s immediate post-death resurrection as a vindicated martyr was actually the firstfruits of the type (2) resurrection for Christians. I am unconvinced by Kellermann’s interpretation of 2 Maccabees. Although the text never states that the martyrs will be resurrected together at the end of time, it also does not state that they will rise up in new bodies immediately after their deaths. While possible, Kellermann’s interpretation is by no means necessary. The emphasis on the martyrs’ present bodies, such as Razis throwing his intestines, suggests (without proving) that God is going to return those same bodies to them.
out of place. But a threat of bodily torture for the torturer, made possible by the resurrection, would fit quite well here. It is nowhere to be found. Instead, the fifth brother tells the king that he will be tortured by God, and this prophecy is fulfilled while the king is still living (7:17, 9:5-6).

The later description of Judas Maccabeus’s sacrifices for his fallen soldiers might be taken to assume a general resurrection, but here again key clues are missing. Second Maccabees 12:39-45 narrates Judas’s response to the discovery that all of the soldiers from his army who had been killed in a battle had been wearing secret, idolatrous amulets (12:40). Judas and his army responded to this discovery by blessing God, since they now knew that God had dealt justly with these fallen comrades by letting them be killed in battle; instead of calling into question God’s favor and protection, these deaths now demonstrated God’s omniscience and justice (12:41). Judas did not, however, stop with praising God’s justice. He and his army also prayed that the dead would be forgiven of their sin of idolatry, and he took up a collection from his army to provide a sin offering in the Jerusalem temple (12:42-43). At this point in the chapter, the narrator’s voice breaks in to highlight the significance of Judas’s actions:

12 The interpretation of Jonathan A. Goldstein, II Maccabees, AB 41A (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1983), 306, is ambiguous: “Antiochus will have no resurrection unto life because he will awaken from death for eternal contumely and for annihilation.” Goldstein claims that Daniel 12:2 is in the background, but it is precisely threat of postmortem punishment in Daniel 12 that is missing here.

In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection [ὑπὲρ ἀναστάσεως διαλογιζόµενος]. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again [ἀναστῆναι], it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin. (2 Macc 12:43-45)

When viewed alongside texts like Daniel, Judas’s action could be interpreted as an attempt to shift his fallen comrades’ post-resurrection fate from shame to glory. But note that 2 Maccabees only connects resurrection with reward and blessing. In fact, these idolatrous soldiers’ death in battle is itself God’s just punishment. Once again, one finds silence precisely where one would expect an invocation of the frightful fate awaiting the resurrected wicked. Rather than shifting his fallen comrades from post-resurrection shame to glory, Judas seems to be shifting them from the category of those who did not fall asleep in godliness to the category of those who did—and who can therefore look forward to resurrection.¹⁴

Admittedly, the case for this interpretation of 2 Maccabees rests on peculiarities of argument and ostensibly suspicious silence. Resurrection is presented as a fitting reward for the tortured martyrs’ faithfulness to God, but resurrection tout court is never explicitly denied to the wicked king or Judas’s idolatrous soldiers. If Daniel, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch were the only available points of comparison, it would be precarious to argue

¹⁴ Claudia Setzer, Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition (Boston, MA: Brill Academic, 2004), 12, assumes this reading of the passage. Neither Goldstein, II Maccabees, 449-51, nor Doran, 2 Maccabees, 246-49, addresses whether we are supposed to think that Judas believed in a general resurrection.
that 2 Maccabees reveals an alternative understanding of resurrection. But 2 Maccabees is not the only available point of comparison.

Josephus’s descriptions of the Pharisees’ eschatological beliefs confirm that this interpretation of 2 Maccabees is plausible. Consider these two descriptions of Pharisaic beliefs about life after death:

They believe that souls have immortal power; that there are chastisements δικαιώσεις and rewards under the earth for those whose cultivated character in this life was of virtue or vice; and that for the one group of souls has been set up everlasting imprisonment, but for the other group ease in returning to life. (Jewish Antiquities 18.14)¹⁵

While every soul is incorruptible, only the soul of the good passes over into a different body; the souls of the bad are chastised by everlasting retribution. (Jewish War 2.163)¹⁶

Strictly speaking, the second description is of metempsychosis, the soul passing into a different body. This is probably, however, Josephus’s way of rendering the Pharisaic beliefs about life after death:

These translations of Josephus are my own, but I have consulted the translations of Feldman and Thackeray (LCL) and C.D. Elledge, Life after Death in Early Judaism: The Evidence of Josephus, WUNT 2/208 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 170. Citing only this passage and Rudolf Bultmann’s brief quotation of it in his entry on ἀθανασία in the Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Robert M. Grant, “The Resurrection of the Body,” JR 28 (1948): 189, arranges the Pharisees under the heading of “those in Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity whose underlying attitude to the body required them to accept only an immortality of the soul and to speak of its escape from the bondage of matter.” Given what Josephus says about Pharisees elsewhere, along with all the other available data about Pharisaic views of the resurrection, this decision by Grant is inexplicable and reflects the strict dichotomy between resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul that he elsewhere, rightly, rejects.

¹⁵ The term δικαιώσεις appears in only one other passage in Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 18.315. There, it describes the blows (πληγαῖς) with which a cloth weaver chastised (ἐκόλασε) two apprentices who would come late to work. Its pairing with τιμή here, corresponding the pairing of lives of vice and virtue, lends it the same sense here.

¹⁶ ἀθάνατόν τε ἅπασαν µὲν ἀφθαρτοὶ εἶναι καὶ ὑπὸ θεόν δικαίωσις τε καὶ τιμᾶς αἰώνιας ἢ ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας ἐπιτόδειας ἐν τῷ βίῳ γέγονεν, καὶ ταῖς µὲν εἰρημένον ἀίδιον ἐκπίστευσαν, ταῖς δὲ ἁρστώνῃ τοῦ ἀναβίον (ed. Feldman, LCL). These translations of Josephus are my own, but I have consulted the translations of Feldman and Thackeray (LCL) and C.D. Elledge, Life after Death in Early Judaism: The Evidence of Josephus, WUNT 2/208 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 170. Citing only this passage and Rudolf Bultmann’s brief quotation of it in his entry on ἀθανασία in the Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Robert M. Grant, “The Resurrection of the Body,” JR 28 (1948): 189, arranges the Pharisees under the heading of “those in Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity whose underlying attitude to the body required them to accept only an immortality of the soul and to speak of its escape from the bondage of matter.” Given what Josephus says about Pharisees elsewhere, along with all the other available data about Pharisaic views of the resurrection, this decision by Grant is inexplicable and reflects the strict dichotomy between resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul that he elsewhere, rightly, rejects.
belief in resurrection more familiar to his audience. But more important than bodily continuity is that, while all are rewarded or chastised after death, renewed embodiment is a reward restricted to the righteous. The souls of the wicked do not need to be returned to their bodies in order for the wicked to receive their deserved torments. Disembodied imprisonment is sufficient for the wicked. By contrast, rejoining a body is at least part of the reward promised to a righteous person’s soul. Resurrection is clearly not, then, a prerequisite for judgment.

Josephus’s claims about the Pharisees fit well with what we have seen in 2 Maccabees. Some Jews looked forward to the resurrection of only the righteous, and this resurrection constituted their reward. This understanding of resurrection as reward did not prevent them from affirming, with Daniel, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, that God would

18 Elledge, Life after Death in Early Judaism, 49-51.
20 The important point is that Josephus found this view of the relationship between judgment, reward, punishment, and renewed embodiment comprehensible and plausible—not that he accurately reproduced Pharisaic beliefs on this point (which there is not enough data to confirm).
21 It is possible, although not certain, that the Qumran Hodayoth reflect a version of this view. In 1QHa, cols. 11 and 19, resurrection language seems to be used to describe the transformation that made possible the person’s entrance into the everlasting community. God has purified the person from the “great sin,” enabling him to enter the “everlasting community,” and this is described as a rising up from Sheol (col. 11) and the raising of the worms of the corpses (col. 19)—an odd phrase to be sure, but seemingly invoking visions of corpses. The unambiguously positive valuation of resurrection here would suggest that resurrection per se is positive and restricted to the righteous (those in the everlasting community). Its application to a present state rather than an eschatological event would also prefigure in interesting ways the language of resurrection in Ephesians and Colossians.
judge all people after death and condemn some to torment. But for them, *resurrection* was not necessary for judgment or punishment.

1.1.1.3 Implications

The existence of these two views has not gone unnoticed by previous scholars. Wilhelm Bousset perceived the two views clearly, even arguing that belief in the resurrection of only the righteous was more widespread than belief in the general resurrection for judgment.\(^{22}\) Robert M. Grant concurs, claiming that “Jewish pseudepigraphical literature looks forward to a future resurrection, though it is usually only the righteous Israelites who will rise.”\(^{23}\) More recently, N.T. Wright has claimed that the generality of the resurrection was “one of the greatest areas of disagreement among both rabbis and Christians.”\(^{24}\) Despite, however, occasional acknowledgment of the existence of these two fundamentally different understandings of the extent and corresponding purpose of resurrection, treatments of resurrection tend to focus on other questions, like whether resurrection necessarily involves a body—and if so, what kind of body.\(^{25}\) Even Bousset simply points out the existence of the two views throughout the


\(^{24}\) Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 194.

\(^{25}\) Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*, 14-32, categorizes Jewish understandings of resurrection according to purpose rather than nature (i.e., what theological “work” resurrection does rather than what kind of event or body is implied by the language). He arranges the data under four headings: (1) vindicating the people, vindicating God; (2) undergirding parenesis; (3) restoration of the cosmos; (4) restoration of Israel. Since both the resurrection of all to judgment (Daniel, *4 Ezra, 2 Baruch*) and the resurrection of the righteous as their reward (2 Maccabees) involve rewards, he treats them together under category (1). Kirk notes in passing
literature of the period and then moves on to other topics. Thus, it will be worthwhile to pause here to briefly consider the implications of the particular diversity that we have been examining.

First, one cannot assume a particular understanding of the purpose of resurrection whenever one finds resurrection mentioned in Second Temple Jewish texts. Each text must be examined carefully in order to discern who precisely is envisioned as being resurrected and what “work” resurrection is performing. It will not do to assume that affirmations of the resurrection of God’s people automatically imply the resurrection of all people to face judgment. Furthermore, the evidence from Josephus shows that it was at least conceivable to affirm that all would be judged and rewarded or punished and that only some would be resurrected. Therefore, mentions of judgment by authors who affirm the resurrection of the righteous cannot be taken to necessarily imply a resurrection of the wicked.

Second, the nature of the sources in which these two views can be discerned suggests that, despite the existence of diversity on these questions, they were not the subject of controversies. None of the texts surveyed thus far directly argue for their particular understanding of the extent and purpose of resurrection. Neither Daniel nor the later 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch polemicize against those who deny that the wicked will be

the restriction of resurrection to the righteous in 2 Maccabees but does not explore how this might reflect a different understanding of resurrection from texts like Daniel (18).
resurrected to judgment and torment; 2 Maccabees does not insist that the wicked will not be raised all, nor does Josephus say that the Pharisees were distinguished from groups who believed in the general resurrection; they were simply distinguished from groups like the Sadducees who believed in no resurrection at all. This lack of controversy makes it easier to imagine that some authors might have adopted aspects of both views without feeling compelled to iron out all the details.

Finally, it is important to note that the understanding of resurrection as restricted to the righteous opens up space for theological accounts that connect righteousness to resurrection causally, not just correlative. A correlative account would simply be the view that God looks kindly upon righteousness and chooses to reward it by straightforwardly causing the reunification of the souls of the righteous with bodies. God could cause the same to happen to the wicked but chooses not to because they do not deserve it. In a causal account, the resurrection of the wicked would be not only inappropriate but also a contradiction in terms. Something about righteousness—perhaps righteousness itself or that which causes it—would play an indispensable role in causing the eschatological resurrection. This would be a second way of explaining the restriction of resurrection to the righteous. A proponent of a causal model might even begin to refer to the cause by its effect, calling growth in righteousness “resurrection.”
1.1.2 Two Understandings of the Purpose of Resurrection in the New Testament

Both of these understandings of resurrection are represented in the New Testament. On the one hand, scattered statements explicitly declare that all will be resurrected to face judgment. On the other hand, important theological motifs strongly connect resurrection—and not just the blessings that might follow upon resurrection—to new life in Christ. A thorough engagement with these themes in the New Testament is far beyond the scope of this project, but it is also unnecessary for my purposes. The following survey, which begins with the relatively clear evidence from John and Revelation before moving to the more complex Pauline data, simply seeks to demonstrate that these two views appear in the New Testament and to sketch, in broad outline, the forms that they take.\(^{26}\) Doing so will set the stage sufficiently for studying their second- and third-century reception.

\(^{26}\) Hence the Synoptic gospels will not be treated. They affirm the resurrection of Jesus, but they do not clearly articulate how that resurrection relates to the resurrection of others, including of those who are not followers of Jesus. Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and the Debt of Sin: The Economy of Heaven in Matthew’s Gospel*, BZNW 196 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), has argued that Matthew presents resurrection as the reward for losing one’s life for the sake of the gospel. The passage to which he appeals places “eternal life” for the disciples who lose their life in parallel to the “resurrection” that follows upon Jesus’s crucifixion (Matt. 16:21-28; cf. 19:29). It is simply not clear, though, whether what is promised here is resurrection *per se* or resurrection into a blessed state. The Markan and Matthean versions of Jesus’s dispute with the Sadducees over marriage in the resurrection, which came to influence ascetic understandings of marriage, do not indicate whether or not the eschatological resurrection will be general (Matt. 22:15-32, Mark 12:13-27). In the Lukan version, on the other hand, Jesus says that “those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Luke 20:35: ὁι δὲ καταξιωθέντες τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐκείνου τυχεῖν καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐτε γαμοῦσιν οὐτε γαμίζονται). This version could be read as restricting resurrection to the righteous, although Acts later records Paul proclaiming the resurrection of all (Acts 24:15, discussed below).
1.1.2.1 Gospel of John

The Gospel of John strongly develops the connection between new life in Christ and resurrection. The motif of life runs throughout John, and it is emphatically the life that comes from the Father and is received through the Son. Thus, the life that is in the Son (1:4) is the life that comes from the Father and is communicated to all who feed on the Son (6:57-58; cf. 4:14). A recurring theme is the reception of this true life through belief in the Son (3:15-16, 3:36, 5:24, 11:23-27, 17:2-3). Those who do not receive this life are not explicitly threatened with bodily torment; instead, they are threatened with judgment, the abiding wrath of God, and exclusion from life (3:36, 5:24).

But John goes beyond insisting that new life is only received through Christ. This reception of new life is repeatedly described as resurrection. Within the space of only a few verses, Jesus declares three times that the Father has charged him to raise up on the last day those whom the Father has given to him and who have therefore come to him:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up [ἀναστήσω αὐτὸ] on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up [ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν] on the last day. (6:39-40)

No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up [ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν] on the last day. (6:44)

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them [ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν] up on the last day. (6:54)
The repeated refrain that Jesus will raise up on the last day those who have come to him for life suggests that there is something special about that raising up. We do not read that Jesus will not raise up those who have not come to him, but one could easily make such an inference from these statements. This connection between new life in Christ and resurrection is aptly summed up in Jesus’s own words: “I am the resurrection [ἡ ἀνάστασις] and the life” (11:25).

In these ways, John appears to articulate an understanding of resurrection with strong affinities to what we found in 2 Maccabees. The resurrection of the wicked is not explicitly denied, but the text focuses on resurrection as part of the gift of life bestowed by God upon those who seek God. To be sure, the two texts speak about resurrection itself in quite different ways. 2 Maccabees focuses on the reconstitution of the martyrs’ bodies, while John focuses on the reception of true, eternal life. Furthermore, 2 Maccabees connects resurrection with faithfulness to God’s law even unto martyrdom, while John sees belief and participation in the Son as the key factor. Nevertheless, in both, resurrection functions as a gift promised to a subset of people.

One passage, however, upsets this neat account. In John 5:25-29 Jesus declares:

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Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice [ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς] of the Son of God, and those who hear will live [ζήσουσι]. 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice [ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ] 29 and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life [εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς], and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως].

Verses 25-27 fit into the 2 Maccabees scheme well enough: only those who hear the voice of the Son of God will “live.” Given Jesus’s later statement that it is his own sheep who hear his voice and follow him (10:27) and that he will resurrect those whom the Father has given him, one could read this as a declaration that only Jesus’s flock are resurrected. But the last two verses suddenly invoke the understanding of resurrection found in Daniel: all will hear the voice of the Son and be resurrected, albeit to different fates.

This startling shift is often accounted for with reference to the supposed tension between realized and unrealized eschatology that runs through the Gospel. 28 On this model, when Jesus says that he will raise a subset of people (those who hear his voice and believe in him), he is talking about a present resurrection from death in sin. By contrast, when Jesus declares that all will hear his voice and rise to either life or judgment, he is talking about a resurrection at the end of time. Indeed, Jesus says in verse 25 that the time of this resurrection is coming and is now here, a statement conspicuously missing from

verse 28. John’s propensity elsewhere for speaking of the new life promised in Christ as an already-experienced reality is beyond question and without parallel in any of the Jewish views explored above.²⁹

Nevertheless, this distinction does not by itself explain how the two eschatologies relate to one another. Rudolf Bultmann, echoing Wilhelm Bousset, argues that they simply do not cohere: verses 28-29 are the product of the later “ecclesiastical redactor” who tried to bring John’s eschatology in line with “standard” eschatology.³⁰ Raymond Brown sees the realized eschatology as more probably secondary to the unrealized, apocalyptic eschatology that matches more closely the teaching of the Synoptics.³¹ Leon Morris simply asserts that the two are not mutually exclusive; he does not explain how they might relate to each other.³²

Can John’s coherence here be saved? Yes, but the task requires significant speculation. One could argue that the specification in John 5:29 that those who have done good will receive the resurrection of life (ζωῆς) provides the key link to the rest of John’s claims about new life in Christ. Thus, it is this resurrection of life that the Son will bestow on the last day upon those who participate in his life now. The other kind of resurrection

²⁹ Except, perhaps, in the Qumran Hodayoth, as noted above.
is given to those who are elsewhere threatened with judgment because of their refusal of new life in Christ.³³

Even if this reading is correct, John’s overall emphasis on resurrection bestowed by Christ as part of his gift of divine life, both now and “on the last day,” remains conspicuous. John 5:28-29 is the only passage that describes a negative post-mortem fate as resurrection. Nowhere else does resurrection function as a threat. Resurrection is not only elsewhere always positive, but it is integrated into John’s overall account of new life in Christ. This prominent feature of John’s gospel sits uncomfortably with the isolated invocation of a resurrection not only to life but also to condemnation, and the gospel provides precious little help in discerning how these two features relate to each other.

1.1.2.2 Revelation

The book of Revelation follows Daniel in treating resurrection as a prerequisite for postmortem rewards and punishments. The “first resurrection” allows those who have remained faithful to God in the face of persecution to join Christ in his thousand-year reign (20:4-6).³⁴ Although at least some of these faithful have been beheaded (20:4), the reversal of that dismemberment in resurrection is not even mentioned. Instead, the focus lies on the blessings that follow the resurrection.

³³ This is the solution proposed by Beasley-Murray, John, 77.

³⁴ For the reception history of this passage in early Christianity, see Charles E. Hill, Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).
Correspondingly, resurrection precedes the eternal punishment of the wicked. The sea, death, and Hades give up their dead for judgment, and those whose names are not written in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire (20:13-15). Admittedly, Revelation does not explicitly label this event “resurrection.” Nonetheless, the description of the resurrection into the millennium as the “first resurrection” implies a coming “second resurrection,” and the account of the sea, death, and Hades giving up their dead is similar to the descriptions of the eschatological resurrection in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Therefore, although not all people are resurrected simultaneously, all are resurrected so that they can receive the blessing or torment due to them.

The one way in which Revelation might reflect the understanding of resurrection as reward for the righteous is its restriction of the “first resurrection” to those who have remained faithful to God under persecution. Bousset calls this restriction of the first resurrection to the “especially righteous,” with the general resurrection and judgment following only later, a “remarkable conjunction of both views.” This is an intriguing suggestion. As we have seen, however, the split in the timing of resurrection does not result ultimately in a split of purpose. For Revelation, the final point of both resurrections

is to make something else possible, namely blessings or punishments. Revelation is thus fundamentally aligned with Daniel, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.36

1.1.2.3 Paul

Doing justice to Paul’s understanding of resurrection would require a full-scale Pauline theology, with all the attendant decisions on contentious points of interpretation. What follows instead is a modest attempt to chart certain key motifs and theological patterns in Paul’s thought surrounding resurrection.

Paul’s understanding of resurrection fits best within the paradigm that we have found in 2 Maccabees and Josephus’s description of the Pharisees. This fact emerges in two ways. First, Paul connects resurrection to God’s work of conforming the Christian through the Spirit to the resurrected Jesus Christ. This connection is articulated in various ways across the Pauline corpus, but this variety should not obscure the consistent integration of resurrection into God’s saving work.37 Second, Paul never explicitly claims in his letters that there will be a resurrection followed by judgment, condemnation, and

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36 Tobias Niklas, “Resurrection — Judgment — Punishment: Apocalypse of Peter 4,” in Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue, ed. Geert van Oyen and Tom Shepherd (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), sees Apocalypse of Peter 4 as an especially pure version of this understanding of resurrection: “According to Apoc. Pet. 4, the resurrection of the dead has nothing to do with Christ and his resurrection. … That is why, according to our text, resurrection of the dead has nothing to do with salvation. Resurrection of the dead is a universal eschatological concept concerning all of the dead that belong to God without exception and have to be given back to him. In this context resurrection is necessary to make God’s final judgment possible” (474). Niklas points out the similarities of this view to that found in the book of Revelation (465).

37 Questions of authenticity notwithstanding, I refer to all 13 letters of the traditional Pauline canon as “Pauline” because almost all of the authors treated in this study viewed them as such. (On the analogy of Marcion, who Tertullian says rejected the Pastorals [Against Marcion 5.21], the Valentinian writers might not have considered the Pastorals Pauline.)
punishment. To be sure, Paul does speak of coming judgment and wrath (e.g., 2 Thess. 1:6-10). But Josephus’s descriptions of the Pharisees show that affirmations of judgment and punishment do not necessarily imply a preceding resurrection.\textsuperscript{38} Taken together, then, these two factors strongly indicate that Paul thought of resurrection as part of salvation, a transformation towards conformity to the resurrected Christ, rather than a prerequisite for rewards and punishments following a general judgment.

Paul’s focus on Christ is the key to his discussions of resurrection. God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:24, Gal. 1:1, 1 Thess. 1:10, Eph. 1:20; cf. Rom. 4:17, 2 Cor. 1:9), and Paul takes that event as paradigmatic for God’s resurrection of others. He reassures the grieving Thessalonians of the certainty of their loved ones’ resurrection by pointing to the fact that God has already raised Jesus from the dead (1 Thess. 4:13-14). He tells the Corinthians of his confidence that the God who raised the Lord Jesus will raise them up and bring them all together into God’s presence (2 Cor. 4:14). Just as Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power through his resurrection (Rom. 1:4), the revelation of the sons of God that all creation awaits, which is in fact their adoption as

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\textsuperscript{38} The false assumption that affirmations of judgment and punishment necessarily imply a preceding resurrection plays an important role in Heinrich Molitor’s argument that Paul believed in the resurrection of both Christians and non-Christians. After stating this assumption (“Wenn es ein Gericht gibt am Ende der Welt, dem nicht nur die Christen, sondern auch die Nichtchristen … unterworfen sind, … dann ist es klar, daß es eine allgemeine Auferstehung geben muß” [57]), he simply goes to show that Paul does indeed speak of all facing judgment. Thus, he concludes, Paul believed in the resurrection of all. Heinrich Molitor, \textit{Die Auferstehung der Christen und Nichtchristen nach dem Apostel Paulus}, NTAbh 16.1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1933). Murray J. Harris, \textit{Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament} (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), 176-77, comes to the same conclusion by the same argument. He does not discuss the evidence to the contrary provided by Josephus’s description of the Pharisees.
sons, is the “redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:18-23). Paul assures the Romans that they can look forward to a resurrection just like Christ’s—who was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father—because they have been united to him in a likeness of his death through baptism (Rom. 6:4-5). (2 Tim. 2:8-13 makes the same argument while replacing baptismal death with suffering in persecution.) Paul thus presents Jesus’s resurrection as the paradigm for the resurrection of his addressees.

But Paul also connects the resurrection of Christ to the defeat of sin in his own life and the lives of his readers. Faced with the suggestion that Christians should continue to sin so that grace might continue to abound, he reminds the Romans that they have died to sin through their union with the death of Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:1-3). The whole purpose of this participation in Christ’s death, he says, is to live in “newness of life,” just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father (6:4). Christ’s resurrection is therefore paradigmatic not only for the Christian’s future resurrection (6:5) but also for the Christian’s new, morally transformed, dead-to-sin life in this world. (That Paul does not here explicitly call this morally transformed life “resurrection” in no way diminishes the fact that he takes Christ’s resurrection to be somehow paradigmatic for it.)

39 Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer*, HNT 8a (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973), 157, argues that Paul must *not* be read here as implying that the believer has already been resurrected with Christ (in the same way that the believer has already been buried with Christ). Nevertheless, the resurrection of Christ remains in some way paradigmatic for the Christian’s present moral transformation: “…der Apostel unsere Auferweckung erst von der Zukunft erwartet und, wie 12-13 dartun, in der nova oboedientia ihre Antizipation und das Zeugnis für die schon gegenwärtige Realität ihrer Macht erblickt.” Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 399, rejects Käsemann’s notion of Paul’s “eschatological caution,” but nevertheless describes the paradigmatic function of Christ’s resurrection in similar terms: Romans 6:4 “draws a parallel between the divine passive of Christ’s being raised (ἠγέρθη)
urges the Romans to not allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies by obeying its passions precisely because Christ, who has been raised from the dead and with whom they will live, has permanently overcome death in his resurrection (6:8-10). When the Romans pursue sanctification in this way, they are really pursuing eternal life (6:22).

Paul also reminds his readers of their future conformity to the resurrected Christ in order to exhort them to express that conformity even now by presenting their members as instruments for righteousness rather than unrighteousness (6:13). The same connection appears in Philippians, with slightly different logic. Instead of appealing to the assured reality of future conformity in order to motivate a different kind of conformity to the resurrected Christ in the present, in Philippians Paul speaks of his own efforts to die to sin and take on newness of life as attempts to ensure his future conformity to Christ in the resurrection:

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection [τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ] and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;
but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (Phil 3:8-12)

Here we find the same constellation of themes as in Romans: future union with Christ in his resurrection ensured by union with Christ in his death and expressed through how one lives now. As Gordon Fee puts it, “Without ‘death’ of this kind, there is no resurrection.” Later in the same chapter, Paul appeals once again to the paradigmatic nature of Christ’s resurrection, although here for the Christian’s eschatological resurrection: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.”

In both Romans and Philippians, it is clear that the Christian is not left to his or her own devices to achieve this conformity to the crucified and resurrected Christ. In Romans, the Christian must look to the assured future conformity to Christ in the resurrection for encouragement to live in conformity with that new life now. In Philippians, the ground of Paul’s striving after the resurrection of the dead is that Christ has already made Paul his own (3:12). How, though, does this conformation happen? Paul ascribes this transformation to the Spirit of God. After explaining how the Spirit frees the Christian from enslavement to sin and death, accomplishing what the law was unable to do (Rom. 8:2-6), he writes:

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40 Gordon D. Fee, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995). Fee does not speculate on the implications of this claim for the generality of the eschatological resurrection.
But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. (Rom 8:9-11)

Paul here uses the Spirit to weave resurrection into his soteriology and ethics. The indwelling Spirit conforms the Christian to Christ not only by finally making it possible to avoid walking according to the flesh but also by injecting life into the Christian’s mortal body. Paul seems to be suggesting that this indwelling Spirit will cause the future consummate conformity to Christ in the resurrection of the body, precisely because of its relationship to Christ and the God who raised Christ from the dead. Such a view would make good sense of Paul’s frequent appeals to the resurrected Christ as the paradigm for both how Christians ought to live in this life and how Christians can look forward to a future resurrection.

To summarize our findings thus far: Paul takes Christ’s resurrection to be paradigmatic for everything he says about resurrection. But Christ’s resurrection is also

41 The role of πνεῦμα in resurrection here is reminiscent of the Maccabean mother’s confident claim that the God who provided life and breath to her sons in her womb will resurrect them by giving back to them καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωήν (2 Macc. 7:22-23). I am indebted to C.D. Elledge, “Resurrection and Immortality: Navigating the Conceptual Boundaries in Hellenistic Judaism,” in Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, Early Christianity in its Hellenistic Context 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 128, for highlighting the role of πνεῦμα in the Maccabean mother’s discussion of resurrection. The parallel is inexact, of course, since the Maccabees’ mother has in mind the breath of life her children received from God in her womb while Paul has in mind the Spirit of God bestowed upon Christians.

the paradigm for the Christian life that is dead to sin. Furthermore, Paul ascribes this
double conformity to the resurrected Christ to the Spirit, even seamlessly sliding from the
Spirit’s work in morally transforming the Christian to the Spirit’s work in resurrecting the
Christian’s mortal body. This nexus helps to explain Paul’s appeals to the Christian’s
coming resurrection in the context of his exhortations in passages like Romans 6 and
Philippians 3.

The same constellation of motifs appears in Ephesians and Colossians, where the
Christian is described as already resurrected with Christ. Here, “resurrection” names a
present conformity to the resurrected Christ that functions as the ground for a morally
renewed life. Where the message of 2 Maccabees is “Be faithful to God so that you will
be resurrected,” the message here is “You have been resurrected, so be faithful to God!”

In neither letter, however, does this present conformity that is called “resurrection”
replace the future event. Consider Ephesians 2:

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even
when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—
by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him [συνήγειρεν] and
seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to
come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us
in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4-7)

Although the Christian’s resurrection is said to have already happened in virtue of union
with the already-resurrected Christ, there still remains a future dimension to this
conformity. Paul even names the Holy Spirit as the seal that guarantees the Christian’s future inheritance (1:13-14). Furthermore, as in Romans and Philippians, this conformity to Christ’s resurrection is the ground for moral exhortation: “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph. 2:10).

The same is true for Colossians. In baptism, the Christian has not only died with Christ, but has been resurrected with him (2:12-13). This declaration then serves as the foundation for a reoriented life:

So if you have been raised with Christ [συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ], seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). (Col. 3:1-5)

Here we see the same pattern:

1. The ground for a morally transformed life of righteousness (3:2, 5)

2. is present conformity with the resurrected Christ (3:1, 3) established in baptism (2:12-13).

3. There remains, however, a future dimension to this conformity (3:4).

43 While it is now generally acknowledged that the “coming ages” (τοῖς αἰῶνοι τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις) is a temporal reference (rather than a reference to hostile spiritual powers), the precise nature of what God is going to do in the future is not clear. Cf. Markus Barth, Ephesians 1-3, AB 34 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 222-23; Andrew T. Lincoln, Ephesians, WBC 42 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 109-11; Ernest Best, Ephesians, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 223-24.
This pattern has appeared consistently enough across the Pauline corpus that it can be given a short-hand name: the Pauline resurrection schema. This schema is not quite a system, for the exact nature of the relationships between the points enumerated above is not always clear. Nevertheless, the particular constellation of motifs remains remarkably consistent. The most significant change within the Pauline resurrection schema is which kind of conformity to the resurrected Christ receives the explicit label “resurrection.” Whereas in Romans the Christian is not explicitly described as resurrected until the future (3), in Colossians the Christian is in some sense resurrected in the present (2).

This shift in labeling does not necessarily represent a significant structural shift in the schema. Romans already has Colossians’s emphasis on the paradigmatic function of Christ’s resurrection for the Christian life on account of union with Christ in baptism, and Colossians retains Romans’s anticipation of a full conformity that is yet to come. If, however, the present conformity to the resurrected Christ—now labeled “resurrection”—was taken to replace the future conformity, such that the schema loses part (3), then that would indeed represent a significant shift. Perhaps that is precisely the position of Hymenaeus and Philetus, polemicized against in 2 Timothy 2:17-18, who say that the

44 The proposal of Harris, Raised Immortal, 106, that “spiritual resurrection not only precedes but also guarantees somatic resurrection,” is only one of several possible options for systematizing the points in this schema. The “spiritual” (point 2) and “somatic” (point 3) resurrections could be correlated because of a common agent, the Spirit, not because one directly causes the other. In the course of this study, various options will emerge.
resurrection has “already” happened. But while such a position could develop out of Colossians and Ephesians, it need not be found in them.

To summarize once more: Resurrection is integral to salvation across the Pauline corpus. The resurrection of Christ is the paradigm for a twofold conformity effected by the Spirit, first in a life that breaks free from enslavement to sin and second in a future glorification of the mortal body. “Resurrection,” when applied to the Christian, can migrate within this schema.45

This Pauline integration of resurrection into salvation fits neatly into the theological space opened up by the understanding of resurrection found in 2 Maccabees and Josephus’s description of the Pharisees. As noted above, restricting resurrection to the righteous opens the door to exploring the causes underlying this correlation. Paul’s focus on Christ as the paradigm of resurrection and the Spirit as its agent—the Pauline resurrection schema—provides a rich account of precisely this correlation.

The Pauline epistles not only integrate resurrection into salvation, but they also fail to connect resurrection to the final judgment. Paul does not say that the dead will be resurrected on the coming day of judgment, when God will repay all according to their

45 Interestingly, although “resurrection” migrates within this schema across the Pauline corpus, it does not appear to occupy multiple places in the schema in the same letter. Thus, Romans does not explicitly speak of the present conformity as resurrection, and Colossians does not explicitly speak of the future conformity as resurrection. In this respect, the Pauline epistles differ from the Gospel of John, in which both uses of resurrection can be found.
works (Rom. 2:5-10). He does not say that we all must be resurrected in order to appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). If the vengeance and punishment of eternal destruction unleashed at Christ’s second coming on those who do not follow God involves their resurrection from the dead, Paul does not mention it (2 Thess. 1:6-10). When he does describe the resurrection that occurs at Christ’s coming, he only mentions Christians: first the dead in Christ will rise, then those who are living will meet the Lord to remain with him forever (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Paul’s discussion of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 illustrates well both of these aspects of his thought—his integration of resurrection into salvation and silence on the resurrection of those who are not united to Christ. The resurrection of Christ serves as the paradigm for all resurrection (15:3, 12-16), and this resurrection has salvific implications, for without the resurrection of Christ the Corinthians remain trapped in their sins (15:17) and the rational lifestyle is one of debauchery (15:32). Resurrection involves a transformation into imperishability, and there is no hint anywhere that the purpose of this imperishability for some might be eternal torments (15:35-55). Quite the contrary, resurrection is presented as ipso facto a transition into bearing the image of the second

46 Paul says that there will be negative consequences for the soul of each one who does evil (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχήν) but positive consequences for each person (παντί) who does good (Rom. 2:9-10). These could be parallel descriptions of the same entity (whole persons), but the correspondence to Josephus’s description of the Pharisees is interesting to note (souls punished, whole people—body and soul—rewarded).
47 The universal acknowledgment of the lordship of Jesus promised in Phil. 2:10-11 need not involve the resurrection, and indeed the description of those who bow the knee to Jesus as in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth seems strange if an eschatological general resurrection is in view. In any case, Paul never mentions resurrection in this passage.
Adam, Christ. Correspondingly, Paul’s description of what it means for “all” to be made alive in Christ stops short of describing the resurrection of anyone other than Christians:

For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive [ζωοποιηθήσονται] in Christ. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. (1 Cor 15:22-24)

The resurrection at Christ’s coming of those who belong to Christ is not followed by the resurrection of those who do not belong to Christ. The description of resurrection simply stops with those who belong to Christ. 48 Based on Paul’s broader integration of resurrection into salvation, this is exactly what we would expect to find.

There is one important exception. In his speech before Felix, reported in Acts 24:15, Paul declares that he believes in the resurrection of both the just and the unjust (δικαίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων). 49 The significance of this resurrection appears to be tied to the

48 Some have argued that “the end” is the third stage, in which non-Christians are resurrected. For the literature supporting this position and a concise argument for why it cannot be the case, see Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia, 52-55. For example, Albert Schweitzer, Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1930), 69, claims that the resurrection of all to face judgment was well-known and fell under the category of “the end” without any need for elaboration. Based on this reading, he argues that Paul was the first to formulate the “two resurrections” view found in Revelation: a first resurrection of Christians into the millennial kingdom, followed by a resurrection of everyone else to face judgment (94-96). Holleman points out that this reading of “the end” in 1 Cor. 15:24 depends on a strict parallelism between the “all” who died in Adam and the “all” who are made alive in Christ in order to force the mention of “the end” to denote the only unmentioned people, non-Christians. But this requires a strict and unlikely distinction between being “in Christ” and “of Christ,” such that non-Christians are the former but not the latter. Furthermore, he rightly points out, it cannot be assumed that Jews who believed in resurrection thought that all people, both the righteous and the wicked, would be resurrected. See also the discussion of Schweitzer’s view in W.D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 287-98, who himself concludes that Paul believed in a “resurrection of the righteous dead (and possibly of all the dead)” (297).

49 Acts portrays Paul as a former Pharisee, so one might expect its portrayal of Paul’s eschatological beliefs to match what Josephus reports about Pharisees. But that is not what we find here. There are several
judgment that it makes possible, for he claims that he seeks to maintain a clear conscience because of this resurrection (24:16). Furthermore, we read that he later alarmed Felix with his discussion of “justice and self-control [δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἐγκρατείας] and the judgment to come” (24:25). In Acts 24, then, we seem to be right back to Daniel’s understanding of resurrection.

Can the witness of Acts 24 be reconciled with the witness of Paul’s letters? Yes, but the fit is unquestionably awkward. Strictly speaking, the two are reconcilable insofar as Paul’s letters never explicitly deny the generality of the resurrection. But despite multiple discussions of both resurrection and judgment in his letters, he never actively affirms the generality of the resurrection, either. Furthermore, as we have seen, the way that he does speak of resurrection only makes sense when applied to Christians. We can therefore only say that, if in fact Paul believed in the resurrection of all people in order to face judgment, he did not consider it a belief worthy of mentioning in his letters or integrating into his broader understanding of resurrection.

possible solutions to this contradiction. First, the accuracy of Acts in reporting Paul’s views could be questioned. Second, the accuracy of Josephus in reporting Pharisaic views could be questioned. Third, the assumption that Pharisees all believed the same thing about the resurrection could be questioned. The unfortunate fact is that it is very difficult to know anything specific with any degree of certainty about Pharisees. Debates recorded in rabbinic literature about who does and does not have a share in the world to come suggest that there was diversity on this point, although they do not directly pose the question of the relationship between general resurrection and judgment. (See Mishnah Sanhedrin 10.1-3 and Tosefta Sanhedrin 12.9-13.12.) I have thus been careful to speak not of “the Pharisaic view of resurrection,” but of “Josephus’s description of the Pharisaic view.”
To summarize, then, Paul makes several important contributions to the restricted-to-the-righteous view of resurrection:

- He makes the resurrection of the crucified (martyred) Christ the paradigm for resurrection.
- He emphasizes the role of the Spirit in this resurrection.
- Because of the Christian’s connection through the Spirit to Christ’s paradigmatic resurrection, he sometimes speaks of Christians as already resurrected.
- He invokes the Christian’s connection through the Spirit to Christ’s paradigmatic resurrection as the ground for the Christian’s morally renewed life.

As will emerge in the course of this study, each one of these contributions was to play an important role in the unfolding of early Christian reflection about resurrection.

1.1.3 Summary

We have seen that there were two understandings of the extent and purpose of resurrection within Second Temple Judaism. According to the first, both the righteous and the wicked experience resurrection, and its purpose is to make possible postmortem punishments and rewards. According to the second, resurrection is restricted to the righteous, and it is itself a reward. There is no evidence of controversies between partisans of these views. This observation should not obscure the fact, however, that their understandings of its purpose are fundamentally different. Furthermore, it is important to note that the second view, which correlates resurrection with righteousness, provides the dogmatic space for theological accounts offering causal explanations for this correlation.
When we turn to the New Testament, we find both views. Revelation and Paul’s speech in Acts 24, for example, clearly assume the first. Paul’s letters, on the other hand, not only fit the second remarkably well but also step boldly into the aforementioned dogmatic space. The Pauline resurrection schema, bringing together Christ’s resurrection, the indwelling Spirit, the morally renewed Christian life, and the Christian’s future resurrection, constitutes a rich account of resurrection—in every sense that Paul uses the term—as an effect of God’s saving work. The gospel of John fills in this dogmatic space in its own way, assuming the second understanding of resurrection, although, in one passage, it might adopt the first view.

A clear challenge therefore faces any reader who wants to hold together what all of these texts say about resurrection. When the first model is taken to be foundational, it becomes difficult to appreciate the power of the Pauline and Johannine integration of resurrection into salvation. But when the second model is paradigmatic, it becomes difficult to explain how all people are raised. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find an explanation of how to hold these two views together. That task would be left to its readers.

1.2 Purpose and Justification of Study

The following chart summarizes what we have seen thus far:
The purpose of this study is to trace how second- and third-century Christians developed the connections between points 1 to 3 while integrating point 4. While both the Johannine and Pauline versions of points 1 to 3 will play a role, the more developed Pauline schema will be especially important. How was the Pauline integration of resurrection into salvation—points 1 to 3, the “Pauline resurrection schema”—reconciled with clear affirmations that all, including unrepentant sinners, will be resurrected to face judgment? How were Scriptural motifs supporting each of these points sacrificed, ignored, or developed in light of the others? In other words, how did early Christian
debates and discussions about the resurrection reflect the problems and possibilities presented by the juxtaposition in Daniel and the New Testament of these two understandings of the purpose of resurrection?

The reception of Paul’s connection between resurrection and morally renewed life, a key part of his resurrection schema, serves as an indicator of approaches to these questions. Paul’s association of the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the believer (whether already accomplished or remaining in the future), freedom from captivity to sin, and the indwelling Spirit had two important effects. First, it provided stimulating prompts to those interested in articulating precisely how resurrection fits into God’s saving work. Second, it forced all who wanted to adopt the mantle of his theology to at least find a way to account for the connections constituting this schema, even if they preferred to speak of resurrection as something God does to both the righteous and the wicked. Thus, careful attention to the ways in which early Christians dealt with this Pauline constraint or chose to develop this Pauline prompt opens a window into their strategies for reconciling the New Testament’s overall witness.  

In turn, these strategies reveal the fundamental theological commitments underlying their understandings of resurrection. As we will see, this approach can reveal significant and perhaps even irreconcilable differences between

50 With only two exceptions—the Valentinian Treatise on the Resurrection and Gospel of Philip—all of the authors treated in this study explicitly affirm that all people, both the righteous and the wicked, will be resurrected. Thus, they attempt to reconcile the two views found in the New Testament rather than simply override one with the other.
authors, like Irenaeus and Tertullian, who are often taken to be of one mind with respect to resurrection.

Previous scholarship has not pursued this approach to early Christian understandings of resurrection. One reason for this fact is undoubtedly that this approach is prompted by sensitivity to the unresolved relationship between the two understandings of resurrection in the New Testament, and New Testament scholars—although noting it—have not highlighted this tension. Since the Pauline epistles are consistent on this point, the tension simply does not arise for studies devoted exclusively to Pauline theology—especially studies that do not accord to the evidence of Acts the same weight as Paul’s letters. One recent study of resurrection in Romans, for example, dutifully explicates Paul’s deep integration of resurrection into salvation but never cites Acts 24:15 to consider the question of the general resurrection.51 James D. G. Dunn’s Theology of Paul the Apostle neither cites Acts 24:15 nor mentions the general resurrection when discussing resurrection and judgment in Paul.52 When the question does arise in Pauline theologies committed to reconciling the evidence of Acts and the Pauline letters, it is not allowed to affect the broader explication of Paul’s letters. Thus, Richard Gaffin’s 1969 Westminster Theological Seminary dissertation on the centrality of resurrection in Paul’s soteriology relegates the general resurrection in Paul to a single footnote. Gaffin there insists, on the evidence of Acts 24:15 and the epistles’ invocations of eschatological

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51 Kirk, Unlocking Romans.
52 James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
judgment, that Paul believed in a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked to face judgment.\textsuperscript{53} Nevertheless, he admits, “Paul gives no indication of any \textit{structural} relationship, much less unity, between [the resurrection of the wicked] and the resurrection of Christ.”\textsuperscript{54} Because of this complete lack of connection between the general resurrection to judgment and what Paul says about resurrection throughout his letters, Gaffin affirms but effectively ignores the evidence of Acts in interpreting Paul. Another recent conservative New Testament theology separates its discussions of Paul’s understandings of judgment and resurrection, failing to mention resurrection at all when explicating the former and only discussing the resurrection of Christians in exploring the latter.\textsuperscript{55} Rudolf Bultmann’s New Testament theology claims that the resurrection of the dead is inseparable from the proclamation of the judgment of God but points out—in a paragraph set in small type—that the New Testament has little to say about an “inner, causal relationship between the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead”; the closest one gets, says Bultmann, is Paul’s claim in Acts 17:31 that Christ’s

\textsuperscript{53} In appealing to Paul’s teaching on the general judgment, Gaffin cites and follows Molitor, \textit{Die Auferstehung der Christen und Nichtchristen nach dem Apostel Paulus}, in the false assumption that general judgment necessarily implies general resurrection. Molitor’s work is the only monograph of which I am aware that directly and comprehensively addresses Paul’s teaching on the generality of the resurrection. It is rarely cited and concludes, unconvincingly, that a general resurrection can be inferred from Paul’s epistles.

\textsuperscript{54} Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., \textit{The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978), 62 n. 86 (emphasis original). See the similar conclusion by Harris, \textit{Raised Immortal}, 175-76. See also Perkins, \textit{Resurrection}, 319: when 1 Corinthians 15 is used as a point of departure reflecting on resurrection in the New Testament as a whole, “[r]esurrection is still a communal symbol, which speaks to the new life of the righteous with the Lord. Application of resurrection to those outside the community of the faithful, usually as a mode to render judgment possible, remains secondary.”

resurrection is the assurance of the coming judgment. In a recent essay entitled “Resurrection for Punishment? The Fate of the Unrighteous in Early Christianity and in ‘New Testament Theology,’” Heikki Räisänen describes more clearly than most the question as it relates to Paul:

Paul is rather reticent concerning the fate of the wicked. He does assume that sinners and unbelievers will have a fate different from that of the believers and speaks of their ‘destruction’ …, probably thinking of their annihilation. He seems to assume the resurrection of the righteous only: the dead in Christ (1 Thess 4,16) or ‘those of Christ’ (1 Cor 15,23) will rise when Jesus returns; it is the resurrection of Jesus that makes possible the resurrection of others—namely, of those united with him. This implies that dead non-believers will not be resurrected at all, though it is not clear how this fits with the notion of judgment of all and sundry according to their deeds … In [1 Cor. 15], Paul does not say a word about the resurrection of non-Christians. The impression is that they will remain dead.

Despite this promising title and clear statement of the problem, however, Räisänen’s essay actually focuses on eternal torments for the damned (hell). The resurrection per se of the wicked receives no more attention.

One might expect a sweeping and synthetic study of resurrection like N.T. Wright’s The Resurrection of the Son of God to explore this issue in depth. Wright does

56 Rudolf Bultmann, Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1984), 80, 84. Unlike in Acts 24:15, in 17:31 Paul does not explicitly affirm the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. He does, however, cite the resurrection of Jesus as proof of the coming judgment, possibly suggesting that the resurrection of those who will be judged is also tied to judgment.

note it, claiming that the question of the universality of resurrection was "one of the
greatest areas of disagreement among both rabbis and Christians."\(^{58}\) But he gives this
"greatest area of disagreement" little direct attention. To be sure, his extended explication
of Paul’s understanding of resurrection faithfully reproduces the Pauline emphases, such
as the work of the Spirit, that make little sense for a general resurrection. But only a very
attentive reader of this very large work would notice that Wright actually points out this
tension within the New Testament. His most extensive discussion appears in a footnote,
where he lists Acts 24:15 as one of the passages in the New Testament that teaches "the
resurrection of both righteous and wicked."\(^{59}\) He does not mention that this verse is in the
mouth of Paul, who he claims (in the same footnote) believed in the "resurrection of only
the righteous." Wright later reiterates this point, this time in the body of the text: in
Judaism and early Christianity, "[s]ometimes only the righteous are to be raised (and
resurrection will itself constitute their vindication; this seems to be the case in 2
Maccabees and Paul); sometimes both righteous and unrighteous will be raised, the latter
so that they can be punished for their actions in the body, not just as a shadowy semi-
being in Hades or Sheol."\(^{60}\) The reader searches in vain for a more extensive discussion.\(^{61}\)

\(^{58}\) Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 194.

\(^{59}\) Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 442 n. 146.

\(^{60}\) Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 548.

\(^{61}\) Wright’s most recent treatment of resurrection in Paul assumes the same view and refers the reader back
to his discussions in The Resurrection of the Son of God. See N.T. Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God,
Scholars of early Christianity seeking for an entryway into debates on resurrection can therefore be forgiven for failing to pursue this line of research. This is especially so because, as noted above, this particular diversity in resurrection belief was not the focus of controversies. None of the texts treated above polemically assert the generality or non-generality of the resurrection. The same remains true in the second and third centuries, the period under consideration in this study.

By contrast, the nature of resurrection—what precisely it means to say that someone has been or will be “resurrected”—was and remains to this day the subject of intense debate. Consequently, scholars have devoted significant effort to tracking, sorting, and explaining the various positions on this question in early Christianity. Much of this scholarship, like the ancient debates themselves, focuses on the relationship between resurrection and embodiment.62 Does “resurrection” imply renewed embodiment? If so, what kind of continuity exists between the body of this life and the body of the resurrection? And how, if at all, is the latter a transformed version of the former? Such studies usually proceed by establishing “what the New Testament really says about resurrection” (in practice, often “what Paul really meant by ‘spiritual body’ in

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62 Brian E. Daley, The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), treats early Christian understandings of resurrection within the broader framework of early Christian eschatology, recognizing that even the latter is always a “secondary aspect” of theology insofar as “it reflects other, more fundamental convictions about God, the world and human experience” (2). His treatments of each author, however, are relatively brief and descriptive. (The same is true of the discussions of resurrection in the second century in Perkins, Resurrection.) The present study will show in greater detail precisely how understandings of resurrection could be secondary to broader theological concerns.
1 Corinthians 15”) and then using that as a yardstick for all later positions, seeking explanations for deviations from the true Pauline teaching along the way. This approach to resurrection in early Christianity is valuable, because it takes seriously what many of the protagonists in the debates said they were doing: contending for the right interpretation of Paul’s teaching on resurrection. It can suffer, though, from a myopic focus on the frankly ambiguous discussion of bodily continuity and transformation in 1 Corinthians 15, and the resulting assessments of later authors’ views on these same questions are overly dependent on the scholar’s initial judgment of Paul’s teaching. Thus, while the present study will comment on these issues when they arise, its overall approach will be from a different angle. In terms of Paul, the earlier focus on the reception of 1 Corinthians 15 will be replaced by careful attention to the reception of texts like Romans 6 and 8 or Colossians 3.

Other scholars have sought to read “behind” the arguments about embodiment in resurrection in order to discern deeper issues at play. Noting the insistence in many quarters on the connection between ecclesial authority and witnessing the risen but pre-ascension Christ, Elaine Pagels has argued that the doctrine of the bodily resurrection (at

63 Influential examples of this kind of study include Grant, “The Resurrection of the Body,” James M. Robinson, “Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (Or to the Apostles’ Creed),” JBL 101 (1982), and, on a much larger scale and with opposite conclusions (based on an opposite assessment of “what Paul really meant in 1 Corinthians 15”), Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God.

64 For an important treatment of the complexities of Paul’s various discussions of bodies, including resurrected bodies, see Dale B. Martin, The Corinthian Body (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
least of Jesus) served to legitimate the developing ecclesial hierarchy. John Gager, drawing heavily on Mary Douglas’s theory of “natural symbols,” has suggested that “disputes about resurrection … involve more than just doctrinal matters in a narrow sense. They are also condensed statements about perceived difficulties in the body social and about proposed solutions for those difficulties.” Since the “spirit” represents the individual and the “body” society, eschatologies in which the two are reunited emphasize the subordination of the individual to broader social structures, such as the ecclesiastical hierarchy or, eventually, the Christian empire. Paying careful attention to the images deployed to describe resurrection, Caroline Walker Bynum has argued that the concerns driving most post-Pauline discussions of resurrection differed from the apostle’s own: images of growth and transformation (such as Paul’s seed analogy) come to be replaced by images of reassembly and stasis, revealing a deep fear of bodily processes and the hope that resurrection will still them. Most recently, Claudia Setzer has focused on the ways in which arguments about bodily resurrection helped Jewish and Christian communities to distinguish themselves from outsiders and construct their communities.

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The present study can be read as a combination of these two approaches to resurrection in early Christianity. It shares with the first approach a focus on what the theological texts under discussion actually claim to be doing: drawing on received authoritative texts to articulate coherent theologies. No doubt much more was going on under the surface, and studies that attempt to get behind the theological arguments are valuable for the hidden tensions and seams they can reveal. This study, however, will focus on early Christian theological exegesis as such. But by focusing on the reception of the two views of resurrection described above (including the Pauline resurrection schema), this study reads “behind” or at least “around” the flashpoints surrounding the nature of the resurrected body, sometimes asking the theologians and texts to answer questions that may have never occurred to them. In the process, tensions and seams will emerge, but so will ingenious developments.

The early Christian reception of Paul is particularly important for this study. According to the “Pauline Captivity” narrative that dominated studies of the second-century reception of Paul from F.C. Baur in the nineteenth century through the 1970s, Paul was embraced (“held captive”) by Marcion and Valentinus but ignored by writers

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Identity, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), which I have not yet been able to acquire, appears to adopt the same approach.
like Papias, Ignatius, and Justin. The “real Paul,” according to Baur and his German Lutheran colleagues, was the Paul of justification by faith and emancipation from legalistic Judaism. These emphases conflicted with attempts to preserve Christianity’s link to its Jewish heritage. The present study begins with Irenaeus, who was supposed to have ended the Pauline Captivity with a tendentious reading of Paul through the lens of the Pastorals (i.e., an interpretation of Paul not centered on justification by faith). Critics of this narrative, however, have pointed out that Paul was more important for earlier second-century authors than acknowledged by the Pauline Captivity narrative; furthermore, the so-called Hauptbriefe, the Pauline letters accepted as authentic by scholars in the tradition of F.C. Baur, actually play a far more important role in Irenaeus’s Against Heresies than the Pauline Captivity narrative would lead one to expect. This study will confirm this point. Irenaeus’s rejection of his opponents’

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70 On the Pauline Captivity narrative and its underlying theological and historiographical commitments, see Benjamin L. White, Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), ch. 2.

71 For Baur, the Hauptbriefe were Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, and Galatians. Later scholars added 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon to this list. See White, Remembering Paul, 22, 24.

72 On the overturning of the Pauline Captivity narrative, see White, Remembering Paul, ch. 3. The most important works are: Andreas Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum: Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 58 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), Ernst Dassmann, Der Stachel im Fleisch: Paulus in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Irenäus (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979), David K. Rensberger, “As the Apostle Teaches: The Development of the Use of Paul’s Letters in Second-Century Christianity” (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1981). Irenaeus does draw heavily on the Pastorals to depict Paul as a heresy hunter, but he draws the shape of that heresy-hunter’s actual theology from the other letters. See White, Remembering Paul, 156: “Romans 5.12–21, Galatians 4.4–7 and Ephesians 1.10 appear to have had the greatest constructive influence on his own theology, particularly his views on the economy of salvation and the recapitulation of all things in Christ, the Second Adam. From among the Pauline materials, however, the Pastorals were Irenaeus’s favored sites for borrowing stigmatizing language.”
interpretation of 1 Cor. 15 was grounded in a broader theology based upon and extending the Pauline resurrection schema outlined above and found throughout his letters: the resurrection of Christ as paradigm, through the indwelling Spirit, of both the morally renewed life and a future resurrection. In fact, it is Irenaeus’s faithfulness to and extension of this schema that generates unresolved systematic tensions in his thought with respect to the resurrection of the wicked. But this study will also complicate this narrative by going beyond Irenaeus to the reception of Paul in Tertullian, Origen, and Methodius (alongside Valentinian texts). While Paul was certainly important for each of these authors, he was important in very different ways.

1.3 Methodology

It is important to stop here and declare plainly what this study is not. It is not a new study in the tradition of seeking to determine who got Paul “right.” Therefore, it does not begin with the claim that the true center of Paul’s theology is a particular construal of the Pauline resurrection schema (rather than justification by faith or a particular understanding of bodily continuity in transformation) and then measure all later readings of Paul against that yardstick. This study is also not an attempt to find a new approach to answering the same old questions about the nature of the resurrection. Those questions are important, and this study will comment upon them in passing, but this study is not aimed at answering them.

Instead, this study traces a constellation of related motifs through key early Christian theological texts and figures. Most of these motifs appear in the Pauline
resurrection schema. But one of them, the resurrection of all to face judgment, comes from outside the Pauline epistles and could be in tension with the Pauline schema. Moreover, this study begins not from the claim that these Pauline motifs are the center of any authentic Pauline theology, but rather from the observation of their coincidence in Paul and potential tension with the general resurrection for judgment. Therefore, instead of assessing later authors against the standard of a new “Pauline theology,” this study proceeds by tracing how later authors developed and integrated all of these themes (or found ways to avoid needing to do so). This task, it turns out, was both difficult and highly productive.

For this study as a whole, I do not take a particular kind of event—for example, a revivification of corpses—as paradigmatic for “resurrection” and treat all other uses of resurrection terminology or motifs as “metaphorical” or even somehow defective.73 Rather, I seek to allow each source to define “resurrection” for itself by tracing its deployment of the language of resurrection. I take this language to be constituted primarily by terms like ἀνίστημι and ἐγείρω, along with their cognates and corresponding Latin translations. In practice, identifying discussions of resurrection in the texts examined in this study is only difficult if one comes to the texts with a predefined understanding of what actually counts as “resurrection.” The texts themselves are quite clear about when they are discussing a rising up from the dead, even if they are

73 In other words, I do not start from the conclusions of Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God.*
sometimes less clear about what this looks like. I use the term “general resurrection” as a short-hand for a resurrection that encompasses all people. One sometimes finds scholars talking about a “general resurrection” that is actually restricted to a subset of humans, usually the righteous. By “general resurrection,” they appear to mean “multiple people resurrecting at once.” I find this usage needlessly confusing and therefore avoid it. I prefer to call the eschatological resurrection of a subset of humans “the eschatological resurrection of the [subset].”

A second term requires discussion: moral transformation. I have used this term as a shorthand for the freedom from enslavement to sin that Paul connects to conformity to the resurrection of Christ. “Moral transformation” is not, of course, Paul’s own language. Rather, Paul speaks of a transition from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18) or coming to bear the fruit of the Spirit rather than the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23), to take just two examples. Other authors can speak of this transition in other terms: Irenaeus speaks of becoming more spiritual, Origen of abandoning vice and growing in virtue. Rather than privilege one author’s preferred idiom, I use the term “moral transformation” to highlight the family resemblance that exists among such discourses about changes in human character and behavior—changes that are hopefully but not necessarily for the better. In doing so, I have no intention of artificially isolating these discussions from other loci with which they are intimately bound up in each author.

74 I use “moral transformation” rather than the more specifically positive “moral renewal” or “improvement” because, for Origen, the fact that some become morally worse over time, while regrettable, must be theorized alongside the moral improvement of others.
In other words, I do not highlight this family resemblance across authors in order to extract their discussions of “moral transformation” from the web of theological connections in which they are always embedded so that I can then compare their respective understandings of “moral transformation” with each other. My purpose is exactly the opposite: I use the general term “moral transformation” precisely in order to highlight the ways in which the same basic theme can be embedded differently in webs of theological connections.

Finally, this study is extensive but not comprehensive. I do not seek to treat every possible text or figure in the second and third centuries. Instead, I have chosen particular authors or texts as case studies. I have made these choices with an eye to the extent of their surviving writings and the depth of their engagement with the key motifs that are the focus of this study. I have thus omitted Clement of Alexandria because, although his surviving writings are voluminous, he does not develop the connection between moral transformation and resurrection in a systematic way.\(^{75}\) Perhaps he did in his treatise on the resurrection, but that is now lost. Similarly, Athenagoras’s *On the Resurrection*, although interesting for what it says about the continuity between the body of this life and the body of the resurrection, does not integrate that teaching into a broader understanding of moral transformation in any extensive way.

\(^{75}\) In isolated comments, Clement does connect moral transformation with resurrection in a way that Origen would develop much more fully. See, for example, *Stromateis* 3.25.4, where Clement describes the putting to death of passions as rising from the grave and living to Christ.
1.4 Preview of Findings

This study begins with Irenaeus of Lyons (chapter 2). Not only is Irenaeus the first Christian author whose extant writings engage extensively with Paul, but much of his engagement with Paul is directed against people who use Paul to deny the resurrection of the body. (Irenaeus is aware that some appropriate the language of “resurrection” to mean something other than what he thinks it should mean, but he does not seem particularly concerned about them.) The key point of dispute is what it means to become “spiritual.” Irenaeus’s opponents take this to mean a change in anthropological composition that removes the fleshly body of this life from the person. Irenaeus, by contrast, draws from across the Pauline corpus to argue that becoming “spiritual” is in no way mutually exclusive with possessing a fleshly body, since this spiritualization process has already begun in this life through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit and concomitant moral transformation. In fact, since the human being receives all life (including the biological life of the body) from the life-giving Spirit of God channeled through the human soul, this already-inaugurated spiritualization process actually produces the eventual resurrection of the body. In effect, Irenaeus builds on the prompts provided by the Pauline resurrection schema to show precisely how becoming “spiritual” guarantees rather than excludes the resurrection of the body. Although Irenaeus never speaks of moral transformation as itself resurrection, it is connected to resurrection by the fact that the Spirit produces both. Irenaeus’s use of Paul in this way, however, remains in tension with his clear affirmation that all will be resurrected to face judgment, both those in
whom the Spirit is working in this life and those in whom the Spirit is not working. He makes no attempt to integrate these two understandings of resurrection with one another. Irenaeus is thus a clear example of someone who makes the understanding of resurrection as restricted to the righteous foundational to his theology and then struggles to explain the general resurrection.

Tertullian (chapter 3), although drawing on Irenaeus, takes the opposite approach. He makes the understanding of resurrection as the prerequisite for judgment foundational to his theology. In opposition to those who take “resurrection” to denote a spiritual return to life in the present (a threat Tertullian takes far more seriously than Irenaeus), Tertullian insists that “resurrection” can only mean the return to life of all people through the reunification of their souls with their corpses in order to face judgment. He struggles, however, to account for the connection between resurrection and the economy of salvation in Paul. His solution is to read “resurrection” in Paul as a cipher for that which the eschatological resurrection of all people makes possible, namely the reward of the righteous that follows upon their vindication at the final judgment. Correspondingly, Tertullian only adopts from Irenaeus arguments for the resurrection of the body that apply equally to all people, whether or not the life-giving Spirit has been poured out upon them in baptism and is working in them to produce moral transformation in the present. The resurrection of the body does not require the indwelling Spirit, for the human soul is perfectly capable of bestowing life on the body. For Tertullian, then, the reception of the indwelling Spirit and the concomitant moral transformation are not at all connected to the
resurrection of the body itself; rather, they are connected to what comes after resurrection. This move places the general resurrection to judgment on much surer footing than in Irenaeus’s theology but produces strain on Tertullian’s interpretation of Paul.

The *Treatise on the Resurrection (Epistle to Rheginos)* and *Gospel of Philip* (chapter 4), despite the difficulties of dating, provide windows into the views opposed by Irenaeus and Tertullian. These Valentinian texts describe both a present reality in the Christian’s life and a future event as resurrection, even though the nature of that future event is difficult to discern. In this way, they reflect the use of “resurrection” across the Pauline corpus more faithfully than Irenaeus and Tertullian and belie the latter’s fear that calling something experienced now “resurrection” necessarily excludes a future resurrection. These texts also provide the first opportunity for discerning what “resurrection” means when used to denote multiple events. Rather than taking one resurrection to be the “real” resurrection and the other(s) to be “metaphorical” resurrections, I search for themes or motifs that bind together both events named “resurrection.” For the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, it is revelation of true reality. Similarly, for the *Gospel of Philip*, it is transformation corresponding to true perception of reality. In both cases, it is clear that moral transformation is part of this revelation or broader transformation. When resurrection in these texts is understood in this way, their ambiguity about embodiment in the second resurrection becomes easier to understand. In these texts, bodily continuity is simply not what is important about resurrection. To
search for greater precision on that question is to miss the ways in which these texts are clear about the nature of resurrection. These texts thus work off of the Pauline resurrection schema. Correspondingly, there is no hint anywhere that the eschatological resurrection will be general.

Origen (chapter 5) finds a way to integrate the general resurrection into an account of resurrection that is tightly connected to moral transformation. In his early and speculative *On First Principles*, he articulates an understanding of the human body as an instrumental rather than ultimate good. That is to say, the variety of forms taken by the bodies of rational creatures is a divine pedagogical response to the variety of moral states that exist among rational creatures as a result of their diverse, freely-willed falls away from the contemplation of God. The bodies of rational creatures are therefore logically posterior to their moral states. Otherwise, Origen reasons, God would be responsible for the unjust inequality that pervades the creation. The resurrection, then, involves the bestowal upon the rational creature of a body that is newly-calibrated to its moral state—whether for good or ill. Thus, not only do those who have put on virtue in this life receive more glorious bodies, but those who have sunken further into vice receive less glorious bodies. Origen’s later and exegetical *Commentary on Romans* shows that this understanding of resurrection continues to underlie his thought later in his career. It also shows, however, how Origen takes seriously the way in which the New Testament invokes resurrection in a wide variety of ways, including the resurrection of Lazarus, the resurrection of Jesus on Easter, the resurrection of the believer in baptism, the
resurrection of all at the end of time, and the identification of Jesus himself as “the Resurrection” (John 11:25). Origen carefully distinguishes between these various resurrections not in order to keep them separate from each other but rather in order to discern how they all relate to one another. The common thread running through all of them is moral transformation.

This study closes with Methodius of Olympus (chapter 6), one of Origen’s earliest critics. Rather than beginning with Methodius’s criticisms of Origen, though, I articulate Methodius’s own theological concerns. Methodius’s own understanding of the resurrection, which was for him always eschatological and general, grappled with the connection between resurrection and moral transformation no less than Origen’s. According to Methodius, God will raise all people from the dead at the end of time, and in so doing root out the sin that has become entrenched in humans. If resurrection and moral transformation are linked together, and resurrection can only mean an eschatological event that happens to all people, then God must bestow that complete (and positive) moral transformation on all people through the resurrection. God will still, however, punish those who did not at least try to root out this entrenched sin during this life. I argue that this odd result—morally perfected people punished forever—represents Methodius’s idiosyncratic attempt to take seriously the Pauline connection between resurrection and moral transformation so emphasized by Origen without simultaneously taking on board the multivalence of resurrection language. The tensions involved in this view emerge clearly in Methodius’s exegesis (or avoidance) of key Pauline texts.
I close with a brief conclusion summarizing the significance of these findings, highlighting the theologically generative power of the juxtaposition of these two understandings of resurrection in all of the material studied and describing the need for further study of these questions in the fourth century.
CHAPTER 2 | Irenaeus: Resurrection of the Flesh as Stage of Spiritualization

2.1 Introduction

Irenaeus of Lyons’s significance for this study rests on two key aspects of his thought. First, resurrection mattered greatly to him. In the face of theological opponents who denigrated the present material world and denied the resurrection of humanity’s present material bodies, he was deeply concerned to defend the eschatological resurrection of the fleshly bodies in which humans now live, an event that would confirm once and for all that the God who saves is the God who created this world.

This focus on resurrection becomes even more important when combined with the second key aspect of his thought, his use of the Pauline letters. Irenaeus is the first extant Christian author to make extensive use of Paul. That he was not actually the first to make extensive use of Paul is clear from the fact that some of his engagement with Paul was defensive—that is, he had to work hard to counter existing interpretations of Paul that he

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1 Irenaeus’s use of Paul has received significant scholarly attention. His reading of Paul was initially dismissed as distorted by his polemical need to “recapture” Paul from his opponents, who were making great use of his letters in their own theological speculations. Today, the notion that Paul had been abandoned by Irenaeus’s theological forebears to groups like the Valentinians and therefore needed to be “recaptured” has been rejected, and Irenaeus’s reading of Paul is taken to be fundamental to his theology rather than an ad hoc response to opponents. Key works on this topic include: Johannes Werner, *Der Paulinismus des Irenaeus: Eine kirchen- und dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung über das Verhältnis des Irenaeus zu der paulinischen Briefsammlung und Theologie*, TUGAL 6 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1889); Rensberger, “As the Apostle Teaches: The Development of the Use of Paul’s Letters in Second-Century Christianity”; Richard A. Norris, “Irenaeus’ Use of Paul in His Polemic Against the Gnostics,” in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. William S. Babcock (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990); David L. Balás, “The Use and Interpretation of Paul in Irenaeus’s Five Books Adversus Haereses,” *SecCent* 9 (1992); Rolf Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret: zur Rezeption und Wirkung der paulinischen und deuteropaulinischen Briefe im Werk der Irenäus von Lyon*, WUNT 2/66 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994). See also White, *Remembering Paul*. 

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found wanting (e.g., the use of 1 Cor. 15:50 to deny the eschatological resurrection of the fleshly body). But Irenaeus did more than just fend off troubling readings of particular Pauline verses. He also used Paul to do important constructive work for himself.

Irenaeus’s concern with resurrection and engagement with Paul situated him well to notice and develop the Pauline connections between resurrection and moral transformation. In particular, Paul’s ascription of both moral transformation and resurrection to the Spirit shaped his theological system in profound ways. The connection between moral transformation and resurrection, which for Irenaeus is never direct but instead always mediated by their mutual connections to the work of the Holy Spirit, allowed him to read Paul’s discussions of becoming “spiritual” rather than “fleshly” as compatible with and in fact demanding the resurrection of the flesh. At the same time, however, important tensions remain. Because he did not connect resurrection and moral transformation to each other directly, he never spoke of resurrection as a kind of moral transformation or vice versa; consequently, he never cited passages like Colossians 3:1, wherein Paul appeals to his readers’ status as resurrected with Christ to exhort them live with their minds set on things above. Furthermore, the way in which he tied resurrection to the work of the Spirit (and, through the work of the Spirit, to moral transformation in this life) left him without an adequate account of the resurrection of the wicked who have rejected the Spirit, a resurrection that he nevertheless clearly affirmed.
As for his career, Irenaeus was a leader of a Christian community in Lyons during the last quarter of the second century. He was originally from Asia Minor—possibly Smyrna—and had important ties to Rome. His community was by no means the only available Christian option, and he dedicated significant literary effort to establishing the superiority of his own community’s form of Christianity. Several works by Irenaeus were known in antiquity, but only two are extant. The longer by far is the five-book Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως (Refutation and Overthrow of)

2 The precise leadership office that he occupied is unclear. He is usually thought to have been a bishop, but his community called him a “presbyter” (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.4.2), and he never adopts the title of bishop for himself. Furthermore, it is not clear that Irenaeus made a strong distinction between the two offices. He calls Polycarp a “presbyter” (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.20.7) and refers to the predecessors of Victor, bishop of Rome, as “presbyters” (Ecclesiastical History 5.24.14). See the brief discussions in St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 2, and Denis Minns, Irenaeus: An Introduction (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 2.

3 There are only a few data points with which to anchor the dates of his career, and even they are imprecise. He delivered a letter from the confessors in the churches of Lyon and Vienne to the church in Rome. If Eusebius’s dating of the persecution that prompted this event is correct, then he did so around 177. (On the questions surrounding the accuracy of this date, see Pierre Nautin, Lettres et écrivains chrétiens des Ile et Ille siècles [Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961], 62-64, and Timothy D. Barnes, “Pre-Decian Acta Martyrum,” JTS NS 19 [1968]: 517-19.) His intervention with Victor of Rome concerning the quartodeciman controversy was probably in the last decade of the second century, since Victor was bishop from 189 to 198. Moving back into his youth, Irenaeus claims that he heard Polycarp preach. If Polycarp was martyred in the 150’s, then Irenaeus was probably born in the 130’s or 140’s. See also the brief discussions summarizing this data in St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching, 1-2, Minns, Irenaeus: An Introduction, 1-2, and Eric Osborn, Irenaeus of Lyons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2. For a fuller but necessarily more speculative reconstruction of Irenaeus’s life, see Nautin, Lettres et écrivains, 92-104.

4 See the works of Irenaeus mentioned by Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History 5.20.1 (To Blastus, On Schism; To Florinus, On Monarchy or That God is Not the Author of Evil; On the Ogdoad), 5.24.11 (letters to Victor, bishop of Rome, on the quartodeciman controversy), and 5.26 (On Knowledge; a “small book of various discourses [διάλέξεων]” that mentions the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Wisdom of Solomon). It has also been suggested that Irenaeus drafted the letter from the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the churches of Asia and Phrygia (selections of which are preserved in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.1-3), but this cannot be ascertained for certain. See the argument for this identification given in Nautin, Lettres et écrivains, 54-61, based on some linguistic parallels between the letter and Irenaeus’s works and the assumption that the bishop (presumably Irenaeus) would have drafted the letter.
Knowledge Falsely So-Called,\textsuperscript{5} known more commonly both in antiquity and today by the shorter title Πρὸς τὰς αἱρέσεις or Adversus haereses (Against Heresies).\textsuperscript{6} It appears to have been written in Greek\textsuperscript{7} over a span of several years in the last quarter of the second century, perhaps between the late 170’s and the early 190’s, although the evidence is meager and the dating speculative.\textsuperscript{8} The prefaces to the successive books indicate that Irenaeus sent the work, as he was writing it, to someone who had asked him to compose

\textsuperscript{5} The longer Greek title is given by Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 5.7.1), and Irenaeus himself—in the surviving Latin translation—gives this longer title in the preface to Book 4. He also alludes to it in the prefaces to Books 2 and 5. I have followed Matthew C. Steenberg, Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 21, in his English translation of this title. Another option is to translate the first word as “exposé” in order to highlight Irenaeus’s view that he viewed the mere exposure of his opponents’ views as a refutation of them. See St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies (Book 1), trans. Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, ACW 55 (New York, NY: Paulist, 1992), 3.

\textsuperscript{6} Eusebius refers to the work with this shorter title in two places (Ecclesiastical History 2.13.5, 3.28.6). See also Basil of Caesarea, On the Holy Spirit 29.72, and Jerome, On Illustrious Men 35. Photius, in the ninth century, notes both the longer and shorter titles, although he gives the latter as Κατὰ αἱρέσεων rather than πρὸς τὰς αἱρέσεις (Bibliotheca 120). Steenberg dislikes the short title’s replacement of the question of true and false knowledge highlighted by the longer title with a generic focus on “heresy,” so he chooses to refer to the work as the Refutation (invoking the longer title) rather than the more conventional Against Heresies (Steenberg, Of God and Man, 21 n. 17). I, however, will follow convention and call the work Against Heresies or AH.

\textsuperscript{7} John Behr, Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75, speculates that Irenaeus wrote the work for the leader of a community of Christians in Rome that was primarily composed of immigrants from Asia. The Greek version was extant at least until the ninth century; nevertheless, only fragments survive today, mostly contained in extracts and citations by other writers. The work only survives in toto in a Latin translation that is generally dated to the early third century. Although the quality of the translation’s Latin is low, that is mostly because the translator followed the Greek slavishly by reproducing Greek grammatical structures. As a result, Adelin Rousseau, the editor of Against Heresies for Sources Chrétienes (Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, SC 100, 152, 153, 210, 211, 263, 264, 293, 294 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965-1982]), used the Latin translation to produce his own retrojection of parts of the text back into Greek (which he included in his edition alongside the Latin text, ancient Greek fragments, and his French translation). In addition to the complete Latin translation, parts of a sixth-century Armenian translation are extant. (This translation was made from the Greek and helps to confirm the literalness of the Latin translation.) I will provide the Latin text from Rousseau’s edition and give the corresponding Greek only when it appears in an ancient source. For more, see St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies (Book 1), 11-15.

\textsuperscript{8} See the summary of the evidence in St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies (Book 1), 3-4.
it; the identity and location of this person remain unknown, however, and Irenaeus clearly expected his work to be read more widely.9

Against Heresies is a polemical work, as can be inferred immediately from its title (whether the longer or shorter version). In it, Irenaeus sets out to expose and refute understandings of the Christian faith that compete with his own. He also seeks to defend his own views against the criticisms of these competitors. Who exactly, though, were these competitors? He characterizes them as teachers (with their followers) who deny the identity of the saving God of Jesus Christ with the God of the Jews who created the world, denigrate the material creation (including our present fleshly bodies), and engage in wild cosmological speculations. He focuses on Valentinus, Marcus, Basilides, Carpocrates, Menander, Marcion, and Cerinthus, among others. He sees in them a family resemblance that is strong enough that, in order to refute them, he can focus primarily on Valentinianism and treat the others only briefly.10 In the history of scholarship, these groups have usually been called “gnostics” (a term that at least some of them appear to have claimed for themselves in antiquity11), and the theological views that they share

9 See St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies (Book 1), 4-6.
10 AH 2.31.1.
have been called “gnosticism” (a term that is a modern invention).\textsuperscript{12} In recent years, the notion that there is such a thing as “gnosticism” has come under sustained attack.\textsuperscript{13} This grouping of identifying traits is seen as a distorting framework shaped by the polemical needs of authors like Irenaeus, and the term’s focus on knowledge can mask the fact that some authors who opposed these groups, such as Clement of Alexandria, freely identified themselves as “gnostics.” For these reasons, I do not speak of “gnosticism,” nor do I call those against whom Irenaeus argued “gnostics” (even if some of them might have called themselves that); I prefer to speak of those against whom Irenaeus writes as his “opponents.” While generic, this language emphasizes what they are within the polemical world of Against Heresies.\textsuperscript{14}

In the successive books of Against Heresies, Irenaeus moves from exposing and attacking his opponents’ views to defending his own. At the level of its overall structure, its thoroughgoing polemical nature is clear. My explication of Irenaeus’s thought will follow, in its broad contours, Irenaeus’s movement from criticism of others to defense of himself. Thus, I will begin with the polemical situation relevant to the relationship between moral transformation and resurrection as Irenaeus presented it, drawing


\textsuperscript{13} Williams, \textit{Rethinking “Gnosticism”;} King, \textit{What is Gnosticism?}.

\textsuperscript{14} On the way in which Irenaeus frames this polemical world and thereby participates in the development of the notion of heresiological discourse, see Alain Le Boulluec, \textit{La notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque Ile-Ille siècles, Tome I: De Justin à Irénée} (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 113-88, 215-253.
especially from Books 1 and 2. I will then turn to my primary focus, Irenaeus’s own views on the matter, drawing primarily from the last three books.

Irenaeus’s only other surviving work is the Εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος (Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching).\(^{15}\) The Demonstration is a relatively short text that summarizes the history of the economy of salvation, taking special pains to show that every aspect of it was predicted by the Old Testament. Its date relative to Against Heresies is a matter of some dispute. The work’s conclusion directs the reader to Against Heresies, but the conclusion’s authenticity has been called into question because of stylistic and theological differences from the remainder of the work.\(^{16}\) It only survives in a sixth-century Armenian translation, which was discovered in 1904.\(^{17}\) I will supplement the far more well-known and extensive Against Heresies with the data provided by the Demonstration.

### 2.2 Polemical Backdrop

In Against Heresies, Irenaeus put forward his own theological views as an antidote and alternative to the views of those whom he opposed. While the fact that Irenaeus’s principal surviving work is polemical should not lead us to infer that he

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\(^{15}\) This title appears in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.26.

\(^{16}\) See John Behr’s discussion of the question in St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching, 118 n. 229. Behr leans towards rejecting the authenticity of the conclusion and therefore leaving open the question the Demonstration’s relationship to Against Heresies. He has recently suggested that Irenaeus wrote the Demonstration after completing Books 1 and 2 of Against Heresies but before writing books 3 through 5 (Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity, 68-69, 76).

\(^{17}\) On the textual history of the Demonstration, see Behr’s discussion in St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching, 27-35.
necessarily developed all of his own theological positions in response to his opponents, the fact that he expressed them as a response means that we must take careful note of the polemical context as he appears to have understood it. This is a necessary step on the way to our ultimate goal, discerning the nature and function of the connection between resurrection and moral transformation within Irenaeus’s own theological system.

On his own telling, Irenaeus recognized that some people redefined the term “resurrection” to mean something other than what he believed it ought to mean. He says that Menander, purportedly the successor of Simon Magus, taught that resurrection was received by his disciples in their baptism into him; as a result, these “resurrected” disciples were supposedly unable to die and would persevere in life with immortality, never growing old. Irenaeus fails to explain what exactly this meant—did he think Menander taught that those who received his baptism would simply live forever, completely exempted from the death of the body? Perhaps he found that view to be so patently ridiculous that it needed neither explanation nor refutation. In any case, Irenaeus clearly recognized that Menander had a different definition of “resurrection,” one that he interpreted to be an avoidance of death rather than a recovery from it. Others, he recognized, could remove resurrection from the realm of bodily life altogether: the followers of Simon and Carpocrates denied the very possibility of resurrections of the

18 *AH* 1.23.5.
19 Tertullian (*On the Soul* 50) ascribes just this view to Menander, but it is not clear whether he has any better information than Irenaeus.
kind performed by Jesus, the apostles, and the later church—presumably, miracles like the raising of Lazarus—and instead defined resurrection from the dead as acknowledgment of the truth taught by them.\(^\text{20}\)

In general, however, Irenaeus seems to have been far less worried about people redefining “resurrection” than about people denying it altogether. With the exception of the two passages just noted, he shows almost no concern that his opponents might actually take over the language of resurrection for their own use. In contrast, he gives far more attention to the denigration of the body as unworthy of salvation. The Valentinians, he says, split all substances into three categories—material (\textit{materiale}/\textit{ㄚlικόν}), animal (\textit{animale}/\textit{ψυχικόν}) and spiritual (\textit{spiritale}/\textit{πνευματικόν})—and consign the first to certain destruction on account of its inability to receive the breath of incorruption (\textit{spiratio incorruptelae}/\textit{πνοὴ ἀφθαρσίας}).\(^\text{21}\) Correspondingly, since what is material is completely incapable of receiving salvation,\(^\text{22}\) the Valentinian Savior assumed nothing material and matter is excluded in the consummation. For Carpocrates, salvation consists in the soul escaping back to the Father from this inferior world.\(^\text{23}\) Others, he says, identify Paul’s “inner man” with the intellect (\textit{sensus}/\textit{νοῦς}) in order to deny that their body or soul can

\(^{20}\) \textit{AH} 2.31.2. \textit{esse autem resurrectionem a mortuis agnitionem eius quae ab eis dicitur ueritatis} (SC 294, 330).

\(^{21}\) \textit{AH} 1.6.1 (SC 264, 90). See also \textit{AH} 2.29.3.

\(^{22}\) \textit{AH} 1.6.1. \textit{non enim hylicon capacom salutis / μὴ γὰρ εἶναι τὴν ὑλὴν δικτικῆν σωτηρίας} (SC 264, 92).

\(^{23}\) \textit{AH} 1.25.1.
receive eternal life. Irenaeus interprets these denials of the resurrection of the body as denials of God’s power. He accuses his opponents of denying the possibility of the resurrection of the body because they, like Stoics, believe that God is bound to the law of nature according to which things must return to the elements from which they were formed. When they are eventually resurrected, they will finally have to acknowledge the power of the God who has done what they believed would never happen. Since God is good, mighty, and superior to nature, these problems that they adduce from the order of nature are no obstacles at all to the resurrection of the body. And it will become clear that, just as Irenaeus spends more time describing his opponents’ denials of resurrection than their redefinitions of it, his criticisms of their positions and presentations of his own focus on how and why God resurrects the flesh rather than why resurrection should be understood as including the flesh. In other words, he generally assumed that he was arguing with people who agreed with him that “resurrection” necessarily involves the flesh. Rather than claiming that a resurrection not involving the flesh would happen, these opponents simply denied the resurrection wholesale.

Irenaeus perceived a connection between his opponents’ denial of the resurrection of the body and their moral comportment. Specifically, he draws a line from the way in

26 *AH* 1.22.1.
27 *AH* 2.29.2.
which they distinguish between the three categories of substances (material, animal, and spiritual) to the way in which they justify to themselves immoral living. Immediately after describing the Valentinian interpretation of the relationship between the material, animal, and spiritual — wherein the material is excluded from salvation and thus resurrection — he gives two examples of deleterious moral conclusions drawn from that distinction.²⁸ First, people can be categorized as material, animal, or spiritual.²⁹ While the first group is excluded from salvation, the second group (“we the Church”) receives salvation only through its pursuance of good works. But the third group, the Valentinians, is saved simply in virtue of its nature as spiritual; therefore, it has no need of works at all to guarantee its salvation. As a result, he complains, the Valentinians abandon themselves to the enjoyment of meat sacrificed to idols, bloody gladiatorial entertainment, and sexual pleasures. The second justification for such behavior assumes that every person is a composite of the material, animal, and spiritual. From this anthropology is deduced the notion that each of those parts should be given what corresponds to it: spiritual for the spiritual but carnal for the carnal.

The question of the accuracy of Irenaeus’s claims here about Valentinian morality and the justifications thereof can be left to one side for the moment.³⁰ More significant for understanding Irenaeus is the fact that he draws a clear connection between the way in

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²⁸ AH 1.6.2-3.
²⁹ Cf. also AH 1.7.5.
³⁰ The views of some of Irenaeus’s opponents, as far as can be reconstructed from texts like the Treatise on the Resurrection and the Gospel of Phillip, will be treated in chapter four.
which they denied the resurrection of the material body and the way in which they rationalized questionable behavior in this life. Underlying both, in his view, is an impulse not only to distinguish between the material, animal, and spiritual, but also to separate them from each other. On the question of the resurrection, this impulse makes it easy to deny the resurrection of the body by drawing a hard line between the material, on the one hand, and the salvation that is inherent in the spiritual and available to the animal, on the other. As to the question of how the relationship between the three ought to play out in the moral life, the impulse to separate rather than unify what has been distinguished leads to permissive attitudes towards what is material because of the safe isolation of the spiritual. It is against this backdrop that we must read the connections Irenaeus draws in his own theology between anthropology, morality, and bodily resurrection.

2.3 Irenaeus’s Indirect Connection Between Moral Transformation and Resurrection

Irenaeus’s own theology, articulated in response to these opponents, makes extensive use of the Pauline connection between moral transformation and resurrection. Irenaeus does not, however, connect the two to each other directly. Instead, he connects both moral transformation and resurrection to a third thing. Thus, insofar as moral transformation and resurrection relate to each other in Irenaeus—and they do—they do so through their shared connection to something else.

That third thing is the process of humanity’s progressive maturation towards adoption as sons of the Father. This maturing process takes the shape of progressive
conformity to the image and likeness of God—that is, conformity to the Son of God, driven by the working of the Holy Spirit, in order to be adopted by and enter the presence of the Father. This process provides the organizing framework for almost everything in Irenaeus’s theology, and his understandings of moral transformation and resurrection are no exceptions. This framework allowed Irenaeus to draw deeply from Pauline resources, but, as we will see in this chapter’s final section, it also prevented him from offering a satisfying account of the resurrection of those who do not participate in this third thing. In other words, precisely because Irenaeus was faithfully (if only partially) Pauline, he failed to truly integrate the general resurrection into his theology.

2.3.1 From Immaturity to Maturity

In his polemical context, one of the greatest challenges that Irenaeus faced was that of preserving the identity of the creator God with the redeemer God. The position that he sought to refute denied that the God who fashioned the material world in which humans currently live could possibly be the same being as the God of love and truth preached by Jesus Christ. This world is simply too imperfect. Furthermore, the creator God’s ways of dealing with humanity seem incommensurable with the gracious God of Jesus Christ. The God of the Jews seems obsessed with petty carnal issues, like what kinds of animals can be eaten; the God of Jesus Christ speaks spiritual truth and calls people upward.

Irenaeus did not respond to this challenge by positing a completely perfect original creation (only later to be marred into its current state) or by claiming that the
Jewish law was always supposed to be interpreted in a “spiritual” rather than “carnal” way. As we will see, he certainly did think that something has gone wrong in creation. Nevertheless, his response to this challenge rests fundamentally not on the claim that redemption results in a simple return to the primal state, but instead on the claim that creation necessarily begins in immaturity. In order to develop this claim, Irenaeus draws from the language of Paul’s critique of the spiritually immature Corinthians: “And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people [πνευματικοῖς], but rather as people of the flesh [σαρκίνοις], as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh [σαρκικοί]” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Irenaeus takes this framework and makes it the foundation of his anthropology:

But if someone should say, ‘Was God unable to make humanity perfect [τέλειον] from the beginning?’, let him know that, for the God who is ever the same and always exists uncreated, all things are possible with respect to himself; but the things that have come into being, insofar as they had their own origin of generation later, must lag behind the one who made them in this respect also. For things that have recently come into being cannot be uncreated; insofar as they are not uncreated, they also lag behind the perfect one [τοῦ τελείου]; for insofar as they are younger, they are also infants, unaccustomed and unexercised in adult training [τὴν τελείαν ἁγωγήν]. Therefore, just as the mother is able to provide an adult meal [τέλειον … τὸ ἐμβρωμα] to the new-born, but the new-born still lacks strength to receive the food that is too mature [πρεσβυτέραν] for it, so also God himself was able to provide what is perfect [τὸ τελειον] to humanity from the beginning, but humanity was unable to receive it; for it was an infant.31

31 AH 4.38.1. Si hic dicat aliquis: Quid enim! non poterat ab initio Deus perfectum fecisse hominem? sciat quoniam Deus quidem cum semper sit idem et immatus, quantum ad ipsum est, omnia possibilia ei; quae autem facta sunt ab eo, secundum quod postea facturae initium habuerunt, secundum hoc et minora esse oportuit eo qui se fecerit. Nec enim poterant infecta esse quae nuper facta sunt; propter quod autem non
Irenaeus’s reasoning here depends on his receptivity anthropology, which we will explore in more detail below. Briefly, though, Irenaeus defines humanity as that which is receptive to the gifts of God. Thus, to be a perfect human is to be a person who is receiving God’s greatest gifts. This anthropological model accounts for Irenaeus’s focus here on the analogy of childhood development: just as a mother is capable of giving an infant any kind of food, God can certainly give to anyone the gifts that, if received, would result in consummate human perfection. Nevertheless, just as the food that would sustain an adult human would harm an infant forced to ingest it, so also humanity when first created is unable to “bear” (digest, in the analogy) the consummate gifts of God. The

sunt infecta, propter hoc et deficiunt a perfecto; secundum enim quod sunt posteriora, secundum hoc et infantilia, et secundum quod infantilia, secundum hoc et insueta et inexercita ad perfectam disciplinam. Quemadmodum enim mater potest quidem praestare perfectam escam infanti, ille autem adhuc non potest robustiorem se percipere escam, sic et Deus ipse quidem potens fuit homini praestare ab initio perfectionem, homo autem impotens percipere illam: infans enim fuit / Εἰ δὲ λέγοι τις· Οὐκ ἦδύνατο ο Θεὸς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς τέλειον παρασχεῖν τῷ βρέφει τὸ ὕβρις, τὸ δὲ ἀδυνατεῖ τὴν αὐτοῦ πρεσβυτέραν δέξασθαι τροφήν, οὕτως καὶ ο Θεὸς αὐτὸς μὲν οἶδα τὸν τελεῖον ἀνθρώπον, ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἀδύνατος λαβεῖν αὐτὸ· νήπιος γὰρ ἦν (SC 100, 942-46).

32 On Irenaeus’s description of the first humans as “infants,” see Ysabel de Andia, Homo vivens: incorruptibilité et divinisation de l’homme selon Irénée de Lyon (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986), 127-45, and, more recently, M. C. Steenberg, “Children in Paradise: Adam and Eve as ‘Infants’ in Irenaeus of Lyons,” JECS 12 (2004). Steenberg examines the arguments for taking this language to be (a) a metaphorical description of the adult Adam and Eve’s intellectual immaturity or inexperience (the majority position) or (b) a physiological description indicating that God created Adam and Eve as normal human infants (the minority position). He finds the arguments for both inconclusive. Based on Irenaeus’s general insistence on avoiding “allegorical” readings and his claim that Christ passed through the stage of infancy in order to recapitulate the first Adam (AH 3.21.10, Dem. 31-33), though, Steenberg rightly cautions against overly hasty dismissals of (b). Steenberg does show, however, that Irenaeus connects the necessity of
problem is not that God is incapable of giving; rather, it is that any newly-formed creation is incapable of receiving.

Irenaeus uses this argument to explain the starting point of the maturation process. Humanity does not need to mature because God did shoddy work at the creation. Instead, humanity needs to mature because humanity is both created out of nothing and constituted by its receptivity. Once humanity has been created in this immature state, God works like a parent or farmer to draw it from immaturity to maturity, “calling it from his own lesser things to the greater things that are in his own presence.” 33 Notably, Irenaeus does not deny that the originally-created state can be characterized as “lesser.” What he does deny is that this fact implies that the God who caused that state is different and lesser than the God who calls humanity upwards, to greater things: “It is one and the same Lord who brought up the stalk, multiplied the wheat by nourishing it, and prepared the granary.” 34 This is the claim that Irenaeus’s account of progressive maturation is designed to support.

Adam and Eve being created immature, as “infants,” to the fact that they are physical and therefore temporal beings. In turn, the necessity for development that this fact implies leads to Christ, the first truly “adult” human.


34 AH 2.28.1. * unus et idem Dominus qui et stipulam eduxit et triticum augens multiplicauit et horreum praeparauit* (SC 294, 270).
2.3.2 Receptivity Anthropology

As we have seen, Irenaeus’s explanation for why God created humanity in an “imperfect” state rests on his claim that recently-created and therefore immature humanity would be unable to receive the divine gifts that result in human perfection. The idea that a perfect God could produce a creation that begins in an imperfect state is fundamental to Irenaeus’s response to those who would separate the creator from the redeemer. Correspondingly, the anthropology that underlies this claim is crucial to his overall theology. This anthropology, however, does more than just explain the original state of creation. It also shapes Irenaeus’s entire understanding of the divine-human relationship.

Receptivity is fundamental to Irenaeus’s anthropology: God created humans to be recipients of God’s beneficence, and human perfection therefore consists in reception of those divine gifts. Irenaeus roots this anthropology in his explanation for why God created humans at all. God did not create humanity out of a need for human service, but rather in order to have a recipient upon whom to bestow gifts. The giver-receiver relation thus structures his account of the difference between God and humanity:

God differs from humanity in this way, that God makes but humanity is made. The one who makes is always the same, but what is made must receive a beginning and middle, addition and growth. God imparts benefits, but benefits are imparted to humanity. God is perfect in all things, being equal and similar to


himself, since he is entirely light and mind and the font of all good things. Humanity, on the other hand, receives progress and growth towards God.\(^{37}\)

The relationship of giving and receiving defines the divine-human relationship, and human receptivity has as its corollary human development.

Irenaeus’s account of humanity as a body-soul unity is also formed by this focus on receptivity. Irenaeus takes it to be self-evident that humans are a composite of a body (\textit{corpus}) received from the earth and a soul (\textit{anima}) that receives the Spirit from God.\(^{38}\)

The soul, then, receives its life as a gift from God—which is what allows it to live forever, overcoming the axiom that things (like souls) that are created in time must also perish in time.\(^{39}\) Irenaeus takes care to emphasize that the soul itself is not life, but rather participates in the life that God bestows on it.\(^{40}\) As we will see, this understanding of the soul as a kind of channel for the flow of life from God to the whole person is central to

\(^{37}\) \textit{AH} 4.11.2. \textit{Et hoc Deus ab homine differt, quoniam Deus quidem facit, homo autem fit. Et quidem qui facit semper idem est, quod autem fit et initium et medietatem et adjectionem et augmentum accipere debet. Et Deus quidem bene facit, bene autem fit homini. Et Deus quidem perfectus in omnibus, ipse sibi aequalis et similis, totus cum sit lumen et totus mens et totus substantia et fons omnium bonorum, homo vero profectum percipiens et augmentum ad Deum (SC 100, 500).}

\(^{38}\) \textit{AH} 3.22.1. \textit{Nos autem quoniam corpus sumus de terra acceptum et anima accipiens a Deo Spiritum, omnis quicumque confitebitur} (SC 211, 432). Cf. \textit{AH} 5.6.1, 5.8.2; \textit{Dem.} 2.


\(^{40}\) \textit{AH} 2.34.4. Irenaeus here follows closely the argument of Justin Martyr’s \textit{Dialogue with Trypho} 5-6, as shown by Andia, \textit{Homo vivens}, 271-72. Tatian (\textit{Oration to the Greeks} 13) has a very similar conception of the soul’s dependence on God for life, but he draws the un-Irenaeian conclusion that the souls of those who lack the Spirit die and are dissolved with their corresponding bodies. See Andia, \textit{Homo vivens}, 122-24.
his defense of the resurrection of the flesh, but it also generates difficulties for his account of the resurrection of the wicked.

We must here briefly address a perennial question in the study of Irenaeus: did he hold to a bipartite anthropology (human body and soul, to which the Spirit of God could be added) or a tripartite anthropology (human body, soul, and spirit, to which the Spirit of God could join)? The confusion arises from the fact that, although Irenaeus usually speaks of the human being as composed of a body and soul and receiving the Spirit from God, he does occasionally speak of righteous people having not only their “own” bodies and souls, but also their “own” spirits. Since he does not speak of the wicked as having their “own” spirit, and he usually says that a person’s body and soul receives the Spirit from God (rather than the person’s body, soul, and spirit receiving the Spirit from God), this spirit that the righteous have as their “own” should probably be understood as the Holy Spirit of God as it indwells the individual Christian. Even if this interpretation is incorrect, however, his consistent insistence on the necessity of the Spirit of God for life would remain, and thus the overall emphases of his anthropology would remain


42 E.g., *AH* 2.33.5.

43 Here I am following Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 157-61. For an analogous view, see Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 6.14. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 99-105, denies that only Christians have their “own” spirit but still maintains that every person’s spirit is actually the Holy Spirit. The Spirit simply indwells Christians and non-Christians in different modes. As I will discuss below, Behr does this in order to preserve the principle that the Spirit is the only source of life.
unchanged. But in the very lack of clarity on this question, one can see the struggle to integrate the established language of a tripartite anthropology with the idea that humanity is defined by *reception* of life from the Spirit who *gives*—and therefore is not human.

Irenaeus’s account of the human body is characterized by a similar emphasis on receptivity. The body receives its life from the soul (which, of course, receives its life in turn from God). Thus, the body is paradigmatically mortal because it is paradigmatically receptive, losing all life and decomposing when the soul departs. Furthermore, at the resurrection, the body is emphatically not raised by its own power, but rather by the power of God. Bodies, then, are defined by their receptive relationship to the soul, which is in turn defined by its receptive relationship to the Spirit of God. Thus, humanity is defined by its receptivity towards God, whether viewed in each component part or as a composite. Irenaeus interprets participation in the Eucharist as a reminder of this fact: when one gratefully receives life through the Eucharist, one learns from experience that one only possesses eternal existence through the power of God.

Receptivity, however, is not the same as simple passivity. Thus, along with his consistent emphasis that humans are constituted by their receptive relationship to God, Irenaeus also insists that humans must actively participate in this reception. To extend his

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44 *AH* 2.33.4.
45 *AH* 5.7.1.
46 *AH* 5.6.2.
47 *AH* 5.2.3. Cf. *AH* 4.18.
maternal metaphor, the infant must actively suckle at the mother’s breast in order to be nourished by her; the mother does not nourish the infant through an intravenous drip. The reception of God’s good gifts takes the form of human obedience to God, and God gave commandments to free humans so that they might obey, recognizing God’s lordship, and be thus judged justly or rewarded with immortality. This is why God desires obedience rather than sacrifices. Thus, while everything good that one has is a gift from God, it is no less true that one must actively preserve those gifts. The struggle required to preserve this gift and thus eventually attain immortality by the gift of God, Irenaeus says, makes one appreciate the gift all the more. And this appreciation issues in love for God, which in the end is what makes humanity close to God and renders humanity perfect.

The corollary of the claim that humanity is constituted by its reception of gifts from God through obedience is that disobedience both reveals a proud refusal to acknowledge one’s dependence upon God and leads to death. Irenaeus explores both of these points. He interprets disobedience to God as a free act of separation from God, cutting oneself off from the gifts that God created humanity to receive. He thus

51 AH 4.17.1.
52 AH 4.37.1.
53 AH 4.37.7.
55 Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 117-20.
emphasizes that the dark “punishment” that results from this free separation is really nothing more than the consequence of separating oneself from a source of light; God does not actively heap punishments upon the disobedient.\textsuperscript{56}

What precisely, though, is this consequence? Irenaeus looks to the account in Genesis 2-3 of the first human disobedience and finds a clear answer: death.\textsuperscript{57} The serpent’s denial that eating from the forbidden tree would lead to death deceived the first man and woman, but God’s truthfulness was vindicated when Adam and Eve fell under the power of death at the moment of their disobedience.\textsuperscript{58} Irenaeus’s identification of “death” as the consequence of turning away from God through disobedience aligns well with his anthropology. If God created humans to be receptive to gifts from God, then their refusal to accept these gifts is a refusal to do something that is essential rather than accidental to their being.

The question remains, however, of what kind of death Irenaeus had in mind here. Surely Irenaeus recognized that many people live long and healthy lives in rebellion against God. Furthermore, as we will see, Irenaeus did not think that the Spirit of God was poured out in a permanent and widespread way until after the incarnation. Given the

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{AH} 4.39.3.

\textsuperscript{57} For a detailed study of Irenaeus’s use of the first chapters of Genesis in \textit{Against Heresies} with careful attention the function of those chapters in his polemical context, see Thomas Holsinger-Friesen, \textit{Irenaeus and Genesis: A Study of Competition in Early Christian Hermeneutics}, Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplement 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009).

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{AH} 5.23.1.
weight he places on the receptivity of the body from the soul and the soul from the Spirit, then, how could he account for so many people being alive without the Spirit?

One relatively easy solution to this question would be to say that Irenaeus did not think that bodily death is the consequence of disobedience. But this solution is ruled out by his discussion of what it might mean to say that Adam and Eve died on the day they ate from the tree. He offers several different explanations. The first, expressed in the quotation above, is that they died on that day insofar as they were handed over and became debtors to death. The second is that they eventually died on the same day of the week as the day on which they had eaten. Based on the principle that Christ’s bodily death on a Friday recapitulated and reversed Adam’s, Irenaeus infers that Adam would have both eaten and then eventually died on a Friday. A third solution is to interpret the “day” as a millennium (since 2 Peter 3:8 says that a day is like a thousand years for the Lord). Since Adam lived to be less than a thousand years old, he died on the very “day” on which he sinned. The fourth and final option is that they died on the same “day” insofar as all of creation is really encapsulated in one “day.” (Irenaeus fails to give any further explanation of what this might mean.) While these explanations are quite different, all except the first clearly assume that the death in view here is bodily death—even if there is some delay between the disobedience and the death—and the first

59 AH 5.23.1.
60 AH 5.23.2.
explanation is compatible with this view. The connection between disobedience to God and bodily death is taken for granted, and the definition of “day” must be adjusted to allow for it.

The question of how Irenaeus accounts for the continued life of those who have disobeyed God and lack the Spirit thus cannot be solved by disassociating disobedience from bodily death. As we will discuss later in this chapter, Irenaeus never adequately answers this question, and his failure to do so underlies several significant scholarly disagreements about his theology. Nevertheless, it is clear that his thoroughgoing receptivity anthropology drives him towards the affirmations that generate this tension—namely, that the whole human being, both body and soul, is utterly dependent upon the gifts of God for life and all other good things.

2.3.3 Soteriology Corresponding to Receptivity Anthropology

In both its overall shape and specific details, Irenaeus’s soteriology takes its cues from his receptivity anthropology. Humanity’s maturation into ever-greater receptivity and gratefulness was interrupted by its disobedience at the instigation of the deceptive serpent. The result was an ungrateful humanity that refused to receive God’s gifts. God’s response is to deal with humanity in such a way that humanity returns to a grateful posture of receptivity, never again forgetting that God is the source of all good things and

61 See AH 5.12.2, discussed below, for one account of this delay that nevertheless maintains the necessity of the Spirit for the soul’s permanent bestowal of life on the body.

62 AH 3.20.1.
loving God all the more for the gracious salvation that was offered. Using Jonah as his model, Irenaeus claims that God allowed humanity to be swallowed by the “whale” in order that, once saved, humanity

… would always continue glorifying God and returning thanks without interruption for this salvation that it obtained from him, so that ‘all flesh would not boast in the sight of the Lord’ (1 Cor. 1:29), in order that humanity might never accept a contrary idea about God, judging this incorruptibility that is around it to be naturally its own, and boast with empty arrogance, not holding the truth, as if it is naturally similar to God.63

In keeping with Irenaeus’s receptivity anthropology, then, the fundamental lesson that humanity must learn is that “we could be saved not by our ourselves but rather by this assistance from God.”64

For Irenaeus, the work of God’s two “hands,” the Word and Spirit, fits within the overall framework provided by his receptivity anthropology and the maturation process that he takes to be a corollary of his anthropology.65 Father, Son, and Spirit cooperate in

63 AH 3.20.1. ut ... semper permaneat glorificans Deum et sine intermissione gratias referens pro ea salute quam consecutus est ab eo, ut non glorietur in conspectu Domini omnis caro, nec unquam de Deo contrarium sensum accipiat homo, propriam naturaliter arbitrans eam quae circa se esset incorruptelam, et non tenens ueritatem inani supercilio iactaretur quasi naturaliter similis esset Deo (SC 211, 386). Cf. 3.20.2.

64 AH 3.20.3. hoc quoniam non a nobis sed a Dei adiumento habuimus saluari (SC 211, 394). Cf. AH 5.21.3: God had compassion on humanity and bestowed salvation upon it “in order that humanity might learn by experience that it receives incorruptibility not from itself but rather through God’s giving” (ut experimento discat homo, quoniam non a semetipso sed <ex> donatione Dei accipit incorruptelam [SC 153, 278; the ex is inserted based on the Armenian translation]). Irenaeus’s point does not seem to be that all humans receive the gift of salvation no matter what, and that the question is merely whether or not humans acknowledge the true source of this gift. Irenaeus is no universalist, and he makes it clear that people can “opt out” of the economy of salvation. Thus, “man must allow himself to be made, to be fashioned in the image and likeness of God” (Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 40; emphasis in original).

65 Irenaeus calls the Word and Spirit God’s two “hands” throughout his extant writings. When Irenaeus speaks of the Father’s “hand” (singular), he always means the Son; “hands” mean Son and Spirit. He uses
the task of bringing humanity through an orderly progression towards a mature reflection of the divine image and likeness:

Therefore, through this order and a harmony of this kind, and by such guidance, created and formed humanity is being established according to the image and likeness of the uncreated God: The Father approves and encourages, the Son assists and fashions, the Spirit nourishes and strengthens, and humanity gradually advances and rises towards perfection, which is to become most like the uncreated; for what is uncreated is perfect, but this is God.66

(Here it must be noted that, while “image” and “likeness” are not identical in Irenaeus, he does not use that distinction as the primary structure to organize his account of the economy of salvation. In contrast to the common summary of his economy of salvation as a movement from image to likeness, his relatively limited use of the image/likeness distinction is governed by his deeper focus on progressive spiritualization.)67 Irenaeus

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66 AH 4.38.3. *Per hanc igitur ordinationem et hujusmodi convenientiam et tali ductu factus et plasmatus homo secundum imaginem et similitudinem constituitur infecti Dei, Patre quidem bene sentiente et jubente, Filio vero ministrante et formante, Spiritu vero nutriente et augente, homine vero paulatim proficiente et perveniente ad perfectum, hoc est proximum infecto fieri: perfectus enim est infectus, hic autem est Deus/Διὰ ταύτης τῆς τάξεως καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ῥυθμῶν καὶ τῆς τοιαύτης ἁγιογην, ἦ γεννητὸς καὶ πεπλασμένος ἀνθρώπος κατ’ εἰκόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν γίνεται τοῦ ἁγενήτου Θεοῦ, τοῦ μὲν Πατρὸς εὐδοκοῦντος καὶ κελεύοντος, τοῦ δὲ Υἱοῦ ὑπουργοῦντος καὶ πρᾶσσοντος, τοῦ δὲ Πνεύματος τρέφοντος καὶ αὔξοντος, τοῦ δὲ ἀνθρώπου ὡρίμα προκοπθοντος καὶ ἀνερχομένου πρὸς τὸ τέλειον, πληρίσθων τούτεστι τοῦ ἁγενήτου γινομένου· τέλος γὰρ ὁ ἁγένητος, οὗτος δὲ ἐστι Θεός (SC 100, 954-56).

67 Thus, for example, in AH 5.6.1, Irenaeus can say that a person who lacks the Spirit of God has the image of God in the handiwork (the body) but has not received the likeness through the Spirit. As will be discussed below, this use of “image” accords with Irenaeus’s claim that the “image” resides in the human flesh, imaging the incarnate Son. Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*, 171-72, argues that the “likeness,” by contrast, is the economic way that humans live in to true life as revealed by Christ. In other words, the “image” names the correspondence between humanity’s constitution and the incarnate Christ, while the “likeness” names the act of actually living like God. As we will see, however, Irenaeus uses
makes sure to point out that this progression is ordered throughout by the needs of those who are being matured: “For where there is a natural succession, there is also harmony; and where there is harmony, there is also appropriateness to the circumstances; and where there is appropriateness to the circumstances, there is also utility.” As we will see, the way that Irenaeus articulates the Word and Spirit’s roles in this progressive maturation of receptive humanity fundamentally shapes his account of the relationship between moral transformation and resurrection.

For Irenaeus, God’s Word and Spirit work together to produce progressively increasing intimacy between God and humanity. He interprets the story of Adam and Eve’s initial response to their own act of disobedience as an account of them trying, on their own initiative, to recover the intimacy with God that they originally possessed. Before their initial disobedience, Adam and Eve, like children, had been able to be around each other completely naked without any lustful thoughts. After their disobedience, however, they were no longer so innocent. Adam, recognizing that the lustful desires that now filled his flesh resulted from the loss of the “robe of sanctity” (sanctitatis stolam) that he had received from the Spirit, donned harsh fig leaves in a


68 AH 4.20.7. ubi est enim consequentia, illic et consonantia, et ubi consonantia, illic et pro tempore, et ubi pro tempore, illic et utilitas (SC 100, 646).

69 Dem. 14. On this passage, see Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 111-12.
desperate attempt to tame his lusts. (Irenaeus elsewhere draws the same connection between sin and the Spirit: Sin—disobedience to God—is acting without the Spirit’s guidance.) God’s response, however, was simultaneously more merciful and harsher. God mercifully provided much softer garments of skin, but God also interposed a far more radical solution to human lust: death. God drove Adam and Eve out of Paradise, away from the Tree of Life, so that, through the death and dissolution of their bodies, sin would finally cease and they could begin to live to God.

This last claim, that God addressed the problem of sin by interposing death, might seem to be at odds with Irenaeus’s claims elsewhere that death is simply the consequence of humanity’s free separation of itself from God and not something that is actively imposed by God. Two observations are in order. First, the claim appears to come from Theophilus of Antioch, from whom Irenaeus draws several aspects of his protology. If this is indeed its source, then it is quite possible that Irenaeus picked it up from Theophilus without adequately integrating it into his broader theology; he certainly does

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70 AH 3.23.5 (SC 211, 458). Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 117-18, 210-12, reads this desperate attempt as an example of a human response to separation from God that is not receptive: Adam tries to generate his own solution to the problem rather than waiting for God’s gracious solution. God thus gently replaces Adam’s response with the response that is really needed. Correspondingly, Behr sees Irenaeus avoiding the pursuit of sexual renunciation as a means for repairing the human relationship with God.

71 AH 4.27.1.

72 AH 3.23.5.

73 AH 3.23.6.

74 Specifically, To Autolycus 2.26.
not develop the notion extensively, in contrast to Methodius of Olympus.\textsuperscript{75} Second, even if the portrayal of God actively interposing death by driving Adam and Eve away from the Tree of Life does not sit easily with what Irenaeus says elsewhere, the notion that God uses death and subsequent resurrection as part of the broader process of bringing humanity to maturity does fit well with his thought.

However we understand the precise role played by God in the imposition of death, it is clear that for Irenaeus the death of the body follows upon human disobedience, which itself is connected to some kind of lack of the Holy Spirit. Correspondingly, then, the recovery from this disobedience and return to obedience is intimately bound up with the reception of the Holy Spirit, and this process in turn leads to the resurrection of the body. The incarnation of the Word turns out to be integral to this process.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} In the near context (3.24.1), Irenaeus speaks of both “breath” and “Spirit” as vivifying powers from God; later (5.12.2), he distinguishes sharply between the animating “breath” and the vivifying “Spirit.” Since 3.24.1 comes in the midst of several apparent borrowings from Theophilus, and Irenaeus seems to contradict that view later, it would seem that on this point Irenaeus drew on Theophilus for a short time but did not integrate that idea into his thought. See Briggman, \textit{Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit}, 97-103. The same thus could be happening here in the case of God’s role in imposing death. Methodius of Olympus’s development of this idea will be explored in chapter six.

\textsuperscript{76} The lack of precision in Irenaeus’s discussions of Adam and Eve in relation to his discussions of Christ reflects his broader tendency to see second rather than the first Adam as the true paradigm of human existence and therefore the one who is truly worthy of most careful attention. See Steenberg, \textit{Of God and Man}, 33. Irenaeus does not speculate on whether or not the Word would have become incarnate if Adam and Eve had not disobeyed God. His understanding of the first humans as immature certainly suggests that they would have needed at least some of the benefits conferred by the incarnation even without their disobedience. Nevertheless, Irenaeus names many benefits of the incarnation that directly deal with the legacy of their disobedience. It seems doubtful that he would have seen it necessary to speculate on the role of the incarnation in the counterfactual situation of a completely obedient humanity. Indeed, Behr identifies an aversion to speculation about counterfactuals as a key aspect of Irenaeus’s thought: Irenaeus is only interested in understanding what has in fact happened, not in speculating about what might have happened (\textit{Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity}, 116, 208).
The overall effect of the incarnation is to bestow immortality upon humanity. One way that Irenaeus articulates this effect is through the language of sight. Through the incarnation, culminating in Christ’s resurrection, the light of the Father rests on the flesh of Jesus so that humans might attain to incorruptibility, enveloped in that paternal light. The Spirit and Word work together to make this vivifying perception of God’s love possible, progressing through the vision of God in the prophets, then the incarnate Son, and finally of the Father in the kingdom of heaven. This vivifying sight of God is so paradigmatic for Irenaeus that he once even uses it as the framework for explaining the life of any living thing whatsoever in the creation: just as the revelation of the Father that comes through the Word paradigmatically bestows life, so the manifestation of God through creation gives life to everything living on the earth.

77 On the importance of the vision of God and the incorruptibility it bestows, see Andia, *Homo vivens*, 321-32.

78 *AH* 4.20.2. *et ut in carmen Domini nostrī occurrat paterna lux, et a carne ejus rutila veniat in nos, et sic homo deveniat in incorruptelam circumdatus paterno lumine* (SC 100, 630).

79 *AH* 4.20.5. See also *AH* 4.20.6, where Irenaeus claims that those who bear the Spirit within them see God, and this sight renders them immortal. Correspondingly, as he points out elsewhere, those who remove themselves from the light are in darkness as a natural consequence of their own choice (*AH* 4.39.4).

80 *AH* 4.20.7. *Si enim quae est per conditionem ostensio Dei vitam praestat omnibus in terra viventibus, multo magi ea quae est per Verbum manifestatio Patris vitam praestat his qui vident Deum* (SC 100, 648). Irenaeus neither develops the claim that all things living upon the earth receive life from the vision of God in creation, nor does he refer to it elsewhere. Were it central to his thought, he would have explained human death as a function of waning perception of God through creation. (The creation [*conditio*] here is almost certainly the broader world that God created, not the created soul specifically. See the parallels in *AH* 2.9.1, 4.6.6. On the role of this revelation through creation in the broader divine economy, see Philippe Bacq, *De l’ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée: Unité du Livre IV de l’Adversus Haereses* [Paris: Namur, 1978], 71-73.) Thus, while this claim represents a tantalizing solution to the questions about the life now and in the resurrection of those who have rejected the Spirit, it cannot bear that weight.
Irenaeus also articulates the effect of the incarnation through the language of sonship. Put succinctly, the Son of the Most High God became the Son of Man so that humans might become the Son of God.\textsuperscript{81} The incarnation can make this happen only because humanity was originally created in the image of the \textit{incarnate} Son of God.\textsuperscript{82} Humanity’s conformity to the Son of God is thus not the imposition of an alien pattern upon humanity, but rather the maturation of humanity into its true form. This molding of humanity is more than a simple re-establishment, a return to a primal perfection; it is a re-establishment that goes beyond what was originally possessed. One way that it does so is its security: although it was earlier claimed (accurately) that humanity was created in the image of God, this fact was not actually \textit{seen} until the incarnation.\textsuperscript{83} The fact that it was claimed but not seen made it easier to lose, and in fact it was lost quite quickly. But now that it is shown in the incarnation, it has been re-established in a more sure manner. The purpose of this remolding of humanity into the image of the Son of God is to put humanity into a new, loving relationship with God, “so that, through that likeness which is to the Son, humanity might become precious to the Father.”\textsuperscript{84}

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\textsuperscript{81} AH 3.10.2. Cf. also AH 5.Pref.1: Through his transcendent love, the Word of God became what we are so that he might make us what he is.
\textsuperscript{82} AH 4.33.4. Irenaeus insists that an image must have form and therefore can only exist in matter (AH 2.7.6). Therefore, the part of humanity that bears the image of God is the flesh (AH 5.6.1), and it images the incarnate Son of God. The (incarnate) Son’s status as the image of (the immaterial) God, a motif that Irenaeus invokes only once (Dem. 22), is utterly unique. See Behr, \textit{Asceticism and Anthropology}, 89-90, who draws on Fantino, \textit{L’homme image de Dieu}, 87-89, 94-106, 145-54.
\textsuperscript{83} AH 5.16.2.
\textsuperscript{84} AH 5.16.2. \textit{ut per eam quae est ad Filium similitudinem pretiosus homo fiat Patri} (SC 153, 216). On this theme of believers being adopted as sons of God, see Behr, \textit{Asceticism and Anthropology}, 69-70.
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In the incarnation, then, the preexistent Word provided a new beginning to humanity so that it could recover what had been lost through Adam’s disobedience—viz., to be in the image and likeness of God.\(^85\) This task required both reversing the primal disobedience and giving the life-giving Spirit.

Christ reversed the primal disobedience by remaining obedient even unto death on the cross. Irenaeus famously articulates this reversal through his notion of recapitulation. Since the first Adam’s disobedience was occasioned by a tree, the second Adam was obedient on a tree.\(^86\) By reversing humanity’s primal disobedience in this way, Christ returned humanity to subjection to and communion with its creator.\(^87\) Christ’s obedience only affects humanity’s relationship to God insofar as it is identified with Christ, so Irenaeus underlines the identification of the second and first Adams: in the incarnation, the Lord actually made himself to be the original man out of whom the woman was made (i.e., Adam).\(^88\)

Irenaeus also makes much of the importance of the incarnation for the distribution of the Holy Spirit. Given his receptivity anthropology, this fact should come as no surprise. The “perfect human being is the mingling and union of a soul receiving the Spirit of the Father and mixed with this flesh that has been formed according to the image

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\(^{85}\) \textit{AH} 3.18.1.  
\(^{86}\) \textit{AH} 5.16.3.  
\(^{87}\) \textit{AH} 5.17.1.  
\(^{88}\) \textit{AH} 5.21.1.
of God." Insofar as the incarnation is instrumental in molding humanity into perfection, then, one would expect the Spirit of God to play an important role, and indeed it does: The incarnate Word “therefore recapitulated these things, uniting humanity to the Spirit and placing the Spirit in humanity, having himself been made the head of the Spirit and giving the Spirit to be the head of humanity: for through him we see and hear and speak.” Hence, the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism is a moment of central importance for his understanding of the incarnation’s salvific effect. Earlier, God had raised up prophets in order to accustom humanity to bear the Spirit and thus to hold communion with God; these indwellings, however, were sporadic and temporary. In the Spirit’s permanent indwelling of Jesus, on the other hand, Irenaeus sees a decisive turn. Now, in Christ, the Spirit becomes truly accustomed to dwelling in the human race. As

89 AH 5.6.1. perfectus autem homo commixtio et adunitio est animae assumentis Spiritum Patris et admixtae et carni quae est plasmata secundum imaginem Dei (SC 153, 72).


91 What precisely Irenaeus thinks is happening when the Spirit descends upon Christ at his baptism has been a matter of extensive disagreement. For the history of this discussion and a compelling argument that the Holy Spirit is anointing (rather than changing or perfecting) the Christ’s humanity (rather than divinity) in order to empower that humanity for the Messianic mission, see Briggman, Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit, 59-77. For a similar argument that the Spirit’s descent upon Jesus is necessary for the full redemptive effectiveness of the incarnation, see Steenberg, Of God and Man, 35-37.


93 AH 3.17.1. Rather than changing or perfecting Christ’s humanity by indwelling it, then, the Spirit is itself changed in some way by its indwelling of the humanity of the incarnate Word. The baptism of Christ thus does not produce the perfection of Christ’s humanity in any adoptionistic manner; the perfect union of the Word with humanity in the incarnation already accomplishes that. Rather, the Spirit is thereby prepared to adopt other humans, bestowing perfection upon them as the unction of Christ. See Briggman, Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit, 71-75.
a body-soul composite indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Christ truly demonstrates Irenaeus’s definition of the perfect human being.  

Once the Spirit has become accustomed to indwelling perfect humanity in Christ, it can be distributed. After his ascension, Christ sent down the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, giving them perfect knowledge. This vivifying gift of the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption and ladder of ascent to God, is entrusted to the Church, the body of Christ. Reception of this Spirit unites one to God by uniting one to the incarnate Christ: it is received from Christ, and those who receive it are partakers in Christ. And precisely by uniting one to Christ, it makes it possible to pass into the glory of the Father.

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94 AH 3.22.1. There seems to be some tension here. On the one hand, Irenaeus does not say that the humanity of Christ was imperfect before the decent of the Spirit at his baptism. Indeed, as noted above, the perfection of the humanity of Christ through its union with the Word appears to be the very condition for the Spirit becoming accustomed to indwelling humanity. On the other hand, Irenaeus points out the correspondence between humanity as it was created to be—body and soul, with the latter receiving the Spirit from God—and what Christ was. This correspondence would seem to be imperfect until Jesus’s baptism. This tension, which Irenaeus does not address, is a function of the combination of his (a) avoidance of adoptionist Christology and (b) articulation of perfected humanity as that which has been adopted through its progressive maturation in the Spirit.

95 AH 3.1.1. Irenaeus uses this claim to deny that the apostles preached (and thereby mislead others) before they had acquired a full understanding of the truth.

96 AH 4.23.3.

97 AH 3.24.1. For more detail on the Spirit’s work within the Church specifically, see Briggman, Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit, 78-89.

98 AH 3.17.2. See also AH 5.1.1, 5.18.2.

99 AH 4.20.4. Irenaeus’s integration of his receptivity anthropology with the activity of not only the Holy Spirit but also the Son and Father thus means that, for him, human nature simply cannot be understood in isolation from the divine. They are inextricably intertwined. Cf. Dem. 7 and see Steenberg, Of God and Man, 52.
We are now in a position to summarize how the broad sweep of Irenaeus’s soteriology corresponds to his receptivity anthropology. Humanity needs to partake of life from God through the Spirit in ever-increasing degrees, both because humanity was created immature (and therefore incapable of receiving the fullness of God’s gift at first) and because humanity lost even what it had through its disobedience. In response, God worked with humanity through a series of pedagogical stages in order to finally make possible this perfect reception of life from the Spirit. The incarnation came at the decisive moment, reversing the disobedience and allowing humanity and the Spirit to become accustomed to each other. Now newly and fully indwelt by the Holy Spirit, received from Christ through the Church, humans can enter a new stage of receiving even greater gifts from God. One of those gifts, although by no means the final one, reverses the bodily consequence of the primal disobedience: the resurrection of the body.

2.3.4 The Purpose and Nature of Moral Transformation

Before turning to the resurrection, we must treat Irenaeus’s understanding of something that ought to precede it, namely moral transformation. Although Irenaeus speaks extensively of humanity’s progressive reception of the Spirit, he says relatively little that focuses on changes in moral behavior *per se*. This fact testifies to Irenaeus’s broader subordination of moral transformation to the more fundamental process of maturation in the Spirit, a point that we will explore in more detail in subsequent sections. What he does say about the purpose and nature of positive moral
transformation, however, is consistent across Against Heresies and corresponds to his account of the consequences of the primal disobedience.

Irenaeus consistently characterizes the behavior from which humanity must turn as carnal lusts. This tendency fits well with his description of Adam moving from innocent, childlike nudity with Eve before his disobedience to being filled with lustful desires after losing the robe of sanctity. These carnal lusts form a barrier to God. Thus, Irenaeus reasons that those Gentiles who successfully inferred that they should call the maker of this world their Father were those who attended to moral discipline (morum *prouidentiam*) and were “less enslaved to enticements and pleasures…”\(^{100}\) Those who have led lives of wantonness (*deliciis*) and luxury (*luxoriis*), despite God’s benevolent provision of earthly needs, will be judged.\(^ {101}\) One of the most important apostolic tasks, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, was cleansing the Gentiles from these vices.\(^ {102}\)

Similarly, the first lesson that he draws from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is that “no one should yield to pleasures nor, passing time in worldly delights and many banquets, be a slave to his own pleasures and forget God.”\(^ {103}\) And lest one think that only

\(^{100}\) *AH* 3.25.1; *qui minus illecebris ac uoluptatibus servierunt* (SC 211, 478).

\(^{101}\) *AH* 3.25.4 (SC 211, 484).

\(^{102}\) *Dem.* 41.

the lascivious and gluttonous fall under condemnation, Irenaeus draws on 1 Corinthians 3:3 to describe even behavior like envy and strife as carnal.\textsuperscript{104}

The primary purpose of turning away from such carnal lusts is to become fitting for greater intimacy with God by recovering from the fall into bodily lusts that resulted from humanity’s original deception and disobedience. Such transformation is necessary for intimacy with God, since—drawing on the parable of the wedding garment—those who lack the proper wedding garment (the Spirit), which can only be received by those who have fled carnality and are adorned with works of righteousness, will be barred from entering the eschatological banquet; “for he who is good, just, pure, and spotless will tolerate neither anything evil, nor unjust, nor abominable in his marriage chamber.”\textsuperscript{105}

Irenaeus thus understands human moral failings and the importance of overcoming them within the framework of his receptivity anthropology. Irrational, carnal lusts naturally follow from a free turn away from the gifts of God,\textsuperscript{106} and they block the reception of the Spirit. They are not the reason that humanity needs to undergo a process of maturation towards greater receptivity from the Spirit—that is a function of humanity’s original and necessary immaturity—but, insofar as the Spirit is indispensable to that maturation process, they form an insurmountable obstacle to the completion of that process.

\textsuperscript{104} AH 4.38.2.

\textsuperscript{105} AH 4.36.6. qui enim est bonus et justus et mundus et immaculatus, neque malum aliquid neque injustum neque abominandum in suo sponsali thalamo sustinebit (SC 100, 904-06).

\textsuperscript{106} AH 4.4.3.
2.3.5 The Purpose and Nature of Resurrection

Resurrection plays a crucial role in *Against Heresies*. Irenaeus repeatedly criticizes others for denying it (and occasionally for adopting a competing definition of it), and he uses large swaths of the final two books to defend its necessity and plausibility. While everything that Irenaeus says in *Against Heresies* has some kind of polemical motivation, it nevertheless remains useful to distinguish between, on the one hand, the purpose or “work” performed by the resurrection within Irenaeus’s polemics against his opponents and, on the other hand, the “work” that it performs within his own theological system. While the former is certainly important for seeing what Irenaeus took to be non-negotiable about the resurrection, the latter helps to situate it in his thought vis-à-vis moral transformation and thereby illuminate the ways in which he related the two.

2.3.5.1 The Function of Resurrection in Irenaeus’s Polemics

The primary polemical work that resurrection performs in *Against Heresies* is to guarantee and highlight bodily continuity within the economy of salvation, thereby preserving the identity of creator and redeemer. Irenaeus takes Jesus’s rebuke of the Sadducees for denying the resurrection to reveal that the God of the living is the God who spoke to the patriarchs (i.e., the God of the Jews).\(^{107}\) For Irenaeus, denying the resurrection of the flesh—the body of this present life—amounts to despising the God

\(^{107}\) *AH* 4.5.2.
who created it. Against this position, he insists that the fleshly body of humility is the very thing that Christ will transfigure into glory when he comes and bestows immortality and incorruptibility. He further secures the identity of creator and redeemer by using the resurrection of the body to guarantee the restoration of the rest of creation. In this way, as the “fashion” (figura) but not the “substance” (substantia) or “material” (materia) of the creation passes away, the faithfulness of the creator God is displayed for all to see.

This polemical deployment of the resurrection is part of Irenaeus’s larger attempt to defend the integrity of this creation. One way that he does this is by justifying the great diversity apparent in creation. He adopts a musical analogy: the notes of a lyre might seem opposite and inharmonious when considered in isolation, but they produce a melody when played in sequence; in the same way, the diversity characteristic of creation should be viewed as a harmonious melody arranged by one wise composer. God bestowed on every creature a nature suitable to the character of life assigned to it—some spiritual and invisible, others celestial, angelic, or animal, with some designed for swimming and others for life on land. The resurrection not only restores the variety of notes, but it also preserves the number of notes by preserving the number of creatures that

\[^{108}A\ H\ 5.31.1.\]
\[^{109}A\ H\ 5.13.3.\]
\[^{110}A\ H\ 5.36.1\ (SC\ 153,\ 452).\]
\[^{111}A\ H\ 2.25.2.\]
\[^{112}A\ H\ 2.2.4.\]
God foreordained to create. Irenaeus mocks those who consider themselves to be “spiritual” but denigrate the creator as “animal”: Have they, he asks, been able to produce a creation that is simultaneously wildly diverse and thoroughly adorned with beauty? For Irenaeus, such a feat should be taken as a sign of God’s greatness.

2.3.5.2 The Function of Resurrection in Irenaeus’s Own Theology

Within Irenaeus’s own theology, the primary function of resurrection is to return immortality to morally healed humans so that they can continue on the path towards full maturity. In other words, resurrection is not the consummation of the economy of salvation. Instead, it is merely a stepping-stone to further progress, albeit an important one. At least, this is the case for the resurrection of the righteous. Irenaeus deeply embeds the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous into his overarching narrative of progressive maturation. As we will see in a later section, the way in which he accounts for the resurrection of the righteous raises many questions for his understanding of the resurrection of the wicked. Nevertheless, in keeping with Irenaeus’s primary focus on how God brings humanity to maturity rather than what God does with those who refuse to grow up, most of what he says about the resurrection concerns the resurrection of the righteous.

\[113 \textit{AH} 2.33.5. \]

\[114 \textit{AH} 2.30.2-3. \]
For Irenaeus, the resurrection of the body is an event of receptivity from the Spirit, and he draws on his Eucharistic theology to emphasize this point. In the Eucharist, the earthly elements (such as the wheat) receive the Spirit of God, becoming a union of the earthly and heavenly that nourishes the recipient for the resurrection. The fact that human flesh and blood is nourished by Christ’s flesh and blood in the Eucharist proves that human bodies are, in fact, receptive to divine gifts (through the Spirit) and thus to the gift of incorruptible life in the resurrection. He makes the same basic point elsewhere without citing the Eucharist, but even there he notes the importance of the Spirit: if the body is a temple of God in which the Spirit of the Father dwells (1 Cor. 3:16), surely it will partake of salvation by being resurrected! This connection between the possession of the Spirit and the body’s resurrection to incorruptible life accords well with his receptivity anthropology.

Not only does the resurrection of the body take place through the agency of the Spirit, but it is also part of the broader process of maturation in that it makes possible the

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116 *AH* 4.18.5.
118 *AH* 5.6.2.
119 Cf. also *Dem.* 42.
continuation of that process. Irenaeus connects the importance of God truly (vere) resurrecting people (rather than “allegorically” [allegorice]) to the broader development that he believes it makes possible:

For just as it is truly God who resuscitates humanity, so also humanity will rise from the dead truly and not allegorically …; and just as humanity will truly rise, so also will it in the times of the kingdom practice incorruptibility and be nourished and flourish, so that it will become capable of receiving the glory of the Father; then, when all things have been renovated, humanity will truly live in the city of God.

Irenaeus’s understanding of the continued maturation that resurrection makes possible is tightly connected with his millennialism. The just are resurrected into the millennial kingdom, where they begin their life of incorruption; there, they become gradually accustomed to receive God (paulatim assuescunt capere Deum). During this time, as they live in and rule over an earth that is not only fantastically productive but has also returned to its primal submissiveness, the righteous are progressively strengthened by

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120 For a detailed account of the progression from the resurrection of the righteous into the millennial kingdom to their final vision of God, see Andia, Homo vivens, 299-319.
121 On the link between Irenaeus’s eschatology and Scriptural hermeneutic, see Andia, Homo vivens, 304-06.
122 AH 5.35.2. Quomodo enim vere Deus est qui resuscitat hominem, sic et vere resurget homo a mortuis et non allegorice…; et sicut vere resurget, sic et vere praemeditabitur incorruptelam et augebitur et vigebit in regni temporibus, ut fiat capax gloriae Patris; deinde omnibus renovatis, vere in civitate habitabit Dei (SC 153, 450).
123 AH 5.32.1 (SC 153, 396).
124 AH 5.33.3.
125 AH 5.32.1. Irenaeus combines Scriptural motifs about Eden with motifs about the Promised Land. He describes resurrection from the dead as a reversal of the penalty (death) inflicted upon Adam for his disobedience and return of humanity to the inheritance of the fathers (AH 5.34.2). This return was made possible by the work of the incarnate Lord, who has it possible for exiled humanity to return without fear to
the direct sight of the Lord (crescentes ex visione Domini) so that they become receptive to the glory of the Father (assuescent capere gloriam Dei Patris).\textsuperscript{126}

In keeping with the subordination of resurrection to the broader process of maturation, Irenaeus focuses primarily on the immortality that it bestows (rather than any kind of differentiation that might follow from it). The vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, which Irenaeus insists describes the eschatological resurrection of bodies, depicts God conferring immortality upon dead bodies by resurrecting them.\textsuperscript{127} In explaining the apostolic affirmation of the eschatological resurrection, he names the bestowal of immortality as its primary benefit for the righteous.\textsuperscript{128} Correspondingly, he describes the primary effect of the incarnation—which is what made the resurrection possible—as the bestowal of immortality.\textsuperscript{129} Any eschatological differentiation among the righteous certainly does follow upon the resurrection, but Irenaeus never identifies the resurrection as that which produces it (in the mode of the diverse resurrected bodies described in 1 Cor. 15).\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{126 AH} 4.8.2. This is the fulfillment of the promise of the land made to Abraham (\textit{AH} 5.32.2). On the Promised Land motifs, see Andia, \textit{Homo vivens}, 307.
\textsuperscript{127 \textit{AH} 5.35.1 (SC 153, 438).}
\textsuperscript{128 AH 5.15.1.}
\textsuperscript{129 AH 1.10.1. Cf. 2.29.2.}
\textsuperscript{130 AH 3.19.1.}
\textsuperscript{131 AH 4.13.3, 5.36.1-2.}
For Irenaeus, then, the resurrection (of the righteous, at least) is a part of humanity’s maturation towards consummate receptivity of God’s gifts, but it is only a part. Once human disobedience has been reversed, it reverses the death that followed upon that disobedience. In so doing, it helps get humanity back on track towards full maturity by making possible direct communion with the Son in the millennial kingdom. The process of maturation, passing through communion with the Spirit and Son to the Father, would have been necessary even if the first humans had not been disobedient. Death and resurrection, by contrast, would not have happened.

2.3.6 The Polemical Function of the Indirect Connection Between Moral Transformation and Resurrection

As we have seen, Irenaeus integrates both moral transformation and resurrection into the process by which originally immature humans develop in their receptivity towards God. Moral transformation is necessary because humans, turning away from obedience to God, have fallen into bodily lusts. Indulgence of these bodily lusts renders one carnal and is mutually exclusive with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Since, in keeping with Irenaeus’s receptivity anthropology, reception of the Holy Spirit is necessary for life because true life is only given by the Spirit to the soul (which in turn passes it on to the body), this is a grave problem indeed. The incarnate Son’s recapitulation of the first Adam overcomes this problem by reversing the disobedience and rendering both humanity and the Spirit more accustomed to each other before

\[\text{AH 5.36.2.}\]
pouring out the Spirit through the Church after his ascension. In turn, participation in this Spirit (including in the Eucharist) eventuates in the bodily resurrection of the just into the millennial kingdom, where they are able to continue progressing towards consummate receptivity through their direct communion with the Son and then, finally, the Father.

In this scheme, moral transformation and resurrection are bound together by their mutual connections with the Spirit-driven maturation process. This indirect connection, mediated by the Spirit, has a critical polemical payoff for Irenaeus: it allows him to argue that Paul’s description of the resurrected body as “spiritual” (1 Cor. 15:44) and denial that flesh and blood can inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50) is not about a change in a person’s composition. To be “spiritual” is to be a body-soul composite in a receptive relationship to the Spirit, not to lack a body.

As noted above, Irenaeus presents his polemical situation as one in which some people use Paul’s anthropological terms to separate categories or components of humans from each other. “Spirit,” “soul,” and “body,” whether denoting different kinds of people or the component parts of every person, not only can be distinguished but also must eventually be separated. Similarly, the “inner man” and “outer man” are separable, with the “inner” surviving eschatologically and the “outer” cast off. These people oppose spirit to body, denigrating the latter and focusing on the former for its own sake. In sharp contrast, Irenaeus’s receptivity anthropology interprets these terms in a unitive way.

132 Andia, Homo vivens, 294, thus speaks of “une double action de l’Esprit: ontologique et éthique.”
“Spirit,” “soul,” and “body” are distinguishable, of course, but true life comes in their union, not separation. “Spirit” is important not for its own sake but because of the life it gives to soul and body.

This disagreement underlies Irenaeus’s concern about competing definitions of “spiritual,” which far outweighs his concern about competing definitions of “resurrection.” He points out that Paul describes those who speak in tongues as “perfect” and “spiritual,” since they participate in the Spirit—not, clearly, because they lack bodies! After all, according to his anthropology, the perfect human being is a soul united to a body, participating in the Spirit. A person is “dead” and is rightly called “flesh and blood” when the soul turns towards the body and away from the life-giving Spirit, and the person thus becomes “pure,” “spiritual,” and “living to God” when he or she possesses life through the Spirit.

Paul’s invocations of flesh and Spirit in his discussions of the moral behavior incumbent upon Christians are especially useful for Irenaeus. It is here, in particular, that Irenaeus uses the connection between moral transformation and resurrection, mediated by their mutual links to the Spirit, to offer an alternative to his opponents’ interpretations of Paul’s doctrine of resurrection. The challenge for Irenaeus is explaining Paul’s twin claims that the body is raised “spiritual” rather than “fleshly” and that “flesh and blood

133 AH 5.6.1. 1 Cor. 2:13-15, Gal. 6:1.
134 AH 5.6.1.
135 AH 5.9.1-2, 5.7.2.
cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” His key move, which we have just seen, is to define being spiritual as possessing the Holy Spirit. From this starting point, he scans the Pauline corpus to discern what exactly happens when the Spirit is present. What he finds is that the Spirit is associated with both moral transformation and eschatological resurrection. Even better, he also finds that Paul describes the moral deformation of the unspiritual person as “flesh.”

The key passage tying together moral transformation and the Spirit is Paul’s enumeration in Galatians of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Foreseeing those who would misinterpret him, Paul defined what it meant to be carnal by listing the “works of the flesh”—adultery, hatred, envy, etc.—and declaring that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. The fact that this passage connects the vices to the “flesh” and threatens exclusion from the kingdom of God becomes particularly important when set alongside 1 Corinthians 15:50, wherein Paul excludes “flesh and blood” from the kingdom of God. Surely, Irenaeus reasons, 1 Corinthians should be read in light of Galatians, so that the “flesh and blood” that are excluded from the kingdom of God are those whose lives are marked by the works of the flesh. He

136 AH 5.11.1.
138 See also AH 5.14.4.
notes the same scheme at work in Colossians: Paul might seem to be denigrating the body when he commands his readers to mortify their members that are upon the earth (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), but he immediately defines those members not as arms, legs, or genitals, but as fornication, uncleanness, and other vices (Col. 3:5). But if to be “flesh and blood” is to produce the works of the flesh, what does it mean to be spiritual? Once again, Galatians defines the key term, for there the “fruit of the Spirit” is love, joy, peace, patience, and so forth. This transition from a fleshly to a spiritual existence occurs in baptism, because that is when the Christian receives the Spirit.

Irenaeus uses the language of fruit, drawn from Galatians, to invoke Paul’s analogy of the grafted wild olive branch from Romans 11:17-24. Irenaeus repurposes the analogy to illustrate how the nature of something (the wild olive branch qua olive branch) remains unchanged even as its qualities are changed by its engrafting into a cultivated olive tree (i.e., it now brings forth fruit). Importantly, this change in qualities appropriately calls forth a corresponding change in appellation: the same olive branch that was once “wild” is now “fruit-bearing.” In the same way, Irenaeus says, those who are “flesh and blood” (i.e., producing the works of the flesh) come to be called “spiritual” when they begin receiving nourishment from the Spirit and producing a different kind of fruit.

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\begin{align*}
139 \textit{AH 5.12.3}. \\
140 \textit{AH 5.11.2}. \\
141 \textit{AH 5.10.2}.
\end{align*}
\]
This positive change in quality does not follow automatically from the engrafting of the branch or the bestowal of the Spirit. One must actually be receptive. To establish this point, Irenaeus cites Jesus’s claim that the quality of a tree is recognized by its fruits, and that the tree that fails to bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matt. 7:16-19). Although olives do not appear in Matthew 7, Irenaeus adopts the threat of being cast into the fire and integrates it into the olive tree analogy from Romans. Wild olive branches that fail to become fruit-bearing olives even after being engrafted into cultivated trees will be cut off and thrown into the fire, just as those who cast out the Spirit that they have received by failing to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit—i.e., those who remain “flesh and blood”—will not inherit the kingdom of God.142

When the Spirit is accepted receptively, however, it brings life. It evicts death from those in whom it dwells, those who tread down earthly desires.143 The eternal life that the Spirit brings far surpasses the temporary and fragile life bestowed by the original breath of life, which he elsewhere defines as the soul144; whereas the breath of life, given to the first Adam, rendered humans “animal,” the Spirit that comes through the second Adam makes humans “spiritual.”145 This is what it meant for Paul to say that the first

142 AH 5.10.1.
143 AH 5.12.1-2.
144 AH 5.7.1.
145 AH 5.12.2. Cf. 5.18.2. On the relationship between the fragile life given by the soul (the breath of life) and the permanent life given by the Spirit, see Andia, Homo vivens, 273-75. Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 86, draws on this passage to describe the entire economy of salvation as a movement from animation (by the soul) to vivification (by the Spirit), and Briggman follows him in giving prominence to this terminology. As both recognize, however, this movement must not be construed as a movement from
Adam was made a living soul (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν) but the second Adam a life-giving Spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν) (1 Cor. 15:45). The death of the body, as we have seen, resulted from the first humans’ disobedient turn away from God and consequent banishment from the Tree of Life. Correspondingly, then, the second Adam, through the Spirit, brings life to the substance of human flesh. Thus, resurrection is the fruit of the Spirit: “The fruit of the work of the Spirit is the salvation of the flesh. For what else is the visible fruit of the Spirit that does not appear than to make the flesh mature and receptive of incorruption?”

All of these moves allow Irenaeus to read Paul’s claim that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” as a warning. The “flesh and blood” that will be excluded are those who continue in the works of the flesh—that is, those who are not morally reformed; those who receive the Spirit and bear its fruit, by contrast, obey God and “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Paul’s worry is that some might undervalue the moral transformation that is the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit and thus find independence from the Spirit (animation) to dependence upon the Spirit (vivification). Irenaeus is clear that, ultimately, there is no source of life apart from the Spirit. How precisely to relate the life-giving Spirit to the temporal life bestowed by the animating soul is much less clear, however, and—as we will discuss below—Behr and Brigman offer different proposals.

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146 AH 5.12.3.
147 AH 5.12.4. Fructus autem operis spiritus est carnis salus. Quis enim alius apparens fructus ejus est qui non appareat Spiritus, quam maturam efficere carnem et capacem incorruptelae? (SC 153, 154).
148 AH 5.9.3.
themselves to be “flesh and blood” on the last day, excluded from the kingdom of God.

Fittingly, Irenaeus’s gloss of 1 Corinthians 15:50 ties these arguments together:

It is as if he is saying: ‘Do not be mistaken: If the Word of God will not have dwelt in you and the Spirit of the Father will not have been in you, but instead you will have passed your life idly and just as it happened, as if being this alone—flesh and blood—you will not be able to take possession of the kingdom of God.’

2.3.7 The Absence of Direct Connections Between Moral Transformation and Resurrection

The indirect connection, through the Spirit, between moral transformation and resurrection appears to be more than just something that Irenaeus uses to do specific kinds of work in his polemical situation. Instead, the very indirectness of the connection seems to be fundamental to his theology.

This point emerges most clearly through an absence. Although Irenaeus speaks often of both moral transformation and resurrection as works of the Spirit, he does not speak of moral transformation as resurrection or vice versa. He cites Colossians, but never the claim of 3:1 that the readers have been resurrected (συνηγέρθητε) with Christ. The process of maturation by the Spirit—which would have happened whether or not humanity had fallen into sin and death—is more fundamental to him than the process of moral transformation and the event of resurrection. Thus, when he charts the relationship between this life and the life of the resurrection, he speaks of it as a movement from a

\[149\] AH 5.9.4. Velut si dicat: Nolite errare, quoniam, nisi Verbum Dei inhabitaverit et Spiritus Patris fuerit in vobis, vane autem et prout evenit conversati fueritis, quasi hoc tantum caro et sanguis exsistentes, regnum Dei possidere non poteritis (SC 153, 120-22).
partial possession of the Spirit to a complete possession of the Spirit; resurrection is subsumed to that transition:

Now, however, we are receiving a certain share from his Spirit for perfection and preparation for incorruptibility, gradually becoming accustomed to receive and bear God. The part of his honor that has been promised to us by God is that which the apostle also called a pledge, saying in the letter to the Ephesians: ‘In whom you, too, the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having been heard—in whom, believing, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is the pledge of our inheritance’ (Eph. 1:13-14). If, therefore, this pledge, as it dwells in us, already makes us spiritual, and what is mortal is already being absorbed by what is immortal—‘For you,’ he says, ‘are not in flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you’ (Rom. 8:9)—this happens not according to the throwing away of the flesh but rather according to the communion of the Spirit. For those to whom he was writing were not without flesh but instead were those who had received the Spirit of God, in which we cry out: ‘Abba, Father’ (Rom. 8:15). If, therefore, when we have the pledge, we cry out ‘Abba, Father,’ what will happen when, rising, we will see him face to face, when all members will have brought forward abundantly a hymn of exultation, glorifying him who will have lifted them up from among the dead and given eternal life? For if the pledge, embracing humanity in itself, already makes humanity say ‘Abba, Father,’ what will the whole grace of the Spirit do, which will be given to humans by God? It will make us like him and accomplish the will of the Father, for it will make humanity according to the image and likeness of God.150

150 AH 5.8.1. Nunc autem partem aliquam a Spiritu ejus sumimus ad perfectionem et praeparationem incorruptelae, paulatim assuescentes capere et portare Deum: quod et pignus dixit Apostolus, hoc est pars ejus honoris qui a Deo nobis promissus est, in epistola quae ad Ephesios est dicens: In quo et vos, auditio verbo veritatis, Evangelio salutis vestrae, in quo credentes signati estis Spiritu promissionis sancto, qui est pignus hereditatis nostrae. Si ergo pignus hoc habitans in nobis jam spirituales efficit et absorbetur mortale ab immortalitate - Vos enim, ait, non estis in carne sed in Spiritu, siquidem Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis -, hoc autem non secundum jacturam carnis sed secundum communionem Spiritus fit - non enim erant sine carne quibus scribendar, sed qui assumpserant Spiritum Dei, in quo clamamus: Abba, Pater -, si igitur nunc pignus habentes clamamus: Abba, Pater, quid fiet quando resurgentes facie ad faciem videbimus eum, quando omnia membra affluenter exsultationis hymnum protulerint, glorificantia eum qui suscitaverit eu ex mortuis et aeternam vitam donaverit? Si enim pignus complectens hominem in semetipsum jam facit dicere: Abba, Pater, quid faciet universa Spiritus gratia quae hominibus dabitur a Deo? similes nos ei efficiet et perficiet voluntatem Patris: efficiet enim hominem secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei (SC 153, 92-96).
In the very next paragraph, Irenaeus describes what it means to live as a “spiritual”
person in this world—focusing on its moral aspects—but never describes that life using
the language of resurrection.\textsuperscript{151} What binds this life and the life of the resurrection
together is the work of the Spirit. The language of spiritualization, rather than
resurrection, dominates.

One aspect of Irenaeus’s thought that helps to explain his apparent reticence to
speak of moral transformation as resurrection is his emphasis on the forward movement
through orderly stages of the process of maturation by the Spirit. The ordering of these
stages matters greatly to Irenaeus. God created humanity to “increase and multiply” (Gen.
1:28), which Irenaeus takes to mean growing towards perfection.\textsuperscript{152} This road to
perfection, expressed most simply, passes through three stages: first, humans are created;
second, they receive the soul; finally, they receive the communion of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{153} Put
another way, with the Father planning, the Son creating, and the Spirit nourishing,
humanity progresses through the stages of creation, growth, strengthening, multiplying,
recovering,\textsuperscript{154} and glorification to the final step of seeing God.\textsuperscript{155} The fixed trajectory of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{151} \textit{AH} 5.8.2.
\item \textsuperscript{152} \textit{AH} 4.11.1. Cf. 4.5.1.
\item \textsuperscript{153} \textit{AH} 5.12.2.
\item \textsuperscript{154} The Latin here is \textit{convalescere}, which translates the Greek \textit{ἐνισχύοσαι} (surviving in a fragment from the \textit{Sacra Parallela} of John of Damascus [SC 100, 956]). The translator for the Ante-Nicene Fathers renders it “recover [from the disease of sin],” taking \textit{ἐνισχύοσαι/convalescere} to describe a specific kind of
strengthening—namely, one that is a recovery after a loss of strength. This sense accords well with the only
other use of \textit{convalescere} in \textit{Against Heresies}, 2.18.2, where it clearly indicates a recovery from a
weakness or disease (but for which there is no corresponding Greek fragment). It also matches the
definitions and examples given for \textit{ἐνισχύοσαι} in BDAG, Lampe, and LSJ. Rousseau translates it “devint
\end{itemize}
these successive steps is marked by suitability at every step.\textsuperscript{156} Thus, for example, the Word—the perfect “bread” of the Father—came to infantile humans as “milk” in the incarnation because they would have been unable to bear his immortal glory.\textsuperscript{157} Having come as “milk,” however, the Word was then able to bestow the “bread of immortality,” the Spirit of the Father.\textsuperscript{158} When Christ returns again, it will be “at the proper time.”\textsuperscript{159}

Although this process of maturation went awry when the first humans turned aside from the way towards the Spirit,\textsuperscript{160} the recovery and resumption of that process is no less orderly. God set out a series of covenants, through which humanity was to gradually attain to perfect salvation.\textsuperscript{161} Corresponding to the significance of the four fort,” which makes the sense of recover less clear (SC 100, 957). Similarly, Behr translates it “strengthen” (\textit{Asceticism and Anthropology}, 124). The puzzle is why Irenaeus says that it was \textit{necessary} for humanity to “recover,” and why he placed this recovery after strengthening, growing, and multiplying (\textit{multiplicari}). The key, in my judgment, lies in Irenaeus’s narration of the lives of Adam and Eve. Having been created immature, they had to grow (\textit{adolescere}) before they could multiply (\textit{multiplicari}) (\textit{AH} 3.22.4; SC 211, 440). As the story in fact unfolded, however, they fell away from God and lost the robe of sanctity on their way to multiplying. Thus, while their subsequent recovery was not \textit{de jure} necessary (in the way that their being created immature was), it was \textit{de facto} necessary because of their disobedience. Furthermore, it in fact followed upon their entry into a procreative relationship. Therefore, Irenaeus’s inclusion of “recovering” in his list here of the steps that were necessary for humanity on the way to glorification should be taken to reflect what turned out to be necessary for humanity, not what would have been necessary for humanity had the first humans remained obedient.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{AH} 4.38.3.
\item \textit{AH} 4.20.7.
\item \textit{AH} 4.38.1.
\item \textit{AH} 4.38.1.
\item \textit{AH} 4.16.6. \textit{apto in tempore} (SC 211, 314).
\item \textit{AH} 5.12.2.
\item \textit{AH} 4.9.3.
\end{itemize}
gospels, there are four principal covenants: a covenant under Adam (before the flood), one under Noah (after the flood), one under Moses, and finally the fourth, “which renovates humanity and recapitulates all things in itself—which is through the gospel—elevating and bearing humans on wings into the heavenly kingdom.”\textsuperscript{162} Each covenant is designed to lead into the next. As a result, Irenaeus interprets the Jewish insistence on continued literal observance of the law as a sign of a preference for their own zeal over against God’s planned pedagogical progression.\textsuperscript{163} The Gentiles, on the other hand, have the opposite problem: Irenaeus claims that the conversion of the Gentiles was more difficult than that of the Jews because they had missed the pedagogy of the prior covenant.\textsuperscript{164}

Irenaeus is wary of the impulse to rush through the pedagogical progression by seeking to live in conformity with a subsequent stage prematurely. Immediately after listing the stages that humanity must pass through on the way to maturity, he criticizes those who want to live even now as if they lack the passions that they so manifestly have.\textsuperscript{165} He counsels an attitude of patient receptivity towards God’s plan:

How, therefore, will he be a god who has not yet been made a human being? How will he be perfect who has been formed recently? How will he be immortal who has not obeyed the Creator in this mortal nature? For you must certainly first observe the order of humanity; then, afterwards, participate in the glory of God.

\textsuperscript{162} AH 3.11.8. \textit{quartum uero quod renouat hominem et recapitulat in se omnia, quod est per Evangelium, eleuans et pennigerans homines in caeleste regnum} (SC 211, 170).

\textsuperscript{163} AH 4.11.4.

\textsuperscript{164} AH 4.24.2.

\textsuperscript{165} AH 4.38.4.
For you do not make God, but God makes you. If, therefore, you are a work of God, wait for the hand of your maker that does all things seasonably—seasonably, however, insofar as it concerns you who are being formed. … But if you obstinately reject his craftsmanship and are ungrateful towards him because you have made a human being, you have become ungrateful to God, and you have simultaneously lost his craftsmanship and life.\footnote{AH 4.39.2. Quemadmodum igitur erit deus, qui nondum factus est homo? quomodo autem perfectus, nuper effectus? quomodo autem immortalis, qui in natura mortali non obaudivit Factori? Oportet enim te primo quidem ordinem hominis custodire, tunc deinde participari gloriae Dei. Non enim tu Deum facis, sed Deus te facit. Si ergo opera Dei es, manum artificis tui exspecta opportune omnia faciendem, opportune autem quantum ad te attinet qui efficeris. … Si vero statim obduratus respulas artem ejus et ingratus existas in eum quoniam homo factus es, ingratus Deo factus, simul et artem ejus et vitam amisisti (SC 100, 964-66).}

In other words, one must never lose sight of the fact that one is, at the moment, a human beings with passions; furthermore, one must not complain about it, despite the fact that it is a marker of one’s difference from the image and likeness of God to which one will eventually be conformed. One is to submit to the pedagogical progression as laid out by God rather than to try to participate proleptically in the next stage.

The forward-moving drive in Irenaeus’s account of the pedagogical progression also emerges in his explanation of the transition from the covenant under Moses (with the literal observance of the law) to the covenant introduced by Christ. Literal observance of the Mosaic law was set aside not because it was somehow deficient but because it had accomplished its purpose:

For the law, since it was laid down for enslaved people, was instructing the soul through these corporeal things that were outward, as if dragging it with a rope towards obedience to the commands, so that humanity might learn to yield to
God; but the Word, liberating the soul, taught the body to be purified voluntarily even through the soul itself.\textsuperscript{167}

There is a kind of continuity here that \textit{could} be described as a transition from shadow to reality, and Irenaeus does occasionally describe it in this way.\textsuperscript{168} He does not, however, infer that the figures and types were never to have been followed literally. Literal observance of the law was right and necessary \textit{in its own right}, teaching the basic lessons of service to God. It could be transcended because it had succeeded on its own terms, not because it had failed. The proper attitude for one living under the Mosaic covenant, then, would be to submit to its pedagogy on its own terms rather than to strive prematurely towards the pedagogy of those who have been freed by the Word. Correspondingly, just as Irenaeus refrains from describing the pedagogy of Moses as a deficient version of the pedagogy of Christ, so also he does not describe the intensifications of moral demands on Christians—not even lusting or hating—as anticipations of the resurrection.\textsuperscript{169} The integrity of each step along the way to maturity is preserved.\textsuperscript{170}

In this forward-driving ordering of pedagogical steps, each stage finds its significance in its relationship to the overall trajectory—ever-growing reception of the Spirit—rather than in its relationship to the next step \textit{per se}. Thus, moral transformation

\begin{itemize}
\item[167] \textit{AH} 4.13.2. \textit{Etenim lex, quippe servis posita, per ea quae foris erant corporalia animam erudiebat, velut per vinculum attrahens eam ad obaudientiam praeceptorum, uti disceret homo assentire Deo; Verbum autem liberans animam, et per ipsam corpus voluntarie emundari docuit} (SC 100, 528).
\item[169] \textit{AH} 4.13.3.
\item[170] Irenaeus’s prioritizing of the second Adam over the first Adam does not violate this principle, for Christ is actually the first Adam in whose image Adam was created (Behr, \textit{Asceticism and Anthropology}, 58).
\end{itemize}
is significant because of its relationship to the reception of the Spirit, and resurrection is significant for the same reason. Moral transformation’s significance does not, by contrast, lie in its relationship to resurrection. To speak of moral transformation as resurrection, then, would be to mistake sequential ordering for direct causal link (or to conflate the two).¹⁷¹ Such a mistake could call into question the necessity of the body’s inclusion in resurrection. If, after all, moral transformation—which clearly happens while the body remains untransformed and unresurrected—is considered a form of resurrection, then one might wonder whether the body is necessarily implicated in resurrection at all. On the other hand, by keeping moral transformation and resurrection distinct, Irenaeus was able to defeat the objection that the body cannot participate in a process by which a person becomes “spiritual”: since one form of becoming “spiritual”—moral transformation—clearly happens while the person remains in the body, embodiment and becoming “spiritual” cannot be mutually exclusive. Therefore, Paul’s descriptions of resurrection as becoming “spiritual” must not be read as entailing the elimination of the body.

2.4 Accounting for the Resurrection of the Wicked

If the eschatological resurrection of the body is so tightly integrated into the process of maturation through receptivity towards the Spirit, what does Irenaeus think

¹⁷¹ I would thus hesitate to summarize Irenaeus’s understanding of the moral demands of the Christian life, asceticism, as “the realization, the putting into practice, of the new eschatological life granted in baptism within the confines of this life” (Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 17). Behr takes view to be what ties together Irenaeus and Clement. To my knowledge, however, Irenaeus himself never adopts this account of the Christian life as an anticipation of what comes next; he prefers to speak of it, rather, as a preparation.
happens to those who stubbornly reject the Spirit? Are they, having turned away from the life-giving Spirit, excluded from the eschatological resurrection? Irenaeus’s logic might seem to lead towards this conclusion, but he does not follow it there. Instead, although clearly affirming the bodily resurrection of those who have rejected the Spirit, he fails to offer any account of that resurrection that is integrated into the broader structure of his theology.

Irenaeus explicitly and repeatedly affirms the bodily resurrection of the wicked to judgment and torment. Citing the faith received from the apostles, he says that Christ will come again in glory to recapitulate all things and to raise up all flesh of the human race, so that every knee of those in heaven or on the earth or under the earth might bend to Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Savior and King, according to what is pleasing to the Father, and every tongue might confess to him, and he might render a just judgment regarding all; so that, indeed, he might send into eternal fire the evil spiritual beings and the angels who have transgressed and become apostates and the impious, unjust, iniquitous, and blasphemous humans, but that he might gather to a place of favor the just, the fair, those who preserve his precepts and persevere in his love, some certainly from the beginning and others from penance, granting incorruptible life, and that he might encircle them with eternal splendor.  

According to this traditional formulation, then, at Christ’s second coming all will receive bodily resurrection in order to then face judgment and receive either punishment or

\[172 \text{AH 1.10.1. ad recapitulanda uniueris et resuscitandum omnem carnem humani generis, ut Christo Iesu Domino nostro et Deo et Salvatori et Regi secundum placitum Patris invisibilis omne genu curvet caelestium et terrae et infernorum et omnis lingua confiteatur ei, et iudicium iustum in omnibus faciat, spiritualia quidem nequitiae et angelos transgressos atque apostatas factos et impios et injustos et iniquos et blasphemos homines in aeternum ignem mittat, iustis autem et aequis et praeecepta eius servarentibus et in dilectione eius perseverarentibus, quibusdam quidem ab initio, quibusdam autem ex paenitentia, utiam donans incorruptelam loco muneres conferat et claritatem aeternam circumdet (SC 264, 156-58).}\]
rewards. Irenaeus repeats these points throughout his works. Furthermore, the resurrection of the wicked does not remain an inert doctrine for him—i.e., something that he affirms but never really uses. Thus, for example, he looks forward to the day when those who deny the possibility of the resurrection of the body are in fact resurrected in their bodies and forced to admit that God indeed has the power to resurrect.

Does Irenaeus, then, distinguish in any way between the event of the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked? At points, he seems to distinguish them chronologically. Quoting Revelation 20:5, he calls the resurrection of the righteous into the millennial kingdom the “first resurrection.” The righteous must rise first, to receive the promised inheritance; the judgment then occurs afterwards. But when he describes the “general resurrection” and judgment, wherein the sea gives up its dead and all are judged by what is written in the books (Rev. 20:12-13), he does not specify when exactly this resurrection and judgment occurs. Does it happen at the end of the millennium? Or immediately after the first resurrection? He also does not specify whether or not this general resurrection, distinguished from the “first” resurrection into the millennial

173 See *AH* 2.22.2, 3.4.2, 3.16.6, 3.23.3, 4.11.2, 4.40.1, 5.27.1-2.
174 *AH* 1.22.1.
175 *AH* 5.34.2. This happens after the coming of the antichrist and the destruction of all nations under his rule (5.35.1).
176 *AH* 5.32.1.
177 *AH* 5.35.2.
kingdom, includes only the wicked. Although affirming the resurrection of the wicked, he is generally unclear about how to relate it to the resurrection of the righteous.

What Irenaeus completely fails to do is offer an account of the resurrection of the wicked that parallels the depth of his account of the resurrection of the righteous and that is integrated into his broader understanding of the maturation process driven by receptivity to the life-giving Spirit. As we have seen, he offers several arguments for the possibility of the resurrection of the body that rest on the body’s inclusion in the economy of salvation (e.g., through the reception of the Eucharist)—but these only help explain the resurrection of the righteous. He does offer a few arguments for the possibility of the resurrection of the body that are not in principle restricted to the righteous. They are, however, quite generic and completely independent from his broader theological emphases. Thus, for example, he argues that God would not be a God of power if God did not vivify what is mortal, and he points out that it is absurd for people who are currently alive to claim that the flesh cannot partake of life. Furthermore, although these arguments can apply to the resurrection of anyone, Irenaeus does not use them to account specifically for the resurrection of the wicked.

Irenaeus’s tight integration of the resurrection of the body into his broader theology of maturation in the Spirit thus raises important questions about his affirmation

\[178\] *AH* 5.3.2-3.
of the resurrection of those who refuse to accept the Spirit’s maturing presence.\textsuperscript{179} If the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous is the Spirit’s fruit, then why are those who have rejected the Spirit and failed to bear its fruit resurrected? Should they not be completely devoid of life?

One way to resolve this tension would be to read Irenaeus as some sort of annihilationist.\textsuperscript{180} On this reading, the resurrection of the wicked, if it happens at all, is ephemeral. While God is certainly capable of reuniting their souls and bodies by \textit{fiat}, God allows them—after the judgment—to pass away into nothingness, completely devoid of the life-giving Spirit. The bodily resurrection of the wicked is thus a fundamentally different event from that of the righteous. While the resurrection of the righteous is an act of the indwelling, life-giving Spirit that bestows immortality, the resurrection of the wicked is an act of divine power, not necessarily connected to the Spirit, that does not bestow immortality at all. In fact, the purpose of the resurrection of the wicked would be to condemn them to corruption.

\textsuperscript{179} Ilaria L.E. Ramelli’s recent treatment of Irenaeus in \textit{The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena}, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 120 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 89-107, emphasizing the themes in his work that tend towards universalistic \textit{apokatastasis}, pays inadequate attention to the role of the Spirit received from God in the working out of Christ’s salvific work. While she acknowledges that is the Spirit from God that does this work, she does not discuss whether or not all people possess this Spirit. Her passing comment that Irenaeus espouses a tripartite (body, soul, spirit) anthropology, established solely on the authority of AH 5.6.1 (\textit{The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis}, 96), along with later statement that eternal life is granted through the \textit{pneuma} given by God to humanity (Ramelli, \textit{The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis}, 105 n. 282), suggests that she believes all people always have the Spirit. The importance for Irenaeus of actually receiving this Spirit thus fades into the background.

\textsuperscript{180} For this reading of Irenaeus, see Henri Lassiat, \textit{Promotion de l’homme en Jésus-Christ d’après Irénée de Lyon, témoin de la Tradition des Apôtres} (Paris: Mame, 1974), 409-34, who leans heavily on AH 2.34.3, quoted below.
Reading Irenaeus as an annihilationist makes good sense in light of his receptivity anthropology. If the wicked are defined as those who refuse to receive life from God through the Spirit that conforms them to the incarnate Son, then it would seem logical that they should, eschatologically, be completely devoid of life and not conformed to the Son’s resurrection. In arguing for the soul’s dependence upon God for life, Irenaeus even claims:

For life is neither from us nor from our nature, but rather is given according to the grace of God. And therefore, the one who will have preserved the gift of life and given thanks to the one who provided it will also receive length of days into eternity; but the one who will have thrown away life and been ungrateful towards the Creator, on account of the fact that he was made, and will have not acknowledged the one who provides, deprives himself of perseverance into eternity.\(^\text{181}\)

But despite the fact that this argument sets him up perfectly for an annihilationist eschatology, Irenaeus never hints that the torment to which the wicked are condemned at the judgment is really a passing out of being. He certainly does not suggest that the bodily resurrection of the wicked—which he emphatically affirms—is distinguished by its impermanence from the resurrection of the righteous. Given Irenaeus’s articulation of the resurrection of the righteous in terms of his receptivity anthropology, the most coherent version of annihilationism would deny bodily resurrection to the wicked altogether. Since he neither does this nor hints that the resurrection of the wicked is

\(^{181}\textit{AH} 2.34.3. \textit{Non enim ex nobis neque ex nostra natura uita est, sed secundum gratiam Dei datur. Et ideo qui seruauerit datum uitae et gratias egerit ei qui praestitit, accipiet et in saeculum saeculi longitudinem dierum; qui autem abiecerit eam et ingratus extiterit Factori ob hoc quod factus est et non cognouerit eum qui praestat, ipse se priuat in saeculum saeculi perseverantia} (\textit{SC} 294, 358).\)
temporary, the annihilationist reading of Irenaeus should be set aside. His reasoning certainly leads towards annihilationism, but he does not deduce an annihilationist conclusion.

A second solution is to read Irenaeus as distinguishing sharply between mere bodily or physical life and the higher life that is communion with God. The former is provided to the body by the soul, independent of any relationship with the Spirit of God; the latter is provided to the soul by the Spirit. Since the principle of bodily life is the soul, by itself, the soul’s receptivity towards the Spirit is irrelevant to the loss and recovery of bodily life. Consequently, questions about the coherence of ascribing bodily life to humans who have rejected the Spirit disappear, both in this life and after the resurrection. The fact that the resurrection reanimates the bodies of both the righteous and the wicked turns out to be a function simply of the rejoining of body and soul. Receptivity towards the Spirit only determines whether or not the resurrected will live inside or outside of communion with God.

But Irenaeus simply does not separate the life of the body, including its loss and recovery, from the soul’s receptivity towards the Spirit.\(^2\) The death that resulted from

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\(^{182}\) This point has not always been conceded by scholars of Irenaeus. After Henri Lassiat inferred an annihilationist eschatology from Irenaeus’s emphasis on both the unity of all life and the necessity of communion with the Spirit for life (Lassiat, *Promotion de l’homme*), Adelin Rousseau responded in a strongly-worded article by pointing to (a) Irenaeus’s failure to indicate that the those who suffer in the eternal fires of torment will not suffer eternally, and, more importantly, (b) what he took to be Irenaeus’s clear distinction between physical life and the life that is communion with God (Adelin Rousseau, “L’éternité des peines de l’enfer et l’immortalité naturelle de l’âme selon saint Irénée,” *NRTh* 99 [1977]). The former, he claimed, has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, while the latter—the only true life—has everything to do with it. The first point is certainly true, but Rousseau could not provide unambiguous
the first human disobedience—which he construes as the first act rejecting the reception of God’s gifts—is the death of the body, not merely the estrangement from God, as evidenced by the options he entertains for explaining how this death happened on the same “day” as the sin. He appeals to the body’s nourishment by the Eucharist as evidence for the return of the body to life after death. He portrays the bodily resurrection of the righteous as the Spirit’s fruit. When he distinguishes between the temporal life of this world and eschatological eternal life, he clearly views the two as different intensities of the same kind of life—life in the body—rather than two completely different kinds of life, only related to each other analogically:

If, moreover, this life that is temporal, although it is much weaker than that eternal life, nevertheless is so powerful that it vivifies our mortal members, why will that life that is eternal not vivify such flesh as will have already practiced and become accustomed to bearing life?183 evidence for the second. Distinguishing between the two kinds of life is not the same as disconnecting them from each other, which is what would be necessary to avoid the problems that Rousseau rightly sees would attend the eternal physical life in torment of those who have rejected the Spirit. The link between the two kinds of life, however, undergirds the logic of too many of Irenaeus’s arguments to be dismissed. Lassiat’s perspective on the link between the two kinds of life has carried the day in recent scholarship, even if his annihilationist interpretation of Irenaeus has not. See, e.g., Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 95-97.

183 AH 5.3.3. Si autem haec quae est temporalis vita, cum sit multo infirmior quam illa aeterna vita, tamen tantum potens est ut vivificet nostra membra mortalia, cur illa quae est aeterna vita non vivificabit eam carnem quae jam meditata et assueta sit portare vitam? (SC 153, 52). Citing this passage, Gustaf Wingren—whom Behr and Briggman follow—writes: “[Irenaeus] … held together in his understanding natural life and the Spirit, Creation and the Sacraments, and man’s body and his communion with God. By the very act of our being in the presence of life in all its countless forms we are confronted by a wholly divine activity in which God is directly at work in His creation” (Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus, trans. Ross Mackenzie [Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1959], 14; emphasis in original). Briggman’s explanation of his understanding of the terms “temporal life” and “eternal life” in Irenaeus’s passage here does not address the question of what to call the bodily life of the resurrected wicked: “by ‘eternal life’ I am referring to immortality, incorruptibility, the eternal life that
Thus, the eternal life that is received through communion with the Spirit is fundamentally the same kind of thing as the temporal life enjoyed in this world.

This solution would receive some support if it could be shown that Irenaeus ascribed a life-giving capacity to the soul by its own existence rather than through its channeling of the life received from God through the Spirit. Indeed, Irenaeus occasionally seems to come close to saying exactly this. In the midst of arguing that “the perfect human being is the mingling and union of a soul receiving the Spirit of the Father and mixed with this flesh that has been formed according to the image of God,” he writes:

If, however, the Spirit is from the soul, the one who is such is truly soulish [animalis] and left imperfect, carnal, indeed possessing the image in the formation but not assuming the likeness through the Spirit. At first glance, this seems to be a clear statement that the soul can animate flesh independently from the Spirit. And it certainly is a claim that the soul can animate those who have not received the outpouring of the Spirit that is received in the church (which is manifested, he says, in phenomena like speaking in tongues). But can the soul itself comes to those who please God and which they live with him; not included in this ‘eternal life’ is the continual existence experienced by the souls relegated to punishment” (Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit, 168 n. 84).

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184 AH 5.6.1. perfectus autem homo commixtio et adunitio est animae assumentis Spiritum Patris et admixtae et carni quae est plasmata secundum imaginem Dei (SC 153, 72).

185 AH 5.6.1. Si autem defuerit animae Spiritus, animalis est vere qui est talis et carnalis derelictus imperfectus erit, imaginem quidem habens in plasmate, similitudinem vero non assumens per Spiritum (SC 153, 76).

186 AH 5.6.1. Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 100, is thus correct to specify that it is “the Spirit, as it is given in Christ” that is under discussion here (emphasis added).
exist completely independently from the Spirit of God, even if it is not always indwelt by that Spirit in the way that renders a person *perfectus homo*?

In fact, Irenaeus occasionally does appear to ascribe such existence to the soul. He criticizes those who say that God does not give life to the body for having God, rather unimpressively, give life only to things that are already immortal. Theirs is a God

... who feigns that he vivifies the things that are immortal by nature, to whom living is present by their own nature, but is not benevolently vivifying the things that require his assistance in order to live, instead negligently abandoning those things to death.  

Earlier in the same paragraph, he defines the spirit and the soul as the things that, manifestly to all, remain immortal. Later, explaining Paul’s claim in Romans 8:11 that the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will give life to “your mortal bodies,” Irenaeus argues that the soul and spirit cannot possibly be the “mortal bodies” in view here because they are not subject to death and corruption. Do these claims contradict Irenaeus’s earlier statements that the soul is *not* inherently immortal but instead only exists by God’s continuing sustaining grace? If so, perhaps an inherently immortal soul provides life through its own powers to the body to which it is joined.

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187 *AH* 5.4.1. *qui ea quidem quae sunt natura immortalia, quibus a sua natura adest vivere, fingit se vivificare, quibus autem opus est ab eo adjutorio ut vivant non vivificans benigne sed relinquens illa neglegenter in mortem* (SC 153, 56-58).

188 On the language of “spirit” in addition to “soul” here, see the discussion above of tripartite versus bipartite interpretations of Irenaeus’s anthropology.

189 *AH* 5.7.1.
Two considerations speak against this interpretation. First, in spite of his claim that the soul and spirit are immortal “by nature,” he appears to maintain a difference in the mode of their life. While the spirit “itself is the life of those who obtain it” (ipse vita est eorum qui percipiunt illum) the soul is the “breath of life” (flatus vitae).\(^\text{190}\) The soul’s life thus appears to remain derivative in comparison to that of the spirit.\(^\text{191}\) This distinction becomes even clearer several sections later, when he contrasts the impermanence of the life bestowed by the breath of life with that bestowed by the Spirit.\(^\text{192}\) It does not seem to be the case that Irenaeus integrates into his own views the idea that the soul and spirit are inherently immortal.\(^\text{193}\) Thus—and this is the second consideration—even if the soul continues to exist without end apart from the Spirit, it

\(^{190}\) AH 5.7.1 (SC 153, 86-88).

\(^{191}\) See Andia, Homo vivens, 273-75.

\(^{192}\) AH 5.12.2.

\(^{193}\) This same argument—that it would be quite unimpressive for God to save and bestow life on something that is inherently incorruptible—appears in Pseudo-Justin’s On the Resurrection 8. There, the author explicitly ascribes to his opponents the anthropology according to which the soul is incorruptible because of its origin in God while the body is corruptible because it does not come from God. The point is that the opponents’ notion of resurrection is unimpressive on their own terms. If this text underlies Irenaeus’s argument (as seems likely given broader correspondences in the order of their arguments), then it is possible that he, too, made this argument based on the anthropological views of others without actually taking on board those views himself. Lassiat, Promotion de l’homme, 165, takes this view, which is important for him because his annihilationist interpretation of Irenaeus cannot allow souls to be immortal without God’s continual active sustenance. Rousseau, “L’éternité des peines,” 848, rebukes Lassiat for doing great violence to the text but does not note the parallel with Pseudo-Justin (to which, in any case, Lassiat himself had not appealed directly). In the end, the disagreement between Lassiat and Rousseau with respect to the soul’s immortality is not over whether or not the continuing existence of the soul is ultimately dependent upon God (both agree that it is), but rather whether or not God preserves the soul in existence “by default,” no matter its posture towards God. Rousseau argues that God must do so, since “donner l’existence de façon transitoire n’est pas la donner véritablement” (“L’éternité des peines,” 862). In his response to Rousseau, Lassiat counters that God must not do so, since humans must be able to reject the gift of life from God if they are to be truly free (“L’anthropologie d’Irénée,” NRTh 100 [1978]: 406). See also Andia, Homo vivens, 277-78. Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 40, reads this immortality as a relative one that follows from incorporeality.
clearly cannot bestow everlasting life upon a body without the Spirit. For that, the permanence of the life bestowed by the Spirit is necessary.

If the soul’s life is always derivative, and the Spirit is life itself, then Irenaeus’s claim that the soul that lacks the Spirit (as bestowed in the church) nevertheless animates the flesh should not be taken to denote the soul’s complete independence from the Spirit. But how is the Spirit the source of life for the soul that “lacks” it?

Answering this question occupies important discussions in two recent treatments of Irenaeus. John Behr, realizing that bodily life cannot be separated from the work of the Spirit for Irenaeus, argues that all people must possess the Spirit in some way in order to be alive. The reception of and growth in the Spirit by Christians after baptism, then, is really a change in the modality of the Spirit’s indwelling. Anthony Briggman, building on Behr’s understanding of the inseparable link between the Spirit and life, nevertheless argues that, for Irenaeus, only Christians are indwelt by the Spirit. How, then, are non-Christians alive at all? Briggman’s solution is to distinguish between the Spirit’s instrumentality and indwelling. Temporal life is bestowed by the soul, which receives life from the Spirit insofar as it has been created by the Spirit. In this way, all life comes through the Spirit’s instrumentality.

194 Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 97-109.
196 Briggman, Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit, 168-69. Briggman infers the soul’s creation by the Spirit from AH 5.12.2, wherein Irenaeus says, “Moreover, what has been made is different from the one who made it. Therefore, what has been breathed is temporal, but the Spirit is eternal” (Aliud autem est quod factum est ab eo qui fecit. Afflatus igitur temporalis, Spiritus autem sempiternus / ἄλλον autem est quod factum est απὸ τὸν ὑπό τὸν οὗ τοιαύτης. Αὔφημος οὖν κήρυκαί τοιαύτης, ἀλλὰ Πνεῦμα οἰκειότερον τοῖς οἷον τὸν οὗ τοιαύτης).
which God bestows life, however, is not the same thing as saying that everything that is alive is indwelt by the Spirit. Rather, on Briggman’s interpretation, the indwelling of the Spirit is reserved for Christians and is what produces, through the ever-increasing bestowal of divine grace and power, the eternal life that is fellowship with God and bodily resurrection. It is only this indwelling, made possible by the Spirit’s indwelling of Christ and distributed through the Church, that can renew humanity to life.

More important than adjudicating between these two accounts is noting that both are striving to make sense of Irenaeus’s clear inclusion of the life of the body within his receptivity anthropology. All life must ultimately come from the Spirit, whether it is the temporal life associated with the animating soul or the eternal life from the vivifying Spirit. Interestingly, however, while both of these accounts can explain how those who have not received the indwelling Spirit poured out by Christ can be alive at all, they are less satisfactory for explaining the general resurrection. In the case of the righteous, it is precisely the special kind of indwelling of the Spirit to which Irenaeus ascribes bodily resurrection. So, the notions of the Spirit’s minimal indwelling (Behr) or mere instrumentality (Briggman), which might be able to account for the present, temporary

\[\delta\varepsilon\ \varepsilon\sigma\tau\iota\ \tauo\ \pi\omega\iota\eta\beta\varepsilon\nu\ \tauo\ \piou\iota\sigma\varsigma\alpha\nu\tauo\varsigma\zeta.\ \hat{\varepsilon}\ \omega\nu\ \pi\nu\eta\ \pr\omega\sigma\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\varsigma\zeta,\ \tauo\ \delta\ \Pi\nu\epsilon\iota\mu\alpha\ \acute{\alpha}\acute{n}n\alpha\nu\varsigma\ [SC\ 153,\ 146]).\] While this inference is valid, Irenaeus clearly did not seek to emphasize here the Spirit’s status as the creator of the human soul.


life of non-Christians, fail to explain how those who have not received Spirit’s full indwelling can be resurrected in the eschaton.\textsuperscript{199}

There simply is no satisfactory solution to these questions.\textsuperscript{200} Irenaeus’s entire anthropology is built around his understanding of humans as created by God to be recipients of God’s gifts. The Spirit of God bestows these gifts upon humans, and indeed Irenaeus draws deeply on the Pauline link between the Spirit and the resurrection. As a result, the structure of his thought is well suited to integrate the bodily resurrection of those who are indwelt by the Spirit into the narrative of God’s saving and maturing work through the two “hands,” the Son and Spirit. This very strength of his thought, however, makes it ill suited for explaining how those who have rejected the Spirit can be alive, let alone be resurrected.

\textsuperscript{199} Behr is thus correct to point out that souls can be “immortal” for Irenaeus—surviving after death even for the wicked—without being connected to the life-giving Spirit (Asceticism and Anthropology, 95), but that is not the same as saying that such a soul can communicate the renewal of life necessary for resurrection to a body. Irenaeus’s arguments for the resurrection of the body treat the indwelling Spirit as the catalyst for the event, so establishing that God can preserve souls in existence apart from communion with the Spirit is not a step towards accounting for the bodily resurrection of those who have rejected the Spirit.

\textsuperscript{200} Briggman’s summary is apt: “The sheer number of pages that have been devoted since the late nineteenth century to explaining Irenaeus’ understanding of the presence of the Spirit to human beings, and its life-giving activity in human beings, suggests the work of Irenaeus in this regard either lacks the clarity that comes from sufficient detail or is very complex. In fact, both are true. Irenaeus does not provide the clear and detailed explanations that would enable an easy statement of his thought on this matter” (Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit, 148). In my judgment, Osborn has correctly identified that the unclear aspects of Irenaeus’s anthropology are so because of the way in which he seeks to articulate consistently the dependence of all human life on participation in God (Irenaeus of Lyons, 230).
2.5 Conclusion

In Irenaeus, both the opportunities and pitfalls presented by the New Testament’s connections between moral transformation and resurrection are on full display. He develops this Pauline motif, drawing especially on Paul’s treatments of the work of the Spirit. Although he does not envision a direct link between moral transformation and resurrection (and thus has no use for passages like Colossians 3:1), the links between both and the Spirit in Paul are critical for Irenaeus’s argument that becoming “spiritual” is not about casting off the body. These links, however, do more than just give him leverage against those who would read Paul as teaching a non-bodily resurrection. They also allow his receptivity anthropology to be truly comprehensive: every aspect of fully mature humanity is a fruit of the Spirit, from virtues to incorruptible bodily life.

At the same time, Irenaeus fails to make any progress towards integrating this Pauline vision with the expectation of a general resurrection. The terms that are key to his account of the resurrection of the righteous—the Spirit, fruit, growth, maturity—are completely absent from his discussions of the resurrection of the wicked. When he argues that the souls of the rich man and Lazarus endure not because of any life that is innate to the soul but rather because God continues to give them existence as a gift, the Spirit is conspicuously absent from his account.201 He offers no explanation of this shift and appears not to have noticed the tension. But if Irenaeus illustrates what can happen when

201 AH 2.34, as noted by Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 95.
the Pauline connection between resurrection and moral transformation is taken seriously but not integrated into every aspect of one’s theology, Tertullian will show what can happen when the tension is noticed and the connection rejected.
CHAPTER 3 | Tertullian: Resurrection of All for Reward and Punishment

3.1 Introduction

Like Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian of Carthage was deeply interested in both defending the eschatological resurrection of fleshly bodies and interpreting the Pauline letters. And like Irenaeus, Tertullian defended the resurrection of the flesh and interpreted Paul in the context of polemics against groups like Marcionites and Valentinians. Tertullian was even familiar with Irenaeus’s work, to which he openly declared his intellectual debt.¹ One might expect, then, that Tertullian would follow, at least in broad outline, the approach to the relationship between moral transformation and resurrection that Irenaeus articulated in Against Heresies.

But Tertullian did no such thing. Instead, while borrowing certain arguments from Irenaeus, he took a strikingly different overall approach. Where Irenaeus, in keeping with his receptivity anthropology, articulated a strong connection between moral transformation and eschatological resurrection (mediated by the maturing work of the Holy Spirit), Tertullian moved in the opposite direction. Acutely conscious of the ways in which some of his theological opponents used Pauline language to affirm the resurrection of the dead but deny the resurrection of the flesh, Tertullian worked to disentangle and then separate from each other all of Scripture’s uses of the language of death, life, and

¹ E.g., Against the Valentinians 5. Tertullian’s debt to other predecessors, such as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Theophilus, is less clear. See Ernest Evans, Tertullian’s Treatise on the Resurrection (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), xxiv-xxxii.
resurrection. For example, armed with the critical distinction between the resurrection *per se* and what comes *after* the resurrection, he argued that much of the confusion sowed by his opponents stemmed from their failure to see that the language of “resurrection” can be used in Scripture as a cipher for what comes after resurrection—that is, what resurrection makes possible but is not itself resurrection. Moral transformation in this life affects what comes after resurrection, not resurrection itself. This detachment of the moral transformation from the eschatological resurrection of the body was made possible for Tertullian by an anthropology differing from Irenaeus’s at key points—in particular, the clear sufficiency of the soul to grant life, independent from ongoing communion with the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the generality of the eschatological resurrection fit Tertullian’s theology much more neatly than Irenaeus’s. At the same time, however, the clarity of Tertullian’s distinctions came with significant costs: he was pressed into tendentious readings of key Pauline passages, and the role of Christ’s death and resurrection in the reversal of bodily death at the general resurrection became very unclear.

Tertullian was active in Carthage\(^2\) from the last decade of the second century to the first two or three decades of the third century.\(^3\) Little more can be said about his life

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\(^1\) For a study focused on contextualizing Tertullian within his context in (colonized) Roman North Africa, see David E. Wilhite, *Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian’s Context and Identities*, Millennium Studies in the culture and history of the first millennium C.E. 14 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

\(^2\) See the chronology in Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 54-55, along with arguments for rejecting the earlier view that Tertullian
with confidence, despite claims even in antiquity that he was the son of a soldier, a
trained jurist, a priest in the church, and later a Montanist schismatic. That he was the son
of a soldier is claimed first by Jerome, but this could be a mistaken inference from
Tertullian’s writings. That he was the beneficiary of specialized legal training beyond
the general knowledge of law acquired by any educated person also rests on dubious
arguments. Jerome claims that Tertullian was a priest, but Tertullian himself never
appeals to any authority as a member of the clergy and even seems to class himself
among the laity on several occasions; the fact that he wrote several works in the form of
sermons could simply be due to the fact that the Carthaginian church, as he himself
describes it, provided the opportunity for laypeople to expound the Scriptures. That
Tertullian came to sympathize with the New Prophecy and went on the attack against
Christians who did not is undeniable, but it is far less clear whether this shift involved
any kind of formal separation from those who did not share his sympathies.

had written into the 220’s. In the postscript to the second edition, Barnes makes minor adjustments to the
chronology he had originally proposed. See Barnes, Tertullian, 325-29.

4 On Illustrius Men 53.
5 Barnes, Tertullian, 13-21, thinks there is no reason whatsoever to think that Tertullian’s father was a
soldier.
6 Barnes, Tertullian, 22-29; David Rankin, “Was Tertullian a Jurist?,” StPatr 31 (1997).
7 Exhortation to Chastity 7, On Monogamy 12; Barnes, Tertullian, 11; Heinrike Maria Zilling, Tertullian:
8 Apology 39; Barnes, Tertullian, 117.
9 See David E. Wilhite, “The Spirit of Prophecy: Tertullian’s Pauline Pneumatology,” in Tertullian and
Paul, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, Pauline and Patristic Scholars in Debate 1 (New York, NY:
To casual readers, Tertullian’s turn towards Montanism and his alleged anti-philosophical bent are probably the two best-known aspects of his thought. He fits the stereotype too well: the religious enthusiast who eschews rational thought and engagement with intellectual predecessors in favor of direct, ecstatic revelation from God. This portrait, however, is strikingly unhelpful for understanding him. While his views on matters of church discipline do shift observably when he begins speaking out in favor of the New Prophecy, his fundamental theological views remain remarkably constant. For example, although one might expect his pneumatology to undergo significant changes after his turn to Montanism, it does not. Eric Osborn can thus claim that one central idea—“the economy of salvation perfected in Christ”—runs throughout Tertullian’s works, making his later Montanism the result rather than cause of his theological emphases. Consequently, the task of sorting his works into strict “pre-Montanist” and “Montanist” categories is less important than one might initially expect.

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12 William Tabbernee, “The World to Come: Tertullian’s Christian Eschatology,” in Tertullian and Paul, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, Pauline and Patristic Scholars in Debate 1 (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2013), divides his explication of Tertullian’s eschatology into pre-Montanist and Montanist periods (dating the shift to 208), but he detects no differences in Tertullian’s overall understanding of resurrection. Similarly, Steenberg, Of God and Man, 58, acknowledges that Tertullian’s “zeal clearly grows” over the course of his theological career but detects no significant changes in his anthropological convictions.
Tertullian’s reputation as the “enemy of argument and the apostle of unreason” is equally misleading. To be sure, he did ask, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” (Prescription Against Heretics 7), he did say that the Son of God’s death is to be believed “because it is absurd,” and he did say that Christ’s resurrection is certain “because it is impossible” (On the Flesh of Christ 5). He had no patience for those who would use philosophy to constrain Christian proclamation, sifting Christian teachings to eliminate the implausible ones. But when it came to articulating and defending Christian teaching, Tertullian found the resources of philosophy and broader learning invaluable. His writings draw on a wide array of ancient learning, from histories to satires to philosophy. The philosophers, he acknowledges, can sometimes get things right—but only when they observe divinely-created nature by correctly employing the divinely-given tools of rationality. Among the philosophers, the Stoics appear to have gotten the most things right. He calls Seneca “saepe noster,” and he famously and explicitly

13 Osborn, Tertullian, First Theologian of the West, 27.
14 quia ineptum est (ed. Evans, 18). For the Latin text of this treatise, I have used the edition of Evans, Tertullian’s Treatise on the Resurrection. Translations are my own, but I have consulted Evans’s.
15 quia impossibile (ed. Evans, 18).
16 On the extent of Tertullian’s learning, see Barnes, Tertullian, 196-210. Barnes argues that Tertullian is best understood when placed alongside the writers of the Second Sophistic (Tertullian, 211-32), and Osborn calls him “a Christian representative of the Second Sophistic, where argument could be vigorous and offensive” (Tertullian, First Theologian of the West, 29).
17 On the Soul 2.
follows the Stoics over against the Platonists in insisting on the corporeality of the soul. The fact that he then supports this view with arguments from Scripture and confirms it with an account of an ecstatic revelation received by a Christian woman during worship amply demonstrates that philosophical reasoning, Scriptural argumentation, and ecstatic revelation did not necessarily need to be disentangled from each other.

Tertullian has left to posterity a variegated and—considering when he lived—massive corpus. His surviving writings range from apologetic to satire to topical theological treatise to ethical exhortation, and one whole volume of the Ante-Nicene Fathers set is not enough to contain them. Although he did write one work that one would expect to be especially important for this study—On the Resurrection of the Flesh—passages important for his understanding of the relationship between moral transformation and resurrection are scattered throughout his oeuvre. This should come as no surprise, since much of his literary output is either directed against people who in some way deny the resurrection as Tertullian wants to understand it (e.g., Against Marcion) or treats subjects that turn out to be critical for understanding his solution to tensions that emerged in his predecessor Irenaeus (e.g., On the Soul). Thus, without foreclosing on the possibility that Tertullian’s views developed over time or assuming

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19 On the Soul 5-6. On Tertullian’s relationship to philosophy, see Jean-Claude Fredouille, Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972), 337-56. For the ways in which Tertullian follows the Stoics over against the Platonists in matters beyond the nature of the soul—such as with his relatively high degree of trust in sense perception to provide true knowledge—see Laura Nasrallah, “An Ecstasy of Folly”: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity, HTS 52 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 101-11.

that everything he said can be organized into a tight, logically consistent system, this
chapter will draw from across his works to illuminate the logic of his position.

3.2 Polemical Backdrop

In the case of Irenaeus, we noted that he understood himself to be arguing
primarily with people who agreed with his definition of resurrection (the eschatological
reversal of the death of the fleshly body) and for that very reason rejected it as
implausible. He was aware that some people were using the language of resurrection to
refer to the recognition of the truth (the followers of Simon and Carpocrates) or some
kind of immortality received at baptism (Menander), but he did not direct his efforts
against them. Their redefinitions of resurrection are not reflected in his polemics, and
they do not appear have shaped his own theology in any discernible way.

Like Irenaeus, Tertullian was concerned to refute people who denied the
possibility of an eschatological resurrection of the flesh. He groups together Marcion,
Apelles, and Valentinus as the intellectual descendants of the Sadducees and the deniers
of the resurrection attacked by Paul in 1 Corinthians.21 The overall impulse to deny the
resurrection, he says, is derived from all the philosophers taken together.22 In Marcion’s
case, he explains that the problem of evil is what led him to separate the creator God of
the Old Testament from the redeeming God of Jesus Christ.23 When combined with the

21 Prescription 33.
22 Prescription 7.
23 Against Marcion 1.2.
notion that the *real* person is the non-bodily part and the body is a product of the inferior creator God, Marcion’s split unsurprisingly leads to a denial of the body’s resurrection.

Tertullian also perceives threats from competing understandings of resurrection. The Mithraic mysteries parody Christianity by introducing an “image of resurrection.”

Closer to home, some Christians affirm resurrection by adopting deceptive definitions. Tertullian repeats the charge of Irenaeus that Menander promised immediate immortality and participation in resurrection to those who underwent his baptism. Unlike Irenaeus, however, who merely notes this teaching but does not explain what he takes it to mean, Tertullian devotes significant effort to ridiculing it. Why, he wonders, are the waters of Menander’s baptism so much more powerful than anything known to pagan myth or Christian Scripture? Why did not John the Baptist or even Jesus use them? Why are so few people seeking out Menander’s baptism? Tertullian challenges these immortal followers of Menander to step forward; then he, like Thomas, will believe. Throughout, Tertullian clearly takes Menander to be claiming that his followers will be exempted from the bodily death that is owed by all at the end of life. At least in Tertullian’s understanding, then, Menander correctly took the language of resurrection to be about the life of the fleshly body but mistakenly moved the reception of this life forward from the *eschaton* to the individual’s baptism.


The seriousness with which Tertullian took the threat of competing interpretations of “resurrection” becomes especially clear in his treatise *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. After working through the appropriateness, possibility, and purpose of resurrection, Tertullian claims that those points are simply prolegomena to the task of showing that the Scriptural language of the “resurrection of the dead” must refer to the flesh and not to something else.\(^26\) He must do this because some attempt to read Scripture’s descriptions of “resurrection,” and the “death” that precedes it, allegorically. They claim that death must be understood spiritually, as one’s ignorance of God wherein a person is buried in error, rather than as the separation of body and soul at the end of a person’s life.\(^27\) Correspondingly, then, they affirm the resurrection—defined as new life in relation to God received when the ignorance of God has been removed. They connect this resurrection very closely to baptism and claim that, through it, they are now living with the Lord. Tertullian complains that these people even deceptively claim to believe in a resurrection *in* the flesh (that is, a resurrection experienced while still living in the flesh) rather than a resurrection *of* the flesh. Others say that the resurrection *is* the separation of body and soul, when the soul finally escapes from the imprisoning body.

In both of these cases, a resurrection is affirmed, but only of the soul. Tertullian claims that people restrict resurrection to the soul because they despise the flesh.\(^28\) He

\(^{26}\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 18.

\(^{27}\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 19.

\(^{28}\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 2.
ascribes denials of the reality of Christ’s own flesh to the desire to disassociate the hope for the resurrection from the hope for a resurrection of the flesh;\textsuperscript{29} some even go so far as to split Christ in order to be able to affirm the resurrection: Jesus dies, but the non-fleshly Christ is resurrected.\textsuperscript{30} In a similar vein, he says that Marcion’s mistake in interpreting 1 Corinthians 15 was to dispute the substance of the resurrected “body” (arguing that it is really soul rather than flesh) instead of noticing that Paul’s entire discussion—at least, according to Tertullian—\textit{assumes} that the body that will be raised is the flesh.\textsuperscript{31} It is thus not surprising that Tertullian felt it necessary to clarify what precisely he meant by “body”:

But since here, too, a question concerning the interpretation of ‘body’ is jeering, I will not understand the ‘human body’ to be anything other than that whole heap of flesh—by whatever kind of matter it is fitted together and diversified—which is seen, held, and then struck down by humans. In the same way, I will not admit the ‘body’ of a wall to be anything other than quarry stones, rocks, and bricks.\textsuperscript{32}

Redefinitions of the body and of its resurrection clearly concerned Tertullian. In a way that cannot be seen in Irenaeus’s extant works, he was worried not only that some found the resurrection of the body implausible but also that some simultaneously retained the language of resurrection. He perceived the connections of resurrection to baptism and

\textsuperscript{29} On the Flesh of Christ 1.  
\textsuperscript{30} On the Flesh of Christ 24.  
\textsuperscript{31} Against Marcion 5.10.  
\textsuperscript{32} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 35. \textit{sed quoniam et hic de interpretatione corporis quaestio cavillatur, ego corpus humanum non aliud intellegam quam omnem istam struem carnis, quoquo genere materiarum concinnatur atque variatur, quod videtur, quod tenetur, quod denique ab hominibus occiditur. sic et parietis corpus non aliud admittam quam caementa, quam saxa, quam lateres} (ed. Evans, 96).
transforming initiation into Christ as tools in the hands of those who wished to
dissociate resurrection from the eschatological return of the flesh to life. As we will
see, his own treatments of the Scriptural passages undergirding these connections
reflected this concern.

3.3 Disentangling Pauline Connections

Tertullian displays an acute awareness of the ways in which Scriptural discussions
of death, life, and resurrection could be read in a way that calls into question whether
“resurrection” necessarily denotes the return to life of fleshly corpses. He understands
that those who affirm a resurrection of the soul, whether at baptism or upon the soul’s
separation from the body, are not arguing without any textual support. In this situation,
Tertullian had two options open to him for explaining Scripture’s language of
resurrection: he could have extended the scope of “resurrection” to include the whole
process of progressive spiritualization laid out by Irenaeus, or he could have maintained
that “resurrection” only properly refers to the return to life of corpses. The second option
would force him to argue that all other uses in Scripture are either being misinterpreted or
are potentially misleading figures of speech. Origen, as we will see, chose a strategy
closer to the former. Tertullian, by contrast, chose the latter.

One strategy that Tertullian employed was to carefully define problematic
instances of the language of death, life, and resurrection in Scripture so that they cannot

33 For a helpful catalog of Tertullian’s resurrection terminology, see René Braun, Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977), 530-45.
suggest that the eschatological resurrection is anything other than the restoration of the flesh. Some of the passages most problematic for Tertullian appear in Colossians, where Paul says that the Christian has been buried and raised with Christ in baptism (Col. 2:12, 20) and can use the claim that the Christian has already been raised with Christ as the premise for further exhortation (Col. 3:1-5). In On the Resurrection of the Flesh 23-24, Tertullian acknowledges that these passages might appear to support his opponents’ views and sets out to show how they ought to be read. His response rests on two key arguments: first, that the baptismal resurrection to which Paul refers is not mutually exclusive with an eschatological resurrection of the flesh; and second, that this baptismal resurrection can only be called such because it is constituted by *anticipation* of that which the real, bodily resurrection makes possible, namely judgment.

In order to show that the resurrection discussed in Colossians and an eschatological resurrection of the flesh are not mutually exclusive, Tertullian first emphasizes that it is a spiritual resurrection. Paul presents the resurrection with Christ in baptism as the reversal of being dead in trespasses (Col. 2:13), which Tertullian glosses as a state of being dead spiritually (*spiritualiter*). Tertullian claims that Paul specified this death as spiritual in order to clarify that a corporeal death still remains for humans. Thus, he infers, the resurrection that corresponds to this spiritual death must also be

34 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 23.3 (ed. Evans, 62).
spiritual and therefore equally compatible with a later corporeal resurrection.\textsuperscript{35} Tertullian confirms this interpretation by pointing out that Paul elsewhere clearly expects an eschatological resurrection.\textsuperscript{36} He draws heavily on 1 and 2 Thessalonians to show that the events with which Paul associates the eschatological resurrection, such as the voice of the archangel and the rapture into the clouds, have not yet happened.\textsuperscript{37} Those who claim that they have already been resurrected are those who have hope in this life only (1 Cor. 15:19). Thus, Paul’s description of what happens to the Christian in baptism as “resurrection” cannot possibly refer to the same event that he elsewhere describes as happening at the end of time.

Establishing that affirmation of a baptismal “resurrection” is not mutually exclusive with the eschatological resurrection of the flesh, however, is not enough to explain why Paul chose to speak of what happens in baptism as “resurrection” at all. Tertullian seeks to account for this by showing how what Paul discusses in Colossians is connected to the real, eschatological resurrection of the flesh. He does so by arguing that this realized resurrection can be called resurrection precisely because it is the \textit{un}realized hope for the \textit{just judgment} that the resurrection of the flesh makes possible (and not for the resurrection of the flesh itself). He first observes that Paul tells the Colossians to set

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\textsuperscript{37} \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh} 24. This argument supplements his argument to the same effect in \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh} 22.
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their minds on things above because they have been resurrected with Christ (Col. 3:1). If they already possessed these things, he reasons, they would not be setting our minds on them; they would be ready to hand. Furthermore, Paul immediately adds that the “resurrected” Colossians’ life is hidden with God (Col. 3:3); this implies they do not yet possess it, and Tertullian looks for corroboration to 1 John 3:2, which states that the Christian’s eschatological state remains hidden. “Thus,” he concludes, “in this course there is contemplation of the hope through faith, not its manifestation; there is expectation, not possession.”

What precisely is it, then, to which this so-far unfulfilled hope looks? To answer this question, Tertullian collects statements from across the Pauline corpus about Paul’s own hopes for the end of time. From these, he concludes that the content of the hope that is received in the resurrection of baptism is the expectation of the rewards and punishments that will be handed out at the judgment that will follow the resurrection of the flesh. In Galatians 5:5, Paul claims to look for—not hold—the hope of righteousness. Tertullian interprets this “righteousness” as “the justice of God that comes from the

38 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 23.4. For Tertullian, the mind (νοῦς, mens, animus) is the knowledge-acquiring faculty of the soul and serves the latter (On the Soul 12.1, 13.1); see Nasrallah, “An Ecstasy of Folly”, 117. On the language of anima (soul) and animus (a faculty of the soul) in Tertullian, see Jean-Claude Fredouille, “Observations sur la terminologie anthropologique de Tertullien: constantes et variations,” in Les Pères de l’Église face à la Science Médicale de leur Temps, ed. Véronique Boudon-Millot and Bernard Pouderon, Théologie Historique 117 (Paris: Beauchesne, 2005), 325.

39 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 23.7. adeo contemplatio est spei in hoc spatio per fidem, non repraesentatio, nec possessio sed expectatio (ed. Evans, 64).
judgment in which we will be judged concerning reward.\textsuperscript{40} He claims that Paul was thinking of the same when he wrote to the Philippians that he hoped to arrive at the resurrection by any means (Phil. 3:11-12), for Paul then described his life in hope of the resurrection as one of stretching forward towards a prize (Phil. 3:13-14). Although he does not spell it out, Tertullian’s logic appears to be that the only “resurrection” Paul can hope and seek to attain is not the resurrection of his flesh per se (which, as we will see, everyone attains) but rather the reward he will receive at the eschatological judgment. Tertullian thus concludes with passages in which Paul speaks of eschatological reward and punishment (Gal. 6:9, 1 Tim. 6:14-15).

In this way, Tertullian finds Paul sometimes using the language of resurrection as a cipher for what comes after resurrection.\textsuperscript{41} Having established this point, Paul’s otherwise puzzling decision to speak of the acquisition of this hope for eschatological judgment as “resurrection” becomes easier to understand. A casualty of this reading, however, is any causal connection between the transformation inaugurated in baptism and the eschatological return of the flesh to life. To live the resurrection life today, as Paul describes it in Colossians, is simply to live with the constant awareness that one will be judged—after the resurrection. On the other hand, the advantage of this reading in

\textsuperscript{40} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 23.7. iustitiam autem dei dicit ex iudicio quo iudicabimur de mercede (ed. Evans, 64).

\textsuperscript{41} One must therefore be careful when reading Tertullian to avoid conflating resurrection with that which follows after resurrection. The distinction is important for him. In light of this, the title of Carly Daniel-Hughes’s The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the Resurrection (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011) could be misleading, for the passages on which she focuses are more about the glorious transformation in the Spirit that follows resurrection than the resurrection itself.
Tertullian’s polemical context is that it effectively insulates the resurrection *per se* from any doubts about its fleshliness that might be raised by Scriptural connections between resurrection and baptism, the work of the Holy Spirit, the recognition of the truth about God, or moral transformation.

The same basic desire to protect the eschatological resurrection from Scriptural descriptions that do not seem to fit it very well appears to underlie Tertullian’s reading of Paul’s claim that the “outward man” is decaying even as the “inward man” is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). Tertullian complains that some appeal to this passage in order to ascribe salvation to the soul but destruction to the flesh.\(^42\) In response, Tertullian insists that the decay in view here is not the kind of decay that the body undergoes upon death. Rather, it is the suffering of the body in this life for the sake of Christ, seen most clearly in the martyrs.\(^43\) Tertullian reinforces this point by noting that the renewal in life that Paul here ascribes to the “inner man” is a gradual process of progress in faith under the nourishment of the Spirit, completely unlike the instantaneous and once-and-for-all renewal in the eschatological resurrection.\(^44\) In *Against Marcion*, he offers the same interpretation of Paul’s wasting away and renewal language, but there, as in his interpretation of Colossians 3, he specifies the *content* of the hope that renews the

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\(^42\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 40.2.

\(^43\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 40.6.

\(^44\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 40.7.
inner man as the eschatological resurrection.\textsuperscript{45} It is easy to see why Tertullian would not want the decay and renewal of life described in this passage to be applied to the eschatological resurrection: not only could it be read as a valorization of the soul at the expense of the body, but the decay and renewal that it describes are simultaneous. In Tertullian’s understanding of the resurrection, by contrast, renewal is by definition the reversal of decay. Thus, in response, Tertullian highlights the ways in which a passage that might be taken to describe resurrection in fact cannot.

Tertullian does occasionally make statements that appear to make the eschatological resurrection of the flesh the consequence of renewal in righteousness in this life. His main point in doing so, however, is to highlight the participation of the body in eschatological life, not the means by which the body is returned to life. Thus, his response to those who would appeal to Romans 8:8—“those who are in the flesh cannot please God”—to exclude the flesh from eschatological life is two-pronged. First, Tertullian argues that “in the flesh” denotes a moral rather than ontological state by pointing out that the immediately following verse declares that the Romans, who are manifestly still living in the flesh ontologically, are “not in the flesh but in the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{46} “Flesh” here thus means “works of the flesh,” and Paul is not condemning the state of possessing a fleshly body. His second argument, then, is to argue that the life “in the

\textsuperscript{45} Against Marcion 5.11.16.

\textsuperscript{46} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 46.2.
Spirit” that replaces this death must also be situated in a fleshly body. This final point is the conclusion that Tertullian emphasizes: since both the morally degraded life according to the flesh and the morally renewed life in the Spirit take place within the flesh, the flesh should be resurrected in order to participate in the person’s full, eschatological life.

This, he says, is the import of Paul’s claim in Romans 8:11 that the indwelling Spirit of God will raise up mortal bodies.

Tertullian develops the same basic argument in interpreting Romans 6. He points out that the “old man” that has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6) cannot be our corporeality (corporalitas nostra), since we have obviously not been crucified with Christ literally; rather, what has been crucified with Christ must be our old moral state (moralitas). Thus, it is through a change of life (emendationem vitae) that the body of transgression is to be abolished (Rom. 6:6).

Correspondingly, when Tertullian elsewhere summarizes the teaching of Romans 6:1-11, he focuses on the finality of death to sin and ignores the language of resurrection and new life altogether. That the death that is commanded is to sin (Rom. 6:11), not to the flesh, further reinforces the point that

47 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 46.3.
48 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 46.5-7.
49 Tertullian gives the same interpretation of these verses from Romans 8 in Against Marcion 5.14.
50 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.1 (ed. Evans, 132).
51 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.1 (ed. Evans, 132).
52 On Modesty 17.4-8. Tabbernee, “The World to Come,” 276, claims that Tertullian here “utilizes this text [Rom. 6:1-11] to call on Christians to lead moral lives in the certain hope of their own resurrection.” While the theme of resurrection certainly appears in the Pauline passage that Tertullian quotes, Tertullian himself does not mention it in his summary of the passage’s teaching.
the corresponding life will be in the flesh, as does the remainder of the chapter’s positive exhortation to present the bodily members as servants of righteousness.53

Here Tertullian makes a key additional connection: not only does the moral life take place within the flesh, but it also affects it. Romans 6:23 states that the wages of sin is death. Tertullian could have taken this claim to indicate simply that sin leads to some sort of non-bodily death, but he does not. Instead, he takes the second part of Paul’s claim—namely, that the grace of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ—as a promise to the flesh that it will be resurrected.54 In doing so, Tertullian explicitly recognizes that he is connecting the “newness of life” with both the transformed life after baptism and the eschatological resurrection of the flesh:

And lest you think that it was said only about that life that must be lived in newness from faith after baptism, he most discerningly adds, ‘For if we have been sown together in a likeness to the death of Christ, we will also belong to the resurrection’ [paraphrase of Rom. 6:5]; for we die in baptism through a likeness, but we rise in the flesh in truth, just like Christ: ‘So that, just as the trespass reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness into eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord’ [Rom. 5:21].55

He summarizes the connection quite straightforwardly: “For if the rule of death produces nothing other than the dissolution of the flesh, then the life that is contrary to death

53 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.2-7.
54 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.8.
55 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.11-12. ac ne de ista tantum vita putes dictum quae ex fide post baptisma in novitate vivenda est, providentissime adstruit, Si enim consati sumus simulacrum mortis Christi, sed et resurrectionis erimus: per simulacrum enim morimur in baptismate, sed per veritatem resurgimus in carne, sicut et Christus: Ut sicut regnavit in morte delictum, ita et gratia regnet per iustitiam in vitam sempiternam per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum (ed. Evans, 134).
should produce what is contrary, namely the restoration of the flesh…” 56 The moral life that replaces moral death in this life results in eschatological life for the body that reverses the bodily death and dissolution caused by moral death.

At first glance, these claims appear to commit Tertullian to the view that positive moral transformation in this life, inaugurated at baptism and empowered by the Spirit, directly causes the eschatological resurrection of the flesh. If this was indeed Tertullian’s view, then he would be quite close to Irenaeus and would face the same tensions as Irenaeus in explaining the bodily resurrection of those in whom the Spirit has not worked to produce moral renewal. Two factors, however, should caution against such an interpretation.

First, in the broader context of both of these passages, Tertullian’s focus is squarely on the claim that the flesh will participate in the person’s eschatological life because the moral life takes place within it. The important point for him is that the whole person, both body and soul, participates in the eschatological life with its rewards and punishments. 57 To be sure, this conclusion is compatible with a causal connection between the moral life and the resurrection of the flesh. Nevertheless, Tertullian mentions that connection only in order to further establish the body’s participation in eschatological life; the connection itself is not the focus of his attention, and he does not

56 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.13. nam si regnum mortis nihil operatur quam carnis dissolutionem, proinde vitam contrariam morti contrarium oportet operari, id est carnis redintegrationem… (ed. Evans, 134).

57 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 46.5-6, 47.16-18.
exploit it for moral exhortation. He never says, for example, that moral transformation is important because without it one might fail to be resurrected.

Second, in the same context Tertullian deploys a distinction between the resurrection of the flesh per se and the reward that follows upon resurrection, connecting righteousness to the reception of the latter but not the former. The passage that prompts this distinction is 1 Corinthians 15:50 (“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”), to which Irenaeus had devoted so much attention. Tertullian first follows Irenaeus in arguing that “flesh and blood” here denote an immoral life lived according to the flesh, not the flesh itself. Then, however, he offers a different approach. He accepts the literal definition of “flesh and blood” that he has been working to undermine but claims that, even with that definition, the verse does not threaten the resurrection of the flesh:

For what is directly denied is not the resurrection of flesh and blood, but rather the kingdom of God that accompanies the resurrection; there is, however, also a resurrection into the judgment. Indeed, the general resurrection of the flesh is even confirmed when the special is treated as an exception: for when the state into which it will not rise is proclaimed, the state into which it will rise is understood.

While this view would not exclude flesh and blood from resurrection, it would still seem to exclude them from the kind of resurrection that the readers presumably desire, the

58 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 48-49.

59 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 50.2. non enim resurrectio carni et sanguini directo negatur, sed dei regnum quod obvenit resurrectioni: est autem et in iudicium resurrectio. imo et confirmatur carnis resurrectio generalis cum specialis excipitur: dum enim in quem statum non resurgat edicitur, in quem resurgat subauditur (ed. Evans, 146).
resurrection into the kingdom of God. To avoid this problem, Tertullian clarifies that what is excluded from the kingdom of God is not flesh and blood per se, but rather flesh and blood alone and by themselves (sola et per semetipsa). When flesh and blood are quickened by the Spirit and produce the works of the Spirit, on the other hand, they can enter the kingdom of God—after they are resurrected and transformed by the putting on of incorruptibility and immortality. As he puts it in Against Marcion:

[W]e are certainly not defending the kingdom of God for the flesh, but rather the resurrection of its substance, which is like the door of the kingdom through which it is accessed. Moreover, the resurrection is one thing, the kingdom another. For the resurrection is first, then the kingdom. Accordingly, we say that the flesh rises, but it obtains the kingdom after being changed.

The importance of Tertullian’s distinction—which, as we will see, underlies much of his eschatology—lies in the way that it allows him to maintain the generality of the resurrection of the flesh without abandoning the notion that moral transformation in this life affects the resurrected body. The resurrection of the flesh is the condition for the possibility of that which moral transformation brings, the final transformation and entry into the kingdom of God. The displacement of spiritual death with life is unnecessary for the resurrection of the flesh, as demonstrated by the reality of the resurrection of the flesh

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61 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 50.4 (ed. Evans, 146).
62 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 50.4-6.
to judgment. This position is, of course, not what one would expect in light of Tertullian’s insistence that the dissolution of human flesh in death is punishment for sin. One would then expect the body’s reconstitution to be the result of recovery from sin, as indeed Tertullian does claim in isolated passages. As we have already seen and will become even clearer, however, Tertullian preferred to connect moral transformation with what comes after resurrection, thereby protecting the generality and unambiguous fleshliness of the eschatological resurrection itself.

One way to see the differences between Tertullian’s and Irenaeus’s approaches is to note which arguments Tertullian does not take over from Irenaeus. Tertullian repeats Irenaeus’s argument that the “flesh and blood” that are excluded from the kingdom of God are moral states and not the actual substances of flesh and blood (although, as we have seen, he supplements this argument with a separate one that Irenaeus did not make), but the Irenaean arguments for the resurrection of the body that are only applicable to Christians are conspicuously missing in Tertullian. For example, he never appeals to the Christian body’s Eucharistic union with the incarnate Word to argue for the bodily resurrection. Tertullian clearly accounted for the resurrection of the flesh in a different way than Irenaeus. We now turn to explore the positions Tertullian adopted that made possible his understanding of resurrection.

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64 In On Prayer 6, Tertullian does quote the words of institution (“this is my body”) and then say that our petition for “daily bread” is a petition for perpetuity in Christ through indivisibility from his body. See Steenberg, Of God and Man, 91-92. In contrast to Irenaeus, though, there is no mention of resurrection in this discussion.
3.4 Corresponding Views

Underlying the understanding of resurrection that we have found thus far in Tertullian is a set of positions on related issues. Tertullian’s views on the nature of the soul, the body-soul relationship in the moral life, how humans are motivated to moral transformation, the corresponding reason for the necessity of resurrection, and the nature of post-resurrection glorification in and through the Spirit help to clarify and confirm what we have already found.

3.4.1 Anthropology: Body and Soul—then Spirit

For Tertullian—in contrast to Irenaeus—the presence of the soul is unambiguously sufficient for human biological life. This is true not only for life in this world, but also for resurrection life. As we will see, this is not to say that the soul is unrelated to the Spirit of God; in fact, for Tertullian the presence of the soul is sufficient for life precisely because of the nature of its relationship to the Spirit of God. It does mean, however, that the soul does not need to be in ongoing communion with the Spirit in order to mediate life to the person. Rather than acting as a funnel for divine life pouring forth from the Spirit, the soul bears within itself the gift of life received at its creation from the Spirit. It thus becomes much easier to account for the generality of the eschatological resurrection, since the indwelling Spirit received in baptism is not what returns the dead body to life.

Tertullian ascribes the flesh’s return to life in the resurrection to its reunification with its soul. He counters those who would argue that the resurrectio mortuorum is the
resurrection of mortal souls by arguing that that which brings life by its very presence—the soul—cannot itself be mortal and thus cannot be that which is resurrected: the soul “itself is that which brings downfall to the body when it has been breathed out, just as the soul itself is that which raised the body from the earth when it was breathed in. That cannot fall which raised by being breathed in; that cannot destroy which destroyed by being breathed out.”65 The soul bestows life upon the body both at the beginning of life and in the resurrection. To be a “living soul,” as Paul describes the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), is to be a body sustained in life by the soul.66 God transformed the clay into flesh, resulting in this “living soul,” by breathing on the clay.67 Since it is the soul itself that moves the body, the soul makes the body animate by its presence or inanimate by its absence—a fact that, for Tertullian, is a key piece of evidence in favor of the soul’s corporeality, since otherwise the soul would be unable to move the corporeal body.68 In the resurrection, the re-animated body can become a spiritual body not because the soul ceases to perform its life-giving function, but because of the transformation for the

65 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 18.8. atquin ipsa est quae ruinam corpori infert cum efflata est, sicut ipsa est quae illud de terra suscitavit cum inflata est. non potest cadere quae suscitavit ingressa: non potest ruere quae elidit egressa (ed. Evans, 50).
67 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 7.3.
68 On the Soul 6.2-3. This is a classic Stoic argument for the corporeality of the soul; see A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, The Hellenistic philosophers, volume 1: Translations of the principal sources, with philosophical commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 272-73. See also On the Soul 27.2, where Tertullian defines life as nothing other than the conjunction of the soul with the body.
kingdom of God worked by the now-fully-possessed Spirit. Thus, “the body is made animated when the soul has been received back, in order that it might become spiritual: for only that which existed can rise again.”

Tertullian is fully aware that Scripture often speaks not only of a person’s body and soul, but also of spirit. He insists, however, that this “spirit,” when it is distinguished from the soul, is really an activity of the soul rather than a distinct entity: the soul can be called “spirit” only in virtue of its action of emitting breath. The main argument that he provides for this position is that, in humans, being alive and breathing are coterminous. One cannot do one without the other. Since the soul is what makes a person alive, then, it is also the cause of breathing. He forwards this view against Hermogenes, who distinguished between the human spirit and soul in order to account for the human fall.

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69 Against Marcion 5.10.14, 5.12.4; On the Resurrection of the Flesh 53.18-19.

70 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 53.7. recepta enim anima rursus animale corpus efficitur, ut fiat spiritale: non enim resurgit nisi quod fuit (ed. Evans, 158). Tertullian can also, however, write as if becoming “spiritual” is integral to being resurrected, in which case—given his commitment to the generality of the eschatological resurrection—all would need to receive the fullness of the Spirit, of which only Christians possess a down payment in this life (53.18). Thus, he says that the one who has received the Spirit as a down payment is nevertheless called animale in this life because the soul is the greater substance; later, when the Spirit is fully received, that same one will be called spiritale, and in this fullness the person will be resurrected (in qua [plenitudine] resuscitatur [53.19; ed. Evans, 162]). Given his general ascription of resurrection to the return of the soul to the body and restriction of the Spirit in this life to Christians, he should probably be taken to mean that the fullness of the Spirit that makes one’s body spiritale rather than animale happens to Christians, alongside resurrection (not to all, through resurrection per se). Thus, the following summary given by Nasrallah, “An Ecstasy of Folly”, 144, should be restricted to Christians: “Tertullian explains that humans will have the pneuma or spiritus in substance when they are raised again in the flesh (Res. 53); one’s anthropology is transformed after one’s resurrection, and the spirit which is now accidental (using the language of Paul, only a ‘pledge’) will be natural as humans are raised as ‘spiritual bodies.’” The same holds for Jean Daniélou’s claim that “the resurrection brings about the dispositio spiritalis in the flesh” (The Origins of Latin Christianity, 346). Nevertheless, Tertullian should not be pressed too hard for consistency on this point; as we will see later in this chapter, he does make puzzlingly unqualified claims about the role of the Spirit’s call in the eschatological resurrection.

71 On the Soul 10. Cf. Alexandre, Une Chair pour la Gloire, 257-60.
into sin. For Hermogenes, the human spirit comes from the Spirit of God, but the soul comes from matter and not God and is therefore able to fall away into sin.\textsuperscript{72} Since Tertullian ascribes the human fall into sin to the soul’s free will and not to its corporeality (which would threaten the goodness of the material creation),\textsuperscript{73} he rejects this distinction and insists on the fundamental unity of the human soul with its spirit. He thus can speak of the human as composed of body and soul or body and spirit but not body, soul, and spirit.\textsuperscript{74}

Tertullian emphasizes that the soul comes from God. The first human became a living soul by the breath of God,\textsuperscript{75} and God breathes on subsequent human beings while

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\item \textsuperscript{72} \textit{On the Soul} 11.2. For a summary of Hermogenes’ teaching, see Waszink, \textit{De Anima}, 7*-12*; for the probable sources of his views, see Jan Hendrik Waszink, “Observations on Tertullian’s Treatise against Hermogenes,” \textit{VC} 9 (1955): 129-38.
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{Against Marcion} 2.5-8. Matthew C. Steenberg, “Sinful Nature as Second Nature in Tertullian of Carthage,” \textit{StPatr} 46 (2010), shows that for Tertullian the first humans’ fall into sin did not result in a damaged human nature passed down to all their descendants; in other words, pace many of his interpreters, Tertullian did not believe in a proto-Augustinian doctrine of “original sin.” Instead, building on his conviction that moral differences between humans result from the different possibilities for living out the one human nature within a fallen economy (rather than from different human natures, pace Valentinus), he ascribed the universal tendency towards sin to habituation: “Sinful nature as ‘second nature’ identifies the fallleness of the human condition with the habitation of economy, as the ingraining of the ‘accidents’ of human transgression into the pattern of life that gives expression to the nature God has fashioned” (19). See also Steenberg, \textit{Of God and Man}, 79-84.
\item \textsuperscript{74} See the discussion of Tertullian’s vacillation between “body and soul” and “body and spirit” in Wilhite, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” 50-51. See also Fredouille, “Observations sur la terminologie anthropologique de Tertullien”; and Steenberg, \textit{Of God and Man}, 64: “Where it is more difficult to apply ‘bi-partite’ or ‘tri-partite’ terminology to the anthropology of Irenaeus, with his alternating language of body/soul and body/soul/spirit, it is a direct matter to assign Tertullian the bi-partite label.” On Tertullian’s anthropology, see also now Eliezer Gonzalez, “Anthropologies of Continuity: The Body and Soul in Tertullian, Perpetua, and Early Christianity,” \textit{JECS} 21 (2013): 483-91.
\item \textsuperscript{75} \textit{On the Soul} 11.3.
\end{itemize}
they are in the womb. 76 This breath (adflatus) of God that moistens the clay and animates the human, bestowing the soul, is nothing other than the vapor of the Spirit (vapor spiritus). 77 This link between God’s Spirit and the human soul is critical to grasping Tertullian’s understanding of the soul and its life-giving function. In Against Marcion, Tertullian responds to the objection that the soul’s derivation from the Spirit of God would preclude its fall into sin by carefully tracing out the relationship between Spirit and breath. Breath (afflatus), the soul, is an image or reflection of Spirit (spiritus)—which is God in Godself—insofar as breath is a function of Spirit but nevertheless weaker than it, as a breeze relates to wind. 78 Spirit and soul are like each other but not the same thing, he emphasizes, just as wind and breeze are similar but breeze is not wind. 79 (Note here Tertullian’s break from the Stoics, for whom the soul [ψυχή] simply is spirit [πνεῦμα] with a particular degree of tension and functioning in a particular way to animate a body.) 80 But in what sense is breath weaker? For Irenaeus, the answer would have been breath’s inability to bestow life on its own. Tertullian, by contrast, focuses on its susceptibility to sin. The human soul can image every aspect of the divine Spirit—

76 On the Soul 26.4-5. On the simultaneous fashioning of body and soul in all humans after Adam, and perhaps even in Adam, see Steenberg, Of God and Man, 68-69. This does not mean that there is no continuity between the soul of the parents and the soul of the child. See Petr Kitzler, “Ex uno homine tota haec animarum redundantia: Ursprung, Entstehung und Weitergabe der inviduellen Seele nach Tertullian,” VC 64 (2010): 369-81.
78 Against Marcion 2.9.3 (ed. Evans, 110).
79 Against Marcion 2.9.2.
immortality, freedom of choice, rationality, and understanding—except one, the power of immunity from sin. The solution to the problem of human evil, then, lies in the combination of freedom of choice and ability to sin that results from the soul’s relationship to the Spirit of God. Thus, the Platonists’ correct observation that souls today possess both rational and irrational elements is no argument against the soul’s ultimate derivation from God, for the irrational element is a later accretion caused by the free choice to turn away from God and follow the serpent.

This link between the Spirit of God and the soul, however, explains more than human sin. It also accounts for the soul’s life-bestowing function. When God breathed on the flesh to animate it, God did so “according to the likeness of his own vital force.” Tertullian elsewhere says that the whole world was originally quickened by the Spirit who quickens all living things. That the soul bestows life on the body to which it is joined is thus a function of its derivation from the life-giving Spirit. The soul can bestow life by itself, without the indwelling Spirit, precisely because it images that Spirit. For Irenaeus, by contrast, the soul functions as a conduit for the Spirit’s life; it cannot itself

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81 Against Marcion 2.9.4-5. Cf. On the Soul 24.2, where Tertullian ascribes the soul’s immortality to its reflection of God and its passibility to its createdness. It is this possibility that, in Against Marcion, explains its susceptibility to sin. See Waszink, De Anima, 13*; Daniélou, The Origins of Latin Christianity, 373; Cardman, “Tertullian on the Resurrection,” 38-39; Alexandre, Une Chair pour la Gloire, 261-62; Steenberg, Of God and Man, 70-71; Kitzler, “Ursprung, Entstehung und Weitergabe der inviduellen Seele nach Tertullian,” 359-62.

82 Against Marcion 2.5-7.


84 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 9.1. ad similitudinem suae vivacitatis (ed. Evans, 26).

85 Apology 48.7.
give life, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is central to the renewal of life that produces bodily resurrection.\textsuperscript{86}

Of course, Tertullian’s bipartite (soul-body) anthropology and understanding of the soul’s relationship to the Spirit of God does not exclude the possibility of the Spirit of God indwelling humans. The Spirit does come upon humans, an event that restores the pre-sin state in which humans received the Spirit of God (\textit{illum dei spiritum}) from God’s breath (\textit{adflatu eius}); in this highly Irenaean passage, Tertullian even says that the return of the Spirit allows humans to be conformed to God’s \textit{similitudo} (eternity), having already been conformed to God’s \textit{imago} (in form \textit{[in effigie]}).\textsuperscript{87} The salvific work of Christ is precisely to make this renewed work of the Spirit possible, through which the Spirit reverses the effects of sin (alienation from God) by pouring out divine life on the

\textsuperscript{86} The following summary is thus easily misunderstood: “For Tertullian, as for Irenaeus, the soul’s vivifying and divinizing role lies not in its own immortality or immateriality, but in its function as the created means by which the uncreated properties of the divine are brought into the realm of the human—by which the Father’s life is, through the Holy Spirit, wrought within the human frame” (Steenberg, \textit{Of God and Man}, 77). It is true that, for both Irenaeus and Tertullian, the soul serves as an intermediary bringing life from God to the human being, \textit{How} the soul mediates life, however, is quite different. While the soul for Tertullian certainly does not have its “own” immortality, if this is taken to mean possessing immortality that it did not first receive from God, it \textit{does} possess its immortality in the sense that God bestows immortality to it at its creation, and that immortality is not removed from it when intimacy with God is subsequently interrupted.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{On Baptism} 5.7 (CCL 1, 282). See Wilhite, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” 54. Daniélou, \textit{The Origins of Latin Christianity}, 377, argues that this passage represents an earlier stage in Tertullian’s thinking that he modified after his encounter with the teachings of Hermogenes. In particular, he points to the apparent identification of the Spirit of God with God’s \textit{afflatus} and the contrast between God’s “likeness” and “image.” The former is clearly rejected in his arguments against Hermogenes, and the latter appears in only one other extant treatise (\textit{Exhortation to Chastity} 1.3). See also the similar (and apparently independent) judgment of Kitzler, “Ursprung, Entstehung und Weitergabe der inviduellen Seele nach Tertullian,” 363-64. It is not clear to me, however, that this passage in fact identifies God’s \textit{afflatus} with the Spirit. Instead, Tertullian might be saying that God’s Spirit is received \textit{through} something else—God’s \textit{afflatus}, the soul. I therefore do not exclude this passage from consideration in reconstructing Tertullian’s mature views, even though doing so would make his consistency easier to see.
Christian. But as we will discuss later in this chapter, Tertullian never clarifies whether or not this divine life poured out through the Spirit because of the Son’s work is the cause of the return to life of all people in the eschatological resurrection; it might well be, rather, the turn to a morally renewed life that results in intimacy with God both now and after the resurrection rather than continued alienation from God after the resurrection.

Usually, however, Tertullian focuses on the special gifts, like prophecy, that the reception of the Spirit brings. Appealing to Isaiah 42:5, wherein God gives breath (flatum) to people on the earth and Spirit (spiritum) to those who walk on it, Tertullian argues that God first gives the soul (anima, which he equates with flatus) to those who live carnally in the flesh (i.e., those on the earth) and only later gives the Spirit to those who subdue the works of the flesh (i.e., those who walk on the earth). That Adam prophesied about the relationship between Christ and the church (Gen. 2:24-25, Eph. 5:31-32) demonstrates that he was under the influence of this Spirit. (He is careful to point out, however, that this influence of the Spirit on Adam should not be taken to mean that the Spirit was integral to Adam’s nature before sin.) The Spirit of God is not the only thing that can indwell a human being in this way: evil spirits, such as that which

88 See the helpful discussion in Steenberg, Of God and Man, 88-103.
89 See Tertullian’s discussion of spiritual gifts in Against Marcion 5.8. Wilhite, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” 46, can thus say that “Tertullian’s comments on the Holy Spirit center primarily on the Spirit’s role in prophecy, be it ‘old’ or ‘new.’”
90 On the Soul 11.3 (ed. Waszink, 15).
91 On the Soul 11.4.
indwelt Judas, influence humans in the same way. In fact, Tertullian points out, Saul was indwelt successively by the Spirit of God, which enabled him to prophesy, and by an evil spirit, which made him an apostate.\(^93\) Tertullian concludes, “Therefore, if the spirit of neither God nor the devil is joined to the soul from birth, the soul evidently exists alone before the effect of the spirit of either….”\(^94\)

For Tertullian, the soul is not the only element of the human that images God. He declares that God formed the human body by looking forward to the incarnate Christ.\(^95\) This is why, for him, the identity of Christ’s flesh with human flesh was so important to establish: if Christ’s flesh is not the same as human flesh, then it could not have functioned as the archetype for human flesh and the identity of creator and redeemer is undermined; if they are the same, however, that identity is preserved and the resurrection of Christ’s flesh proves the resurrection of human flesh.\(^96\) Thus, the non-temporal priority of Christ’s flesh is the reason one can say that God formed human flesh in the image of God.\(^97\)

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\(^{93}\) *On the Soul* 11.5.

\(^{94}\) *On the Soul* 11.6. *Igitur si neque dei neque diaboli spiritus ex nativitate consertitur animae, solam eam constat ante eventum spiritus utriusque*... (ed. Waszink, 15). This is not to say that the soul is always able to live very long before it is assaulted by an evil spirit. Later in the same work, Tertullian claims that the evil one latches on to every soul at birth because of the idolatries practiced there; having done so, he obscures all the faculties bestowed on the soul at birth (*On the Soul* 39.1-2). The unclean soul thus must be taken up by the Spirit at baptism, its second birth (*On the Soul* 40-41).


\(^{96}\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 2. This is why *On the Flesh of Christ* is the precursor to *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*.

\(^{97}\) *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 9.
It is thus not the case that, for Tertullian, the human body is valuable and worthy of eschatological restoration simply because it was created by the good God who both creates and redeems. Although he insists that the whole creation is from God\textsuperscript{98} and the first proof of God’s goodness is God’s decision to create,\textsuperscript{99} he explicitly declares that the non-human creation will pass away after the millennial kingdom.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, in response to the view that the description of carrion birds and fish spewing up the bones of the dead guarantees the resurrection of such non-human creatures, he argues that the purpose of this description is simply to emphasize that the bodies of even those humans who have been consumed by such beasts will be restored to them in the eschaton; the fish and birds will not be resurrected.\textsuperscript{101} He also cautions against reading Scripture’s eschatological promises of “land” and “earth” literally—which he says would be to fall into the errors of the Jews—but instead refers them to general human flesh and the flesh of Christ.\textsuperscript{102}

At first glance, Tertullian’s insistence that the non-human creation will not be restored in the eschaton, even though it is a good creation of the good God, seems to be a fatal mistake. What would prevent one from saying the same about the human body? This is precisely where Tertullian’s Christological understanding of the value of the human

\textsuperscript{98} Apology 17.
\textsuperscript{99} Against Marcion 2.3
\textsuperscript{100} Apology 48, Against Marcion 3.23. Tabbernee, “The World to Come,” 266-67, notes that, although Tertullian’s extant discussions of the millennium and New Jerusalem postdate his adherence to the New Prophecy, it remains an open question whether Montanism was the main source of his chiliasm.
\textsuperscript{101} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 32.1-2. He appears to be referring to 1 Enoch 61:5.
\textsuperscript{102} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 26.
body comes into play. The human body is restored in the resurrection not because it is a creation of God, but because it is a direct creation of God that images the incarnate Christ; by contrast, the rest of creation was created by the voice of God and only to serve humanity. Thus, although good, the remainder of creation is an instrumental good and can be disposed of in favor of another instrumental good. This is exactly what Tertullian claims will happen eschatologically: God will provide a second realm, a higher world, in which to continue pursuing knowledge of God after this world has passed away.

By anchoring the human body in Christology, Tertullian takes a strong stance on the body’s integrality to the human person. He insists that the body and soul come into being in the womb at the same time; one cannot be a person without both. Consistent with this vision of human nature as a body-soul composite, he emphasizes the necessary intertwining of the two, preferring to speak of the soul as ingrafting (inseruit) and intermingling (immiscuit) with the flesh rather than dwelling in it. In fact, he says, the two are so intertwined that it is difficult to say which carries the other around. This is so because, although the flesh is at the service of the soul, the flesh is an indispensable and irreplaceable servant of the soul: only through the flesh can the soul enjoy the gifts

103 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 5.
104 Against Marcion 2.4. See also On the Resurrection of the Flesh 59.
105 On the Soul 27.2-4.
106 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 40.3.
107 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 7.9 (ed. Evans, 22).
of nature, express itself in speech, and exercise its faculty of bestowing life.\textsuperscript{109} In turn, the soul itself is energized by bodily nourishment.\textsuperscript{110} The soul’s dependence on the flesh extends to the realm of its salvation: the soul is cleaned by the washing of the flesh in baptism, consecrated by the anointment of the flesh, protected by the crossing of the flesh, illuminated by the Spirit through the imposition of hands on the flesh, and is filled with God through the fleshly feeding on the body and blood of Christ.\textsuperscript{111} Furthermore, it is only through the flesh that the soul can do works pleasing to God, such as fasting, abstaining from sex, and being persecuted, tortured, and martyred.\textsuperscript{112} Thus, the whole life of faith must be lived not only in the flesh (\textit{in carne}), but also through the flesh (\textit{per carnem}).\textsuperscript{113}

From this interdependence of soul and flesh, Tertullian infers the body’s implication in the person’s moral actions. He emphasizes that the body is more than a mere instrument for the soul. Since the soul is the commanding faculty, some might infer that the flesh is no more implicated in moral praise or blame than a sword wielded in murder; such a view, however, mistakenly views the body as a tool (\textit{instrumentum}) rather

\textsuperscript{109} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 7.10-12. On the necessity of the body’s sensory organs to the soul’s reception of the gifts of God in creation, see also On the Crown 5.2.

\textsuperscript{110} On the Soul 6.6. For this point, with which he argues that the soul is corporeal, Tertullian relies on the authority of Soranus.

\textsuperscript{111} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 8.3.

\textsuperscript{112} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 8.4-5.

\textsuperscript{113} On the Resurrection of the Flesh 45.15 (ed. Evans, 126).
than a servant (\textit{ministerium}).\footnote{\textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh} 16.1-3 (ed. Evans, 42).} Paul can call the body the “outer man” (2 Cor. 4:16) because its relationship of interdependence with the soul is constitutive of what it means to be a human. The body is thus a servant and as such will be held accountable.\footnote{\textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh} 16.11-15.}

Tertullian uses this designation of the flesh as a servant that works together with the soul to explain why baptism involves both body and soul.\footnote{\textit{On Baptism} 4.5.} The inference that he emphasizes most heavily, however, is that the body deserves to share in the reward or punishment for the person’s actions.\footnote{\textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh} 15; cf. 7.13.}

In emphasizing the body’s culpable involvement in the person’s moral actions, Tertullian is careful to avoid making the body a scapegoat for immorality. Thus, in slight incongruity to his emphasis elsewhere that the soul does everything through the body, he claims that the soul can, in point of fact, commit sins on its own—sins like looking upon a woman lustfully.\footnote{\textit{On the Soul} 58.6.} It is for these sins that the (corporeal) soul suffers in Hades while awaiting its reunification with the body in the resurrection.\footnote{\textit{Earlier in the same work, Tertullian appeals to the soul’s ability to suffer in Hades (before the resurrection) as proof of its corporeality (\textit{On the Soul} 7). See also \textit{On the Resurrection} 17, where he reprises the argument from \textit{On the Soul} and again clearly states that the sins for which the soul alone suffers in Hades are the sins that it committed alone. On the intermediate state, including his initial belief in a pleasant section of Hades called Paradise in which the souls of the martyrs and the faithful dead await the resurrection and later shift to move Paradise out of the lower regions (replacing it with “Abraham’s Bosom”), see Tabbernee, “The World to Come,” 263, 267-68. See also Daniêlou, \textit{The Origins of Latin Christianity}, 390-95; Nasrallah, “\textit{An Ecstasy of Folly}”, 125-26; Eliezer Gonzalez, \textit{The Fate of the Dead in }}
without the body, one cannot claim that the body is necessarily the cause of sin. And in the case of the vast majority of sins, in which the soul and body work together, the soul takes the lead. Thus, the body is never primarily at fault for sin and should not be unfairly singled out for destruction, as if that would solve the problem of sin. Even in those instances in which the flesh seems to be the instigator of sin, such as sexual sins, the root problem is the soul’s free decision to abdicate its responsibility to lead rather than be led.120

Thus, the body is neither irrelevant to moral praise and blame—such that it can be omitted from eschatological judgment—nor the primary focus of moral blame—such that it deserves to be punished through annihilation. Tertullian explicates his unambiguously bipartite anthropology in a way that leads inexorably to one conclusion: because of the body’s integral role in a person’s moral life, punishments or rewards that are just must include the body. We now turn to the way Tertullian draws on his anthropology in his understanding of resurrection.

120 To His Wife 1.4; To the Martyrs 4. Cf. Against Marcion 2.8 (humanity fell from virtuous life through the free exercise of the will, not through an infirmity of nature that can be blamed on the Creator), Against Marcion 5.10 (the soul takes the lead in sin, with the body following along), and On the Soul 40 (when Scripture blames the flesh for sin, it does so because it is only with the flesh that the soul can sin).
3.4.2 Resurrection, Judgment, and Moral Transformation

After establishing (a) that the flesh is the sort of thing that can rise from the dead and (b) that God is in fact able to make this happen, Tertullian turns to argue (c) that God should indeed cause the resurrection of the flesh. The first two points are, he acknowledges, inadequate for proving the reality of the eschatological resurrection of the flesh; just because something can happen and God is able to cause it does not mean that God should or will cause it.¹²¹ What, then, is the reason for the eschatological fittingness and necessity of resurrection?

Tertullian does not here appeal to the dignity of the flesh grounded in its creation by the good, creator God. Nor does he speak of the necessity of resurrection for the further maturation of the human being. Instead, he focuses on the relationship of resurrection to judgment.¹²² Resurrection will accomplish (expunget) judgment; that is its “whole cause” (tota causa) and necessity (necessitas).¹²³ Its connection to judgment lies in the anthropology that we have just examined, for it is only through resurrection that the whole morally responsible being, soul and flesh, can receive God’s just judgment.¹²⁴

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Every person has lived as a body-soul composite and must therefore appear before the judgment seat as one. The *tota causa* of resurrection is to make this happen.\(^{125}\)

Tertullian returns to and reinforces this point throughout *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. Resurrection of the flesh makes possible the promised vengeance on the blood of those who have spilled the blood of others (28.4). Post-resurrection annihilation of the body is rejected because it vitiates the entire purpose of resurrection: the body is necessary in the resurrection because of the promised eternal sufferings and rewards (35.6-8). Since Christians suffer in the body in this life, the eschatological reward must also be in the flesh (40.11-14). The connection between resurrection and judgment is so tight that he takes any mention of judgment to logically imply resurrection. Thus, he argues that Paul’s enigmatic statements about being at home with the Lord when away from the body (2 Cor. 5:6-7) must be read in light of an undergirding affirmation of the resurrection of the flesh, since Paul in the same context says that humans must face judgment for what they did in the body (2 Cor. 5:9-10) (43.6-9). A true, just judgment,

\(^{125}\) Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 200-1336, 21-58, has argued that late-second- and early-third-century Christian defenses of the resurrection of the flesh are profoundly shaped by the threat of martyrdom. Specifically, the concern to guarantee the renewed integrity of the martyrs’ torn bodies underlies the era’s focus on material continuity and wholeness in the resurrection. Although she groups Tertullian with authors like Irenaeus and Minucius Felix on this question, I would argue that Tertullian is an ill fit. In the broad sweep of his extant *oeuvre*, he insists on the necessity of material continuity and bodily wholeness in the resurrection on many occasions but does not focus on Christian martyrs as the key case. Bynum herself admits that he does not display key characteristics found in the other authors (48). Thus, while it might be true that the images for resurrection Tertullian employs reinforce an understanding of resurrection that is reassuring to a church facing the prospect of martyrdom, in Tertullian’s particular case this concern does not appear to have been at the forefront of his mind when speaking of resurrection.
the only kind of judgment worthy of God, must be preceded by the resurrection of the flesh.

This tight association of resurrection with judgment appears throughout Tertullian’s corpus. He explains in his *Apology* that the reason for the resurrection is the judgment.\(^{126}\) That resurrection is tied to this judgment, with its *eternal* rewards and punishments, rules out successive resurrections.\(^{127}\) In *To the Nations*, he frames his call to Christianity in terms of the eternal rewards and punishments guaranteed by the resurrection of the flesh.\(^{128}\) In *The Soul’s Testimony*, he informs the soul that its reunification with its body is necessary for its judgment.\(^{129}\) His summary of the “rule of faith” in the *Prescription Against Heretics* makes the resurrection of the flesh a precondition for the judgment for which Christ will return.\(^{130}\) He concludes *On Patience* with a call to patience in both spirit and flesh that is founded on the Christian hope for the resurrection of both.\(^{131}\) He thus widely reinforces his claim in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* that the *tota causa* of eschatological resurrection is the eschatological judgment.

Tertullian uses this link between resurrection and judgment to tie moral transformation to them both. It is belief in judgment, with its eternal punishments and

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\(^{128}\) *To the Nations* 1.7.29, 1.19.

\(^{129}\) *Testimony of the Soul* 4.1.

\(^{130}\) *Prescription of Heretics* 13.5.

\(^{131}\) *On Patience* 16.5.
rewards, that leads Christians to pursue uprightness.\textsuperscript{132} Some may mock Christians for turning to Christ out of fear of future judgment,\textsuperscript{133} but that is not a problem because the beginning of the Christian life is perfect fear that drives out sin.\textsuperscript{134} Christians are motivated to follow the Spirit’s moral guidance by desire for God’s rewards and fear of God’s punishments.\textsuperscript{135} Christian modesty, for example, is driven by a longing for the eternal kingdom and fear of the eternal fire (\textit{ex metu et uoto aeterni ignis et regni}).\textsuperscript{136} Correspondingly, “no one lives as carnally as the person who denies the resurrection of the flesh, for he is both denying the penalty and despising the discipline.”\textsuperscript{137} Tertullian can thus make the striking claim that the resurrection of the flesh is the mystery (\textit{sacramentum}) to which the whole faith is committed (\textit{in quam fides tota committitur}) because it is that which the whole discipline strives to reach (\textit{in quam disciplina tota conititur})—for without the promise of the eternal punishments or rewards guaranteed by the resurrection, nobody would join such a hated movement as Christianity.\textsuperscript{138}

Despite the fact that moral transformation really is a transformation of the soul, the very part of the human being that causes resurrection by its reunification with the

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\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Apology} 45.7.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Testimony of the Soul} 2.3.
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{On Repentance} 6.16-17.
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{To Scapula} 1.1. On the Spirit’s moral guidance, see Wilhite, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” 66-68.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{On Modesty} 1.5 (SC 394, 146).
\textsuperscript{138} \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh} 21.3 (ed. Evans, 56).
\end{flushleft}
body, the connection of resurrection to moral transformation remains at the level of making rewards and punishments possible. Recall Tertullian’s account of the soul’s origin and development: Although the soul reflects its divine origin as the breath of God in attributes like immortality, the key aspect in which its weakness relative to the Spirit of God emerges is its ability to fall into sin. When it does so, it changes, taking on an irrational element. As we saw earlier, it is this ability of the soul to develop that allows Tertullian to account for moral differences among human beings without appealing to multiple natures (as he understands the Valentinians to do). Correspondingly, the transformation of the soul effected by renewed communion with the Spirit of God reverses these negative developments. The Spirit gives moral guidance, and Tertullian’s famously zealous moral campaigning is driven by his concern for the soul’s positive moral growth in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{139} He does not, however, speak of this moral transformation of the soul as a renewal of the soul’s capacity to communicate life to the body. Given that Tertullian does not identify this capacity as weakened by the soul’s ontological distance from the Spirit or by its turn to sin, it should come as no surprise that this capacity is not renewed through communion with the Spirit. Consequently, moral transformation in no way affects whether or not a person will be resurrected; it only affects what a person can expect after the resurrection.

\textsuperscript{139} See especially the discussion in Steenberg, \textit{Of God and Man}, 98-100.
3.4.3 The Glorious Transformation in the Spirit after Resurrection

The reward to which the righteous can look forward extends beyond mere entrance into the eternal kingdom. Tertullian also often speaks of a transformation that will be bestowed upon the righteous, a transformation that is in fact a condition for the entrance into the kingdom. As he describes this transformation into glory, however, he is careful to avoid threatening the fundamental concerns of his anthropology, emphasizing throughout that this transformation in no way alters the fact that a human being is a composite of a particular soul and a particular body. Whatever is entailed in this transformation, it is the same body in the end as it was in the beginning.

Tertullian notes that this transformation is a separate event from the resurrection. Although the faithful are resurrected into the millennial kingdom earlier or later depending on their merits, none undergo the instantaneous transformation into the substance of angels until the millennium is over. Similarly, he elsewhere says that those who are still alive when Christ returns will undergo the change, but he does not describe them as resurrecting. The important point is that the whole person, in its integrity, is being clothed upon by immortality, no matter whether that whole person is still living at the eschaton or has only just been reconstituted from the enduring seeds of the body (teeth, bones, etc.) in the resurrection. The very same mortal thing that died

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141 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 41.6, 42.2-3.
142 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 42.1-2, 42.6-8.
must be present again in order to be then transformed: “Therefore, since that which is mortal needs to be devoured by life, it must be exhibited in every way in order to be devoured, and it must be devoured in order to be changed.”¹⁴³ Only after being re-clothed with flesh will the dead be able to be clothed with immortality.¹⁴⁴ And just as the human being was originally constituted in the image of the coming incarnate Christ, so here too the eschatological glorification follows the same pattern: first resurrection, then glorification, just as Christ’s ascension followed his resurrection.¹⁴⁵

Distinguishing between the resurrection and the subsequent transformation into glory helps to highlight the fact that this transformation is a reward for the body itself. In other words, the transformation of the body is not primarily a reward for the soul. If that were the case, the continuity between the earlier body of humility and the body of glory would not be very important, and the resurrection per se could be understood as the gifting to the soul of a new, better body. But for Tertullian, as we have already seen, the importance of resurrection lies in the fact that it allows both body and soul—which acted as a team—to be judged and then punished or rewarded together. The “house not made

¹⁴³ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 42.11. ergo cum a vita habeat devorari quod mortale est, id exhiberi omnifarium necesse est ut devoretur, et devorari ut demutetur (ed. Evans, 118).

¹⁴⁴ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 42.13.

¹⁴⁵ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.15. Tertullian’s most succinct formula actually names Christ’s passion as that which preceded his glorification, corresponding to our resurrection preceding our glorification: the conforming of our bodies of humility to Christ’s body of glory is “without doubt after the resurrection, since not even Christ himself was glorified before the passion” (sine dubio post resurrectionem, quia nec ipse Christus glorificatus est ante passionem [ed. Evans, 136]). Tertullian introduces the corresponding quotation of Phil. 3:20-21, however, by pointing to Christ’s resurrection-ascension sequence. Thus, here he appears to be using Christ’s passion as a synecdoche for Christ’s death and resurrection, both of which preceded his ascension.
with hands” (2 Cor. 5:1) is given to the body precisely because the body is called to suffer for righteousness in this life. In the same way, Paul only commands Christians to offer their bodies as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13) because their bodies will receive the reward that they have earned.

Tertullian is very careful to make clear that this transformation does not result in a transformation of substance. It is, instead, a transformation of dignity. This distinction forms the foundation of his solution to the problem of accounting for the difference between change and destruction, that is, explaining how something can become something else while somehow remaining what it used to be. Some, he complains, take the affirmation of change in the resurrection to imply the destruction of the body that existed before. In response, Tertullian argues that a person remains the same in substance (substantia) throughout his life, despite various changes in health, age, occupation, and so on. The substantia appears to be that which individuates an particular individual, and qualitas seems to function in the same way: on his opponents’ view, he says, Satan would have done the impossible and lost his qualitas when became an angel of light, just as Saul would have left his own body when he became “another

146 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 41.2-3.
147 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 47.8.
148 Tertullian lays out this problem in On the Resurrection of the Flesh 55.2-3. See also the discussion in Alain Le Boulluec, “De la croissance selon les Stoïciens à la résurrection selon Origène,” REG 88 (1975), who focuses on Origen’s approach to this question (discussed below).
149 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 55.3.
150 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 55.7.
person” through the prophesying Spirit (1 Sam. 10:6). Similarly, God’s demand to judge the whole person who acted, constituted by all the body parts, is fulfilled in the resurrection even though many body parts will have lost their former functions (officiis). This demand will be fulfilled because the body parts will have nevertheless retained their substances (substantiis). The change that comes upon the flesh after the resurrection can only be analogous to the growth and aging of the body over the course of a person’s life, the transformation of Moses’s hand before Pharaoh, Moses’s face before the Israelites, or all three figures at the Transfiguration. In all of these cases, Tertullian emphasizes, the same body parts persisted through changes in their characteristics.

Paul’s claim—while discussing the resurrected body—that not all flesh is the same (1 Cor. 15:39) might appear to pose a problem for Tertullian. That Paul then goes on to list kinds of bodies that are manifestly different (cattle, birds, fish, sun, moon) only adds to the problem (1 Cor. 15:39-41). Tertullian’s response is to focus on the role of “glory” in this passage, arguing that the bodies Paul describes—and, correspondingly, the transformed resurrected bodies—differ only in degrees of glory, not in substance. Paul uses birds, cattle, and fish as illustrations of varying degrees of dignity, not different anatomical structures. The exact same body that was placed in the ground at death will be (151-155)

151 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 55.12 (ed. Evans, 166).
152 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 60.6 (ed. Evans, 178).
153 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 55.3-10.
154 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 55.11-12.
155 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 52.12-17.
raised again to receive its reward. This reward will not change the kind of body that the person has; rather, it will change the dignity of that body. He points out that Scripture elsewhere can describe differences in moral dignity by appearing to describe difference in bodily substance (e.g., “all flesh is grass” [Isa. 40:6]). These are clearly analogical descriptions, not ontological claims, and the same will be true in the resurrection. The same is also true for Paul’s language of the “earthly” (first) and “heavenly” (second) Adam: the name “Adam” designates their common substance, while “earthly” and “heavenly” refer to two ways of life (disciplinae) with their corresponding eschatological dignities.

The commonality of substance between the body of this present life and the body of the resurrection thus allows the language of “heavenly” and “earthly,” even when applied to bodies, to be about moral states rather than substantial changes. In this fact, Tertullian sees the ground for Paul’s exhortation to “put on” the image of the heavenly Adam even now, in this life (1 Cor. 15:49). This bridge between the glory of the eschatologically transformed body and the moral life today accounts for the way in which Tertullian elsewhere appeals to the eschatological life in moral exhortation. He does not draw on the resurrection per se in his moral arguments. Instead, he looks to the nature of the glory that will be put on over one’s resurrected self for cues to how one ought to live.

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156 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 59.2-3.
157 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 49.3-4 (ed. Evans, 142).
158 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 49.6.
today. There will be no marriage in the resurrection because of the garment of incorruptibility that bestows an angelic nature. From this point, he elsewhere draws the conclusion that Christians should avoid remarriage, and widows who follow this advice can be counted as already belonging to the angelic family. Similarly, he can argue that Christians should seek to cease now from that which is not admitted into paradise—namely, sexual activity. The second, heavenly Adam’s bodily holiness as a voluntary celibate, in fact, is the holiness that Christians are called to emulate in order to be holy, as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15).

Finally, it is in this transformation that the Holy Spirit’s work is manifested. We have already noted how Tertullian distinguishes between the resurrection of the body through the return of the soul (such that it once again becomes a soul-supported [animale] body) and the subsequent transformation into a spiritual body (spiritale). To be sure, the flesh of the Christian even now possesses the Spirit, but only as a down payment. At that time, the flesh will receive the fullness of the Spirit. In Against Marcion,

\[\text{Footnotes}\]

159 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 36.5. See also *Against Marcion* 4.38.
160 *To his Wife* 1.1.
161 *To his Wife* 1.4.
162 *Exhortation to Chastity* 13.
163 *On Monogamy* 3, 5.
164 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 53.7 (ed. Evans, 158).
165 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 53.18.
166 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 53.19. Tertullian adds that it is in this fullness of the Spirit that the body is resuscitated (*resuscitatur* [ed. Evans, 162]). Taken in isolation, this claim would certainly suggest that Tertullian understood the full indwelling of the Spirit to be the trigger causing the restoration of bodies.
Tertullian makes the same point: the pledge of the Spirit, received now, is a down payment for the final clothing upon of mortality with immortality. Those who are already dead at Christ’s return will receive it once they have received back their resurrected bodies (cum receperint corpus), while those who are still living will receive it immediately. In this way, the integrity of Tertullian’s body-soul anthropology is protected even in the eschaton: the body-soul human composite is first restored in the resurrection, and only then is the fullness of the Spirit superadded.

3.5 The Role of Christ: Questions and Tensions

The alert reader will notice that Christ’s own death and resurrection have not played a significant role in the exposition of Tertullian’s views thus far. If one were to extrapolate from Tertullian’s views on the resurrection as presented here, one would probably conjecture that Christ’s death and resurrection either somehow make possible the general resurrection or are restricted in their effects to the pre-death moral transformation and post-resurrection transformation and reward of his followers. As it turns out, however, Tertullian’s views appear to be more complex and less clear than either of these positions.

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167 Against Marcion 5.12.4.
168 Against Marcion 5.12.3 (ed. Evans, 586).
Tertullian clearly connects Christ’s bodily resurrection to that of the rest of humanity. To deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, he says, is to deny the resurrection for which Christ came (viz., the rest of humanity’s).¹⁶⁹ Christ conquered death through his resurrection,¹⁷⁰ and the rest of humanity’s resurrection will take place in the same way as his (i.e., in the fleshly body).¹⁷¹ The death and resurrection of Christ thus provide the assurance that beloved deceased relatives will rise again.¹⁷² Tertullian’s interpretation of the description of the eschatological resurrection in John 5:25-29 ties together the incarnation with Christ and the Spirit’s role in the resurrection. In this passage, Jesus declares that all the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and come out of the tombs to face judgment. Tertullian makes two glosses: First, the “dead” must be bodies and flesh, since they are said to emerge from tombs.¹⁷³ Second, the voice (vox) of the Son of God must be the Word (sermo), which in turn is nothing other than the Spirit (spiritus), for the Spirit raises up the flesh into which it was made (insofar as the Word was made flesh).¹⁷⁴ (Later in the same work, Tertullian describes the incarnation as the reconciliation of Spirit and flesh.)¹⁷⁵ Considering how clear Tertullian is that the return of the soul is sufficient for the return of the body to life and that the final and full bestowal

¹⁶⁹ Against Marcion 3.8.6.
¹⁷¹ Against Marcion 5.14.5. Cf. 5.9.5.
¹⁷² On Patience 9.
¹⁷³ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 37.7-8.
¹⁷⁴ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 37.3, 37.7 (ed. Evans, 103-04).
¹⁷⁵ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 63.1.
of the Spirit lends incorruptibility after the body’s resurrection, the role ascribed here to the Spirit in the resurrection is somewhat puzzling. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Tertullian does not connect this act of the Spirit to a prior reception of the Spirit in baptism. Whatever the Spirit’s role is in calling forth the bodies of the deceased, both the righteous and the wicked, it does not appear to be contingent upon incorporation into Christ in this life, although it is connected in some way to the Spirit’s union with flesh in the incarnation. Tertullian’s emphasis in this passage is on the Word (sermo) and Spirit (spiritus) as the active principles that bestow life upon the passive flesh (caro); this, he explains, is why the voice of God calls forth the dead to life but the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63).  

In this respect, Tertullian’s argument here is Stoic: the fact that λόγος in the form of πνεῦμα actively bestows life on the passive ὄλη does not entail the dispensability of the latter; on the contrary, it simply names the relationship between the two principles that always occur together. The complicating factor in relation to Stoicism is the relationship in Tertullian between anima/ψυχή and spiritus/πνεῦμα. As explored above, for Tertullian the anima is genetically related to the spiritus of God, yet he does not describe it as a particular form of the spiritus/πνεῦμα of God. Furthermore, the human body-soul composite can, under certain circumstances, receive the spiritus of God (or, indeed, other spirits). In the passage presently under consideration, Tertullian never

176 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 37.5-6.
177 See Long and Sedley, The Hellenistic philosophers, 270-72, 286-89.
mentions the human soul, perhaps subsuming it under the “active” category paradigmatically represented by Word and Spirit. Tertullian’s broadly Stoic framework breaks down under the pressure of Scriptural descriptions of the special reception by particular humans of the Spirit of God. This breakdown, I would suggest, helps to explain his lack of clarity on the relationship between the Spirit/Word as active life principle that produces resurrection and the Spirit as received by Christians in baptism.

A related issue is the extent of the effect of Christ’s work. Is Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection the ground for the bodily resurrection of all, including those who will rise into the resurrection of judgment rather than the resurrection of life (John 5:29)? Tertullian is unclear on this point, and it is likely that the question as formulated here never occurred to him. He argues for the resurrection of the body by pointing out that they are members of Christ, purchased at a great price, but he does not specify whether the bodies of all people are members of Christ. One indication that he did not could be his claim in On Flight in Persecution that Christ’s redemptive death and resurrection were for the purpose of bringing humans into heaven. Since Tertullian clearly thinks that all will be resurrected but not all will enter heaven, this claim would seem to restrict at least one effect of Christ’s death and resurrection to a subset of those who are resurrected. But Tertullian nowhere spells out a two-level causality, wherein Christ’s

\[178\] Against Marcion 5.7.4.  
\[179\] On Flight in Persecution 12.
resurrection effects the general resurrection on one level and the transformation leading into heaven on another.

Furthermore, one cannot securely solve the dilemma by distinguishing between the post-resurrection putting on of incorruptibility and the reception of rewards for righteousness, ascribing the former to the Spirit’s work in all people. Tertullian does seem to suggest that the putting on of incorruptibility happens very soon after the resurrection itself, while the meting out of rewards and punishments happens after the judgment. Additionally, he emphasizes the necessity of eternal substances (aeternas substantias), not only for the enjoyment of eternal blessings by the righteous, but also for the suffering of eternal torments by the wicked. He does not, however, state that these eternal substances necessary for eternal suffering are the result of corruptible resurrected bodies putting on incorruption through the Spirit. When he does describe this putting on of incorruption, he speaks of it as a passing into the angelic state. While he is clear that this transformation comes over both those who are still living at the last trumpet and those who have already died, he does not explicitly state that it comes over both the righteous and the wicked. It would not be impossible for Tertullian to claim that the wicked are transformed into the angelic state and then burned in hell—since this is the

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180 Against Marcion 5.12.1-5.
181 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 35.6-7 (ed. Evans, 98).
182 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 36.5, 42.4. This is not the same as saying that they will become angels. Tertullian is clear that angels and humans are separate categories, and there is no salvation for fallen angels (On the Flesh of Christ 14).
state of fallen angels—but he does not do so. He simply makes no attempt in his surviving writings to resolve these tensions.

3.6 Conclusion

At this point, it might be objected that the apparent impossibility of smoothly integrating the work of Christ into Tertullian’s understanding of resurrection as I have presented it should call into question the utility of some of the distinctions I have drawn upon in explicating Tertullian’s views, such as the distinction between resurrection through the return of the soul and resurrection through the full bestowal of the Spirit or the distinction between the return of the body to life and its reception of incorruptibility. Perhaps, someone might object, Tertullian is not so different from Irenaeus after all.

In response, it must be pointed out that Tertullian’s lack of clarity on these questions does not erase his clarity on others. His overall understanding of the general resurrection remains clearer than Irenaeus’s, for all the reasons I have explored in this chapter. His view of the main purpose of resurrection, bringing the whole person to justice, makes the resurrection of all people an important point of emphasis. His understanding of how the soul communicates the life of the Spirit to the body makes much more sense of the resurrection of the wicked. The disappearance of Irenaean arguments for the bodily resurrection that only apply to Christians, such as participation in the Eucharist, help to avoid muddying the waters. Tertullian’s fears about alternative interpretations of the language of resurrection, which Irenaeus did not seem to share, help to explain the care with which he treats Scripture’s multivalent deployment of that
language. Finally, as he exeges New Testament passages that might threaten his understanding of the real meaning of resurrection, he reinforces his overall emphasis on the connection of resurrection to judgment. His lack of clarity about the role of Christ in this resurrection is indeed a liability of his view. Nevertheless, it is instructive to see where this lack of clarity lies. Irenaeus was relatively clear about where the resurrection of the righteous fit into the economy of salvation centered on Christ but unclear about the corresponding purpose and place of the resurrection of the wicked. One could say that the situation is reversed in Tertullian. In his desire to avoid diluting the meaning of the phrase *resurrectio mortuorum* with non-bodily denotations and to strengthen the confession that *all* will undergo bodily resurrection, Tertullian severed the link between the return to life now in the Spirit and the body’s return to life in the *eschaton*.

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183 As has been noted by others. See Cardman, “Tertullian on the Resurrection,” 105-11, 135-40; Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 200-1336, 43.
CHAPTER 4 | The Valentinian Treatise on the Resurrection and Gospel of Philip: Already and Not Yet Resurrected into True Reality

4.1 Introduction

We now turn to two texts that offer a window into the understanding of resurrection that Tertullian opposed so fiercely. Both of these texts, the Treatise on the Resurrection and the Gospel of Philip, insist on the importance of resurrection. They both, however, insist that resurrection is something one must receive in this life. In this respect, these texts constitute examples of the understanding of resurrection that Tertullian disparaged in On the Resurrection of the Flesh, namely resurrection as something that is received now, distinct from the return of dead bodies to life. But these texts go beyond the position critiqued by Tertullian by also speaking of a resurrection that follows upon bodily death (albeit in ambiguous ways). Furthermore, in both texts, these two resurrections are causally linked with one another: in order to receive resurrection after death, one must receive resurrection now. Moreover, although neither text offers many specifics, it is clear that the resurrection received in this life correlates in some way to changes in how one lives.

Both texts appear to have emerged from Valentinian circles.¹ Active in Rome during the middle portion of the second century, Valentinus was a Christian teacher who

¹ For helpful surveys of the landscape of second-century Christianity, including Valentinianism, see the essays collected in A Companion to Second-Century Christian ‘Heretics’, VCSupp 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
left in his wake a movement that continued until at least the late fourth century. Justin—possibly Valentinus’s contemporary in Rome—along with Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement, and others identifies him as the founder of a heresy. While very little of his writings have survived, a significant number of later writings have been ascribed to his later followers. Many of these have been ascribed to either “Eastern” or “Western” Valentinianism, a division found already within ancient sources on the movement. These branches, which were neither homogenous within themselves nor neatly separated geographically, appear to have differed primarily over their understanding of those whom the Savior came to redeem. Valentinians shared both a general account of the problem for which salvation must be a solution and a corresponding division of humanity into three categories: spiritual, psychic, and material. The world experienced today is the result of a complex cosmic drama of alienation from the spiritual Pleroma. With respect to humanity, this drama eventually produced humans with a purely material nature and no affinity for the spiritual whatsoever (created by material powers), humans with a psychic nature who can only hesitantly recognize the spiritual Savior (created by the Demiurge on his own initiative), and humans with a spiritual nature already implanted in them by the Logos

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2 For the data concerning Valentinus’ life and career, see Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the ‘Valentinians’*, NHMS 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 417-22. For the movement’s history, such as can be pieced together from the fragmentary evidence, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 491-508.

3 For a detailed analysis of the surviving fragments from Valentinus himself, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 430-90.

(created by the Demiurge when unwittingly moved by the Logos). Even these spirituals with their implanted “spiritual seed,” however, are currently trapped in psychic and material components that occlude their true spiritual identity, perhaps even from themselves. For Eastern Valentinians, the Savior takes on flesh to come and rescue the *spirituals* from this predicament by simultaneously participating in their material and psychic imprisonment through his incarnation and bringing to them a spiritual body in which they can participate. For Western Valentinians, the Savior comes primarily to save the *psychics*. The spirituals can be presented as automatically saved, and the importance of the Savior’s incarnation fades with the loss of affinity between the spiritual Savior and the psychic, rather than spiritual, saved. As we will see, both the *Treatise on the Resurrection* and the *Gospel of Philip* appear to be Eastern Valentinian texts, focusing on the salvation of the spirituals and the role of the incarnate Savior therein.

It is important to note that Tertullian and Irenaeus seem to be polemicizing primarily against Western, rather than Eastern, Valentinians. These texts nevertheless adopt positions with which Tertullian and Irenaeus would clearly be uncomfortable, and

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5 Thomassen articulates this division with reference to the “Eastern” *Tripartite Tractate*, but it underlies both Eastern and Western texts (*The Spiritual Seed*, 50-51).

6 On the importance of the Savior taking on real flesh, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 47-50. Not all “gnostics” held to a docetic Christology. Here, though, the Savior has to take on real flesh in order to save the spirituals from it.


8 Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 59-82.
they do so by drawing on Scriptural and especially Pauline motifs in ways that Tertullian and Irenaeus failed to.

### 4.2 The Treatise on the Resurrection

The Treatise on the Resurrection or the Epistle to Rheginos (NHC I,4)\(^9\) is a short, anonymous\(^10\) discussion of the importance of resurrection for Christians, addressed to a certain Rheginos.\(^11\) Although it does not focus on laying out the Valentinian cosmogony, it seems to assume it at key points and seeks to situate resurrection within it.\(^12\) The

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\(^10\) No author is named in the text. Although its first editors argued that Valentinus himself was probably the author, this thesis did not gain acceptance. See Malcolm L. Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection, NTL (London: SCM Press, 1969), 156-80, and the literature cited therein.

\(^11\) Its genre has been a matter of some debate. It addresses itself to an individual (Rheginos), but it lacks a letter’s typical praescriptio and occasionally addresses the reader in the second-person plural. Peel prefers to call it a “didactic letter.” See Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos, 5-12. Bentley Layton, The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 12 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 119-20, acknowledges that it fits somewhere between a personal letter and a treatise.

\(^12\) Malcolm L. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” in Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices, ed. Harold W. Attridge, NHS 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 133-35. Valentinian features include: a “Pleroma”—including an elect “All,” the “Savior,” and “emanations” (προβολαί)—that pre-existed a disruption that produced the “world” and resulted in a “deficiency” (ὑστέρηµα) in the Pleroma’s “system” that only the Savior could fill through his “restoration” (ἀποκατάστασις) of the “All.” Christ is, furthermore, the “seed” (σπέρµα) of the Truth. These aspects of the text are sufficient to make a Valentinian provenance more likely than not, although the text never mentions Sophia or the Demiurge. Scholars have been divided over the possibility of specifying the text’s Valentinianism as Eastern; Peel is cautious because “Treat. Res. does affirm, apparently unlike Oriental Valentinians, that Christ possessed ‘humanity’ (44.21-26), ‘existed in the flesh’ (44.10), and ‘suffered’ (46.16-17)” (“The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 145). Thomassen has shown, however, that such views on the incarnation are characteristic of Eastern Valentinianism; thus, he identifies the Treatise as Eastern (Thomassen, The Spiritual Seed, 83-85). See also Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos, 13-17.
fourth-century Coptic manuscript discovered at Nag Hammadi is the only surviving copy of the text, but the Greek original has been tentatively dated to the late second century.\(^{13}\)

The most striking aspect of this text for our purposes is not only that it insists on the importance of resurrection for the Christian faith (44.3-7, 47.1-3), but also that it can speak of resurrection as something already experienced by the Christian. Resurrection is defined as “the disclosure of those who have risen” (48.5), and Rheginos is assured that “already you have the resurrection” (49.15-16).\(^{14}\) Furthermore, in a particularly Pauline flourish, the Christian’s resurrection now is said to have already occurred with Christ: “Then, indeed, as the Apostle said, ‘We suffered with him, and we arose with him, and we went to heaven with him’” (45.23-28).\(^{15}\)

The *Treatise on the Resurrection* does not, however, restrict the language of resurrection to something that is attained in this life. The author follows up the Pauline quotation cited above by articulating the connection between that realized resurrection and something that is yet to come, which is also called resurrection:

> Now if we are manifest in this world wearing him, we are that one’s beams, and we are embraced by him until our setting, that is to say, our death in this life. We

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\(^{13}\) This dating rests primarily on three lines of argument: (1) The text bases its arguments on New Testament texts and distinguishes between “Apostle” (45.24) and “Gospel” (48.7) in its quotations, reflecting the state of the canon in the mid- to late-second century; (2) it appears to participate in the second-century controversy over the resurrection reflected in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athenagoras, and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, among other texts; and (3) it can be read as reflecting the Middle Platonism of the late-second century. See the literature cited by Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 146.


\(^{15}\) This is a composite citation based on Rom. 8:17 and Eph. 2:5-6. See Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 70-72.
are drawn to heaven by him, like beams by the sun, not being restrained by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection, which swallows up the psychic in the same way as the fleshly. (45.28–46.2)

This articulation of a connection between a resurrection experienced by Christians in this life and a resurrection experienced after death is faithful to Paul in a way that Tertullian and even Irenaeus were not. 16 Even if one concludes that Irenaeus’s understanding of the resurrection experienced after death comes closer to Paul’s view than the Treatise on the Resurrection, one must still acknowledge that the Treatise’s willingness to describe something that happens to the Christian in this life as “resurrection” more closely approximates Pauline thought, especially Ephesians and Colossians. Furthermore, the Treatise’s view does not neatly fit Tertullian’s critiques of those who speak of a resurrection experienced by Christians in this life. As we saw earlier, Tertullian claims that some affirm a resurrection of the soul in this life, associated with baptism and the reception of Christian truth, in order to deny a later resurrection of the flesh. 17 He betrays no awareness that some might affirm both a resurrection in this life and a later resurrection after death. To be sure, the second resurrection affirmed by the Treatise on

16 The Paulinism of this text has been noted by many. Its first editors, for example, argued that the “Pauline mysticism” reflected in its claim that the Christian has died, risen, and ascended with Christ is more faithfully Pauline than the text’s “ecclesiastical” contemporaries (Malinine et al., De resurrectione, xiii-xiv). While this motif is clearly Pauline, Peel has contested the faithfulness to Paul of its deployment in this text, arguing (with Schweitzer) that Paul’s mysticism is eschatologically-oriented while the Treatise’s is focused on life in this world (Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos, 133-39). More recently, Francis Watson has characterized the Treatise as an extreme form of Paulinism that anchors past and future resurrection in the present. Francis Watson, “Resurrection and the Limits of Paulinism,” in The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

17 On the Resurrection of the Flesh 18-19.
the Resurrection is of an ambiguous nature (to which we will return) and almost certainly would not satisfy Tertullian’s definition of the eschatological resurrection of the flesh; nevertheless, the Treatise names it “resurrection,” and one would expect Tertullian to attack it had he known of it. An additional point of comparison suggests that Tertullian did not know this work directly: As we saw in the preceding chapter, Tertullian concedes that the realized resurrection mentioned in Colossians 3:1 can be called a spiritual resurrection but argues that the very partiality of a spiritual resurrection guarantees that a resurrection of the flesh is still to come. The Treatise on the Resurrection, by contrast, actually calls the later resurrection the “spiritual resurrection”! Once again, it seems likely that Tertullian would have addressed this if he had known of such a view.

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19 What exactly the author means by a “spiritual resurrection” that “swallows” both the “psychic” and “fleshly” resurrections has been debated. First, does “swallow” mean “to incorporate into itself” or “to destroy or deny”? The latter seems likely in light of the text’s other uses of the verb, and indeed all major interpreters take it to mean something like “deny.” What, then, is being affirmed and denied? The correspondence of “spiritual,” “psychic,” and “fleshly” to “spirit,” “soul,” and “flesh” might suggest that the text is affirming the resurrection of one component part of a person (the spirit) to the exclusion of the two other parts (the soul and flesh). This is the interpretation adopted by Layton, The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 65-66, although he acknowledges that the term “spiritual resurrection” is odd because the Treatise never speaks of the νοῦς as πνεῦμα. For Layton, the “fleshly” resurrection is the resurrection of the body of this life (i.e., the view defended by Tertullian) while the “psychic” resurrection is “the hope that the soul (but not specifically νοῦς) would survive, get loose, and ascend at the moment of death (but not before)” (The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 65). Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos, 148, agrees with respect to the “psychic” and “fleshly” resurrections: “Thus, the passage may reflect the author’s implicit polemic against those who affirm the immortality of the naked ‘soul’, and against those who contend exclusively for the resurrection of the flesh.” Since Peel reads the Treatise as affirming the reception of some kind of flesh in the resurrection, though, he claims that the “spiritual resurrection” here is not spiritual to the exclusion of possession of soul and flesh (i.e., “spiritual” denoting a kind of resurrection body) but rather a spiritual mode of resurrection that nevertheless involves flesh (The Epistle to Rheginos, 74-75; cf. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 166). He does not, however, explain precisely what a spiritual “mode” of resurrection would be. In the end, there is not enough evidence for assured conclusions. It does seem to me to be plausible, however, to read the Treatise as claiming that the “spirit” (perhaps equated with the νοῦς and “inner members”) will rise without the soul or body to

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How, then, does the *Treatise* bind together these two resurrections? Scholars have offered divergent answers to this question, and their answers have been significantly shaped by their understandings of what the *Treatise* teaches about the nature of the second, post-mortem, “spiritual” resurrection. One view on this latter question, advocated by Malcolm Peel, is that the *Treatise* teaches a spiritual resurrection that is the taking on of a new, spiritual flesh\(^{20}\) by the inward “members” after the death of the body of this life.\(^{21}\) The *Treatise* employs a variety of anthropological terms, but the human being is presented as having two fundamental levels: the “thought” (ἔννοια?) or “mind” (νοῦς) is that which survives and is the cause of the “flesh’s” (σάρξ) life (46.22-24, 47.9-10); the “body” (σῶμα), subject to old age and corruption and apparently constituted by the “visible members” (µέλη) and the “living [members] which exist within them,” will rise which it was connected in this life, but that then it will receive some sort of new flesh (and accompanying soul?). To call this a “fleshly resurrection” could be imprecise, since no flesh is actually raised from the dead; new flesh is added on to something else—the spirit—that has risen.

\(^{20}\) Although the *Treatise* never uses the phrase “spiritual flesh,” it does speak of a “spiritual resurrection” and, arguably, the reception of new “flesh” in the resurrection. If the *Treatise*’s use of the metaphor of “swallowing” (45.14, 45.20, 46.1, 49.4) is taken to invoke Paul’s discussion of resurrection in 1 Cor. 15, which speaks of a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44), then the case for describing what is received in the resurrection according to Peel’s reading of the *Treatise* as “spiritual flesh” is strengthened. See Hugo Lundhaug, “‘These are the Symbols and Likenesses of the Resurrection’: Conceptualizations of Death and Transformation in the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,4),” in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland, Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 191-92. Thus, in this chapter, the term “spiritual flesh,” as Peel’s term, is meant to invoke the reading of the *Treatise* advocated by him.

\(^{21}\) Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 146-49.
(47.17-19, 47.35-48.3). The treatise does use the adjectives “spiritual” [πνευματική], “psychic” [ψυχική], and “fleshly” [σαρκική] [45.39-46.2], but it uses them to modify “resurrection” and not to describe parts of a person. The body/flesh/visible members are left behind at death, and the thought/mind/inner members—at least according to Peel—take on a new flesh. Resurrection is thus paradigmatically something that occurs to an individual once, at a particular point in time (namely, immediately after the death of the present flesh [47.30-37]). But if resurrection is paradigmatically a concrete post-mortem event, the “resurrection” available to Christians in this life must be resurrection in some derivative sense. Thus, Peel claims that resurrection in this life is constituted by an anticipation of the post-mortem resurrection that is assured by the elect believer’s link

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22 Peel, The Epistle to Rhéginos, 112-14. On the Treatise’s anthropological terms, see also Layton, The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 65-66, 123-25, who argues that the text opposes νοῦς with σῶμα and ψυχή with σῶμα. (ψυχή does not appear in the text, but Layton infers it from the mention of a life-giving function. The hypothetical objector, he says, fails to distinguish between νοῦς and the soul’s life-giving faculty [The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 78].) Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 138, also infers the presence of a ψυχή in the author’s anthropology, although from the denial of a “psychic” resurrection. Lundhaug, “‘These are the Symbols’,” 192-93, suggests that the νοῦς is to be identified with the invisible “members” but acknowledges that the text’s lone mention of the νοῦς does not provide enough information to be sure.


24 The passage to which Peel appeals for the taking on of new flesh (σῶμα), 47.4-8, actually never speaks of taking on a new body (σῶμα). But from the equation of the discarded visible members with “body,” Lundhaug, “‘These are the Symbols’,” 190, infers that the invisible, living members can also be called a “internal body,” although the text itself never does this explicitly.
to Christ’s own, prior post-mortem resurrection. This anticipation is properly constituted by a life “free from all anxiety about death and the afterlife.” Since this new flesh cannot be put on in this life, this anticipation cannot really be called a participation. While one can look forward with assurance to a future resurrection, one cannot be said to be undergoing resurrection in the moment.

Bentley Layton, on the other hand, understands the post-mortem resurrection in the Treatise to be the complete escape from entanglement with any kind of flesh whatsoever. (He reads the passages about the reception of new flesh after death as objections posed by the author’s opponents, not the author’s own views.) If resurrection is paradigmatically disentanglement from flesh, then one can participate in it right now by living without concern for the flesh. The “drawing up” to the sun, the spiritual resurrection, does not begin only after one’s death; it beings now and is continued uninterrupted after death. Thus, although final and complete disentanglement from flesh

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25 Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos, 46, 140-43. In this sense, Peel’s reading of the Treatise is actually remarkably close to Tertullian’s own account of Paul’s realized-resurrection language: one can speak of being “resurrected” now only in the sense that one is living in assured expectation of the future, “real” resurrection.

26 Peel, The Epistle to Rheginos, 141.


can only happen at death, ceasing to care about the flesh in this life is a real start to that disentanglement.\textsuperscript{30}

A strength of Layton’s reading is that it better accounts for the text’s emphasis on possessing resurrection \textit{now}. If one can only look forward to a future resurrection, as Peel would have it, it is not clear why it is so important to say that one actually possesses resurrection now. But if one can now begin to participate in what resurrection is—disentanglement from all flesh—then calling that participation “resurrection” demonstrates one’s grasp of the true nature of resurrection. The problem with Layton’s reading is that he is forced to ascribe several key statements in the \textit{Treatise} to a hypothetical objector in order to save the author from arguing for the reception of a new, spiritual flesh in the resurrection—a position that he finds completely inconsistent with the remainder of the \textit{Treatise}. Subsequent readers have not found Layton’s readings of these passages convincing.\textsuperscript{31}

These diverging interpretations of the text’s teaching on the nature of the post-mortem resurrection are possible because the \textit{Treatise} is not crystal-clear on this matter. Consider this key passage from the middle of the text:

\begin{quote}
So, never doubt concerning the resurrection, my son Rheginos! For if you were not existing in flesh, you received flesh when you entered into this world. Why will you not receive flesh when you ascend into the Aeon? That which is better
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{30} Layton, \textit{The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi}, 92.

\end{flushright}
than the flesh is that which is for it (the) cause of life. That which came into being on your account, is it not yours? Does not that which is yours exist with you? Yet, while you are in this world, what is it that you lack? This is what you have been making every effort to learn. The afterbirth \(\chi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\) of the body is old age, and you exist in corruption. You have absence as a gain. For you will not give up what is better if you depart. That which is worse has diminution, but there is grace for it. (47.1-24)

That which is subject to old age, in which Rheginos exists in corruption, is probably the flesh of this life, the “visible members” that, when dead, will not be saved (47.38-48.1).\(^{32}\) As visible and corruptible, this flesh is part of the illusory, perishing world that the Savior put aside in his resurrection (44.20-21, 45.14-17, 48.38-49.5). But will this flesh be replaced in the resurrection by a different kind of flesh? And if so, with what kind? The confusing logic of the quoted passage makes these questions difficult to answer. Is Rheginos supposed to think that he in fact had flesh before he entered the world, or not? If not, then why would it be expected that new flesh will be received upon departure from this world into the Aeon?\(^{33}\) Later, the author promises Rheginos that he will “receive again what at first was” when he is “released from this Element” through “practice” (49.31-36). If he started without flesh, received flesh upon entry into this world, and then


\(^{33}\) One possible solution would be to construe resurrection as a second birth and therefore a fitting time for the reception of new flesh, just as we received flesh through our first birth into this world. See Lundhaug, ““These are the Symbols”,” 193-97, who particularly emphasizes the natal implications of the term \(\chi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\) (“the \(\chi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\) of the body is old age” [47.17-18]). The term can refer to the membrane covering the fetus in the womb or even the entire afterbirth. In this case, a spiritual flesh must have pre-existed the individual’s entry into this world, and “if you were not existing in flesh” must express a counterfactual hypothetical (Lundhaug, ““These are the Symbols”,” 199).
received new flesh upon ascent into the Aeon, can he really be said to have received again what at first was (assuming this promise refers to an ontological state, which is unclear)? On the other hand, his invocation of the “living” members that will rise, in contrast to the “visible members which are dead,” along with his appeal to the transfiguration (47.38-48.11), suggests a resurrected existence that is in some way identifiably continuous with the fleshly appearance in this life. Is this connected to the flesh that is received upon ascent into the Aeon? Perhaps all of this was clear to Rheginos in light of the prior teaching he had received from the Treatise’s author. Without access to that catechesis, though, it is very difficult to be certain about the text’s vision for the post-mortem resurrection.

If, however, one begins by focusing on what the text’s descriptions of the two resurrections have in common, rather than by first trying to ascertain the Treatise’s highly enigmatic view on the nature of one of the resurrections (the post-mortem one), the strengths of Layton’s participatory view can be preserved without its accompanying exegesis. A key motif that appears throughout the Treatise helps to explain the relationship between the two resurrections in the text: the motif of revelation of true reality. True reality is the pre-existent Pleroma from which the world broke loose (44.33-

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34 See Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 99: “The expression seems to mean the Gnostic’s ‘return to his own self’ …, or it may mean that the Elect receives again that pre-existent state which was his before he came into the ‘world.’”

This reality is opposed to this illusory world that one is tempted to mistakenly take to be the true reality, in which the tendency towards corruption and death reigns. Those whom the Savior came to save are to ascend into this true reality (“into the Aeon” [47.8]), an ascent apparently connected to the Savior’s own self-transformation into an “imperishable Aeon” after he put aside the perishing world (45.14-18). (The Treatise appeals to predestination to explain the difference between those who respond in belief and those who do not: the former have been “elected” and “predestined from the beginning not to fall into the foolishness of those who are without knowledge” [46.25-29].) In fact, there are strong hints that these Elect are actually returning to the true reality from which they originated: they existed without flesh and then received flesh upon entering this world (47.4-6), paralleling the Savior’s own origin “from above” before the world came into being (44.34-36), and the Elect are assured that they can receive back what they originally were through being “released from this Element” (49.30-36).  

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36 Peel, The Epistle to Reginos, 106-07.
37 Based on extensive parallels, Peel, The Epistle to Reginos, 117-22, and Layton, The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 51, both take the “Law of Nature,” also called “Death,” to be this very tendency.
38 Peel, The Epistle to Reginos, 128-30.
39 Peel, The Epistle to Reginos, 111. The identity of this “Element” (στοιχεῖον) is not clear. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 209-10, takes it to be the evil world of matter, while Layton, The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 112, thinks it might refer specifically to the flesh of this life. Insofar as the both interpretations acknowledge that the flesh of this life is left behind at bodily death, the difference between them is insignificant here.
Since this true reality is not currently evident, the *Treatise* places a heavy emphasis on its revelation. It summarizes the purpose of the coming of the Savior, whom it here calls “the Solution,” as “to not leave anything hidden, but to reveal all things openly concerning existence—the destruction of evil on the one hand, the revelation of the elect on the other” (45.6-11). Similarly, its first narration of the Savior’s career emphasizes a revelatory transition that probably corresponds to his resurrection: the Lord “existed in flesh” and then “revealed himself as Son of God” (44.14-17). Those who have suffered, risen, and ascended with the Savior are said to be “manifest in this world wearing him” (45.29-30), a state that is continuous with being drawn to heaven in the spiritual resurrection after “our death in this life” (45.31-40). 40 To the question “What, then, is the resurrection?” comes the answer, “It is always the disclosure of those who have risen” (48.3-6). Later, the author contrasts the revelatory resurrection with the illusory world: While appearances in this world are constantly overturned (the living die, the rich become poor, and kings are overthrown [48.21-25]), “the resurrection does not have this aforesaid character, for it is the truth that stands firm. It is the revelation of what is, and the transformation of things, and a transition into newness” (48.31-38). This revelation in resurrection is simultaneously a transformation and transition, just as the Savior “transformed [himself] into an imperishable Aeon and raised himself up, having swallowed the visible by the invisible” (45.17-21). Put another way, what appears to be

40 Although it is clear that the Savior’s incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension make possible the resurrection of the elect, the *Treatise* does not specify precisely how this works. See Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 139-41; Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 83-85.
the transformation of one thing into another kind of thing can also be described as the manifestation of true reality in the dissipation of illusions as “imperishability [descends] upon the perishable; the light flows down upon the darkness, swallowing it up; and the Pleroma fills up the deficiency” (48.38-49.5).⁴¹

The text’s overall emphasis on the transformational revelation of true reality, and its integration of resurrection into that framework, can help to illuminate its claim that the resurrection can be possessed in this life. The author tells Rheginos that he “already” has the resurrection when he “do[es] not think in part … nor live[s] in conformity with this⁴² flesh for the sake of unanimity, but flee[s] from the divisions and the fetters” (49.9-16). The author describes what Rheginos should be doing as “exercise” (γυμνάζεσθαι) and “practice” (ἀσκεῖν), and Rheginos is apparently supposed to know what this constitutes, although what precisely it looks like to live in this way is not specified (49.30-31).⁴³

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⁴¹ On the relationship between manifestation, transformation, and salvation in Valentinian texts, see Einar Thomassen, “Valentinian Ideas About Salvation as Transformation,” in Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland, Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009). Some Valentinian texts focus on salvation as manifestation, others on salvation as transformation. Thomassen notes that the Treatise on the Resurrection and the Gospel of Truth hold the two side by side. The solution that they pursue “is to regard the empirical world as irreality, an illusion—only the oneness of the divine truly exists. Becoming totally transformed and understanding that one already possesses eternal being are two parallel ways of articulating the soteriological implication of the realization that the world is actually nothing” (“Valentinian Ideas,” 184-85).

⁴² Lundhaug, “These are the Symbols,” 189, takes the specification that Rheginos should not live in accordance with this flesh to imply the eventual reception of another, better kind of flesh—thereby supporting Peel’s view.

⁴³ Based on the immediate context’s focus on awareness that one has resurrection, Peel suspects that these involve “internal or mental training designed to give confidence about the resurrection” rather than “external behavior” (The Epistle to Rheginos, 132-33; cf. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection,” 209). Layton agrees that, “at the very least, [the author] must refer to practices which will allow mental application and concentration upon what is thought to be the truth” (The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection
Nevertheless, it clearly is a new, morally transformed way of life that is oriented towards what is truly real rather than the flesh. The fact that the *Treatise* has already described the Christian life as being “manifest in this world wearing [the Savior]” (45.29-31), defined resurrection as the revelation of true reality, and declared that this kind of life constitutes the possession of resurrection “already” suggests that this already-possessed resurrection can be understood as such because it, too, is the revelation of true reality. Living in conformity with true reality and not the flesh of this illusory world would itself be a form of showing forth what is real, anticipating a similar showing-forth when the flesh of this life is left behind in the glory of the resurrection. In this sense, the second, post-mortem, spiritual resurrection truly would be the resurrection (i.e., revelation) of those who have already risen (i.e., revealed the nature of true reality in this life) (48.5-6).

The *Treatise on the Resurrection*’s relative lack of clarity on the precise nature of the post-mortem resurrection thus becomes less significant in light of the way that it highlights what the two resurrections have in common. Irenaeus used spiritualization to link moral transformation in this life to the resurrection, but he did not use this link to describe the Christian life here and now as resurrection. The *Treatise*, on the other hand,

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*Lundhaug, “These are the Symbols”,* 201, claims that we are probably to think of some sort of “ascetic practice” but does not provide arguments for this conclusion.
uses revelation where Irenaeus used spiritualization.\textsuperscript{44} But it also uses this link to take the Pauline step Irenaeus failed to take, insisting that the morally transformed Christian life is resurrection. Whatever it is that will happen to Christians after death, the important point from the Treatise’s point of view is that it will be revelatory. Therefore, and no less importantly, the revelatory life of the Christian now is resurrection.

\section*{4.3 The Gospel of Philip}

The Gospel of Philip (NHC II.3), dated tentatively as late as the late third century,\textsuperscript{45} is an anonymous Valentinian text consisting of a series of statements rather than a narrative.\textsuperscript{46} (In this respect, the Gospel of Philip resembles the Gospel of Thomas,

\textsuperscript{44} As Peel notes, the Treatise on the Resurrection differs strikingly from the New Testament in its lack of focus on the Holy Spirit’s instrumentality in resurrection (The Epistle to Rheginos, 142 n. 124). Layton goes so far as to infer from the text’s link between the self-resurrecting Christ and the Christian that the believer, like Christ, self-resurrects through the newly-acquired acquaintance with his true self that he received from Christ’s teaching (The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi, 58-59).

\textsuperscript{45} Wesley W. Isenberg, “The Gospel of Philip: Introduction,” in Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7, ed. Bentley Layton, NHS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 134-35. Recently, Hugo Lundhaug has argued that the Gospel of Philip was written in Coptic in the fourth century, not in Greek in the second or third (Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis of the Soul, NHMS 73 [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 349-94). In so doing, he argues that the Gospel’s insistence on resurrection “in this flesh” better reflects the polemics of the late-fourth-century Origenist controversy than second- and third-century disputes. This dating is incompatible with the oft-repeated hypothesis that the Nag Hammadi texts were buried in the wake of Athanasius’s festal letter of 367, but of course that is merely a hypothesis. They could have also been buried during the “anti-Origenist purge following the death of Evagrius Ponticus in 399,” or at some other time, and the jar in which they were found is typical of the fourth or fifth centuries (Lundhaug, Images of Rebirth, 8-9). If Lundhaug is correct—and the jury remains out on his proposals—the Gospel of Philip becomes only somewhat more removed from the age of Irenaeus and Tertullian than if it is dated to the late third century. Moreover, it would still retain its value insofar as it supplements the Treatise on the Resurrection in showing how the language of resurrection can function when it is not restricted to a post-mortem event.

which immediately precedes it in Nag Hammadi Codex II.)\textsuperscript{47} Some of these statements are ascribed to Jesus, and some of the sayings describe events in his ministry, but most seem to be spoken simply in the voice of a Christian teacher. More specifically, the text’s focus on interpreting sacramental rites suggests that many of the sayings reflect the voice of a catechetical instructor.\textsuperscript{48}

The text’s literary coherence has been the topic of some disagreement. Some have regarded it as an incoherent and sometimes contradictory compilation of selections from Valentinian catechetical manuals; correspondingly, they have interpreted it by isolating and analyzing particular sayings. Others, however, have detected themes that hold the sayings together and invite a more synthetic interpretation of the text as a whole, even if the work is still viewed as a compilation from multiple authors.\textsuperscript{49} My analysis will follow the latter approach.


Like the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, the significance of the *Gospel of Philip* for this study lies in its use of the language of resurrection. The *Gospel* is even more insistent than the *Treatise* about the necessity of receiving resurrection in this life, seemingly ruling out any view that makes death a prerequisite for resurrection: “Those who say that the lord died first and (then) rose up are in error, for he rose up first and (then) died. If one does not first attain the resurrection he will not die” (56.15-19). A similar point appears later: “Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing” (73.1-4). Note that these two quotes do not make quite the same point: the first makes resurrection a prerequisite of “death” instead of vice versa, but the second quote simply requires resurrection to precede “death” if it is going to happen at all. It is possible to die without being first resurrected. But the *Gospel* elsewhere suggests that resurrection actually *is* a recovery from death:

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51 See also 52.15-18: “A gentile does not die, for he has never lived in order that he may die. He who has believed in the truth has found life, and this one is in danger of dying, for he is alive.”

If the woman had not separated from the man, she should not die with the man. His separation became the beginning of death. Because of this Christ came to repair the separation which was from the beginning and again unite the two, and to give life to those who died as a result of the separation and unite them. (70.9-17)

It should be clear by now that a key to understanding the Gospel of Philip is the multivalence of terms like “death.” The death that must follow resurrection appears to be the death of the body at the end of this life, but the death from which resurrection is a recovery is something else.

In fact, the Gospel itself highlights the deceptive multivalence of terms:

Names given to the world are very deceptive, for they divert our thoughts from what is correct to what is incorrect. Thus one who hears the word “God” does not perceive what is correct, but perceives what is incorrect. So also with “the father” and “the son” and “the Holy Spirit” and “life” and “light” and “resurrection” and “the church” and all the rest—people do not perceive what is correct but they perceive what is incorrect, [unless] they have come to know what is correct. (53.22-35)

This deceptiveness results from the trickery of the “rulers” (archons), who, envious of humanity’s “kinship with those that are truly good,” “took the name of those that are good and gave it to those that are not good, so that through the names they might deceive him [humanity] and bind them to those that are not good” (54.20-25). Why, then, did “truth,” which is “one single thing,” bring these many and now dangerously deceptive terms into existence? Because without these names, learning the truth in this world would

53 Cf. Lundhaug, Images of Rebirth, 229-30.
have been completely impossible (54.13-17). In order for terms like “life” and
“resurrection” to lead towards rather than away from the truth, however, the deceptive
definitions of the archons need to be replaced through true teaching.

The Gospel uses this same logic of accommodation to speak of the rites of
Christian initiation.

Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images. The
world will not receive truth in any other way. There is a rebirth and an image of
rebirth. It is certainly necessary to be born again through the image. Which one?
Resurrection. The image must rise again through the image. The bridal chamber
and the image must enter through the image into the truth: this is the restoration.
(67.9-19)

Thus, “the lord [did] everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and
a redemption and a bridal chamber” (67.27-30). These “types and forms,” although weak
and lowly when compared to the perfect glory, are nevertheless the means of access to
that glory (85.14-16).

The Gospel of Philip situates resurrection within the framework of these
deceptively-defined names and weak yet salvific “types and forms.” “Resurrection” is
both a deceptive name (53.31) and an image through which it is necessary to be born
again (67.15). Its status as a deceptive name accounts for the text’s concern with
overcoming competing understandings of “resurrection” and closely associated terms like
“death” and “flesh.” As we have already seen, the Gospel simultaneously insists that
resurrection must precede death and claims that resurrection overcomes a prior death. At
first glance, it is similarly unclear with respect to the “flesh.” Consider this key passage:
Some are afraid lest they arise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, and [they] do not know that it is those who wear the [flesh] who are naked. [It is] those who […] to unclote themselves who are not naked. “Flesh [and blood shall] not inherit the kingdom [of God]” (1 Co 15:50). What is this which will not inherit? This which is on us. But what is this, too, which will inherit? It is that which belongs to Jesus and his blood. Because of this he said, “He who shall not eat my flesh and drink my blood has not life in him” (Jn 6:53). What is it? His flesh is the word, and his blood is the Holy Spirit. He who has received these has food and he has drink and clothing. I find fault with the others who say that it will not rise. Then both of them are at fault. You (sg.) say that the flesh will not rise. But tell me what will rise, so that we may honor you (sg.). You (sg.) say the spirit in the flesh, and it is also this light in the flesh. (But) this too is a matter which is in the flesh, for whatever you (sg.) shall say, you (sg.) say nothing outside the flesh. It is necessary to rise in the flesh, since everything exists in it. In this world those who put on garments are better than the garments. In the kingdom of heaven the garments are better than those who have put them on. (56.26-57.22)

The denial in the first part of the passage that the flesh will participate in the resurrection is unsurprising. The immediately preceding passage states that the “soul” is a precious thing that exists in a “contemptible body” (56.25-26). Later, we read that the circumcision required of Abraham teaches “that it is proper to destroy the flesh” (82.26-29); we also read that the world “came about through a mistake” (75.2-3).  

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55 A. H. C. van Eijk, “The Gospel of Philip and Clement of Alexandria: Gnostic and Ecclesiastical Theology on the Resurrection and the Eucharist,” VC 25 (1971): 95, argues that the “flesh” that must be taken off in order to avoid rising naked is not the material body, but rather the “sphere marked by human weakness and sin.” This sphere of sin, not the material body itself, is the “flesh and blood” that cannot inherit the kingdom. What will rise, then, is our current material body as it has been cleansed from sin through union with Christ in the Eucharist. As van Eijk points out, this understanding of 1 Cor. 15:50 is remarkably close to Irenaeus’s—a conclusion important to his overall argument that the lines between the “orthodox” (Irenaeus) and “gnostic” (Gospel of Philip) parties at this time were far less clear than previously thought (96, 120). While van Eijk’s reading can make sense of the Gospel’s admonition to unclote in order to not rise naked, it is difficult to square with the claim that those who hold the wrong view “wish to rise in the flesh” “lest they rise naked.” Who would say this if “flesh” meant the state of sin? Of course, it is possible that the text is playing with multiple definitions of “flesh.” But if this is the case, and the Gospel is about to affirm that the flesh (this material body) will in fact rise once removed from the flesh (the sphere of sin) through the Eucharistic flesh, then why not state more clearly that the flesh that will rise in the end is in fact continuous with the flesh mentioned at the beginning (even if it has been
Consequently, to desire to rise in this flesh is to completely misapprehend the nature of this world and flesh. But the apparent about-face in the second half of the passage is baffling: having just explained how those who want to rise in the flesh are ignorant, how can it now insist that those who deny that the flesh will rise are also wrong? To explain this apparent contradiction, it has even been suggested that the passage as it stands is an incoherent compilation in which the second voice interjects arguments for the resurrection of the flesh in order to nullify the first voice’s problematic denial of the resurrection of the flesh.\textsuperscript{56}

When the Gospel’s sensitivity to the deceptiveness of names in this world is taken into account, however, such compilation theories become unnecessary. The flesh that the text claims does rise might not be the same thing as the flesh that does not. A fragmentary passage later in the Gospel even appears to suggest this very multivalence: “The […] from the dead. […] to be, but now […] perfect. […] flesh, but this […] is true flesh. […] is not true, but […] only an image of the true” (68.31-37). Although too fragmentary for certainty, the passage seems to distinguish between “true flesh” and flesh that is “only an image of the true.” It is thus plausible that this distinction underlies the earlier, confusing

passage about the flesh in the resurrection: true flesh does rise in resurrection, but the flesh that is only an image does not.\textsuperscript{57}

In the extended passage on resurrection and the flesh quoted above, an apparent allusion to the Eucharist marks the transition from the discussion of the flesh that does not rise to the flesh that does rise:

But what is this, too, which will inherit? It is that which belongs to Jesus and his blood. Because of this he said, “He who shall not eat my flesh and drink my blood has not life in him” (Jn 6:53). What is it? His flesh is the Word, and his blood is the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{58} He who has received these has food and he has drink and clothing. (57.1-8)

One can thus read this passage as teaching that the flesh that \textit{does} rise, the true flesh, is Jesus’s flesh (and blood) as received in the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, this flesh and blood is not Jesus’s own false, non-rising flesh, but rather the “Word” and “Holy Spirit.” To press the text for more specifics on the kind of flesh constituted by this received Word


\textsuperscript{58} I have chosen to capitalize “Holy Spirit” in the Gospel of Philip, even though Isenberg does not. I do this to highlight the fact that the Gospel seems to be referring to a particular spirit that is intimately connected with the Savior. Were I to find these references in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, or Methodius, I would undoubtedly capitalize them. Therefore, in order to minimize artificial distinctions between those authors and the Gospel of Philip, I have followed the same practice here.

\textsuperscript{59} Cf. Lundhaug, \textit{Images of Rebirth}, 237-38. Van Eijk, “The Gospel of Philip and Clement of Alexandria,” 100-03, helpsfully compares the Gospel of Philip’s invocation of the Eucharist for resurrection to Irenaeus’s similar argument, noting that, unlike Irenaeus, the Gospel of Philip appeals to John 6 and defines the elements (flesh and blood) as Christ’s word and Holy Spirit instead of focusing on the earthly elements (bread and wine). Schenke, \textit{Das Philippus-Evangelium}, 234-35, surveys the reasons to doubt that this passage refers to the Eucharist and concludes, correctly in my opinion, that the broader text’s sacramental emphasis outweighs these doubts. See also R. McL. Wilson, \textit{The Gospel of Philip: Translated from the Coptic text, with an Introduction and Commentary} (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1962), 88-89, who cautiously suggests that the Gospel might be describing a resurrection of the flesh that is then followed by a stripping off of that flesh to be replaced with a heavenly robe.
and Holy Spirit is to miss the fact that the Gospel has already stated what is most
important: this is the flesh of Jesus; that which resurrects, which inherits the kingdom, is
Jesus himself as appropriated in the Eucharist.60

This appearance of a Christian sacrament at a key point in the Gospel’s argument
is characteristic of this text. In fact, the Gospel of Philip is so suffused with sacraments
that it can be characterized as a compilation from a catechetical manual. Although the
text discusses several rites (baptism, chrism, Eucharist, etc.), a key theme running
throughout these discussions is the reception or putting on of a new, perfect human. The
following passage, for example, explains both the Eucharist and baptism in terms of this
transformation:

The cup of prayer contains wine and water, since it is appointed as a type of the
blood for which thanks is given. And it is full of the Holy Spirit, and it belongs to
the wholly perfect man. When we drink this, we shall receive for ourselves the
perfect man. The living water is a body. It is necessary that we put on the living
man. Therefore, when he is about to go down into the water, he unclothes himself
in order that he may put on the living man. (75.14-24)61

According to the Gospel, this putting on of the perfect human is necessary because it
ensures that the Christian is invisible to the archons: “Not only will they be unable to
detain the perfect man, but they will not be able to see him, for if they see him they will
detain him. There is no other way for a person to acquire this quality except by putting on

60 See Ménard, L’évangile selon Philippe, 15-16; Schenke, Das Philippus-Evangelium, 237; Lehtipuu,
“‘Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God’,” 163-64; Heimola, Christian Identity in the Gospel
of Philip, 252.

61 Another passage bluntly states that “the eucharist is Jesus” (63.21), appealing to a Syriac title of Jesus:
“For he is called in Syriac ‘Pharisatha,’ which is ‘the one who is spread out,’ for Jesus came to crucify the
world” (63.21-24).
the perfect light, [and] he too becoming perfect light” (76.22-29). The same point appears earlier: “The powers do not see those who are clothed in the perfect light, and consequently are not able to detain them. One will clothe himself in this light sacramentally in the union” (70.5-9).

This sacramental transformation—putting on the perfect light, the perfect human, Jesus—coincides with resurrection. Baptism, it is claimed, “includes the resurrection” (69.25-26). In another passage, baptism and chrism are tied to renewal in life, although here it is to chrism specifically that resurrection is ascribed (73.1-8, 17-18): “He who has been anointed possesses everything. He possesses the resurrection, the light, the cross, the Holy Spirit” (74.18-21). The Gospel does not distinguish between the various sacraments in order to specify what is received in each act but in none of the others, for what is ascribed to one rite in one place can be ascribed to others elsewhere. Rather, the main point that emerges from the document as a whole is that, in these rites taken together, the person undergoes a transformative union with Christ such that the person becomes not just a Christian, but Christ (61.30-31, 67.26-27). This transformation, which proceeds through the transformation of like by like, is called “resurrection.”

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62 For a synthetic study of Valentinian initiation rites, including baptism, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 333-405.

The Gospel highlights the significance of this resurrection by emphasizing its benefits. In addition to invisibility from the hostile archons, it seems to enable one to see God. The reader is admonished to “not despise the lamb, for without it it is not possible to see the king. No one will be able to go in to the king if he is naked” (58.14-17). The language of nakedness and clothing is closely associated with both baptism and resurrection throughout the Gospel, and here the idea is probably that one cannot see God without first undressing and “putting on” Christ (the lamb) in baptism.

While the Gospel often speaks of the benefits of this transformation as being in the future, they are not exclusively future.64 The conclusion states:

If anyone becomes a son of the bridal chamber, he will receive the light. If anyone does not receive it while he is here, he will not be able to receive it in the other place. He who will receive that light will not be seen, nor can he be detained. And none shall be able to torment a person like this even when he dwells in the world. And again when he leaves the world he has already received the truth in images.

The world has become the Aeon, for the Aeon is fullness65 for him. (86.4-14)

There is a here, where the light is available, and a there, where it is not; between here and there lies the potential for detention, and even here one is threatened by torment (probably from the same agents, the archons). But when one puts on the light here, then the there—the Aeon—has broken through into this world.


65 Schenke, Das Philippus-Evangelium, 518, shows that the word translated “fullness” (πλήρωμα) is not synonymous with οἰόν but instead means Erfüllung (fullness or fulfillment).
A similar dynamic appears elsewhere in the text. An early statement describes this world as winter and the Aeon as summer: if one tries to reap a harvest prematurely, in winter, one merely rips plants out from the ground; instead, one must sow in winter (this world) and reap in summer (the Aeon) (52.25-33). Although this passage seems to imply a “now” (winter) versus “later” (summer) chronology, even pointing out that “summer follows winter” (52.29-30), a later passage picks up the same metaphor when discussing baptism: “When that spirit [of the world] blows, it brings winter. When the Holy Spirit breathes, the summer comes” (77.12-15). Here, the distinction is articulated less in chronological terms than in terms of sphere of influence: where the Holy Spirit breathes, as it does in baptism, there is the Aeon.66

The penetration of this world by a reality that is nevertheless also future helps to explain this key passage:

And so he dwells either in this world or in the resurrection or in the middle place. God forbid that I be found there! In this world there is good and evil. Its good things are not good, and its evil things not evil. But there is evil after this world which is truly evil—what is called “the middle.” It is death. While we are in this world it is fitting for us to acquire the resurrection, so that when we strip off the

66 The *Gospel* highlights the work of the Holy Spirit as the sine qua non of a true baptism: One must receive the Holy Spirit in baptism in order to be able to truly claim that one is a Christian (64.22-30). It is possible, however, to “go down into the water and come up without having received anything” (64.23-24). Thus, the *Gospel of Philip*’s sacramental theology is clearly not one in which the mere participation in a rite and pronouncing of the correct words ipso facto effect the intended transformation. Koschorke, “Die ‘Namen’ im Philippusevangelium,” 315-20, reads this aspect of the *Gospel*, along with its general focus on the deceptiveness of names, as polemically directed against non-Valentinian Christians. In other words, here the Valentinians reverse Tertullian’s accusation (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 19.6): they use the same terms but mean something different. See also Pagels, “Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*,” 284-85, and Lehtipuu, “‘Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God’,” 151.
flesh we may be found in rest\textsuperscript{67} and not walk in the middle. For many go astray on the way. For it is good to come forth from the world before one has sinned. (66.7-23)

“This world” is where names like “good” and “evil” are deceptive, in contrast to “the middle”—which appears to be undiluted and non-deceptive evil—and “the resurrection.”\textsuperscript{68} One not only can but must acquire the resurrection while in this world.\textsuperscript{69} But when one examines this passage closely, it becomes very difficult to specify with precision when the flesh is stripped off and the person comes forth from the world. In keeping with the Gospel’s insistence on the importance of “undressing” for baptism, does one “strip off” the flesh at that point? Or does this refer to the death of the body?

The same question can be asked of “coming out of the world,” and it is here that the moral aspects of the Gospel’s vision of Christian transformation become particularly important. The paragraph immediately preceding the description of this world, the resurrection, and the “middle place” begins: “He who comes out of the world and so can no longer be detained on the grounds that he was in the world evidently is above the desire of the […] and fear. He is master over […]. He is superior to envy” (65.27-32). Although this passage is fragmentary, enough remains to suggest that part of what it

\textsuperscript{67} The connection between salvation and “rest” reappears in 71.15 and 72.23. See also Treatise on the Resurrection 43.34-44.3.

\textsuperscript{68} On the relationship between this use of the term “middle” and its appearance in other Valentinian texts (where it tends to be less negative), see Heimola, Christian Identity in the Gospel of Philip, 240-41.

\textsuperscript{69} This is evidence that Valentinians did not necessarily teach that some people (the spirituals) are immune from sin by nature. There is no hint in the Gospel of Philip that its exhortation to resurrection in this life is only relevant to part of its audience. See Michael R. Desjardins, Sin in Valentinianism, SBL Dissertation Series 108 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 91-100.
means to have come out of the world and be undetainable by the *archons* is to live above the desires of the flesh. This is precisely what would be expected from a text that elsewhere, as we have seen, speaks of the world as created by a mistake and recommends destroying the flesh. Thus, the Christian is admonished: “Fear not the flesh nor love it. If you (sg.) fear it, it will gain mastery over you. If you love it, it will swallow and paralyze you” (66.4-6).70

The right valuation—more precisely, devaluation—of the flesh that makes possible this detachment from its desires could be construed as a transition out of “this world,” since the next paragraph defines this world as the place where moral valuations are confused. Later, the *Gospel* argues that evil draws its strength from its hiddenness: once recognized for what it is, its power disappears and it is easily plucked out (83.8-29). Thus, this moral transformation would constitute a coming out from this world and into resurrection through true moral valuation. It might also anticipate a different kind of

70 What exactly such a life would look like is unclear. Is all sexual activity, for example, excluded? Scholars are divided on this question, although the majority now think that sexual activity was not excluded and in fact was positively incorporated into Valentinian ethics. Segelberg, “The Coptic-Gnostic Gospel According to Philip and its Sacramental System,” 198, appealing to the Gospel’s “well-defined encratic character,” dismisses the possibility that the “bridal chamber” sacrament has anything to do with earthly marriage. Isenberg, “The Gospel of Philip (II,3),” 140, follows Segelberg, claiming that the “defiled women” who are excluded from the bridal chamber are “all women who participate in sexual intercourse.” Grant, “The Mystery of Marriage,” 133, on the other hand, follows Irenaeus’s lead and thinks that the Valentinians engaged in sexual union. Buckley, “A Cult-Mystery,” 572, goes far further than Grant, arguing that earthly marriage and sexual union are actually necessary *prerequisites* for the spiritual union. DeConick, “The True Mysteries,” 245-56, also argues for the importance of sexual union within marriage for the Valentinians. See also Heimola, *Christian Identity in the Gospel of Philip*, 267-84, who concludes that the *Gospel of Philip* is ambivalent about sexual activity. That the continuity between Valentinus and his followers lies primarily in their shared concern for the therapy of desires towards detachment from the world, and that the Valentinians’ mythmaking was in service of that concern, is the main argument of Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008).
escape from this world at bodily death, but, as we have seen, the Gospel is not concerned
to sharply distinguish these two.

4.4 Conclusion

The Gospel of Philip’s emphasis on resurrection through sacramental
transformation adds another layer of Paulinism to what we have already found in the
Treatise on the Resurrection. Colossians, in particular, presents a helpful point of
reference. There, resurrection comes through the putting off of the body of flesh and
putting on of Christ in baptism (2:11-14), and this resurrection has important moral
corollaries (3:1-14). (Colossians, like the Gospel of Philip, also narrates this event within
a cosmic drama involving hostile powers [e.g., 2:15].) Both the Treatise on the
Resurrection and the Gospel of Philip, unlike Irenaeus and Tertullian, are eager to follow
Colossians in speaking of a resurrection that is already received in this life. But by
focusing on the reception of this resurrection in the rites of Christian initiation, the
Gospel of Philip follows Colossians even further. The Gospel of Philip’s discussions of
other rites, like chrism and Eucharist, simply extend the focus of Colossians on
transformation and resurrection in baptism.

These two Valentinian texts share several striking features. Both are clear that
resurrection can and must be received in this life, and the way that they emphasize this
point indicates that it was a point of potential contention or misunderstanding. Both also

71 As noted by Heimola, Christian Identity in the Gospel of Philip, 268.
make claims about the “flesh” that at first glance seem contradictory, simultaneously denying that the resurrection is the rising of the flesh and affirming that resurrection involves flesh. In both cases, the apparent contradictions regarding the flesh have led some scholars to read the denial as representing the text’s real voice over against the affirmation. The appearance of the same phenomenon in both texts, however, strongly suggests that both are engaged in an attempt to claim for themselves the language of “resurrection of the flesh,” perhaps in response to its deployment by those who would insist that “resurrection of the flesh” must denote the reanimation of coarse, fleshly bodies.

Correspondingly, although both texts speak of flesh in the resurrection, neither focuses on continuity between the flesh born in this life and the flesh of the resurrection. In the Treatise on the Resurrection, the flesh of the resurrection is related to the inner members, not the outer members currently visible. In the Gospel of Philip, the flesh of the resurrection is the flesh of Christ, not the particular person’s flesh. This lack of continuity between the flesh of the resurrection and the flesh that the term is commonly taken to denote—and which authors like Irenaeus and Tertullian took it to denote—corresponds to both texts’ negative assessment of the visible world as a whole. (For all the ways in which they are faithful to the Paul of Colossians, here they make a significant break.

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72 As we have seen, Layton reads the Treatise on the Resurrection’s affirmations about the participation of the flesh in resurrection as words spoken in the voice of a hypothetical objector, and Schenke at one point saw the similar claims in the Gospel of Philip as an editor’s interpolation.

73 Lundhaug, Images of Rebirth, 239-40, 381-85.
They do not join Colossians in declaring that all things were created through Christ, whether in heaven or on earth, visible or invisible [1:16].

Furthermore, in both texts, “resurrection” is exclusively positive: the resurrection received in this life is a salvific transformation, and whatever resurrection occurs after this life is a continuation of that salvific event. Those who do not receive resurrection now are not described as receiving some sort of resurrection then. Thus, in the Gospel of Philip, one is not resurrected into the “middle.” In other words, there is no general resurrection.74

The function of resurrection in these texts belies the fear evinced by Tertullian that speaking of a realized resurrection excludes a resurrection after death. The Treatise on the Resurrection has no problem affirming both and relating them to each other. The Gospel of Philip, while less clear, certainly does not rule out naming as “resurrection” something that happens after death—to those who have already been resurrected in this life. Having placed the accent on resurrection as a salvific transformation received in this life, however, it is not surprising that neither text describes the post-mortem resurrection as a soteriologically neutral event that happens to all. In this respect, then, their affirmation of realized resurrection does undercut the core of Tertullian’s understanding of resurrection as a prerequisite for universal judgment.

74 As already noted by van Eijk, “The Gospel of Philip and Clement of Alexandria,” 96 n. 7.
Thus, while the use of the term “resurrection” to describe a transformation in this life is not mutually exclusive with its use for a post-mortem event, these texts highlight how the two usages shape each other. If both are resurrections, what do they have in common? In the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, revelation of true reality binds together the various “resurrections” in the text. A similar theme, transformation corresponding to true perception of reality, binds together resurrection in the *Gospel of Philip*. In each case, an overarching understanding of resurrection articulated in discussions of the resurrection received in this life shapes how all instances of resurrection are viewed.

On the one hand, neither Irenaeus nor Tertullian offer an overarching understanding of resurrection that encompasses multiple referents. This simplicity, however, comes at the cost of faithfulness to the full breadth of the New Testament’s discussions of resurrection. On the other hand, the two Valentinian texts that we have examined faithfully embrace Scriptural claims that those united with Christ in the sacraments have already been resurrected. In so doing, however, they sacrifice the general resurrection that is taught elsewhere in the New Testament, including in texts that they quote (like John). We must therefore look to Origen for an all-encompassing theory of resurrection that takes the claims of Pauline texts like Colossians as its starting point without sacrificing the generality of the eschatological resurrection. Where the *Treatise on the Resurrection* and *Gospel of Philip* incorporate moral transformation into the broader theme that ties together the multiple referents of resurrection (such as revelation of true reality), Origen uses moral transformation as that broader, integrative theme.
CHAPTER 5 | Origen: Resurrection as Moral Pedagogy for All

5.1 Introduction

The career of Origen of Alexandria—grammarian, catechist, philosopher, speculative theologian, exegete, and homilist extraordinaire—spanned two great centers of culture and learning, Alexandria and Caesarea, and two significant periods of persecution, that under Septimius Severus at the beginning of the third century that took his father’s life and that under Decius at its midpoint that eventually claimed his own.  

Controversial even in his own day, Origen was simultaneously the object of suspicion and a feted Christian intellectual. The same remained true after his death as a confessor, and this legacy shapes both his significance for this study and the challenges inherent in examining his understanding of resurrection.

The controversies that swirled around Origen’s eschatology, said to include an understanding of the resurrection so ethereal as to be unworthy of the term and an expectation that even the devil will receive salvation, has made the task of examining Origen’s understanding of resurrection difficult. Because of his imperial condemnations in the sixth century, first in 543 CE and then at the Second Council of Constantinople.

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1 For Origen’s life, including a critical examination of the sources available for reconstructing Origen’s biography, see Pierre Nautin, Origène: Sa vie et son œuvre (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977). See also John A. McGuckin, “The Life of Origen (ca. 186-255),” in The Westminster Handbook to Origen, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004). That Origen’s works must be read within the narrative of his life (as far as possible given the limited data), rather than abstracted from it as if he never developed or changed his mind, is the argument of Ronald E. Heine, Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
(553), much of his prodigious output has been lost.² Of his works that survive, many do so in toto only in fourth- and fifth-century Latin translations. Origen’s early treatise dedicated to the subject of the resurrection, for example, is almost completely lost—a particularly frustrating state of affairs, since Origen refers the reader of *On First Principles* to it. The interpreter of Origen’s eschatology thus faces a haphazard patchwork of surviving data, some of which is of questionable reliability.

The Origenist controversies also bequeathed to posterity a robust tradition of polemically driven interpretations of Origen’s thought. From Methodius of Olympus to Jerome and Epiphanius to the Emperor Justinian, Origen had no shortage of interpreters driven by a desire to prove how wrong and dangerous his teachings could be.³ Because of the fragmentary state of Origen’s extant oeuvre, some of their claims about what he said cannot be verified. For example, after Jerome turned against Origen, how fair were his translations and quotations? Even if his quotations and translations were faithful, how much context did he omit as he sought to paint Origen’s teachings in as negative a light as possible? In many cases, we do not know.⁴ Similar questions surround Origen’s

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⁴ We now know that some of the positions that came to be associated with Origen and condemned in the anathemas of the Second Council of Constantinople should actually be tied to Evagrius Ponticus, not Origen. Antoine Guillaumont, *Les “Képhalaia gnostica” d’Évagre le Pontique et l’histoire de l’origénisme*
defenders. Rufinus of Aquilea, Origen’s most prolific translator and staunchest defender against the attacks on Origen’s legacy from his erstwhile friend Jerome, openly states that his method of translation includes excising passages that he judges to be interpolations, inconsistent with or contrary to Origen’s true teaching, and clarifying obscure passages with clearer statements from elsewhere in Origen’s writings.5

These two factors—the fragmentary nature of his extant writings and the polemical context of many translations, quotations, and interpretations—combine to complicate the reconstruction of what Origen actually said. I would like to suggest, however, that this situation is actually a blessing in disguise for the interpreter of Origen. By making it so difficult to isolate and describe Origen’s specific positions, it forces the interpreter to look for broader themes and concerns that appear across the different strands of surviving material and that would have been far more difficult to edit out or insert. Ultimately, these broader concerns and themes are easier to discern with confidence and reveal more about what was truly important to Origen than do the specific positions he might have speculatively suggested.

I argue in this chapter that Origen’s understanding of the relationship between rational creatures’ bodies and their moral character, forged by his theodicy, allowed him


5 On First Principles Rufinus’s Preface.2-3.
to integrate into his thought in a way that had eluded his predecessors both the Pauline connection between resurrection and moral transformation and the generality of the eschatological resurrection. I establish this point through his early, speculative *On First Principles*. Then, through a close reading of his later, exegetical *Commentary on Romans*, I show how this approach to resurrection, when combined with his sensitivity to the multivalence of theological terms, produced a multilayered and interconnected development of the Pauline resurrection schema.⁶

5.2 *On First Principles*

5.2.1 Introduction

For all the uncertainty about its precise text,⁷ Origen’s *On First Principles⁸* remains the best entryway into Origen’s thought on resurrection. This is the case not

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⁶ *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on Romans* are by no means the only important works for Origen’s understanding of resurrection. A comprehensive study of the topic would require careful attention at least to his early *Commentary on John*, his late *Against Celsius*, and his many homilies. The main contours of his views, however, are visible from the two works treated here.

⁷ Most of the work survives only in Rufinus’s Latin translation, although significant Greek fragments are preserved in friendly sources, like the *Philocalia of Origen*, and hostile ones, like Justinian’s epistle to Menas. Paul Koetschau’s influential modern edition, *Origenes Werke, Fünfter Band: De principiis*, GCS 22 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), illustrates the difficulties faced by anyone trying to reconstruct this work today. Should the surviving Greek fragments be juxtaposed with Rufinus’s translation wherever possible? Since Rufinus himself claimed to have omitted passages that he judged to be spurious, should the modern editor try to reverse Rufinus’s excisions by culling passages from later critics who probably had access to complete Greek copies of *On First Principles*, re-inserting them where they seem most appropriate? (Should this be done even for passages that Origen’s ancient critics ascribed to Origen but not to any particular work?) Koetschau answered “yes” to each of these questions. As a result, the modern reader of G.W. Butterworth’s popular English translation, *Origen: On First Principles*, trans. G.W. Butterworth (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), based on Koetschau’s edition, must navigate through passages that only survive in Rufinus’s complete Latin *On First Principles*, passages that have corresponding Greek fragments (taking note of any differences), passages that survive in both Rufinus’s translation and Jerome’s more hostile (but supposedly more literal) Latin translations, and passages quoted by Jerome and later critics that Koetschau has conjecturally reinserted into the text (some of which survive in Greek, others
because the text provides Origen’s final answer on any particular issue, but rather because of its systematic comprehensiveness: here, more than anywhere else in his extant corpus, Origen treats and relates to each other a wide range of theological loci. Of course, he treats many of these loci elsewhere, and one must allow each passage to speak for itself rather than be forced into the mold provided by On First Principles. Nevertheless, the systematic structure of Origen’s thought (which concerns or problems take priority and shape others), at least at one stage of his career, is clearest in On First Principles. Furthermore, On First Principles falls at a fortuitous point in the chronology of Origen’s works. On the one hand, since it predates his Caesarean works, its theology forms a potential backdrop for much of Origen’s corpus. On the other hand, since On First Principles postdates his lost On the Resurrection, to which he refers the reader, what Origen says about resurrection in the former work should be a partial yet considered opinion based on the thought he put into the latter work; in fact, Origen claims that his

only in Latin). By contrast, the more recent French translation, Origène: Traité des Principes, trans. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, 5 vols., SC 252, 253, 268, 269, 312 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978), only supplements Rufinus’s Latin text with Greek fragments from the friendly witness of the Philocalia. The 1976 German edition and translation by Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien, Texte zur Forschung 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), follows the same plan. See the discussion in Ronnie J. Rombs, “A Note on the Status of Origen’s De Principiis in English,” VC 61 (2007). I have chosen to rely on Rufinus’s translation for my interpretation of On First Principles. There are two main reasons for this decision: First, as discussed above, the authenticity and proper placement of many of the Greek fragments are questionable. Second, I believe that Origen’s most important and innovative theological moves on these topics are apparent in Rufinus’s version, even if we might suspect Rufinus of blunting some of their force. Therefore, I believe that the most secure way of proceeding is to establish my interpretation of Origen on the basis of the Latin while occasionally seeking confirmation in the Greek fragments.

8 Often cited by either its Greek or Latin title (Περὶ ἀρχῶν and De principiis, respectively).
discussion of resurrection in On First Principles repeats the arguments he developed in On the Resurrection.⁹

5.2.2 Theodicy and Bodily Diversity

Theodicy is one of the most important concerns shaping Origen’s speculative articulation of Christian theology in On First Principles.¹⁰ The fundamental crime from which God needs to be acquitted is that of causing unjust inequality, specifically the inequality that manifestly exists among rational creatures. Why are some, like archangels, more glorious? Why, even among humans, are some righteous and some wicked? Origen claims that the followers of Marcion, Valentinus, and Basilides answer these questions by asserting that all this inequality results from a diversity of natures.¹¹ But since this diversity of natures results in an unjust inequality, the creator of these diverse natures cannot be just and fair. This accusation then underwrites the split between the unjust creator God and the just, saving God of Jesus Christ.

Origen was committed to protecting God from these charges of injustice within the framework of what he had received as the apostolic deposit of teaching, which ruled

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⁹ On First Principles 2.10.1.


¹¹ On First Principles 2.9.5. Alain Le Boulluec, “La place de la polémique antignostique dans le Peri Archôn,” in Origeniana, ed. Henri Crouzel, Gennaro Lomiento, and Josep Rius-Camps (Bari: Istituto di letteratura cristiana antica, Università di Bari, 1975), argues that, although “anti-gnostic” concern suffuses On First Principles, the gnosticism being opposed is an artificially homogenized form. He points out that this does not necessarily mean that Origen knew no Valentinians; it just means that it was not expedient for him, given the purpose and audience of his work, to spell out precise differences among his opponents.
out any distinction between the God of creation and the God of redemption. Origen therefore had two options: he could either deny that inequality in creation is unjust, or he could find some other cause to blame for it. He chose the latter, assigning all responsibility for inequality to each creature’s own work (opus) and motions (motus). The logic here implies that God must have created all rational creatures equal, and indeed Origen makes this conclusion explicit: from one beginning arise “many differences and varieties.” Had this not been the case, the righteousness of the Creator would have been obscured. In fact, God’s nature requires that everything God creates be equal:

When ‘in the beginning’ he was creating the things that he wanted to create—that is, rational natures—he had no other cause for creating except himself, that is, his own goodness. Therefore, because he himself, in whom existed neither any variety nor change nor inability [inpossibilitas], was the cause of the things that were to be created, all things that he created he created similar and equal, inasmuch as there was no cause of variety and diversity in him.

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12 On First Principles Origen’s Preface.4.
13 On First Principles 1.5.3 (SC 252, 182). Origen deploys this same logic to explain why Paul can say that God created some as vessels of honor and some as vessels of dishonor (Rom. 9:21): Pointing to 2 Tim. 2:20-21, which states that those who cleanse themselves from all dishonorable things will be honorable vessels, Origen infers that God’s creation of some as honorable and others as dishonorable vessels must be based on the merits of own, prior free decisions (On First Principles 3.1.21). See below for Origen’s speculations about a succession of worlds that would allow for these prior actions.
14 On First Principles 1.6.2. multae differentiae ac uarietates (SC 252, 196). All translations of On First Principles are my own, but I have consulted the translations of Butterworth, Crouzel and Simonetti, and Görgemanns and Karpp throughout.
15 On First Principles 2.9.7.
16 On First Principles 2.9.6. Hic cum in pricipio crearet ea, quae creare voluit, id est rationabiles naturas, nullam habuit aliam creandi causam nisi se ipsum, id est bonitatem suam. Quia ergo eorum, quae creanda erant, ipse extitit causa, in quo neque varietas aliqua neque permutatio neque inpossibilitas inerat, aequales creavit omnes ac similis quos creavit, quippe cum nulla ei causa varietatis ac diversitatis existeret (SC 252, 364).
Thus, reflecting on the inequality implied by the division of rational creatures into those in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, Origen claims that they all, “from that one beginning, were distributed throughout the diverse orders according to merit, having been moved in various ways according to their own respective motions; for goodness did not exist in them essentially [substantialiter], as it does in God and his Christ and the Holy Spirit.”

Origen supplements his observation that rational creatures can fall away from God because goodness (bonitas) does not essentially reside in them by describing this departure from God in moral terms. As each created mind (νοῦς/mens) freely moves away from contemplation of God, its love for God “cools.” The result is that what was once a νοῦς cools (ψύχεσθαι) into a soul (ψυχή/anima)—but that process can be reversed. Origen describes this transformation in moral terms: the love of the mind

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17 On First Principles 1.6.2. omnis universitas indicatur, hi uidelicet, qui ab illo uno initio pro suis unusquisque motibus marie acti per diversos ordines pro merito dispensati sunt; non enim in his bonitas substantialiter inerat, sicut in deo et Christo eius et in spiritu sancto (SC 252, 198).

18 Origen ascribes this initial turn away from contemplation of God to satiation or boredom (On First Principles 1.3.8, 1.4.1).

19 On First Principles 2.8.1-3. On Origen’s anthropology, see Henri Crouzel, “L’anthropologie d’Origène dans la perspective du combat spirituel,” Revue d’Ascètique et de Mystique 31 (1955); Jacques Dupuis, ‘L’esprit de l’homme’: Étude sur l’anthropologie religieuse d’Origène (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1967); Henri Crouzel, “L’anthropologie d’Origène: de l’archê au telos,” in Archê e Telos, ed. Ugo Bianchi and Henri Crouzel, Studia patristica Mediolanensia 12 (Milan: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1981); Marie-Joseph Pierre, “L’âme dans l’anthropologie d’Origène,” Proche-Orient chrétien 34 (1984); Henri Crouzel, Origen, trans. A. S. Worrall (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989), 87-92; Benjamin P. Blosser, Become Like the Angels: Origen’s Doctrine of the Soul (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012). Important aspects of Origen’s anthropology remain debated, in particular (a) the relationship between the mind-cum-soul and the human spirit (πνεῦμα) is “spirit” another name for the soul in its ideal state as the mind, or is it a different component part of the person; and if the latter, what is its function?) and (b) the relationship between the mind and the body (does the mind necessarily inhabit a body, or are bodies later additions?). Since neither of these questions affect Origen’s understanding of the
grows cold because “iniquity” (*iniquitas*)\(^{20}\) has multiplied (Matt. 24:12); the original
“hot” state from which they cooled was the “ardor of the righteous” (*a fero re iustorum*).\(^{21}\) Origen thus attaches a moral valence to the freely-chosen distance of each
mind-cum-soul from God, who alone is essentially good. This moral valence underlies
the connection Origen repeatedly draws, both in *On First Principles* and the *Commentary
on Romans*, between return to God, growth in the virtues, and the transformation of the
body.

The diversity in rational creatures’ mode of corporeal existence, no less than their
diverse moral states, is a problem that theodicy must address. Rational beings, like
angels, humans, and demons, possess different kinds of bodies; there are varieties of
irrational creatures, like cattle, birds, and fish; there are varieties of plants; and there
varieties of places, like the heavens, sky, earth, and water.\(^{22}\) Of course, one could argue
that the diverse aspects of creation, taken together, constitute a glorious harmony.

correlation between the soul’s moral state and its body as expressed in resurrection, I leave these debates to
the side. (See the bibliography in note 33 below on the second question.)

\(^{20}\) *On First Principles* 2.8.3 (SC 253, 344).

\(^{21}\) *On First Principles* 2.8.3 (SC 253, 346).

\(^{22}\) *On First Principles* 2.1.1. Origen tends to speak of these different regions as *χώρια* (“places”) and all of
them taken together as the *κόσμος* (“world”), although he acknowledges that the latter can bear many
meanings in Scripture (*On First Principles* 2.3.6). Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and
Ontology of Time*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 99-110. On the
arrangement of these regions within Origen’s cosmology, see Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars:
Although Origen does argue that God wondrously turns this diversity into harmony,\textsuperscript{23} he is nevertheless clear that God cannot be the cause of the diversity itself. Rather, the varying extents of the rational beings’ free falls away from their original unity causes the bodily diversity observable among rational creatures, and that bodily diversity in turn causes all the other diversity observable in creation.\textsuperscript{24}

Origen explains the body’s ability to reflect diverse moral states through his account of matter, quality, and body. Matter underlies bodies but is not therefore itself, considered in abstraction, a kind of body.\textsuperscript{25} Rather, bodies are matter \textit{as qualified by the four “qualities”} (\textit{qualitates}/ποιότητες: heat, cold, dryness, wetness) into various

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{On First Principles} 2.1.2.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{On First Principles} 2.1.1. Mark Edwards, \textit{Origen Against Plato}, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 91-92, denies that the diverse freely-willed falls of the rational creatures temporally precedes the creation of the visible world, arguing instead that Origen’s descriptions of boredom and satiety refer to failures \textit{in the present world} to contemplate God. Edwards nevertheless preserves the causal precedence of these free actions in the variety observable in the world: “The variety of the world arises from the \textit{foreseen} variety of human choices, not from any antecedent fall” (105, emphasis added). Crouzel, \textit{Origen}, 206-09, by contrast, is content to affirm the temporal precedence of the rational creatures’ free falls and defend Origen from his later detractors by pointing out, with Pamphilus, that Origen’s theory was comfortably within the bounds of the rule of faith as he had received it. On the various options for relating this fall of the pre-existent rational creatures to the narrative of the first humans’ fall in Genesis, see C.P. Bammel, “Adam in Origen,” in \textit{The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick}, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Bammel concludes by highlighting the fact that Origen provided no spelled-out a solution to this question in his extant works, despite opportunities to do so. Therefore, precision on this point was probably not a priority for him. The real priority, preserved in both Edwards’s and Crouzel’s readings, was to explain inequality as a result of creaturely free will, not to make a particular point about preexistence \textit{per se}. J. Rebecca Lyman, \textit{Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 60.

combinations of the four elements (earth, air, water, fire). Although conceptually distinguishable from each other, matter and qualities never exist apart from each other; consequently, matter never exists except as underlying a body. God inserts these qualities, which determine the form of the body that the matter underlies, with an eye to the particular creature’s pedagogical needs—that is, what kind of body would be most effective for encouraging the creature on the way back to God. When bodies change, it is because the qualities that qualify the underlying matter have been changed.

Although Origen initially highlights the non-bodily aspects of diversity among rational creatures, he clearly makes the diversity of bodies a function of the root of the problem, the diversity of rational creatures. Thus, the infinite malleability of material

26 On First Principles 4.4.6. Cf. Bostock, “Quality and Corporeity in Origen,” 326-28. In On First Principles 4.4.7, Origen adds “hardness” (duritia) and “softness” (mollities) to the list of four qualities (SC 268, 416). The reason for this is not clear; Bostock speculates that it reflects Plato’s description of the transformations of the elements (earth, water, fire, air) into each other as processes of hardening and softening (Timaeus 49B-C; Bostock, “Quality and Corporeity in Origen,” 329-30).

27 On First Principles 2.1.4; cf. 4.4.7. On the pedagogical function of rational creatures’ bodies and the world in which they live, see especially Koch, Pronoia und Paideusis, 40-46.

28 He describes the rational creatures that have fallen away from their original unity and harmony as having “devolved into various qualities of minds according to the diversity of their own intention” (On First Principles 2.1.1). pro intentionis suae diversitate in varias deduxerunt mentium qualitates (SC 252, 236). (These tendencies explain why God’s justice is not impugned by the fact that some people are more susceptible to demonic suggestion and possession than others, with some even born demon-possessed [3.3.5].) Similarly, God restores to harmony the rational creatures that “stood apart from each other in such variety of mentalities,” “so that a work as immense as the world would not be dissolved by the conflicts of minds” (On First Principles 2.1.2). quae a semet ipsis in tantum animorum varietate distabant ... ne scilicet tam immensum mundi opus discidiis solueretur animorum (SC 252, 236). Rufinus here gives varieties and conflicts of animorum rather than animarum (souls). Animus appears to be here a translation for voō, understood either as the created mens that would become an anima or as the anima’s intellectual faculty. (For animus functioning this way, see Crouzel, “L’anthropologie d’Origène,” 37.) Thus, Crouzel and Simonetti translate animorum varietate as “la diversité de leurs mentalités” but discidiis ... animorum as “les divisions des intelligences” (SC 252, 237). Görgemanns and Karpp translate the phrases as “geistigen Unterschied” and “die Uneinigkeit der Geister” (287). On the general imprecision in Rufinus’s translations of Origen’s anthropological terms, see Pierre, “L’âme dans l’anthropologie d’Origène,” 25-27.
substance is important precisely because it allows rational creatures’ bodies to match their diversity:

That material substance, possessing a nature of such a kind that it is transformed from all things into all things, is formed into a more dense and solid bodily state when it is drawn to whatever is lower. It does this in a way that distinguishes the visible and varied species of the world. But when it serves the more perfect and blessed, it shines in the brilliance of the heavenly bodies and adorns the angels of God and the sons of the resurrection with the garments of the spiritual body.

Through all these will the diverse and varied state of the one world be fulfilled.\(^{29}\)

From this principle—more glorious bodies for more perfect beings, more “dense” and “solid” bodies for lower beings\(^{30}\)—Origen infers that, if any beings other than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could possibly live without a body, they would be those that have “arrived at the height of holiness and blessedness.”\(^{31}\) Furthermore, such creatures would need to pass through intermediate bodily states corresponding to their progressive growth

\(^{29}\) On First Principles 2.2.2. *materialis ista substantia huius modi habens naturam, quae ex omnibus ad omnia transformetur, cum ad inferiores quosque trahitur, in crassiorem corporis statum solidioremque formatur, ita ut visibles istas mundi species variisque distinguat; cum uero perfectioribus ministret et beatioribus, in fulgore caelestium corporum micat et spiritualis corporis indumentis uel angelos dei uel filios resurrectionis exornat, ex quibus omnibus diversas ac uarius unius mundi complebitur status* (SC 252, 248).

\(^{30}\) Origen does acknowledge exceptions to this rule. These rational creatures, like the sun, moon, and stars, possess bodies of a lower rank than they deserve. But God imposed this on them so that they could serve the human race better (e.g., by providing light) and, recognizing their lot as an unfair exception, promised to compensate them accordingly for their labors (*On First Principles* 1.7.5, 2.9.7). Cf. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, 211-12, and the much fuller discussion of Origen’s views on the astral creatures in Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars*, 127-49. Demons also appear to be exceptions, but in a different way. Although they have sinned the most, they do not have gross, earthly bodies (*Against Celsus* 5.5). Their sin was so great that they were not considered worthy of pedagogy through their bodies (*On First Principles* 1.6.3). This exception highlights the general fact that, for Origen, the correspondence between moral state and form of corporeality is pedagogical rather than necessary. See Crouzel, *Origen*, 215; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, ACLS Lectures on the History of Religions n.s. 13 (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988), 165; Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars*, 156.

\(^{31}\) On First Principles 2.2.1. *ad summum sanctitatis ac beatitudinis uenerint* (SC 252, 246).
in holiness. Whether or not rational creatures can ever exist without bodies, the logic governing their relationship with bodies remains constant: bodies reflect the rational creatures’ diversity and are only dispensable, at least conceptually, when that diversity gives way to a unity of holiness and blessedness.

Origen thus assumes that types of bodies can be arranged on a continuum, with purer and more subtle bodies somehow closer to the incorporeal God than grosser and more solid bodies; hence, incorporeality, whether attainable or not, is the logical limit of movement along the continuum from more solid to more subtle bodies. This is a crucial point. Nothing in Origen’s account of corporeality necessarily implies that incorporeality is something that can be had in degrees; types of bodies could be differentiated from each other without some being less bodily than others (such that some are closer to incorporeality than others). Yet without this assumption, a key conceptual link between God’s incorporeality and the corporeality of creatures would disappear. If incorporeality is at one end of the continuum of corporeality (even if not itself on the continuum), then

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32 On First Principles 2.3.3. Correspondingly, even if rational creatures could exist without bodies once they reached the highest state of blessedness, any subsequent fall—always a possibility, since the freedom of the rational creatures is inviolable—would require bodily nature to be created anew in order to express their new diversity (2.3.3).


34 For God’s incorporeality, see On First Principles 1.1.7, 1.2.4.
God’s incorporeality invests the entire continuum with significance: the more subtle points on the continuum become more excellent and in some sense less corporeal by virtue of their relative proximity to the incorporeal God. It is hardly surprising, then, that where a body falls on this continuum is so intertwined with the creature’s likeness to God in other respects, such as moral excellence.

5.2.3 Bodily Diversity in Resurrection

Origen integrates resurrection into this broader account of the relationship between rational creatures and bodies. This integration emerges clearly in his discussion of Paul’s proclamation that “this corruptible” must put on “incorruption” and “this mortal” must put on “immortality,” at which time death will be swallowed in victory (1 Cor. 15:53-56)—a passage that Origen introduces as Paul’s discussion of the resurrection of the dead.35 Origen interprets “this corruptible” and “this mortal” as references to bodily matter, which is now corruptible.36 “Incorruption” and “immortality,” however, do not primarily refer to a different kind of bodily matter. Rather, they refer to characteristics of a perfect soul that clothes the body.37 Thus, in a striking reversal of metaphors, the soul becomes clothing for the body. Since Paul can command the Romans

35 On First Principles 2.3.2.
36 On First Principles 2.3.2.
37 For Origen, the soul is inherently immortal in the sense that its existence is not threatened by the death that is the separation of soul from body. This is not, however, the kind of immortality under discussion here. Rather, the truly significant kind of immortality, which the soul can only possess through participation in Christ, is immunity from the death that is the fall into sin. See Henri Crouzel, “Mort et immortalité selon Origène,” BLE 79 (1978).
to “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14), thereby envisioning Christ as clothing for
the soul, “so also through a certain intelligible reasoning is the soul, too, said to be the
clothing of the body. For it is its ornament, concealing and covering up its mortal
nature.”³⁸ Based on this understanding of Christ as clothing for the soul, conferring
incorruption and immortality, and the soul as clothing that, in turn, confers those
characteristics upon the body, Origen offers this paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 15:53: “It is
necessary that this corruptible nature of the body receive the clothing of incorruption, a
soul possessing in itself incorruption (in virtue of the fact, of course, that it has put on
Christ, the wisdom and word of God).”³⁹

The result is a transformed body. Not only will the body become a partaker of
life, but the body will be possessed “in a more glorious way [gloriosius].”⁴⁰ (Origen
elsewhere describes this bodily transition in the resurrection as a change of quality
[qualitas], just as we have come to expect from his account of bodily change.)⁴¹ The
body’s underlying, malleable matter, which is now in a “carnal” (carnalis) form, will be

³⁸ On First Principles 2.3.2. Sicut ergo Christus indumentum est animae, ita intellegibili quadam ratione
etiam anima indumentum esse dicitur corporis. Ornamentum enim eius est celans et contegens eius
mortalem naturam (SC 252, 252).
³⁹ On First Principles 2.3.2. necesse est naturam hanc corruptibilem corporis indumentum accipere
incorruptionis, animam habentem in se incorruptionem, pro eo uidelicet quod induta est Christum, qui est
⁴⁰ On First Principles 2.3.2 (SC 252, 254).
⁴¹ On First Principles 2.10.1 (SC 252, 376). See also Against Celsus 3.41, Commentary on Psalm 1:5
(preserved in Methodius, De resurrectione 1.23.1-3 [= Epiphanius, Panarion 64.15.1-4]). Cf. Bostock,
“Quality and Corporeity in Origen,” 330-31; Crouzel, “La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité,” 244-
48.
in a “subtler” (subtilior) and “purer” (purior) form that is appropriately described as “spiritual” (spiritalis).  

Origen’s vision of resurrection as an event in which the body is recalibrated so that it corresponds once more to the condition of its soul comes into even sharper relief when he uses it to speculate on the nature of the resurrection not only of the righteous but also of the wicked.  

Near the end of his discussion of the nature of the “outer darkness” into which the wicked will be thrown (e.g., Matt. 8:12), he writes:

> It must also be seen whether perhaps this expression signifies that, just as the saints will receive back shining and glorious from the resurrection their own bodies, in which they lived holy and purely in the dwelling of this life, so also the impious, who loved the shadows of errors and the night of ignorance, might be clothed with dark [obscuris] and murky [atris] bodies after the resurrection, so

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42 On First Principles 2.3.2 (SC 252, 254).

43 In On First Principles 2.3.2, Origen acknowledges that his view involves a delay between the transformation of the soul and the body’s reflection of that transformation. But if resurrection is the recalibration of the body to reflect the soul, will there be further recalibrations after the coming resurrection in a succession of worlds? Origen speculatively explores this possibility but does not commit to it (cf. 2.3.1, 2.3.4-5, and 3.5.3). As for what souls will be doing between their separation from the earthly body and their resurrection, Origen argues that they will be enjoying Paradise or suffering in Gehenna. See Henri Crouzel, “L’Hadès et la Géhenne selon Origène,” Greg 59 (1978). Will the soul in Paradise or Gehenna be without a body as it awaits resurrection? In a passage from his lost On the Resurrection, preserved by Methodius of Olympus and Procopius of Gaza, Origen describes the soul in the intermediate state as enveloped in an ethereal (corporeal) ὄχηµα or vehicle that retains the form of body from which the soul was separated at death. Although this ὄχηµα is not the body of the resurrection, it prevents the soul from existing in an incorporeal state as it awaits the resurrection. This point constitutes an argument in favor of the view that, for Origen, rational creatures could never exist completely without the body. See Henri Crouzel, “La thème platonicien du « véhicule de l’âme » chez Origène,” Did 7 (1977). (Lawrence R. Hennessey, “A Philosophical Issue in Origen’s Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality,” in Origeniana Quinta, ed. Robert J. Daly [Leuven: Peeters, 1992], assumes that the ὄχηµα is the body of the resurrection, although without providing any passages that tie the two together explicitly.) The fact that this ὄχηµα does not seem to differ from person to person according to their new moral states also underlines the contingency of the resurrection body’s reflection of the soul’s moral state: God causes the resurrection body to reflect the soul for pedagogical purposes, not because bodies inherently must do so.
that that very fog of ignorance that had haunted the inner places of their minds in this life would appear in the future through the clothing of the exterior body.\textsuperscript{44}

Origen’s description of the resurrection of the wicked as an instance of the same process as the resurrection of the blessed confirms that, for Origen, the resurrection of bodies is structurally parallel to the creation of bodies: the body corresponds in some way to the moral state of the soul.\textsuperscript{45}

Origen uses Paul’s enumeration in 1 Corinthians 15:38-41 of all the different kinds of bodies—not just earthly and heavenly bodies, but also the gradations within those categories (humans, animals, birds, fish; sun, moon, stars)—to discuss corresponding distinctions among resurrected bodies. According to Origen, Paul compared the resurrected bodies of the saints who rise in glory to the heavenly bodies; correspondingly, he compared the resurrected bodies of “those who will come to the resurrection without having been purified in this life,” the “sinners” (\textit{peccatores}), to earthly bodies (such as the bodies of fish and birds).\textsuperscript{46} Not only do the two categories of bodies—heavenly and earthly—correspond to the two categories of the resurrected—

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{44} On \textit{First Principles} 2.10.8. \textit{Videndum quoque est, ne forte etiam illud iste sermo significet, quod sicut sancti corpora sua, in quibus sancte et pure in huius vitae habitatone uixerunt, lucida et gloriosa ex resurrectione suscipiunt, ita et impii quiue, qui in hac uita errorum tenebras et noctem ignorantiae dilexerunt, obscuris et atris post resurrectionem corporibus induantur, ut ea ipsa caligo ignorantiae, quae in hoc mundo interioura eorum mentis obsederat, in futuro per exterius corporis appareat indumentum} (SC 252, 392).

\textsuperscript{45} See also the discussion of Tzamalikos, \textit{Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time}, 296-300. The pedagogical function of the diversity of bodies also continues after the resurrection. Scott, \textit{Origen and the Life of the Stars}, 156-60.

\end{footnotes}
saints and sinners—but the gradations within the categories of bodies correspond to differences within the categories of saints and sinners.\textsuperscript{47} That the resurrection will bring a full, variegated spectrum of bodies, not a simple binary of damned and blessed, is clearly a point Origen wants to underline.

Origen’s account of the continuity between the current and resurrected body maximizes the potential for transformation. Origen offers his account while criticizing the views of other Christians who take an unacceptably low view of the resurrection of the body.\textsuperscript{48} The questions that Origen poses to them reveal that their mistake, in his opinion, is to ignore or minimize the transformation involved in the resurrection. Thus, he asks them why 1 Corinthians 15 calls the resurrected body spiritual, glorious, powerful, and incorrupt, while the current body is none of those; he points out that Paul explicitly excludes “flesh and blood” from the kingdom of God; and he asks how they can explain Paul’s declaration that “we shall all be changed.”\textsuperscript{49}

For Origen, the key function of resurrection is to provide the transformed soul with a correspondingly transformed body. Origen therefore provides an account of the principle of continuity that allows for maximal transformation. Picking up on Paul’s

\textsuperscript{47} On First Principles 2.10.2.


\textsuperscript{49} On First Principles 2.10.3. The textual history of 1 Cor. 15:51 is complex, with almost every conceivable permutation of the possible locations of “all” and “not” visible in the manuscript tradition. Origen here has “all will be changed,” which matches most widely-accepted reading today. On the textual history, see Georg Brandhuber, “Die sekundären Lesarten bei 1 Kor. 15, 51: Ihre Verbreitung und Entstehung,” Bib 18 (1937).
comparison of the resurrection to a plant seed to which God gives a body, Origen isolates a principle of continuity that is distinguishable from the body:

For in this way our bodies, too, into which has been inserted this *ratio* that contains our corporeal substance, must be thought to fall into the earth like a seed. Although our bodies might have been dead and corrupted and dispersed, nevertheless by the word of God that *ratio* itself, which was always preserved in the substance of the body, would raise them from the earth and revive and restore them, just as this power, which exists in a seed of grain, restores and revives the seed into a body of stem and ear after its corruption and death.\(^{50}\)

Although his account here does appear to involve continuity at the level of material constituent parts—in the resurrection, the *ratio* raises the corrupted and scattered bodies up from the earth, restoring and refashioning them—that continuity does not bear the burden of proving that the end product is a *resurrection* instead of a *replacement*. Instead, the *ratio*, which is implanted in the body and contains its *substantia*, does that work.

Rufinus is probably translating λόγος. In his discussion of the continuity between the body of this life and the body of the resurrection contained in the fragment of his *Commentary on Psalm 1:5* preserved by Methodius and Epiphanius, Origen makes the same argument using the Stoic terminology of λόγος σπερματικός.\(^{51}\) This “seminal reason” is the force ensuring continuity within development over time.\(^{52}\) There, as in his

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\(^{50}\) *On First Principles* 2.10.3. *Ita namque etiam nostra corpora velut granum cadere in terram putanda sunt; quibus insita ratio ea, quae substantiam continet corporalem, quamuis emortua fuerint corpora et corrupta atque dispersa, uerbo tamen dei ratio illa ipsa, quae semper in substantia corporis salua est, erigat ea de terra et restituat ac reparat, sicut ea uirtus, quae inest in grano frumenti, post corruptionem eius ac mortem reparat ac restituit granum in culmi corpus et spicae* (SC 252, 380-82).

\(^{51}\) Methodius, *On the Resurrection* 1.20.4-5 (= Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64.12.6-8).

\(^{52}\) See Crouzel’s note on this passage in SC 253, 231.
discussion of the *ratio* in *On First Principles*, he introduces a principle of continuity for the body, the εἶδος, that is distinguishable from the body’s constituent material parts, and he explicitly uses that principle of continuity to eliminate the need for the kind of continuity of material parts that produces questions like the chain consumption problem.\(^5^3\)

This account of continuity frees Origen to use Paul’s metaphor of grain and wheat to emphasize transformation.\(^5^4\) When continuity is guaranteed by identity of constituent material parts, the obvious and vast difference between a grain of wheat and the resulting plant presents significant problems. How could the two possibly be composed of the same material parts? As a result, accounts of resurrection that focus on material continuity have tended to use Paul’s metaphor to emphasize only that something must be sown in order for something to be raised, passing over the radical transformation implied by the metaphor and instead preferring analogies that highlight material continuity and minimize transformation, such as that of the reassembled statue.\(^5^5\) By introducing a third thing, the *ratio*, that bears the *substantia* of both the grain and the plant, Origen can use the grain and the plant to highlight not just the restoration but also the refashioning involved in resurrection. What precisely happens to this *ratio* between the corruption and

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scattering of the body and the resurrection at the command of God is left unclear, but the important point is that the ratio does not suffer the fate of the body and is therefore able to maintain continuity when the body is refashioned.

Extending the ratio’s function as the principle of continuity in a process of radical transformation, Origen explains its role within the framework of his broader theological account that makes transformation so important:

And thus, for those who will deserve to obtain the inheritance of the kingdom of the heavens, the aforementioned body-restoring ratio restores, at the order of God, a spiritual body that can live in the heavens from a terrestrial and soulish [animali] body. But to those, too, who will have been of lower or more base or even of the furthest and most remote merit, a glory and dignity of body will be given in accordance with the dignity of each one’s life and soul.  

At God’s command, the ratio refashions the body into a form commensurate with the merits of the body’s soul. As we have seen, precisely this refashioning is the purpose of the resurrection for Origen.

5.2.4 Conclusions

In On First Principles, Origen’s concern to defend God against the charge of injustice based on all forms of inequality in the created realm leads him to ascribe all inequality to the free actions of rational creatures. He stays true to this account in his explanation of bodily inequality, connecting differences between the bodily states of

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56 On First Principles 2.10.3. Et ita his quidem, qui regni caelorum hereditatem consequi merebuntur, ratio illa reparandi corporis, quam supra diximus, dei iussu ex terreno et animali corpore corpus reparat spiritale, quod habitare possit in caelis; his uero, qui inferioris merit fuerint uel abiectioris aut etiam ulterioris et abstrusi, pro uniusquisque vitae atque animae dignitate etiam gloria corporis et dignitas dabitur (SC 252, 382).
various rational creatures to their differing moral states (produced, of course, by the extent of their freely-chosen falls away from God). Having made the bodies of free rational creatures logically posterior to their moral states, he develops an understanding of bodily resurrection as the re-calibration of a rational creature’s body to its new moral status (whether better or worse than before). Thus, resurrection bestows upon the righteous more glorious bodies—bodies that more closely approach God’s glorious incorporeality, whether or not they ever cease to be corporeal—while the wicked receive grosser bodies. In this way, Origen preserves his free-will theodicy: the same factor that accounts for inequality in this world will always account for bodily inequality.

For Origen, then, the actual event of resurrection—not just something that comes after resurrection, like judgment—is shaped by moral transformation in this life. Moral transformation does not directly produce resurrection per se, but the qualities bestowed by God as the body resurrects correspond to the results of moral transformation in this life, whether for good or ill. In essence, Origen has turned the Pauline promise of bodily glorification for God’s people in the resurrection into a general principle that applies, mutatis mutandis, to the wicked. It is thus, ironically, the theologian most often associated with universalism who is best able to account for differentiation between the righteous and the wicked in resurrection.

Origen’s connection between moral transformation in this life and the form of the resurrected body also opens the door to the appropriation and development of the Pauline resurrection schema. Origen does not pursue this possibility in On First Principles. To
see how the understanding of resurrection articulated in *On First Principles* shapes his reading of Paul, we must turn to his *Commentary on Romans*.

### 5.3 Commentary on Romans

#### 5.3.1 Introduction

Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* is one of his mature works, composed late in his Caesarean period. He had certainly completed it by the late 240’s, since he mentioned it in his *Commentary on Matthew* (17.32) and *Against Celsus* (5.47, 8.65)—works that he is thought to have written simultaneously, sometime around 248.57 Although there is no firm evidence establishing its earliest possible date of composition, the fact that he does not mention it in any of his other works suggests that he composed it shortly before writing *Against Celsus* and the *Commentary on Matthew*.58 Not only is it the oldest surviving commentary on Romans,59 but it is also the only one of Origen’s commentaries

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57 Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.36.2) claims that Origen wrote these two works simultaneously, during the reign of Philip the Arabian (244-249), although he never mentions the *Commentary on Romans*. For internal evidence from *Against Celsus* corroborating Eusebius, see *Origen: Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), xiv-xv. For evidence from the *Commentary on Matthew*, see *Origenes: Der Kommentar zum Evangelium nach Mattäus*, trans. Hermann J. Vogt, 3 vols., Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur 30 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1990), 2:1-4.

58 Thus, dates of 243, 244, and 246 have been suggested, although generally without a high degree of confidence in their precision. See *Origen: Commentary on the Épistle to the Romans*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, 2 vols., FC 103-104 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1:8 n. 28.

to survive in a form that treats every passage of the Scriptural book under consideration.\textsuperscript{60}

It thus provides a unique window into Origen’s mature thought as developed across his exegesis of this key Pauline epistle.

Unfortunately, the state of the work’s text is even more complicated than that of \textit{On First Principles}. Relatively little of the original Greek survives. In addition to short quotations preserved in Basil of Caesarea’s \textit{On the Holy Spirit} (29.73), Socrates’s \textit{Ecclesiastical History} (7.32.17), the \textit{Catena}, and the \textit{Philocalia}, there is one larger collection of excerpts from the Tura Papyrus that covers Origen’s comments on Romans 3:5 to 5:5.\textsuperscript{61} As in the case of \textit{On First Principles}, then, interpreters must rely on Rufinus’s Latin translation, completed in 406/7.\textsuperscript{62} Compounding questions about Rufinus’s reliability in translating controversial statements by Origen, though, is the fact that Rufinus himself claims to have abbreviated Origen’s 15-volume work by half.\textsuperscript{63} In fact, the situation is even more complex: Rufinus complains that the Greek manuscripts have been “interpolated” or “interrupted” (\textit{interpolati sunt}) and claims that some of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Origen: \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, 1:1-2.
\item Origen: \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, 1:17. The Tura Papyrus, discovered in 1941, also contains excerpts from Origen’s \textit{Against Celsus} and homily on 1 Samuel 28. In extracting selections from these three texts, the compiler does not appear to have tried to preserve the integrity of the texts before him at the level of their broader arguments. See Jean Scherer, \textit{Le Commentaire d’Origène sur Rom. III.5 - V.7 d’après les extraits du Papyrus no. 88748 du Musée du Caire et les fragments de la Philocalie et du Vaticanus Gr. 762. Essai de reconstitution du texte et de la pensée des tomes V et VI du ‘Commentaire sur l’Épître aux Romains’}, ed. Jean Sainte Fare Garnot, Bibliothèque d’Étude 27 (Cairo: Institut français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1957).
\item Origen: \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, 1:12.
\item \textit{Commentary on Romans} Rufinus’s Preface.2. He seems to have succeeded; see Origen: \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, 1:13.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
work’s volumes are missing from almost everyone’s libraries. The first claim could be that heterodox passages have been inserted into the books, or it could mean that the sequence of books has been interrupted. The second claim, concerning the books missing from nearly everyone’s libraries, could mean that Rufinus had to reconstruct Origen’s comments on certain sections of Romans from his other writings or that Rufinus had to search hard for a complete set but eventually succeeded in collecting one.

In the end, then, we are left with scattered Greek fragments and a compressed (yet still substantial) Latin translation by a translator with a self-professed penchant for “correcting” what he thought were heterodox interpolations into Origen’s works. Despite these obstacles to certainty about what precisely Origen said concerning any particular

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64 Commentary on Romans Rufinus’s Preface.2.

65 Scheck adopts the former interpretation (Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 1:13-14), while the latter is found in Henry Chadwick, “Rufinus and the Tura Papyrus of Origen’s Commentary on Romans,” JTS NS 10 (1959): 37-41. In the comments on Romans 9:1-15 as translated by Rufinus, Chadwick perceives “not a trace of Origen’s vitality and exegetical subtlety” (40). This only changes when the comments reach the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (9:16), which he thinks are remarkably similar to Origen’s discussion of the topic in On First Principles (to which Rufinus’s Latin seems to refer the reader). The fact that book 11 of Origen’s Greek was noted as missing in the tenth-century Mount Athos manuscript (Laura 184) that correlates the text of Romans with the book divisions of Origen’s commentary reinforces Chadwick’s suspicion that book 11, which would have begun with Romans 9:1, was already missing in Rufinus’s day. He thus concludes that Rufinus had to resort to other discussions by Origen to fill in the gap left by the missing volume. While this account is plausible, I do not find it necessary. Rufinus does not say that some books are found in no libraries; he says that they are found in almost (fere) no libraries, and he thanks God for filling in those gaps. In my view, Rufinus could quite easily be read as wearily thanking God for granting success to an extensive search for the missing volumes. Furthermore, his comment at the end of his translation (Epilogue of Rufinus.2-3) that he abbreviated some things and filled in others does not need to be a reference to replacing whole missing books. He could be talking about a missing sentence or paragraph here or there. In any case, Chadwick still believes that the material Rufinus “provided” was of authentically Origenist provenance. Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, “Die fehlehnden Bände des Römerbriefkommentars des Origenes,” in Origeniana Quarta, ed. Lothar Lies (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1987), the producer of the text’s critical edition, argues that Rufinus drew on Origen’s lost Stromateis to fill in some of the gaps.
passage in Romans, the same principle applies here as in the case of *On First Principles*: the broader patterns and connections between themes that inform Origen’s exegesis of Romans remain likely to emerge even from the relatively unsure textual basis provided by Rufinus’s translation.\(^{66}\)

### 5.3.2 The Contribution of the Commentary on Romans: Developing the Pauline Resurrection Schema

Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* further develops the basic system from *On First Principles* in significant ways. Taken together, these contributions constitute a rich development of the Pauline resurrection schema, developing connections between the resurrection of Christ, the moral transformation of the Christian, the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the believer’s bodily resurrection.

#### 5.3.2.1 Jesus’s Death and Resurrection

One of the most important contributions of the *Commentary on Romans* is its discussion of the role of Jesus in the transformation of fallen rational creatures. Origen takes full advantage of the plethora of passages in Romans that discuss the necessity of Jesus in the economy of salvation to explore this theme.

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\(^{66}\) I have used the only existing critical edition of Rufinus’s text, *Origenes: Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes*, 3 vols., AGLB 16, 33, 34 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990-1998), referenced as “Hammond Bammel.” For a detailed examination of what can be learned about Rufinus’s reliability as a translator from a comparison of his Latin version with the excerpts from the Tura Papyrus, with an optimistic conclusion, see Chadwick, “Rufinus and the Tura Papyrus of Origen’s Commentary on Romans.” Chadwick responds point-by-point to the evidence adduced by Scherer for his far more pessimistic assessment of the reliability of Rufinus’s translation. See Scherer, *Le Commentaire d’Origène sur Rom. III.5 - V.7*, 85-121.
In the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen speaks often of the saving effects of Christ’s death and resurrection. In order to make sense of these discussions, however, it is crucial to keep Origen’s broader concerns in mind in order to see how his understanding of the role of Christ in the economy of salvation is shaped by them. Although Origen’s discussion of the salvific effect of Christ’s resurrection is relatively brief, it reflects key patterns evident in his discussion of Christ’s death. Therefore, it will be helpful to first examine his understanding of Christ’s death before turning to his account of Christ’s resurrection.

As we have already seen, one of Origen’s most important concerns is for the moral character of rational creatures. The problem to which the economy of salvation is a solution is that free rational creatures have turned away from God (to varying degrees) and have thereby become morally deformed (to varying degrees)—that is, they have become unlike God.67 Therefore, one would expect Origen’s account of the economy of salvation, including the career of the incarnate Christ, to focus on the ways in which it brings about the moral transformation characteristic of fallen rational creatures progressively returning to likeness to God.

We have also seen how a second key concern of Origen is to protect the freedom of these rational creatures at all costs in order to avoid making God responsible for the inequality that presently pervades the created order. Accounts of Christ’s saving work in

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67 This deformity, not the guilt piled up by sinful acts, is the fundamental problem. This is why transformation, not forgiveness, is the fundamental category of Origen’s soteriology. See Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*, 82.
which the creature’s salvation is effected without the creature’s free and willing participation would run afoul of this concern. If God only saved some, the resulting inequality would clearly be God’s fault; and even if God saved all in this manner (viz., without the creature’s free and willing participation), the victory would be a hollow one.

These concerns emerge clearly in Origen’s discussion of Romans 5:10-11. Origen struggles to explain what Paul might mean by saying that “we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” when “we were still enemies” (Rom. 5:10). He opens his discussion by pointing out that the possibility for an enemy of God to become reconciled to God proves, against Marcion and Valentinus, that there are no substances naturally hostile to God. 68 Only things that are hostile to God on account of their will, rather than on account of their nature, can receive reconciliation, because reconciliation with God can only occur through the cessation of works that God does not love. 69 Without such a change, enmity with God remains and there is no reconciliation. But Origen encounters a problem in Paul’s text: If enmity with God is a result of doing what God hates and reconciliation with God results from turning to do what God loves, then how can people be reconciled to God through the death of his Son while they are still enemies? Their

68 Commentary on Romans 4.12.1.

69 The conclusion that no substance exists that it is hostile to God by nature does not follow from the argument that Origen gives here, at least in Rufinus’s translation. All that follows is that the substances of those enemies who were reconciled to God were not hostile to God by nature. There may yet be other enemies or substances that remain hostile to God by nature and are therefore unreconciled.
reconciliation appears to have been effected without their agency and without any actual change in behavior.\footnote{Commentary on Romans 4.12.3.}

Origen addresses this problem in two ways. First, he recognizes that such a reconciliation can happen through the “blood of a mediator” (\textit{sanguis intercessoris}) rather than the “word of one entreat\textit{ing}” (\textit{sermo precatoris}), but he uses this interpretation to emphasize how shameful it would be to then continue doing what God hates.\footnote{Commentary on Romans 4.12.3 (Hammond Bammel 2:355).} Even though this reconciliation has been accomplished through the agency of the Son and not through a change in the person’s ways, that reconciliation only lasts as long as the person refrains from doing what God hates.

Second, Origen elucidates this compact statement in Romans with fuller statements from elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, particularly Ephesians. Details in the description there of Christ breaking down the “wall of hostility” provide Origen with something that was missing from Romans 5:10: a \textit{process}. The reconciliation in Romans seems instantaneous, which does not fit comfortably with Origen’s interest in the development of moral character across time. But Origen highlights the double mention in Ephesians 2:11-18 of Christ’s destruction of hostility as the key to understanding the process that Romans 5:10 describes so briefly.\footnote{Commentary on Romans 4.12.4.} In the first mention, Christ \textit{breaks down} the middle wall of hostility in his own flesh (Eph. 2:14). Christ does this even now “in
those who are still waging combat against sin and are opposing it in accordance with their abilities.” In the second mention, Christ puts to death that hostility in his body through the cross (Eph. 2:16). Christ does this “in those who no longer accept sin in any way whatsoever”; these are those who can truly say, with Paul, that they have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

This remarkable passage outlines the way in which Origen consistently explicates the role of Christ in the economy of salvation. Instead of describing Christ’s death as effecting some sort of transaction with God or change in God that then allows humans to be reconciled to God, Origen has Christ produce an effect in humans through a twofold process (breaking down, then putting to death) that in turn produces reconciliation between humans and God. Furthermore, this effect in other humans is connected to their own moral effort: when people are fighting against sin with all their might, then

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73 Commentary on Romans 4.12.4. in his qui adhuc certamen gerunt aduersum peccatum et repugnant ei pro uiribus (Hammond Bammel 2:356). All translations of the Commentary on Romans are my own, but I have consulted throughout the translations of Scheck (Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans), Heither (Origenes: Römerbriefkommentar, trans. Theresia Heither, 6 vols., Fontes Christiani 2/1-6 [Freiburg: Herder, 1990-1999]), and Brésard and Fédou (Origène: Commentaire sur l’Épître aux Romains, trans. Luc Brésard and Michel Fédou, 4 vols., SC 532, 539, 543, 555 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2009-2012]). I follow Scheck’s paragraph numbering.

74 Commentary on Romans 4.12.4. in his qui peccatum iam nequaquam omnino recipiunt (Hammond Bammel 2:356).

75 Indeed, Origen is clear that Christ’s death while we were still sinners proves that the hostility was always from our side, not God’s; God loved us even when we were sinners, and the change that needs to be effected in us is the pouring out of that kind of love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Commentary on Romans 4.10.1).
Christ is breaking down the hostility in his flesh; when they have completely overcome sin, *then* Christ has put the hostility to death.\textsuperscript{76}

Origen’s explanation here of how Christ’s death produces reconciliation between once-sinful humans and God both coheres with his broader concerns and raises many questions. On the one hand, it is an explanation of how humans who sin become humans who do not sin; this is precisely what we have come to expect from Origen. To him, anything less would be pointless. Christ himself needs neither moral transformation nor reconciliation with God. If Christ’s death is to do anything significant, it must produce real effects in those who *do* need reconciliation with God. Origen’s is not a scheme in which redemption is first accomplished and only later applied; rather, *the application*—which must not override creaturely free will—is *the accomplishment*.\textsuperscript{77}

On the other hand, it raises many questions about the manner in which Christ’s actions produce this real moral transformation in others. Taken in isolation, the passage here almost seems to turn talk of Christ’s career into a metaphorical way of speaking about other people’s inner struggle for virtue. Origen clearly does not, however, reduce

\textsuperscript{76} In a similar way, Origen carefully explains in his *Commentary on John* that Jesus, the Lamb of God, does not take away the sin of the world apart from producing moral transformation in sinners through suffering that produces penitence (*Commentary on John* 6.295-300). If people neither grieve nor are tormented until their sin is taken away, then Jesus is not in fact the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (6.297).

\textsuperscript{77} Cf. Theresia Heither’s introductory comments to her translation of books 5 and 6 of the *Commentary on Romans*: “Erst in der Teilnahme der Glaubenden an diesem Heilsgeschehen, wie es sich zuerst in Christus vollzogen hat, kommt die Erlösung an ihr Ziel” (*Origenes: Römerbriefkommentar*, 3:18; emphasis added). I would simply add that Origen is not so clear that the Heilsgeschehen had really been consummated “zuerst.”
Jesus to a literary metaphor. Jesus really did live and die, and that really was necessary for the moral transformation of other humans. But how? Origen appears to hold to a theological version of “spooky action at a distance”—and one that does not violate the sovereign agency of the object acted upon, at that! The key point to note here, however, is that what Origen leaves relatively unclear (the way in which Christ’s actions produce effects in other people) makes sense given the overall pattern that Origen makes abundantly clear: Christ acts in history, which subsequently produces real effects in others (which are nevertheless freely willed); and in the production of those effects, Christ is consummately performing those acts that he performed in history (since, without those effects in others, Christ’s own actions would have been pointless).

How, then, does Christ’s death produce the freely-willed rejection of sin in others? Origen begins to answer this question in the very next sentence: “Christ also killed the enmity in his flesh in this way: having accepted death, he gave an example to

78 “Spooky action at a distance” is the informal phrase popularly attributed to Albert Einstein to describe the phenomenon of quantum entanglement, wherein the quantum states of particles become “entangled” with each other so that changes in the state of one particle appear to produce corresponding, practically instantaneous changes in the other—even when they are separated from each other. Einstein thought this was impossible, as he argued the famous paper Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen, “Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?,” Physical Review 47 (1935).

79 Cf. Gerhard Gruber, ΖΩΗ: Wesen, Stufen und Mitteilung des wahren Lebens bei Origenes, Münchener theologische Studien: II. Systematische Abteilung 23 (Munich: Hueber, 1962), 200-01: Although Christ has many comings, such as in the body at the incarnation or at the end of time, “[d]ie wichtigste Ankunft Christi ist jedoch die geistige (νοητή) Ankunft, die Ankunft Christi in der Seele des einzelnen Gläubigen. Denn ohne diese Ankunft in den Gläubigen wäre jene erste Ankunft vergebens geschehen” (200).
humans to fight against sin even unto death.\textsuperscript{80} If one can resist the temptation of sin even under the threat of bodily death, then clearly one has learned to subordinate the desires of the body (even its survival instinct) to the desire for righteousness. Thus, when one sets the cross of Christ before the mind’s eye, no sinful passion can gain the upper hand.\textsuperscript{81}

But Origen does not restrict himself to this moral exemplar theory. He mentions that he has elsewhere discussed the question of how Christ died for humans, bearing their weaknesses and taking away the sins of the world as the lamb of God.\textsuperscript{82} In these places, he says, he has compared Christ’s sacrifice to those of pagans, reported in secular histories, whose deaths delivered their peoples from threats. Although Origen is non-committal about truth of these stories, he uses them to highlight the uniqueness of Christ’s death averting a threat over the whole world (rather than a particular people or city). As for how such deaths manage to avert threatening disasters, Origen here only briefly summarizes the model that he explains in greater depth elsewhere: Jesus hands over his blood to the rulers of this world; rather than quenching the rulers’ thirst for

\textsuperscript{80} Commentary on Romans 4.12.4. \textit{Hoc ergo modo etiam Christus occidit inimicitiam in carne sua cum morte suscepta exemplum dedit hominibus usque ad mortem resistere aduersum peccatum} (Hammond Bammel 2:357). On the connection between Christ’s death on the cross and the victory over sin in the Christian’s life as developed in Origen’s homilies, see Gerardus Q. Reijners, \textit{Das Wort vom Kreuz: Kreuzes- und Erlösungssymbolik bei Origenes}, Bonner Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte 13 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1983), 82-84.

\textsuperscript{81} Commentary on Romans 6.1.4. Cf. 5.5.9. Marguerite Harl, \textit{Origène et la fonction révélatrice du verbe incarné}, Patristica sorbonensia 2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1958), 294, highlights the connection between the refusal of sin and obedience to God in the death of Christ.

\textsuperscript{82} Commentary on Romans 4.11.4.
blood, this blood actually quenches their power and destroys their kingdom.\textsuperscript{83} Thus, Christ’s death causes the freely-willed rejection of sin in others not only by providing a model for rejecting sin even under the threat of bodily death, but also by weakening the forces of evil that were holding humans in sin (and into whose power humans sold themselves through their sin).\textsuperscript{84} In other words, Christ’s death both makes it possible for humans to throw off sin (by weakening the devil) and shows humans how to do so—both disarms the prison guards and shows the prisoners the way out of the prison.\textsuperscript{85}

Compared to his discussion of how Christ’s death produces positive moral transformation in humans, Origen’s discussion of how Christ’s resurrection contributes to redemption is relatively underdeveloped. His claim of what Christ’s resurrection contributes, however, is extravagant: As Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, Origen says, he was contemplating “not the extinction of posterity but the restoration of the world and the renewal of the whole creation that has been restored through the

\textsuperscript{83} Commentary on Romans 4.11.4. In a discussion in his earlier Commentary on John 6.273-83, to which he apparently refers the reader here, Origen similarly compares Christ’s offering of his humanity as the lamb as a sacrifice for the whole world to the martyrs whose faithful endurance wears out the demons who attack them, providing relief for those who have fallen under the demons’ dominion and protecting those who have not yet been attacked. He makes the same point in Against Celsus 1.31. Here, in the Commentary on Romans, Origen appears to be thinking in similar terms when he says that sin was necessarily repulsed and broken when it encountered Jesus, because Jesus is life itself (5.1.21).

\textsuperscript{84} It is because humans freely sold themselves into subjection to these evil powers that they hold the χειρόγραφον of human immortality that Christ had to erase on the cross (Col. 2:14; Commentary on Romans 5.3.3, 5.9.8).

\textsuperscript{85} For a fuller discussion of the specific ways in which Origen accounts for the redemptive effects of Christ’s death and resurrection, see José Antonio Alcain, Cautiverio y redención del hombre en Orígenes, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, Teología Deusto 4 (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1973), summarized in Crouzel, Origen, 194-96. See also the discussion, limited to the Commentary on Romans, in Theresia Heither, Translatio Religionis: Die Paulusdeutung des Origenes in seinem Kommentar zum Römerbrief, Bonner Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte 16 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1990), 246-57.
resurrection of the Lord.” What he does say about how Christ’s resurrection accomplishes this, though, shows that the same overall framework is in play as in his interpretation of Christ’s death.

An important key to his interpretation of Jesus’s resurrection lies in Origen’s tight link between Christ’s resurrection and ascension. Time after time, Origen associates resurrection with heaven or a heavenly state. Such a link is not inevitable. One can imagine a resurrection without an ascension (such as that envisioned by millennialists) or an ascension without a resurrection (such as that experienced by Elijah). In fact, if one thinks that the point of resurrection is to make possible a renewed life on earth, then an ascension into heaven—away from earth—is fundamentally extrinsic and perhaps even opposed to resurrection.

For Origen, by contrast, resurrection and ascension appear to be inseparable. Those who have become dead to this world through Christ—that is, strangers to death and sin—have been raised with Christ, seated in the heavenly realms, and given heavenly citizenship. From Romans 6:4—“Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”—Origen deduces the principle that we will experience everything that Christ experienced, from death to resurrection to ascension to

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86 Commentary on Romans 4.7.3. non interitum posteritatis sed reparationem mundi et innovacionem totius creaturae quae per resurrectionem Domini restituta est (Hammond Bammel 2:321).
87 Commentary on Romans 5.1.16.
sitting at the right hand of the Father in the heavens.\textsuperscript{88} Origen does not go so far as to conflate resurrection and ascension, but he clearly views them as successive steps that properly belong together in a single process.

This link is faithful to the Paul of Ephesians 2:5-6 and Colossians 3:1. It also embeds resurrection within a dense web of Pauline texts that reflect the broader themes and characteristics we have come to expect in Origen’s soteriology, namely, a focus on a process that produces moral transformation, which constitutes increasing conformity to God. Commenting on the connection in Romans 6:3-4 between Christ’s resurrection and the Christian’s walking in newness of life, Origen writes:

Therefore, let us walk in newness of life, showing ourselves to be daily new and, I might say, more beautiful to him who raised us with Christ. Let us be transformed into the same image, collecting the beauty of our face in Christ as if in a mirror and observing in him the glory of the Lord, by which Christ, rising from the dead, ascended from earthly humility to the glory of the Father’s majesty.\textsuperscript{89}

Here, Origen combines Christ’s resurrection (mentioned in Romans 6:4) with Christ’s ascension (not mentioned in the verse) in order to construe the resurrection-ascension sequence as a progression of increasing glory. In turn, this construal allows Origen to connect Christ’s progressive glorification in his resurrection-ascension to the progressive transformation of the Christian that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 3:18. While 2

\textsuperscript{88} Commentary on Romans 5.8.11.

\textsuperscript{89} Commentary on Romans 5.8.13. In nouitate ergo uitae ambulemus ostendentes nosmet ipsos ei qui nos cum Christo suscitauit cotidie nouos et ut ita dixerim pulchriores decorem uultus nostri in Christo tamquam in speculo colligentes et in ipso gloriam Domini speculantes eadem imagine transformemur qua Christus surgens a mortuis ab humilitate terrena ad gloriam paternae maiestatis ascendit (Hammond Bammel 2:430-31).
Corinthians 3 says nothing about Christ’s resurrection or ascension, it does speak of Christians being *progressively*—from one degree of glory to another—transformed into the image of the glory of the Lord. One could read 2 Corinthians 3:18 as envisioning a progressive conformity to a static image—that is, that the image of Christ that Christians see remains constant even as Christians become progressively conformed to it. Instead, however, Origen envisions *two* dynamic images: the image of the glory of the Lord is dynamic because it is actually the image of Christ’s progressive glorification in his resurrection and ascension, and the image of the Christian is correspondingly dynamic precisely because it follows the dynamic image of Christ.90

The remainder of Origen’s discussion of “walking in newness of life” complements this link between Romans 6 and 2 Corinthians 3 with an array of Pauline motifs. He defines “newness of life” as that which is taken on when one casts off the “old man and his deeds” (Eph. 4:22) and puts on the “new man” who has been created according to the image of God (Eph. 4:24) and is “being renewed in the knowledge of God according to the image of the one who created him” (Col. 3:10).91 Origen uses Paul’s description of the “outer man” who is “wasting away” and the “inner man” who is being renewed “day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16) to highlight the necessity of viewing this

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90 On this transformation through contemplation described in 2 Cor. 3:18, see Henri Crouzel, *Théologie de l’image de Dieu chez Origène*, Théologie 34 (Aubier: Éditions Montaigne, 1956), 232-36 (who nevertheless does not discuss the dynamism of the resurrection-ascension process).

91 Commentary on Romans 5.8.12.
transformation as an ongoing process of growth in virtue and understanding. He even argues that Paul’s choice of the word “walking” rather than “standing” testifies to the progressive, ongoing nature of the transformation that is being described.) Christ’s resurrection and ascension thus turn out to constitute the archetype for a process of transformation that Paul discusses throughout his writings. Not surprisingly, Origen’s description of what this transformation actually looks like focuses on progress in virtue and understanding:

Finally, consider those who are advancing in faith and are daily shining forth in virtues, how they are always adding to good works and seeking out more honorable things for honorable acts, how they are growing rich in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom and now perceive as open and clear the things that earlier seemed less easy to understand.

Furthermore, this connection between resurrection and ascension has another payoff for Origen: it gets Jesus not only out of the grave but also up into heaven, into the very presence of the Father (Eph. 2:6, Col. 3:1). Since Origen coordinates proximity to God with both relative “subtlety” of body and moral excellence, as we saw in On First Principles, Jesus’s resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father in heaven becomes a potent archetype for the return of fallen free rational creatures to God.

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92 Commentary on Romans 5.8.13.
93 Commentary on Romans 5.8.14.
94 Commentary on Romans 5.8.13. Intuere denique eos, qui in fide proficiunt et cotidie in uirtutibus enitescunt, quomodo semper bonis operibus adiciunt meliora et honestis actibus honestiora conquirunt, quomodo in intellectu in scientia sapientiaque ditescunt et ea, quae ante minus plana ad intelligendum uidebantur, aperta postmodum dilucidaque perspiciunt (Hammond Bammel 2:430).
We saw earlier that Origen links resurrection to ascension not just for Jesus but also for Christians. Origen’s descriptions of the changes bestowed on humans in this process confirm that the process of resurrection-ascension is integrated into his broader understanding of the human predicament and the nature of corporeal existence. Where Christ is—in heaven, with the Father—is where humans need to be, and they need to be transformed in order to be there. Commenting on Paul’s claim in Romans 8:17 that Christians will be heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Origen gives a twofold explanation of what it means to be a co-heir with Christ: it is both to have one’s body of humility conformed to Christ’s body of glory (Phil. 3:21) and to be allowed to be in the same place as Christ (John 17:24).  

This final destination, for which humans are conformed to Christ’s glory, cannot be anything like what is currently seen. In his explanation of the claim in Romans 8:24 that “hope which is seen is not hope,” Origen focuses on the present invisibility of that which is hoped for. Paul’s point in Romans 8, then, is to teach that the Christian’s hope lies in something so different from the world humans experience today that it is unlike anything seen today, even the visible heaven. God has indeed prepared an earth, but one that is eternal, not temporal. Correspondingly, the purpose of the spiritual body is to be

95 Commentary on Romans 7.3.3.
96 Commentary on Romans 7.5.11. On the importance of distinguishing between things that are inherently invisible (only the incorporeal God) and things that are simply unseen (because of the limitations of the one doing the looking), see Tzamalikos, Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time, 112-16.
97 Commentary on Romans 7.5.11.
able to enjoy these unseen things\textsuperscript{98}—as opposed to the fleshly body of this present life that is only able to enjoy things that are seen and in which sin finds a ready partner for leading humanity astray through fleshly pleasures.\textsuperscript{99} Once again, then, Origen presents resurrection as part of a process that enables a person to transcend this visible creation. The fact that he does not speculate in his \textit{Commentary on Romans} about the origin of this visible creation does not prevent him from viewing the visible creation the same way in both texts, namely, as something created by God yet to be transcended, through resurrection, in a return to God.

\textbf{5.3.2.2 Christ’s Resurrection and the Christian’s Moral Transformation}

In \textit{On First Principles}, bodily transformation in resurrection reflected the rational creature’s moral transformation. With the exception of Jesus’s resurrection—unsurprisingly, since Jesus’s bodily humiliation was exceptional in that it did not reflect moral deformation—the same holds true in the \textit{Commentary on Romans}. We have already explored the ways in which Origen connects Jesus’s resurrection (and ascension) to the Christian’s bodily transformation. Given the strong connection drawn in \textit{On First Principles} between bodily and moral transformation, then, one would expect Origen to integrate the moral transformation of humans into his account of how Christians become conformed to the glorious transformation of Christ. In this expectation, we are not

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 7.5.11.

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 5.7.3-4.
disappointed; Origen’s discussion of Jesus’s resurrection and the way it results in the resurrection of others is saturated with moral transformation.

Origen’s explanation of how people are progressively transformed into the image of the glory of the Lord by beholding the Lord’s glory (2 Cor. 3:18) makes it clear that this process is the bringing forward, in some sense, of the future reality into the present. After laying out a pedagogical progression of glories—from the glory revealed through Moses and the law to the glory revealed in the incarnate Christ’s earthly career to the culminating glory in Christ’s second coming—Origen explains the conditions that are necessary for being transformed oneself from glory to glory. Just as a true understanding of the Mosaic law prompts the person to shift gaze from the law itself to Christ’s earthly career recorded in the gospels, so the person’s mind, enlightened by faith, must then shift its focus to the Lord’s second coming in glory. This second shift, though, necessarily changes this present life. The person who follows this progression is transformed from the present glory to the future glory which is hoped for. Whence I judge that it is not possible for anyone to merit to be made capable of receiving that future glory unless he accepts already here a certain use and practice of it, according to that which the Apostle says: ‘by beholding it in a mirror and puzzle’; so that, by this image of assiduous practice that the one who has been placed in flesh performs, he might be made more ready for the capacity of that true glory through the power of the Holy Spirit.

100 Commentary on Romans 4.8.10.
101 Commentary on Romans 4.8.10. ... et a gloria praesenti ad futuram quae speratur gloriam transformetur. Unde arbitror nec posse quempiam nec mereri futurae illius gloriae fieri capacet nisi iam hinc usum et meditationem quandam eius accipiat secundum quod apostolus dicit, in speculo eam et in aenigmate contuendo; ut ex hac imagine meditationis assiduae quam in carne positus de divina gloria gerit.
In some way, then, the glory proper to the future must be anticipated now in order to be experienced in the future.\textsuperscript{102} As he puts it elsewhere, the resurrection of Christ is what makes it possible to walk in newness of life, which is to live focused on heaven even while walking on earth.\textsuperscript{103}

Origen’s comments on Paul’s claim that righteousness will be reckoned to those who believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:24) helps fill in the picture of what it means for the future glory to be anticipated now through meditation on the glorious Christ.\textsuperscript{104} Why, he wonders, did Paul highlight the importance of belief in Christ’s resurrection when discussing the nature of the faith for which righteousness is reckoned? Why not highlight the importance of belief in Christ as wisdom, power, righteousness, the Word, the truth, or the life? He finds the key in Ephesians 2:6—God “raised us up with [Christ] and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” This verse establishes the principle that whatever happened to Jesus happens or will happen to Christians. Thus, Christians are raised with Christ and have been seated at the

\textit{paratior ad capacitatem ueræ illius gloriae per uirtutem Sancti Spiritus transferatur} (Hammond Bammel 2:335-36).

\textsuperscript{102} See also \textit{Commentary on Romans} 7.8.8 (commenting on Rom. 8:30), where Origen uses 2 Cor. 3:18 to link perception in this life of the glory of Christ with eschatological transformation into glory. He does not there explain, however, how the one produces the other. Henri Crouzel, “La « première » et la « seconde » résurrection des hommes d’après Origène,” \textit{Did} 3 (1973): 4, situates the Christian’s twofold appropriation of Christ’s resurrection within the broader patterns of Origen’s thought, wherein what Christ does is first appropriated “in a mirror” and then “face-to-face.”

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 9.40.1.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 4.7.5.
right hand of the Father in heaven (and are therefore, Origen points out, now in heavenly regions instead of earthly ones). In the same way, and now drawing on Romans 6, Origen reminds his readers that, if they have died together with Christ, they will live with him; correspondingly, they ought to be dead to sin and alive to God. He concludes by quoting the admonition of Colossians 3:1 to set one’s mind on things above, where Christ is, in light of having been raised with Christ. Only people who do this, Origen says, show themselves to be true believers in the resurrection of Jesus; it is only such faith that will be reckoned as righteousness. Thus, Origen interprets Paul’s claim that the faith to which righteousness is reckoned is faith in the resurrection of Jesus to mean that there is something about believing in the resurrection of Jesus that produces or at least motivates real moral transformation.

Origen integrates this understanding of the connection between Christ’s resurrection and the Christian’s moral transformation into the framework described above with respect to the connection between Christ’s death and the Christian’s moral transformation. That is, just as Christ’s death is truly accomplished in its application, which takes the form of the putting to death of the vices, so also Origen is clear that Christ’s resurrection is truly accomplished in its application, the new life of virtue. Just as Christ’s death by itself would be pointless, so too would Christ’s resurrection in isolation be pointless. Thus, commenting on Paul’s claim in Romans 4:25 that Jesus was resurrected for our justification, Origen emphasizes the importance of the Christian’s
moral transformation towards righteousness (which is, for him, the Christian’s justification) by casting it as the accomplishment of Christ’s resurrection:

Indeed, if we have been resurrected with Christ, who is justice, and walk in newness of life and live according to justice, then Christ has risen for us for our justification; but if we have not yet put aside the old man with his deeds, but are instead living in injustice, I dare say that Christ has not yet resurrected for us for justification, nor has he been handed over on account of our sins. For if I believe this, how do I love that on account of which he endured death? If I believe these things, that he rose for my justification, how does injustice please me? Therefore, Christ justifies only those who have taken up a new life by the example of his own resurrection and are casting off the old garments of injustice and iniquity as if the cause of death.¹⁰⁵

One could interpret this passage as merely stating that those who do not respond to Jesus’s death and resurrection by transforming their lives are failing to take it seriously.

A stronger reading, however, is that Jesus only rises from the dead for our justification when we are actually justified (that is, made actually righteous). To be sure, Origen does not conflate Jesus’s resurrection with the believer’s moral transformation tout court—he can speak of Jesus’s resurrection as a pattern that must be received—but there remains an important sense in which Jesus’s resurrection has not yet happened if the person has not been morally transformed.

¹⁰⁵ Commentary on Romans 4.7.8. Etenim si consurreximus Christo, qui est iustitia, et in noutate uitae ambulamus et secundum iustitiam uiuimus surrexit nobis Christus ad iustificationem nostram; si vero nondum deposuimus ueterem hominem cum actibus suis, sed in iniustitia uiuimus, audeo dicere quod nondum nobis resurrexit Christus ad iustificationem nec traditus est propter peccata nostra; si enim hoc credo quomodo illud amo pro quo ille pertulit mortem? Si haec credo quod ille ad iustificationem meam surrexit, quomodo mihi iniustitia placet? Iustificat ergo eos Christus tantummodo qui nouam uitam exemplo resurrectionis ipsius susceperunt, et utestea iniustitiae atque iniquitatis indumenta uelut causam mortis abiciunt (Hammond Bammel 2:324-25).
This latter interpretation is supported by Origen’s treatment of Romans 10:9, “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Some, he says, take this verse to mean that a person who lacks good works will be saved (although perhaps not enjoy the glory of blessedness) simply by their belief. In response, Origen argues that a true confession of Jesus’s lordship by definition includes submission to the lordship of everything that Christ is—wisdom, righteousness, truth, etc.—and rejection of the lordship of mammon (which is greed, unrighteousness, unchastity, or lying). In order to be true, an individual’s declaration that Jesus is Lord must be an accurate description of who that person truly serves, as demonstrated by that person’s moral conduct. It is, in other words, a declaration of the accomplishment of a transfer of lordship, not an aspiration for it, and certainly not of a state of affairs that remains abstracted from the life of the individual who is declaring it. “Otherwise,” Origen argues, “how will it benefit me to know and believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead? If I do not have him as raised in myself [in me ipso], if I do not walk in newness of life and flee the old habit of sinning, Christ has not yet resurrected from the dead for me [mihi].” This passage strikes many of the same themes as the one discussed above, but it adds the motif of having the resurrected

106 Commentary on Romans 8.2.7.
107 Commentary on Romans 8.2.8.
108 Commentary on Romans 8.2.8. Alioquin quid proderit scire me et credere quod Iesum Deus suscitauit a mortuis? Si in me ipso eum non habeam suscitatum ego, si non in nouitate uitae ambulo et uetustam peccandi consuetudinem fugio, nondum mihi Christus resurrexit a mortuis (Hammond Bammel 3:650).
Christ in oneself. Jesus is indeed resurrected in an objective sense, irrespective of the believer’s transformation, but Jesus’s resurrection in this sense is of no benefit to the believer—and, therefore, of no benefit to anyone—unless Jesus is resurrected in the believer. As with Jesus’s death, Jesus’s resurrection is not accomplished in a soteriologically significant way until it is applied through the development of virtue in the Christian.

5.3.2.3 The Christian’s Moral Transformation and Eschatological Resurrection

Origen makes it clear that it is this application of Christ’s resurrection in the moral transformation of the believer that causes the believer’s reception of a glorious body in the resurrection. He interprets Paul’s promise of glory, honor, incorruption, eternal life, and peace to those who persevere in good works (Rom. 2:7, 10) as a promise of incorruption in the eschatological resurrection:

Therefore, those who seek this glory (which is from the resurrection) and honor and incorruption will surely find that which has been written: “the body is sown in dishonor, but it will rise in glory; it is sown in corruption, but it will rise in incorruption.” And therefore the one who seeks after this glory and honor and incorruption through the persistence of good work will obtain eternal life.

To define incorruption, he turns to its opposite, corruption, and distinguishes between bodily and spiritual corruption—the former defined as that which God threatens to inflict

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109 On Christian moral transformation in this life as participation in Christ’s death and resurrection, see Heither, Translatio Religionis, 257-65.

110 Commentary on Romans 2.5.5. Hanc ergo gloriam quae ex resurrectione est qui requirunt et honorem et incorruptionem, illud sine dubio inuenient quod scriptum est: ‘seminatur corpus in ignominia surget in gloria, seminatur in corruptione surget in incorruptione.’ Et ideo inquisitor huius gloriae et honoris et incorruptionis per patientiam boni operis uitam consequetur aeternam (Hammond Bammel 1:115).
upon the one who corrupts God’s temple (1 Cor. 3:17), the latter paradigmatically illustrated by the serpent’s successful deception of Eve (2 Cor. 11:3).\(^{111}\) (Although Origen does not explain exactly what the bodily corruption of 1 Cor. 3:17 is, the context in 1 Corinthians suggests sexual sin.) Thus, instead of immediately defining corruption as bodily frailty or dissolution and incorruption as the lack thereof, Origen characteristically seeks out moral definitions of corruption. After deducing two corresponding incorruptions, however, he also uses the language of incorruption to connect moral virtue and resurrection: Those who pursue incorruption in both of its forms seek to merit, he says, that incorruption that is from the resurrection.

As in On First Principles, Origen speaks of the resurrection as a time when differences of moral excellence will be revealed. He promises that those who mortify their earthly members by eliminating their lusts will produce the fruit of the Spirit.\(^{112}\) This fruit, born of the mortification of the flesh, will shine forth in the resurrection:

“Your seed and works can ascend to heaven and be made works of light and be compared to the brilliance and splendor of the stars so that, when the day of the resurrection will

\(^{111}\) Commentary on Romans 2.5.7.

\(^{112}\) Commentary on Romans 4.6.9. Cf. 4.6.7, where he argues that, in this way, Christians become like Abraham, who considered his body dead (Rom. 4:19) yet produced Isaac, whose name Origen says means "joy," which is the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Pointing to the fact that Abraham fathered many children with Keturah after Sarah died (Gen. 25:1-2), Origen argues that Abraham considering his body dead must not have meant that he thought he was sterile. Rather, it must mean that Abraham had achieved victory over fleshly lusts, enabling him to produce children with Sarah and Keturah without burning with lust.
have arrived, you will differ in brightness as star from star.”

Similarly, when discussing Paul’s claim that those whom God foreknew God also predestined, called, justified, and glorified (Rom. 8:30), Origen uses Paul’s description of the varied glories of the celestial bodies in 1 Corinthians 15:41 to explain how the resurrection consummates the transformation into glory that is begun in Christians even in this life:

We are able to understand glorification even in this age according to what the Apostle says: “but, beholding the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face, we are all being transformed into the same image, from glory into glory, as if by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Therefore, there is both this glory that the justified ones gain in this life and that glory that is hoped for in the future, when this body of our humility is sown in indignity but will rise in glory, and when “the glory of the sun will be one thing and the glory of the moon another and the glory of the stars yet another, and when star differs from star in glory, thus also will be the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:41–42).

Passages such as these clearly confirm that Origen continued to view eschatological resurrection as the continuation and outworking of a process of moral transformation inaugurated in this life.

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113 Commentary on Romans 4.6.9. Sed et tu si mortifices membra tua quae sunt super terram si abiecto omni fereuore libidinis emortuum serues et nullis obnoxium uitiis corpus, potes etiam tu fructus ex eo optimos generare; potes generare Isaac quod est gaudium, et hic est primus spiritus fructus; potest semen tuum et opera tua ascendere ad caelum et effici opera lucis et stellarum fulgori splendori que conferri ut cum dies resurrectionis adfuerit tamquam stella ab stella differas in claritate (Hammond Bammel 2:318).

114 Commentary on Romans 7.8.8. De glorificatione possumus et in praesenti saeculo secundum illud intelligere quod dicit apostolus: ‘nos autem omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes eadem imagine transformamur a gloria in gloria tamquam a Domini spiritu’. Est ergo et haec gloria quam iustificati quique in prae senti uita perciunt; est et illa quae speratur in futuro cum corpus hoc humilitatis nostrae seminatur in contumelia, surget in gloria, et cum ‘alia gloria solis et alia gloria lunae et alia gloria stellarum et stella ab stella differt in gloria, ita erit et resurrectio mortuorum’ (Hammond Bammel 3:593; this passage is Commentary on Romans 7.6 according to Hammond Bammel’s chapter numbering, followed by Brésard and Fédou, which differs from Migne’s 7.8, followed by Scheck and Heither).
Origen even uses this causal link between moral transformation now and future bodily transformation in resurrection to explain Paul’s apparent uncertainty in Philippians 3:11 about whether or not he will attain to the resurrection. Origen uses his perception of Paul’s developing spiritual maturity to organize the Pauline epistles chronologically. Philippians is relatively early, because Paul says he wants to be conformed to the death of Christ so that “somehow” he might be conformed to his resurrection from the dead; Paul even insists that he has not yet taken hold of that for which he strives (Phil. 3:12-13). The perfection that Paul seeks, Origen says, is the perfecting of the virtues (expletio virtutum). While Origen’s Pauline chronology is fascinating in its own right because of its assumptions and execution, the key point here is that he faithfully follows the logic of Philippians in making attainment of this future resurrection contingent upon perseverance in the continuing struggle against sin and towards virtue.

5.3.2.4 The Holy Spirit in Moral Transformation and Resurrection

The system that has emerged from our exploration of resurrection in the Commentary on Romans thus far can be summarized in the following narrative: Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven in glory, where he sits at the right hand of the Father; by meditating on Jesus’s glorification in this process, individuals are progressively transformed to reflect that glory and its concomitant heavenly way of life

115 Commentary on Romans Origen’s Preface.3.
116 Commentary on Romans Origen’s Preface.3 (Hammond Bammel 1:38). In Rom. 8:31-39, by contrast, Paul writes with exuberant confidence of his inseparability from God’s love; therefore, the letter is later, representing a new stage in Paul’s moral perfection.
through their growth in the virtues—a process that actually constitutes the resurrection of Jesus himself in its soteriologically significant sense; finally, through this moral transformation, those individuals become the deserving and sure recipients of an eschatological resurrection whereby they will be transformed into a glory corresponding to the glory of the resurrected and ascended Christ. In short, Jesus’s bodily resurrection produces moral transformation in others, which in turn eventually produces their glorious bodily resurrection.

Origen does not leave free rational creatures completely to their own devices in the struggle to take advantage of the provision of those patterns for death to sin and new life to virtue. Instead, he portrays the Holy Spirit as an indispensable assistant in this process, although without compromising his emphasis on the priority of creaturely free will.117

Origen’s understanding of the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit is important for his understanding of resurrection because, following Paul, he ascribes both the resurrection of Jesus and the moral transformation of the believer to God working through the Spirit.118 Noting Paul’s parallel usages of “Spirit,” “Spirit of Christ,” and

117 Koch, Pronoia und Paideusis, 32, and Ramelli, The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis, 178-81, agree that Origen’s confidence in the eventual success of God’s plan to bring all rational creatures back to himself is founded on the rationality of the creatures: once they finally come to understand the truth, they will turn to God. This view manifests itself, for example, in Origen’s focus on the Holy Spirit as a teacher, discussed below. Origen’s understanding of the divine mystical pedagogy is discussed more fully in Henri Crouzel, Origène et la ’connaissance mystique’, Museum Lessianum: Section théologique 56 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961), and summarized in Crouzel, Origen, 99-119.

118 This Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, not the spirit (πνεῦμα) that is in some sense constitutive of every human being (on the latter, see the note above on debated questions in Origen’s anthropology) and
“Christ” in Romans 8:9-10, Origen deduces that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ are the same Spirit.\textsuperscript{119} This Spirit thus functions as the link between Christ (the embodiment of virtue), the Christian growing in virtue, and the resurrection of the Christian in conformity to Christ:

Christ is wisdom; if one is wise according to Christ and understands the things that are Christ’s, one has in oneself the Spirit of Christ through wisdom. Christ is justice; if one has in oneself the justice of Christ, one has in oneself the Spirit of Christ through justice. Christ is peace; if one has in oneself the peace of Christ, one has in oneself the Spirit of Christ through the Spirit of peace. So also with love and sanctification and every single thing that Christ is said to be: the one who has it here must be believed to have the Spirit of Christ in himself and to hope that his own mortal body will be made alive according to the Spirit of Christ that is dwelling in him.\textsuperscript{120}

How, then, does one acquire this Spirit of Christ that will bestow resurrection? This passage suggests that one does so by growing in the virtues, and a nearby passage confirms this reading by stating that “this gift should be sought out by merits and preserved through innocence of life,” promising that Spirit will be poured out on a person certainly not the principle that sustains biological life (the πνοή, which is only analogically related to the former two as a giver of life). Cf. Gruber, \textit{ZΩΗ}, 176-84.

\textsuperscript{119} Commentary on Romans 6.13.3, 6.13.5; cf. 7.1.2.

\textsuperscript{120} Commentary on Romans 6.13.9. Christus sapientia est; si sit sapiens secundum Christum et quae Christi sunt sapit habet in se per sapientiam spiritum Christi. Christus iustitia est; si qui habeat in se iustitiam Christi per iustitiam habet in se spiritum Christi. Christus pax est; si qui habeat in se pacem Christi per Spiritum pacis habet in se spiritum Christi. Sic et caritatem sic et sanctificationem, sic et singula quaeque quae Christus esse dicitur qui habet hic spiritum Christi in se habere credendus est et sperare quod mortale corpus suum uiusificabitur propter inhabitantem in se spiritum Christi (Hammond Bammel 2:538).
with increasing generosity in proportion to that person’s growth in virtue.\textsuperscript{121} Thus, moral effort progressively brings the Spirit of Christ, which produces glorious resurrection.

To state Origen’s view this way implies that the Holy Spirit has no active role in moral transformation, but rather that it is only given in response to moral transformation. Origen is clear that this is not the case. He portrays the Spirit as a necessary aid to human moral transformation, one that progressively trains up the willing student. Commenting on Paul’s claim that the Spirit himself intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26), Origen says that “when the Spirit of God has seen that our spirit is laboring in resisting the flesh and adhering to the Spirit, it extends a hand and helps our spirit’s infirmity.”\textsuperscript{122} The Spirit does so like a teacher who offers the beginning student a progressively advancing model for imitation.\textsuperscript{123} This image of a teacher teaching by modeling helpfully emphasizes how profoundly synergistic is Origen’s understanding of human moral transformation: the teacher and student work in concert, and the student’s constant effort is indispensable to the education’s success. Thus, while Origen sometimes focuses on the teacher’s contribution to the student’s education—the Spirit’s work in the person’s moral

\textsuperscript{121} Commentary on Romans 6.13.7. et meritis conquiratur hoc donum et uitae innocentia conservetur (Hammond Bammel 2:536).
\textsuperscript{122} Commentary on Romans 7.6.4. Sed ubi uiderit spiritus Dei laborare spiritum nostrum in aduersando carnii et adhaerendo sibi porrigit manum et adiuuat infirmitatem eius (Hammond Bammel 3:580). This passage is numbered 7.4 in Hammond Bammel and Brésard and Fédou.
\textsuperscript{123} Commentary on Romans 7.6.5. For a helpful exploration of the motif of the Holy Spirit as teacher in Origen’s Commentary on Romans, see Maureen Beyer Moser, Teacher of Holiness: The Holy Spirit in Origen’s Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Gorgias Dissertations 17 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2005), 118-29.
transformation—at other times he can describe the process as one in which the person’s moral effort causes the Spirit’s effective presence.\textsuperscript{124}

Although Origen clearly envisions a process in which a person grows in holiness through the combination of the person’s moral effort and the Holy Spirit’s work, he leaves unclear just how much effort is required from the person before the Holy Spirit steps in to assist. To even pose such a question to Origen might seem an imposition of alien concerns, but Origen himself prompts such questions by insisting on the primacy of the creature’s free moral effort in order to protect his anti-determinist theodicy. He occasionally paints a picture in which the effort required from the creature before the Holy Spirit assists is minimal: the person only needs to freely will to put himself under the Spirit’s tutelage.\textsuperscript{125} At other points, however, Origen seems to demand an advanced moral state as the precondition for the Spirit’s indwelling presence. This tension can produce baffling summaries of Origen’s understanding of the Spirit’s work: The “Holy Spirit plays a role only in the lives of the already-holy,” but those same people are the “handpicked few who are sanctified by the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{126} The Spirit is the “Sanctifier of saints”\textsuperscript{127} who works actively “only among those who are already sanctified.”\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{124} For an example of the former, see \textit{Commentary on Romans} 8.5.2. For an example of the latter, see \textit{Commentary on Romans} 6.13.7.

\textsuperscript{125} Moser, \textit{Teacher of Holiness}, 184, appears to adopt this model as the synthesis that relieves the tension in the descriptions cited below: “It is not perfection that draws one into an active relationship with the Spirit, but rather the desire for holiness. This desire, combined with a willingness to learn from the Spirit, makes one ‘worthy.’”

\textsuperscript{126} Moser, \textit{Teacher of Holiness}, 91.

\textsuperscript{127} Moser, \textit{Teacher of Holiness}, 93.
Spirit appears to be “fragile, unable to bear contact with sin and sinners,” yet disciples “need not, and, in fact, cannot be perfect to enter this relationship. The Spirit ... loves and works with those who are imperfect.”

This is not the place to attempt to unravel this tension. The important point to note is that it highlights once again Origen’s dual concern to protect the primacy of the rational creature’s free will and to emphasize the indispensability of God’s work in the redemption of fallen rational creatures. Furthermore, Origen’s depiction of the Holy Spirit’s work provides a helpful corrective to the mistaken impression one might get about his understanding of moral transformation, namely, that it must occur all at once and exclusively by the person’s moral effort. Origen does have a rich account of the way in which moral progress is a long, sometimes slow process of progressive education by the Spirit.

128 Moser, Teacher of Holiness, 182.
129 Moser, Teacher of Holiness, 182.
130 Moser, Teacher of Holiness, 184.
131 An alternative explanation of Origen’s seemingly contradictory statements here is that Origen is trying to follow Paul’s example. Origen views Paul’s vacillation between “all,” “many,” and “very many” in Rom. 5:12-16 as a rhetorical strategy designed to prevent complacency among readers who might be tempted to stop exerting any effort to follow God if they think that the salvific effects of Christ’s death are extended to all (5.2.6-7). Paul thus sometimes says that the effects pass to “many” or “very many” just to keep these lazy Christians worried. Similarly, one might think that Origen’s discussion of the Holy Spirit’s relationship to human moral effort reflects a desire to prevent readers from lapsing into complacency. Given that Origen explains Paul’s ruse in the very same work, though, it seems that Origen assumed the readers of his Commentary would not be in any danger of falling to such temptations.
5.3.2.5 Baptism, Moral Transformation, and Resurrection

An important pattern has emerged from Origen’s treatments of both the indwelling Spirit and some of Paul’s uses of the language of resurrection that is worth pausing to consider. The pattern is that Origen refuses to take for granted that every member of Paul’s ostensibly Christian audience in Romans and his other epistles can be said to have the Spirit dwelling and working in them or can be appropriately described as having died to sin, having been buried with Christ, and thereafter having been resurrected with Christ and seated with him at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Origen’s objection is not that it is impossible for someone to be described in this way in this life. Rather, it is that such status cannot be taken for granted, even among those who call themselves Christians. The possibility of receiving the Holy Spirit and dying and rising with Christ have been freely given by God (which is why they are properly ascribed to God when they actually happen), but the actual attainment of such status is contingent upon the person’s moral effort. Thus, those who call themselves Christians and cognitively assent to propositions about Christ’s death and resurrection, but do not actually reform their lives, have not died and risen with Christ and have not received the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen in our exposition of the Commentary on Romans, Origen supports this view by interpreting Pauline statements about being dead to sin, buried with Christ, or raised with Christ as restricted in their applicability to those who have, in fact, ceased to do the will of sin. Origen’s interpretation can be highlighted by contrasting it...
with a different possible reading. Such a non-Origenist reading of Colossians 3:1 would be:

If then you have been raised with Christ [which of course you have—I am reminding you of your identity], then seek the things that are above…

Origen’s reading, by contrast, would be:

If then you have been raised with Christ [now, examine yourself—can you really say this about yourself? are you in this category? if not, you should be striving for it!], then [you are, or continue] seeking the things that are above…

The first, non-Origenist interpretation is strengthened significantly by Paul’s deployment of baptism as the event that confers this identity (e.g., Col. 2:12). Those who have died and risen with Christ thus appear to be those who have been baptized. Origen, too, speaks of baptism in this way. He says that Jesus instituted baptism to provide the rebirth necessary for wiping away the blemish of the first birth, inherited from Adam. The baptized have been baptized into Christ’s death and thereby received his death to sin, the benefit of his death on account of their sins. It was in baptism that they were crucified with Christ, died with him, and were buried with him. As a result, an initial reading of Origen might suggest that those who have been baptized are ipso facto those who have

132 See the passage from Commentary on Romans 4.7.8 quoted above for this kind of interpretation of Col. 3:1.

133 Commentary on Romans 5.2.11. Everett Ferguson, Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 368-69, argues that Origen’s focus is on the stain of bodily defilement associated with birth in the Old Testament rather than the stain of moral sin inherited from Adam that would become the focus of the doctrine of original sin.

134 Commentary on Romans 5.10.2.

135 Commentary on Romans 6.7.17. See also 9.39.2.
been raised with Christ (which means, those who have been morally transformed),
received the Spirit, and can look forward to a glorious transformation in the
eschatological resurrection. Such a view would be difficult to square with Origen’s
repeated admonitions to his readers, who are presumably baptized Christians, to be
unwavering in their efforts to share in Christ’s death and burial in order to be raised with
Christ by the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead—the very things he seems to say
have been accomplished through their baptism.

In his comments on Romans 6:3-4, however, Origen places a significant
restriction on the conditions under which a person can be said to have had these things
accomplished through baptism. When Paul says that all who have been baptized into
Christ Jesus have been buried with him, Origen points out that only a dead person can be
buried. The death that must precede this burial with Christ is the death to sin, which, as
we have explored above, mirrors Christ’s death on the cross in its absolute refusal to
capitulate to the desires of the flesh. ¹³⁶ Those who have not yet died to sin cannot be
buried with Christ, because their old man is still very much alive; as a result, they can
neither join Jesus in his new tomb and be wrapped with him in his new linens (since what
is old and unclean cannot touch what is new and clean) nor can they walk in newness of
life. ¹³⁷ Origen uses this view to caution his readers: “And therefore, those who are

¹³⁶ Commentary on Romans 5.8.7.
¹³⁷ Commentary on Romans 5.8.4.
hurrying to baptism ought to first see to it that they die beforehand to sin.”\textsuperscript{138}

Correspondingly, only those who have changed their lives in order to deserve to have the Spirit of God are actually indwelt by the Spirit.\textsuperscript{139}

It is thus only to those who died to sin in order to be buried with Christ in baptism that Paul can promise that, “since Christ is rising from the dead, we too will rise together with him, and since he is ascending to the heavens, we too will ascend together with him, and since he is sitting at the right hand of the Father, we too will be said to sit together with him in the heavenlies.”\textsuperscript{140} Since Origen replicates Paul’s future tense for resurrection in Romans 6:5, one might be tempted to think that he is describing eschatological events. Indeed, in a nearby passage, Origen argues that Paul understands “resurrection” in a twofold manner, distinguishing between the accomplished, “first” resurrection of Ephesians and Colossians (which consists of rising with Christ to ponder heavenly things) and the future, “second” resurrection to which Romans 6 refers (in which all are raised).\textsuperscript{141} That this is not the case here, however, becomes clear from Origen’s quotation of Ephesians 2:6—which speaks of being raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenlies in the past—to explicate the events described in Romans as in the future.

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\textsuperscript{138} Commentary on Romans 5.8.10. et ideo qui festinant ad baptismum hoc prius curare debent ut moriantur ante peccato (Hammond Bammel 2:428).
\textsuperscript{139} Commentary on Romans 6.12.8.
\textsuperscript{140} Commentary on Romans 5.8.11. resurgente Christo a mortuis et nos cum ipso simul resurgemus et illo ascendente ad caelos cum ipso simul ascendemus et sedente ipso ad dexteram patris cum ipso simul in caelestibus sedere dicemur (Hammond Bammel 2:429).
\textsuperscript{141} Commentary on Romans 5.9.12, discussed below. See Crouzel, “La « première » et la « seconde » résurrection des hommes d’après Origène.”
\end{flushright}
Ephesians 2:6, in other words, describes as accomplished what Romans 6:5 describes as in the future. Origen finally weaves together the passages in a way that shows that, for him, the future resurrection of Romans 6:5 and the accomplished resurrection and ascension of Ephesians 2:5 are really the same event, the present walking in newness of life:

Moreover, Christ rose through the glory of the Father; and we will be justly said to have resurrected with Christ through the glory of the Father in order to walk in newness of life if we have died to sin and been buried with Christ, since all who see our good works glorify our Father in heaven. Furthermore, newness of life is when we have cast off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man who has been created according to God and who is renewed in the knowledge of God according to the image of the one who created him.\(^{142}\)

Origen apparently sees no problem in Paul describing the resurrection that is walking in newness of life sometimes in the future and sometimes in the past. Perhaps Origen thought that it was described in the future in Romans 6 because the passage’s temporal standpoint is from the perspective of the midst of the process of dying and rising with Christ. More significantly, however, Origen is absolutely clear that the passage’s promises only apply to those who have first died to sin.

One might object to Origen that his admonition to die to sin before undergoing baptism is either unrealistic or manifestly not consistently followed, and indeed he would

\(^{142}\) Commentary on Romans 5.8.12. Surrexit autem Christus per gloriam patris; et nos si mortui sumus peccato et Christo conseptuli, quia omnes qui uidentes opera nostra bona glorificant patrem nostrum qui in caelis est, merito Christo conresurrexisse per gloriam patris dicemur ut in nouitate ultae ambulemus. Nouitas autem ultae est ubi ueterem hominem cum actibus suis deposuimus et induimus nouum qui secundum Deum creatus est et qui renouatur in agnitione Dei secundum imaginem eius qui creauit eum (Hammond Bammel 2:429-430).
agree with the latter. Origen explicitly refuses to assume that everyone who has undergone the rite of water baptism has in fact died to sin and been buried with Christ: even if all have been baptized in the visible waters and received the visible anointing, only the one who has died to sin has been truly baptized.\footnote{Commentary on Romans 5.8.3. J. W. Trigg, “A Fresh Look at Origen’s Understanding of Baptism,” \textit{StPatr} 17.2 (1982), sees this distinction between water baptism and baptism in the Spirit as Origen’s way of resolving the tension between “pastoral” and “perfectionist” tendencies. The “pastoral” tendency views (visible) baptism as the \textit{beginning} of a process of sanctification, while the “perfectionist” views sanctification as a \textit{prerequisite} for (Spirit) baptism. Although agreeing with Trigg’s identification of these two tendencies in Origen, I do not think that visible baptism consistently operates within the “pastoral” paradigm. See, for example, his caution against rushing to baptism before having ceased sinning (quoted above). Surely Origen did not think it was possible to “rush” unworthily towards \textit{Spirit} baptism. By contrast, Hugo Rahner, “Taufe und geistliches Leben bei Origenes,” \textit{Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik} 7 (1932), emphasizes the sacramental unity of visible and Spirit baptism, arguing that both the pre- and post-baptismal sanctification to which Origen calls Christians are outworkings of the power of baptism (216). This solution, too, does not quite fit the data, for it fails to take sufficiently seriously Origen’s discussions of cases in which visible baptism is ineffective. Cécile Blanc, “Le Baptême d’après Origène,” \textit{StPatr} 11 (1972): 118, mentions the distinction but simply emphasizes that Origen maintained the importance of both.} Origen uses Paul’s discussion of circumcision in Romans 2 to support this distinction between the outward rite and the true accomplishment of baptism. After explaining Paul’s logic in Romans 2:25-29, according to which the circumcision of a person who fails to observe the law counts as uncircumcision and the uncircumcision of the person who keeps the law will count as circumcision, Origen applies the same argument to baptism (which Col. 2:11-12 described as circumcision): If a person in the church who has been “circumcised” through baptism transgresses Christ’s law, that person’s baptism will be counted as unbelief.\footnote{Commentary on Romans 2.12.4.} He likewise applies to baptism Paul’s reversal of circumcised judge and uncircumcised
defendant in Romans 2:26-27: the Christian catechumen who follows the law of Christ will stand in judgment over the baptized Christian who does not.\textsuperscript{145}

This distinction helps make sense of Origen’s statements elsewhere in the \textit{Commentary} about baptism and the forgiveness of sins. Origen had earlier argued that God’s judgment according to truth is not jeopardized by God’s forgiveness of past sins because God’s judgment is based on the character into which the person has been transformed, not the particular deeds the person has done in the past.\textsuperscript{146} The objection to which Origen responds is prompted by the promises of forgiveness tied to baptism, repentance, and martyrdom. Since Origen’s answer is that past sins are forgiven in these circumstances \textit{because real moral transformation has taken place}, it must be the case that the “baptism” he has in mind here is the \textit{true} baptism. His striking explanation of why Jesus’s intercession on behalf of the Christian does not cover over post-baptismal sins reveals the same underlying logic.\textsuperscript{147} As Truth, Jesus cannot falsely testify and therefore will not defend a person against charges that are true. Since Jesus does defend the Christian against malicious charges based on pre-baptismal sins, this must be because the person has actually changed through (true) baptism.

Origen’s approach to baptism preserves the coherence of his interpretation of Paul’s use of the language of resurrection by ensuring that the identity associated with

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 2.13.2.

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 2.1.2-3.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Commentary on Romans} 7.10.3.
baptism remains something that is earned rather than simply given. The motivation for moral transformation that conforms a person to Christ’s death and resurrection is not drawn from the prior bestowal of an identity as crucified, buried, and raised with Christ. Rather, the motivation for such moral transformation comes from the promise that that identity, with its eschatological rewards, will be bestowed on those who diligently and successfully pursue moral transformation. This is not to say that there is no respect in which this identity is a free gift from God. The condition for the possibility of acquiring this identity is the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. This is without doubt a free gift of God, undertaken in response to the rational creatures’ self-initiated fall away from God and into slavery to sin. Nevertheless, the actual acquisition of this identity must be earned.\textsuperscript{148}

The important connections that Origen articulates between moral reformation, an identity as already “resurrected” with Christ, and eschatological bodily transformation do not depend on the identity as “resurrected” being earned through effort that produces

\textsuperscript{148} How this understanding of baptism coheres with Origen’s acceptance of the baptism of young children is unclear. He says that young children are not consciously aware of their sinful tendencies (\textit{Commentary on Romans} 5.1.24-26, 6.8.4) and have not committed any sins themselves (5.9.11). Nevertheless, they are to be baptized so that water and the Holy Spirit will cleanse them of the \textit{stain} of sin (5.9.11). In the same context, Origen emphasizes that the practice has been handed down from the apostles; thus, it does not appear to be something he is willing to challenge or modify. It seems to me, then, that there are two possibilities. The first is that, although infant baptism did not cohere well with Origen’s overall view of baptism, he felt compelled to preserve and justify it somehow because he believed it to have been handed down from the apostles. The second is that he found a way to integrate it into his overall view but did not articulate how (or his articulation was not preserved). Perhaps, for example, he thought that infants could be buried with Christ in baptism without first dying to sin because they were never alive to sin in the first place (6.8.9). The fact that he does not defend infant baptism in these terms, however, suggests that he had not adequately reconciled the practice with his broader understanding of baptism.
moral reformation. Origen could have argued that the identity as “resurrected” with Christ is freely bestowed by God in baptism, along with the Holy Spirit, which inaugurates a process in which the Spirit and the person’s efforts cooperate to produce the moral transformation that will be reflected, eschatologically, in a body transformed into glory. While such a view would reflect the connection between moral and bodily states developed in On First Principles, however, it would risk undercutting the very concern at the center of the theodicy that necessitated that connection in the first place—the primacy of free rational creatures in the production of all inequality. Origen could avoid this problem by emphasizing the role of creaturely free will in the person’s decision to undergo the rite that inaugurates moral transformation; this would be consistent with his account in On First Principles of the ignorant person realizing the depth of his own ignorance and so freely placing himself under the tutelage of a master.149 In the Commentary on Romans, however, he chooses to emphasize the primacy of creaturely free will by making true baptism and the reception of the Spirit posterior to the person’s freely willed death to sin. This move in the Commentary suggests that Origen’s concern to protect his free-will theodicy was as strong as ever.

149 On First Principles 3.1.15.
5.3.2.6 The Fate of the Wicked in the Resurrection

On the resurrection of those who have not been morally transformed in Christ in this life, Origen’s statements in the *Commentary on Romans* are consistent with but do not extend his earlier views.

He is clear that the wicked will receive back their bodies eschatologically, but that this will not be a blessed event for them. Commenting on the “redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23), one interpretation that he offers is that the phrase refers to the reward bestowed on the body of the righteous after it is reunified with its soul and faces the judgment seat of Christ. It is the prospect of this reunification of body and soul before judgment, he says, that lies behind Jesus’s warning to fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28). Thus, “each one must suffer and groan in this age, lest, in accordance with evil deeds and negligence of the present life, he not merit to obtain the redemption of his own body but rather is found by that sentence that damns body and soul to the fires of Gehenna.” He uses a similar distinction to explain Paul’s claim that the grace of God “is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:23):

> [P]erhaps he wanted it to be known that eternal life by itself is one thing but eternal life in Christ Jesus is another. For even those who will rise in confusion and eternal reproach have, to be sure, eternal life, albeit in confusion and eternal

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150 *Commentary on Romans* 7.5.10.
151 *Commentary on Romans* 7.5.10. *Dolendum unicuique est in hoc saeculo et gemendum ne forte pro malis actibus et praesentis uitae neglegentia non mereatur redemptionem corporis sui consequi sed inueniat eum ista sententia quae corpus et animam gehennae ignibus damna* (Hammond Bammel 3:576). This passage is numbered 7.3 in Hammond Bammel and Brésard and Fédou.
reproach rather than in Christ Jesus. But the just, who rise in eternal life, have eternal life in Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{152}

And in the Greek version of his discussion of the twofold nature of resurrection (the “first” resurrection of Eph./Col. and the “second” of Rom. 6:5), he invokes the distinction from Daniel 12:3 between resurrection to glory and resurrection to shame in describing the eschatological resurrection:

Concerning this [discrepancy in tenses], one must say that the Apostle names the resurrection in two ways: One, the present [resurrection], according to which the holy one has been resurrected with Christ and, having been seated with him, seeks the things that are above; the other, the [resurrection that happens] “when the end comes” (1 Cor. 13:10), concerning which Daniel, too, prophesied, “Many of those who are sleeping in the dust will be resurrected, some to eternal life and some to reproach and eternal shame” (Dan. 12:3).\textsuperscript{153}

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\textsuperscript{152} Commentary on Romans 6.6.3. sed quia fortasse sciri uoluit aliud esse uitam aeternam solum et aliud uitam aeternam in Christo Iesu. Et illi enim qui surgent in confusionem et opprobrio sempiternum habent quidem uitam aeternam, non tamen in Christo Iesu sed in confusione et opprobrio aeterno: iusti uero qui surgunt in uitam aeternam in Christo Iesu habent uitam aeternam (Hammod-Bammel 2:479-80).

\textsuperscript{153} πρὸς τοῦτο λέκτειν ὅτι διπλώς ὀνομάζει τὴν ἀνάστασιν ὁ ἁπόστολος· μίαν μὲν τὴν ἡδὸν καθ’ ἧν ὁ ἅγιος συνανέστη Χριστῷ καὶ συνεγέρθη αὐτῷ τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖ· ἐτέραν δὲ τὴν ὅταν ἐλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, περὶ ἓς καὶ Δανιὴλ προφητεύων φησίν πολλοῖ τῶν καθευδόντων ἐν γῆς χώματε ἀναστήσονται, οὕτως εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ οὕτως ἐναντίον καὶ εἰς αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον. A. Ramsbotham, “The Commentary of Origen on the Epistle to the Romans. II.,” \textit{JTS} 13 (1912): 363-64 (Frg. 29). In Rufinus’s Latin version, the citation of Daniel 12 is replaced by a description of the “general resurrection” (\textit{generalis resurrectio}) that will coincide with Christ’s second coming (\textit{Commentary on Romans} 5.9.12; Hammond Bammel 2:441). Mark Edwards, “Origen’s Two Resurrections,” \textit{JTS} NS 46 (1995), has argued that Origen did not believe in a delay between death (the separation of the soul from the body) and a subsequent resurrection. Rather, the “intermediate” state, wherein the soul is clothed in the ethereal \textit{δόχημα}, is the awaited resurrection. Therefore, there is no simultaneous resurrection of all at the second coming of Christ. Edwards dismisses \textit{Commentary on Romans} 5.9.12 as evidence for a “second” resurrection wherein all people are simultaneously raised at the second coming of Christ by pointing out that a “twofold” (\textit{duplex}) resurrection is not the same thing as a “first” and “second” resurrection. But he fails to note that the immediately following sentence in Rufinus’s translation explicitly defines the two-fold resurrection as a “first” one that happens in this life when a person rises with Christ by turning from earthly to heavenly things while the “second” resurrection happens to all flesh at Christ’s second coming (508). Ironically, the Greek fragment quoted above, which Edwards does not cite, might have helped his argument: it neither employs the language of “first” and “second” resurrections nor connects the latter with Christ’s second coming. On the other hand, it certainly does not contradict this schema (and its quotation of Daniel 12 could be taken to
These passages all make clear that both the righteous and the wicked will experience an eschatological reunification of body and soul, and that this reunification will be a blessed one for the former but not for the latter. They do not articulate how exactly the moral state of the person in this life will translate into that person’s eschatological existence; that must be inferred from elsewhere, as we have been able to do in the *Commentary on Romans* with respect to those who undergo positive moral transformation.

Unlike in *On First Principles*, however, Origen offers no descriptions in the *Commentary on Romans* of how the resurrected bodies of the wicked reflect their moral state. Furthermore, his description of the disordered, disgraced, and shameful resurrected existence of the wicked as “eternal” could represent a shift away from earlier speculations about the temporariness of eschatological suffering. Whether or not this is the case, though, Origen’s central concerns remain unthreatened: the free choices of rational creatures continue to account for inequality, including bodily inequality.

5.3.3 Conclusions

Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* makes several contributions to our investigation of the ways in which he relates resurrection and moral transformation. Most

suggest at least that some people will be resurrected simultaneously), and the fragment might end before Origen correlates the resurrections to Christ’s two comings. Edwards’s argument is primarily a response to Crouzel, “La « première » et la « seconde » résurrection des hommes d’après Origène,” 4-5, who quotes the Greek fragment, and to Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 127-41.

importantly, it confirms the staying power in Origen’s thought of the driving concerns revealed in *On First Principles* and supplements the systematic speculations of *On First Principles* with detailed, textured exegesis.

With respect to Origen’s understanding of the connection between moral transformation and resurrection, what emerges from the *Commentary* is an account that is both clearer on the role of Jesus Christ in moral transformation and resurrection and far more textured in its deployment of Pauline motifs to describe that connection. And while the more controversial protological and eschatological speculations of *On First Principles* are missing from the *Commentary on Romans*, we have seen repeatedly how the concerns that drove those speculations continue to be reflected in the *Commentary*. Two themes from *On First Principles* are particularly helpful for understanding the *Commentary*: the need to protect the primacy of creaturely freedom in order to exonerate God from responsibility for inequality, and the correlation between forms of corporeality and degrees of moral likeness to God.

Origen’s exegesis of Romans makes a further important contribution through its multilayered interpretation of Paul’s invocations of resurrection. As an exegete, Origen is highly sensitive to the theologically productive ways in which multiple terms or concepts can express one reality. He is equally sensitive to the ways that the same term can reference multiple realities. The most significant example of multiple terms or concepts expressing one reality is his understanding of the *epinoiai* of the Word, according to which the one Word is encountered in many different but mutually illuminating *epinoiai*
or aspects—among others, Truth, Life, Wisdom, and indeed Resurrection.\textsuperscript{155} The way in which the same term can reference multiple realities is seen most clearly in Origen’s concept of homonymy, the notion that Scripture often uses the same term to name distinct but analogous realities.\textsuperscript{156} Thus, Origen appeals to Paul’s distinction between the “inner man” and “outer man” to caution exegetes against rashly assuming that every scriptural mention of human faculties or body parts refers to the “outer” rather than “inner” man. In the \textit{Commentary on Romans}, he is especially concerned to disentangle the different laws and deaths at play in Romans by carefully determining which is in view whenever Paul mentions “law” or “death.”\textsuperscript{157} There is the law of Moses, the law of nature, the law of Christ, the law of the mind, the law of the flesh, and so forth. Similarly, there is the common death (the separation of soul from body), the death of sin (capitulation to sin), the death to sin (conquering of sin), and the death that is the Devil.

Origen’s discussion of resurrection in the \textit{Commentary on Romans} reflects both of these concepts, homonymy and \textit{epinoiai}. On the one hand, he explains that Paul uses the

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{156} On the importance of homonyms for Origen, see Tzamalikos, \textit{Origen: Philosophy of History & Eschatology}, 2-6.

\textsuperscript{157} On law: \textit{Commentary on Romans} Origen’s Preface 8; 3.6.1; 3.7.6; 5.1.24-26; 5.1.29; 5.6.2-4; 6.1.9; 6.12.2. On death: See especially \textit{Commentary on Romans} 6.6.5-7. On the analogy between Paul’s confusing homonymy for both law and death: 5.10.9; also 7.1.1, which extends Paul’s homonymy to spirit. For a detailed exploration of the “law” in the \textit{Commentary on Romans}, see Riemer Roukema, \textit{The Diversity of Laws in Origen’s Commentary on Romans} (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988).
\end{footnotesize}
language of resurrection to describe distinct events—both moral transformation in this life through turning towards heavenly realities and an eschatological reunification of body and soul with an attendant bodily transformation. He thus works to clarify Paul by distinguishing between the different referents carried by the same term, as he does for Paul’s discussions of law and death. On the other hand, Origen takes those distinct referents to be mutually illuminating aspects of one reality, the transformation of rational creatures in their relationship to God. Rather than distinguishing in order to disentangle, as he often does with other examples of homonymy, Origen here distinguishes in order to re-entangle. The multiple referents of resurrection are not merely analogously related; they are causally linked with each other. Origen thus harnesses the prompts provided by Scripture’s discussions of resurrection—especially the Pauline resurrection schema—to develop a sophisticated and multilayered account of resurrection.

5.4 Conclusion

We are now in a position to summarize Origen’s contribution to the early Christian struggle to coherently relate resurrection and moral transformation. Origen’s contribution is significant because he takes the connection between resurrection and moral transformation to be fundamental to the nature of resurrection. That is to say, this connection is the starting point of his thinking about resurrection, rather than something he is forced to integrate into a pre-formed notion of resurrection. In this respect, Origen followed the example of Irenaeus and the Valentinians, who in their own distinctive ways tightly tied together salvation (including moral transformation) and resurrection. Irenaeus
insisted that “resurrection” can only denote the revivification of dead bodies by the sanctifying Spirit but failed to explain why those who are not sanctified receive this gift. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* and *Gospel of Philip* allowed “resurrection” to denote multiple salvific events, but they never spoke of resurrection outside the context of salvation. Origen found a way to generalize the principle animating Irenaeus’s view, namely that moral transformation (in the case of the righteous, through the Spirit) is reflected in the resurrection of the body. At the same time, he reveled in the multiple and interconnected referentiality of the language of “resurrection,” the very phenomenon that made Irenaeus and Tertullian so uncomfortable.\(^{158}\)

What led Origen to adopt this approach to resurrection? Three factors have emerged from our study of *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on Romans*. First, Origen was preoccupied with protecting God from charges of injustice stemming from the inequality manifest within the creation. Since he was committed to doing so within the framework provided by what he had received as the apostolic deposit, theodicies dependent on a separation of the creator from the redeemer were off the table. He could thus either deny that the forms of inequality pervading creation present problems for

\(^{158}\) Did Origen learn to use “resurrection” in this way through his contacts with Valentinians? There is not enough data to be sure. Certainly, sensitivity the multiple levels of reality (and the corresponding multivalence of terms) could be drawn from the common (Platonic) philosophical currency in which both Origen and the Valentinians participated. Nevertheless, Origen’s clearest predecessors in the application of this approach to resurrection specifically were the Valentinians. For a balanced survey of Origen’s relationship with Valentinianism that highlights his many and fundamental disagreements with Valentinianism while acknowledging his apparent debts in others (especially his understandings of the fall and ecclesial life), see Alan B. Scott, “Opposition and Concession: Origen’s Relationship to Valentinianism,” in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Leuven: Peeters, 1992).
God’s justice at all, or he could accept this premise but find another explanation for it. Origen chose the latter and assigned responsibility for inequality to free rational creatures.

Second, Origen was willing to view the created world of which this present bodily life is a part as a pedagogical good calibrated to the diverse states of free rational creatures. As a result, he was primed to pay close attention to any scriptural descriptions or explanations of inequality—particularly bodily inequality. One of the most striking examples thereof, 1 Corinthians 15:39-41, turned out to be about resurrection.

Third, Origen was highly sensitive to interconnections among scriptural terms and motifs. Thus, when he interpreted scriptural statements about “resurrection,” he took full advantage not only of the multiple referents the term has, especially in Paul, but also of the many important motifs and images that are associated with it (such as glorification, baptism, changing clothes, and putting on a new person). Origen took these connections as cues for his own emphases, and indeed they fit well with his focus on the incorporeal God and understanding of the corporeality attending creation as a pedagogical good.

One does not need to know the relative causal priority of these factors in Origen’s thinking to recognize how they work together to closely connect resurrection and moral transformation. If all inequality, including bodily inequality, results from moral inequality among rational creatures stemming from their free choices, and Scripture speaks of a bodily change—resurrection—as producing further bodily inequality, then bodily transformations in resurrection reflect moral transformations.
Origen’s understanding of resurrection as intrinsically connected to moral transformation resulted in several important and sometimes controversial features of his thought. First, it produced a focus on bodily differentiations among the resurrected. Since Origen’s understanding of the moral transformation of free rational creatures was such that it would be highly unlikely for all humans to return to the same moral state in this life, he expected there to be significant bodily diversity in the resurrection. The description of this diversity in 1 Corinthians 15 thus became a leitmotif throughout his discussions of resurrection. While Origen was not the only early Christian theologian to take seriously bodily differentiation in the resurrection, he was distinctive in the central place he accorded it in his thought.

Second, Origen’s broader understanding of why moral transformation and resurrection are intrinsically interconnected enabled him to affirm the general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked without abandoning this connection. Resurrection and moral transformation are connected for Origen because a rational creature’s form of corporeality is logically posterior to its moral state (a view that is, in turn, necessary for Origen’s particular free-will theodicy). The transformation into greater glory that takes place in the resurrection of the righteous is one manifestation of this fundamental principle, but it is not the only one. The transformation into grosser, more shameful bodies that takes place in the resurrection of the wicked reflects this principle no less. Even Origen’s ascription of the resurrection of the righteous to the Holy Spirit fits into this system, insofar as the Holy Spirit is intimately bound up in the process of
moral transformation that a resurrection into greater glory reflects. Origen thus preserved
the connection between moral transformation and resurrection without making positive
moral transformation the condition for the possibility of resurrection *per se* and thereby
calling into question the resurrection of those who are not positively morally transformed.

Finally, and controversially, the connection between moral transformation and
resurrection made the significant continuity in resurrection *moral* rather than *material*.
Origen’s theodicy was not designed to defend the inherent goodness—and therefore
necessary redemption—of the creation as experienced today. Rather, it was designed to
explain its existence despite its injustices and *lack* of inherent goodness without denying
that it was created by God. Therefore, material continuity between the body of a rational
creature in this life and the body of that rational creature after the resurrection was simply
not important to Origen. What was important, by contrast, was that the rational creature’s
body—whatever its material constituent parts—reflect the moral state of what is
inherently good and worthy of redemption: the fallen rational creature.
CHAPTER 6 | Methodius of Olympus: The Eradication of Sin through the Death and Resurrection of the Body

6.1 Introduction

Methodius of Olympus was a Christian author active between the career of Origen (whom he criticized) in the middle of the third century and the end of the Diocletianic persecution (after which he is never mentioned) at the beginning of the fourth century.\(^1\) The details of his life are murky. Later writers placed him in Lycia, on the mountainous coast of southwestern Asia Minor (although there was disagreement about where precisely in Lycia he was active), and the place names that appear in his dialogues are of cities and sites in Lycia. Manuscripts of his works usually designate him as Methodius of Olympus, a coastal city in Lycia, and scholars have been content to use this as his name.\(^2\) None of his works betray a particular ecclesiastical office, but later tradition regarded him as a bishop. Later authors also came to consider him a martyr, although with uncertainty about under which emperor he was martyred.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Jerome says he was bishop first of Olympus and then of Tyre. John of Damascus and Photius claim that he was the bishop of the city of Patara, while Nicephorus makes him bishop of Myra; both of these cities, however, lie in Lycia. See Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus*, 17-18.

\(^3\) Jerome (*On Illustrious Men* 83) reports two dates for his martyrdom: One at the end of the Diocletianic persecution (which he seems to prefer) and another during the persecutions under Decius and Valerian. Since these two persecutions were a half-century apart, it is likely that Jerome has heard reports about two martyrs named Methodius. A passage from the *Apology for Origen* by Pamphilus and Eusebius, written in the early fourth century and quoted by Jerome in the heat of his debate with Rufinus over Origen’s legacy (*Against Rufinus* 1.11), appears to assume that Methodius is still living. Furthermore, a martyrdom in the middle of the third century—in the same persecution in which Origen himself died, no less—would give
Despite this lack of clarity surrounding his biography, Methodius’s works are significant for our purposes in several ways. First, they are a rare witness to Greek theology in the second half of the third century, the period between Origen and Eusebius. Second, they contain some of the earliest extant direct criticisms of Origen, and later critics of Origen, like Epiphanius in the late fourth century, drew heavily from them. Most importantly, they develop a strong yet complex two-tiered link between resurrection and moral transformation.

Although Methodius wrote in Greek, most of his work has unfortunately only survived in Slavonic translation. His Symposium survives intact in Greek, but only fragments of Greek, preserved in the works of others, have survived from On the Resurrection (De resurrectione) and On Free Choice (De autexousio). Fortunately, in the case of these latter two dialogues, full Slavonic translations exist that allow the surviving Greek fragments to be ordered and contextualized. Several other shorter works survive only in Slavonic.\(^4\) Perhaps because of this state of affairs, relatively little scholarship has been devoted to Methodius.

\(^4\) In contrast to the Latin translations of Origen, there is no reason to believe that the Slavonic translations were produced in a context in which Methodius’s legacy was controversial. Thus, there is no reason to doubt the completeness of these translations.
On the basis of internal evidence, Methodius’s works can be arranged in a rough chronological sequence. The clearest clue emerges in the treatise *On Foods* (*De cibis*) 1.4, where Methodius states that he has already completed the *Symposium* but has yet to complete a work on the resurrection (clearly, *On the Resurrection*). Since the treatise *On the Leech* (*De sanguisuga*) promises to treat a particular Scriptural passage (Wisdom of Solomon 7:1-2) in a forthcoming work “on the body,” and *On the Resurrection* indeed takes up that passage, *On the Leech* must also precede *On the Resurrection*. There are no explicit clues for the dating of *On Free Choice*, but the fact that its arguments reappear in condensed form in both the *Symposium* and *On the Resurrection* suggests that it predates those works.\(^5\) Thus, the reconstructed order of these works is: *On Free Choice, On the Leech* and *Symposium, On Foods*, and *On the Resurrection*. (Where to place *On Leprosy* [*De lepra*] is not clear.) Interestingly, this ordering of Methodius’s works reveals an increasingly critical interaction with Origen, a point that both lends support to Pamphilus-Eusebius’s complaint that Methodius turned against Origen and cautions against attempts to read a strong anti-Origenist agenda into Methodius’s earlier works.\(^6\)

The ever-present temptation when reading Methodius is to read him for what he tells us about something else, such as understandings of Origen in the late third century, rather than to listen to his own theological voice. Of course, Methodius’s criticisms of Origen, especially on the topic of resurrection, are of great interest for this study and will

\(^6\) Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus*, 32-33.
be examined in due course. Nonetheless, Methodius is a fascinating thinker in his own right who develops a strong link between resurrection and moral transformation that, as we will see, departs from Origen’s articulation of this link in striking ways. We thus begin with his own, mature position as articulated in *On the Resurrection* before tracing the development of this view through his earlier works. Only then, after allowing Methodius to speak in his own terms, will we be in a position to examine his understanding and criticism of Origen.

### 6.2 The On the Resurrection on Moral Transformation and Resurrection

In the *On the Resurrection* (often referenced by its Latin title, *De resurrectione*), Methodius offers a creative and ingenious account of the relationship between resurrection and moral transformation. He envisions a two-stage battle against sin: First, in this life, a person learns to reject the promptings of the entrenched inclination towards sin. Second, through physical death and eschatological resurrection, the entrenched inclination itself is completely removed from the person. Methodius presents this account as an alternative to the view that a person must escape the body in order to be saved from sin, based on the assumption that the body is the condition for the possibility of sin. He connects both of these stages to resurrection, but he does so in different ways. As will become clear, the distinctions underlying Methodius’s two-stage account are an important innovation that allow him to preserve the connection between resurrection and

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7 This idea appears in Theophilus of Antioch (*To Autolycus* 2.26) and Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies* 3.23.6), but neither of them develop it in the way or to the extent that Methodius does.
moral transformation that was so central to Origen without adopting what he sees as problematic conclusions concerning the nature of the resurrected body.

Methodius uses the analogy of a temple building infested by a fig tree to develop his account of both stages of sin’s eradication. Once a fig tree in a temple has grown so large that its roots fill the crevices between the temple’s stones, it cannot be removed until the stone structure is dismantled and the offending roots removed. Only then can the stones be replaced and the building erected again without fear of the fig tree returning. Until the temple is dismantled and the fig tree’s deep roots are exposed and destroyed, however, all one can do is slow down the tree’s growth by vigilantly chopping off the shoots that break the surface. In this analogy, the temple is a human being, the fig tree is sin, the dismantling and rebuilding of the temple is a person’s death and resurrection, and the cutting of the fig tree’s shoots is the person’s conscious refusal to follow sin’s promptings. Since the immortal God created humans directly—rather than ordering earth, air, and water to bring them forth—and a product must always be like its maker,
humans must have been created immortal. Methodius does not seem to have viewed the tree of life as something that kept originally-mortal humans alive; rather, even one taste from it could return humans to immortality after God had interposed mortality. In other words, Adam and Eve could have returned to immortality by eating from it, but it is not what made them immortal in the first place.) After humans became infested with sin, God interposed bodily death in order to remove sin, roots and all. Once sin has been completely killed in this way, God reconstitutes the person’s body as a sinless whole in the resurrection. Until death and resurrection remove sin completely, however, the person can anticipate the eschatological sinless state by diligently resisting sin’s promptings.

The careful reader will notice that, while both stages—chopping off the fig tree’s shoots and removing the tree’s roots from the dismantled temple—are attacks on the tree, they are not necessarily linked to each other in the analogy. Not only can one chop off the shoots indefinitely without ever destroying the root, but one can also remove the root entirely without having ever attempted to control its shoots. In fact, one could imagine a temple caretaker electing to forego the tedious work of removing all the fig tree’s shoots as soon as they come up because he knows that the whole tree will be removed soon in a grand renovation project. Does Methodius mean to suggest, then, that bodily death and

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10 On the Resurrection 1.34.2-3 (= Panarion 64.26.3-6). Like Origen, then, Methodius deploys the principle that like produces like in order to define something about the creation’s original state. Whereas Origen uses it to establish primal equality, however, Methodius uses it to establish the primal immortality of the human body. Clearly, one of the drawbacks of the principle is that it must be partial and therefore only selectively applied.

11 On the Resurrection 1.39.5-6 (= Panarion 64.31.8-11).
resurrection will successfully and completely remove sin from people no matter whether or not they have resisted sin’s promptings in this life?

Methodius uses Scripture’s descriptions of God as an artisan to address this question. Just as a sculptor or potter would want to restore handiwork that has been damaged by another, so also God values and restores the masterpiece—humanity—that has been destroyed by the evil one’s envy.\(^\text{12}\) To support this analogy, Methodius cites the description in Jeremiah 18:3–6 of God as a potter who remakes a pot that does not turn out perfectly.\(^\text{13}\) The purpose of this refashioning is to restore the work to perfection, and Methodius emphasizes that God succeeds in this aim; God breaks down and remakes the damaged good precisely in order to avoid consigning it to the fate of being left permanently marred, which is what would happen if God merely patched it.\(^\text{14}\) The result of this dissolution and refashioning, which Methodius explicitly defines as the death and dissolution of the body and its subsequent resurrection, is that all the flaws and alterations are removed and the work becomes entirely good and flawless (ὅλον καλὸν αὐτὸ καὶ ἅμωμον εἶναι τὸ ἔργον), restored unadulterated to its own form (εἰς τὸ ἐαυτοῦ εἴδος).\(^\text{15}\)

In both his temple and potter analogies, Methodius seems to imply that God uses the death and resurrection of the body to restore each human to perfection once and for

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\(^{12}\) *On the Resurrection* 1.43 (= Panarion 64.35).

\(^{13}\) *On the Resurrection* 1.43.5 (= Panarion 64.35.9).

\(^{14}\) *On the Resurrection* 1.43.2 (= Panarion 64.35.4).

\(^{15}\) *On the Resurrection* 1.43.2.8–9, 12 (= Panarion 64.35.5).
all by removing sin completely—regardless of the person’s own efforts towards this end prior to death. Is Methodius, then, a universalist in the sense of believing that God will restore all humans to beatitude in the resurrection?

Methodius turns to Paul’s invocation of the potter analogy in Romans 9 to explain how his understanding of the function of death and resurrection does not eliminate the eschatological distinction between the blessed and the damned. Although God reshapes every vessel to be wholly and flawlessly pleasing (τὸ πᾶν ἄνωθεν ἀμέμπτως ἀρεστόν), he forms some to be vessels for honor and others for dishonor (Rom. 9:21). Methodius explains this distinction:

Does not God have the power to resurrect each one individually, either to our honor and glory or to our dishonor and condemnation, reforming and restoring from each one’s same matter? God resurrects to dishonor the one who lived thoughtlessly in sins and to honor the one who lived in righteousness. To further support this interpretation, he then quotes the claim from Daniel 12:2-3 that some will be raised to eternal life while others will be resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt. (Methodius’s insistence that the eschatological resurrection will involve both perfection for all and diversity between the righteous and the wicked shows that this eschatological perfection is not completely identical with the perfection that characterized the original creation. While humans as originally created and humans as

16 On the Resurrection 1.44.1 (GCS 27, 293; = Panarion 64.36.1).
17 On the Resurrection 1.44.2 (= Panarion 64.36.2). μὴ τι ἐξουσίαν οὐκ ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης ἐκάστου τῆς αὐτῆς ἀναπλάσας καὶ ἀνακοσμήσας ἰδίως ἐκαστον ἢ εἰς τιμὴν ἡμῶν ἀναστήσαι καὶ δόξαν, ἢ εἰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ κατάκρισιν; εἰς ἁμαρτίας μὲν τὸν ἐν ἁμαρτίας φαύλως βιώσαντα, εἰς τιμὴν δὲ τὸν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ (GCS 27, 293).
eschatologically resurrected are identical insofar as their bodies are not infested with the lust that continually prompts them to sin, the protological and eschatological perfections are distinct in that the first humans could freely choose to differentiate themselves through their actions while the eschatological humans are hardened in a differentiation based upon their prior choices.) Methodius finally restates the relationship between the two ways in which sin is combatted in order to make absolutely clear the responsibilities for combating sin that humans have in this life and the consequences for failing to do so:

To remove the root of evil completely is not our responsibility; rather, we are to not allow it to stretch out in order to put forth shoots and bear fruit. For the complete and universal taking away and destroying of evil by the roots themselves is produced by God during the dissolution of the body, as has been said. But the partial taking up and destroying of evil, so that it will not bud, is produced by us. On account of this, the one who has reared it up for growth in size rather than making barren and constricting whatever he can must pay the penalty, because, despite being able and having the power to do this, he chose to honor what damages rather than what benefits.  

Thus, he says, no one can blame God for condemning him to torment, since he has chosen evil of his own free will.

Methodius’s account, then, is this:

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18 On the Resurrection 1.44.4-5 (= Panarion 64.36.4-5). ἐφ’ ἡμῖν γὰρ τὸ ἀφανίσαι τὴν ῥίζαν τελείως τῆς πονηρίας, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ πρὸς ἐκτασιν αὐτὴν ἐάσαι φύναι καὶ καρποφορεῖν. ἦ μὲν γὰρ καθόλου καὶ παντελικῇ αὐταῖς ῥίζαις αὐτῆς ἀνάφεσίς τε καὶ ἀπώλεια υπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος, ὡς εἴρηται, διάλυσιν γίγνεται, ἢ δὲ ἐκ μέρους πρὸς τὸ μὴ οἶσαι βλαστὸν υφ’ ἡμῶν. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὸν ἐκθρέψαντα πρὸς αὔξησιν αὐτὴν μᾶλλον καὶ μέγεθος, ἀλλὰ μὴ στειρώσαντα τὸ ὅσον ἐκ’ αὐτῶ πρὸς αὐτὸ καὶ συμπλησσαντα ἀνάγκη διδόναι δίκην, οὕτως δυνάμενος καὶ έχον πρὸς τοῦτο τὴν ἐξουσίαν εἰλατο τὸ βλάπτον πρὸ τοῦ συμφέροντος μᾶλλον τιμῆσαι (GCS 27, 293-94).

19 On the Resurrection 1.45.2 (= Panarion 64.37.2).
1. Sin, the inclination to do evil, has become entrenched in the human body. For a person to return to the wholeness that God intends for humanity, that sin must be completely eradicated from the person. This eradication is only possible if the body in which sin has become entrenched is dissolved so that sin can be pried from its stronghold and destroyed. Only then can the body be reconstituted to form a perfect, unblemished person. God accomplishes this complete eradication of sin and reconstitution of the perfected person for every human being, no matter how much they fight against or encourage the promptings of sin in this life. In other words, every human is restored to perfection in the resurrection, completely independently of the person’s will. Bodily death and resurrection thus produce positive and complete moral transformation.

2. Despite now being completely unblemished and free from all indwelling sin, these resurrected human beings are not thereby guaranteed beatitude in eternity. Based on their efforts to stunt sin’s growth in this life, God chooses whether to bestow upon them glory and honor or dishonor and torment. Thus, although the effort one puts into resisting sin’s promptings in this life in no way causes sin’s eventual defeat, that effort does determine whether one will be blessed or punished after being restored to perfection by God. In the case of those who are damned because they chose to nurture rather than stifle sin in this life, it is as if God punishes them for not even trying to help eradicate sin. In this way, Methodius severs any causal link between moral effort and transformation in this life and resurrection per se,
replacing it with a strong causal connection between moral effort in this life and what comes after resurrection.

Methodius’s view as developed in the *On the Resurrection* is remarkably straightforward and elegant. By distinguishing between the two ways in which sin is combatted, Methodius is able to take seriously both Scripture’s tight link between moral transformation and resurrection *per se* and Scripture’s teaching that the eschatological resurrection is followed by either beatitude or damnation.

Three points deserve brief comment. First, the direction of causality in Methodius’s link between resurrection and moral transformation—resurrection causes the eradication of sin instead of vice versa—is the opposite of what we found in Origen, as illustrated by the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Origen</th>
<th>Methodius</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moral transformation now</td>
<td>eradication of entrenched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(type of body received in)</td>
<td>sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resurrection</td>
<td>(beatitude after) resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moral effort now</td>
<td>(death and) resurrection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Methodius reverses the direction of causality, the connection is there, clearly developed, and fundamental to his understanding of the purpose of death and resurrection in the divine economy. This fact is particularly notable in light of Methodius’s ambivalent relationship with Origen.

Second, Methodius’s account produces the odd result of morally perfected, sinless people being damned to torment. This position appears to follow from the simultaneous use of two models for understanding how sin becomes and remains associated with a
person. The first model views sin primarily as an invasive power that becomes entrenched in a person, constantly pulling that person away from righteousness. (The ontology of this invasive power will be discussed below.) In this model, a person is no longer infected by sin when that power is completely removed. “Moral transformation” here involves the removal of this power. This model finds strong support in Paul, and indeed Methodius uses it to explain Paul’s discussion of sin and the flesh in Romans 7.20 According to Methodius, it is sin understood in this sense that all the resurrected will lack. In contrast, the second model focuses on the enduring taint that sinful acts leave on a person. Even if a person no longer sins and is no longer pulled towards sin, the stains of prior sins—the fact that the person committed acts of disobedience in the past—remain. In this model, “moral transformation” is constituted by changes in the frequency with which a person acquiesces to the promptings of the entrenched inclination to sin. Methodius’s account of why some of the resurrected will be damned despite being completely free of the infection of sin seems to operate on this second model, although he does not use the language of “sin” to explain it. As with the causal relationship between moral transformation and resurrection, so also here Methodius takes on board multiple models by separating them into different stages rather than harmonizing them or subsuming one to another.

20 On the Resurrection 1.42.1 (= Panarion 64.34). Earlier in the discussion, Aglaophon had used these very passages to argue that being fleshly means being sinful (On the Resurrection 1.5).
Third, Methodius presents his account as an alternative to what he perceives to be Origen’s view. Methodius’s presentation of Origen will be discussed in greater detail below. What is important to note here, however, is that for Methodius the primary advantage of his view is the way it protects the inherent goodness of the human body as God created it in the beginning. His view accomplishes this by sharply distinguishing between sin and the human body. Although sin is entrenched in the human body, it is an emphatically alien invader. The body in se is not the problem; as part of God’s good creation, it is what must be saved. Furthermore, were one to point to its mortality as evidence that the body must be transcended in some way, Methodius would respond that the body’s mortality is not inherent to it. Rather, in response to the invasion of sin into the body, God imposed death on the body precisely in order to make possible the eradication of sin from the body and the reconstitution of the body into its original, immortal state. By making bodily mortality a temporarily-imposed solution to sin, Methodius appears to think that he has successfully eliminated all reasons for thinking that the body is to be transcended in any way.

6.3 The Development of Methodius’s View

The concerns and emphases of Methodius’s earlier writings show that the position he lays out in On the Resurrection using both the fig tree and temple analogy and the potter analogy is not the result of casual speculation driven by the particulars of the analogies he happened to choose in that text. Although his earlier writings do not contain the exact view given in the On the Resurrection, they articulate the assumptions that
underlie it and even use different analogies to present remarkably similar views. Thus, the position in the *On the Resurrection* turns out to be the mature product of Methodius’s struggles not only with the legacy of Origen but also with his own deepest commitments and assumptions.

6.3.1 *On Free Choice: The Inherent Goodness of the Diverse Created Material Order*

In the early *On Free Choice*, Methodius develops one of his most important and consistent concerns: to protect the inherent goodness of the created material order in all its diversity. The purpose of the dialogue is to develop a theodicy that does not make matter (ὕλη) the source of evil and therefore something to be escaped. An anonymous speaker opens the dialogue by laying out the position that Methodius clearly wants to avoid. This speaker begins by acknowledging that God’s wisdom must lie behind the wondrous order of the heavenly bodies, the stability of the earth, and the variety of

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21 I have used the text and consulted the translation of A. Vaillant in *Le De autexousio de Méthode d’Olympe*, PO 22.5 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1930).

22 In its original form, this dialogue does not appear to have given names to the three voices that speak in it. This seems to be the best explanation for the inconsistency of the names given to them in later excerpts, descriptions, and manuscripts. The speaker who argues that matter is the source of evil in the world, for example, is either given no name or is variously identified as Valens (a character in the *Adamantius Dialogue*), a Valentinian, or Aglaophon (a speaker in Methodius’s own *On the Resurrection*). The most important witness to the Greek text of the dialogue’s opening sections, Codex Laurentianus Plut.9.23, identifies this speaker as ΟΥ (i.e., Valentinian) and the respondent as ΟΡΘ (orthodox) in marginal notes. Since two of the speakers are clearly arguing for a point of view that Methodius wants to reject and one of the speakers argues for the view that Methodius wants to recommend, I follow A. Vaillant’s practice of identifying the first two for convenience as “heterodox” (from Methodius’s point of view) and the third as “orthodox” or “Methodius.” See Vaillant’s discussion in PO 22:639. For a recent argument that the arguments ascribed to the Valentinian might accurately reflect early Valentinian theology—perhaps even the views of Valentinus himself—see Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus*, 67-72.
animal and plant species. But then he sees human evil: people fighting, robbing, killing, and raping each other. Since he cannot believe that God is the source of these crimes, he considers two other options for explaining the origin of such evil. The first is that God created the universe out of nothing rather than out of himself, but he dismisses this option by pointing out that it would still remain that God created the things that are evil and is failing to return them to non-being now that they have become evil. The second, which he adopts, is that God created out of a preexisting, unformed “matter” by wisely and skillfully separating what is good in it from what is evil. The remaining evil, which God could not use, is what explains evil among humans.

In response, the orthodox speaker argues that God created everything out of nothing. This view avoids the problems that attend claiming that the creation—which is now at least partially characterized by evil—is somehow made from God’s own substance. It also avoids positing two eternal and uncreated things, God and matter. It leaves open, however, the question of how the evil that is observable in the creation came

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26 On Free Choice 3.8 (PO 22:741-43).
27 On Free Choice 3.9 (PO 22:743). Jean Pépin, “Platonisme et Stoïcisme dans le « De autexousio » de Méthode d’Olympe,” in Forma Futuri: Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino (Turin: Bottega d’Erasmo, 1975), argues that this position and Methodius’s arguments against it have important precedents in Middle Platonic arguments against Stoic cosmology. Nevertheless, Pépin admits that the parallels are inexact.
to be. Methodius’s solution is to argue that all evil is a product of the individual choices of humans created free (ἐλεύθερος) and with the power of self-determination (αὐτεξούσιος). Methodius’s appeal to creaturely free will to explain evil is fairly standard, and its details need not detain us here. In fact, his arguments on this point were so similar to Origen’s that several later readers misidentified passages from On Free Choice as coming from Origen’s pen.

The explicit focus of disagreement in On Free Choice is how one should account for evil, not what actually counts as evil. Methodius’s assumptions in this text about what constitutes the evil for which a theodicy is necessary, however, turn out to have far-reaching consequences for the shape of his understanding of resurrection and his later criticisms of Origen.

The significance of Methodius’s assumptions emerge most clearly when compared with Origen’s views. Recall that Origen developed his free-will theodicy in On First Principles to account for all the forms of inequality that he saw within the rational creation. Since the one God must have created everything equal, why are archangels, angels, humans, and demons so different from each other, both in terms of their moral states and bodily forms? Why, in turn, do non-rational creatures exist at all? To deal with

29 ἡ ἑκάστου προαίρεσις, according to Vaillant’s retrojection from the Slavonic. On Free Choice 14.6 (PO 22:789).
31 Excerpts from On Free Choice are included in the Philocalia and the Adamantius Dialogue as excerpts from Origen. See Patterson, Methodius of Olympus, 61.
these questions, Origen posited that the originally-equal rational creatures freely fell away from God to varying degrees, resulting in both moral and bodily diversity among rational creatures. God then formed the non-rational creation to serve the needs of these various rational creatures.

Methodius does not share Origen’s concern with inequality. The opening heterodox speaker in On Free Choice, to whom Methodius entrusts the task of setting up the problem that the competing theodicies must solve, takes the diversity that pervades creation to be evidence for God being its creator and sustainer. To be sure, his focus is on the harmony that characterizes that diversity. Nevertheless, when observing the created order apart from human beings, he sees absolutely no reason to doubt that God is the good and wise creator of everything that he sees.

It is only when he turns to humans that he perceives evil. He sees two people quarreling with each other, and another trying to rob his neighbor. Others are beginning to dare to do even worse things: One desecrates a buried corpse by exhuming and stripping it. Another, in a rage, takes up his sword, chases down, and brutally kills a helpless person. Yet another man tries to rape his neighbor’s wife in order to avoid the responsibility of legitimate fatherhood. Witnessing these outrages forces the heterodox

32 Methodius’s use of musical analogies to describe the diversity of the created order is strongly reminiscent of Irenaeus (e.g., Against Heresies 2.25.2). Origen, too, can marvel at the harmony that God can bring about, but the harmony is what God salvages from the disastrous diversity brought on by the rational creatures’ free wills (On First Principles 2.1.2).

speaker to reconsider his earlier confidence in the pervasiveness of God’s wise providence and leads him to conclude that the evil in the world stems from the evil remainder of preexisting matter.

What precisely, then, is actually wrong with the world? According to this heterodox speaker, the only problem with the world appears to be that humans violently abuse each other. This is indeed a serious problem, yet it is strikingly narrow in its vision. Inequalities among humans—for example, rich versus poor or sickly versus healthy—go unmentioned. The inequalities between categories of creatures (angels versus humans), which so exercised Origen, also go unmentioned. As presented by this opening speaker, then, the only problem that a theodicy must explain is the fact that humans intentionally seek to harm each other.

The remainder of the dialogue does nothing to expand this vision of what is wrong with the world. In fact, a key argument made by the orthodox speaker confirms that Methodius was completely unbothered by the kinds of inequality that drove Origen’s theodicy. After arguing that the only real evils in the world are caused by humans, and that those evils are caused by human free choice, Methodius turns to the problem that bedevils so many free-will theodicies: the source of the original suggestion to choose evil. Methodius cannot say that a propensity for evil was somehow built into humans as God created them, since that would put at least some of the responsibility for evil back on

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34 In sharp contrast to The Book of the Laws of the Countries associated with the enigmatic Syriac author Bardaisan, which deals extensively with both human crimes and human inequalities.
God. Unsurprisingly, then, he ascribes the original suggestion to disobey God to the devil. This too can be a dangerous move, though, because it raises the same questions about the source of the devil’s inclination towards evil.

Methodius’s solution to this tricky problem hinges on the devil’s mistaken conflation of inequality with injustice. God wanted to give humans the gift of incorruptible life, but God did not want to give this gift without reason. So, God endowed humans with the power of free choice so that they could freely follow God’s command and thus earn incorruptible life. This system did not sit well with the devil, whom God had not honored with the opportunity to earn incorruptible life. Inflamed with envy, the devil taught humans to choose evil by disobeying God in order to prevent them from attaining this greater gift of incorruptible life. Who, then, is responsible for the devil’s envy? Methodius admits that God would be responsible if God had taken what belonged to the snake and given it to humans, but that is not what happened. Instead, God gave a special honor to humans but left the devil as he was. Since God took nothing away from the devil, the devil’s envy was unjustified and the devil was completely responsible for his own envy. Methodius offers an analogy from domestic life to make his point clear: It is as if a master with two slaves left one of them in slavery but adopted the other as a son. The one left in slavery, consumed by envy, killed the adopted one. Would the master, Methodius rhetorically asks, be responsible for this murder?35

35 On Free Choice 17.6 (PO 22:803). Patterson describes this analogy that of a slave becoming envious of the son of the master, but he does not note that the son was originally a slave (Patterson, Methodius of
Methodius clearly expects the answer to be No. The devil is wrong to think that he deserves the same honor as humans, even if there is no apparent reason for the one to be honored but not the other. Every creature has its proper place in the harmony of creation, and God is the sole arranger of that harmony. Thus, every creature is what God has created it to be, and every creature’s purpose is to be exactly that—not to try to be something else. To think that a theodicy is necessary for the diversity manifest within the created order—even among different types of rational creatures, such as angels and humans—would be to question God’s wisdom as creator. Notably, Methodius does not seem to think that this is a controversial perspective. The heterodox speaker simply assumes it, and Methodius’s voice neither challenges nor expands it. He takes it as self-evident that the slave who has not been adopted has no right to be envious of the slave who has been adopted as a son.

The significance of this perspective on diversity, inequality, and justice, then, lies in what it suggests about what was intelligible to Methodius. It is not the case that he seriously considers and thoughtfully rejects the view that God must create all things equal. Instead, such an idea seems to have never occurred to him. Thus, when he encounters the argument in the On the Resurrection that humans will be resurrected into

_Olympus_, 54). This latter aspect of the analogy is particularly important in that it highlights the acceptability to Methodius of even seemingly arbitrary inequality. Bonwetsch reproduces the analogy more fully but does not draw out its significance. See Nathanael Bonwetsch, _Die Theologie des Methodius von Olympus_ (Berlin: Weidmann, 1903), 72.
an angelic existence, his response rests primarily on the observation that a wide variety of creatures are manifest in the world and that to think that they can shift from one type to another suggests a lack of trust in God’s wisdom as creator.36 This response in the On the Resurrection accords well with Methodius’s explanation at the end of On Free Choice of why God created at all, where he says that God created in order to express his goodness and skill (τέχνη) as creator.37

Methodius’s narrow definition of evil shapes his approach to the created world in three important ways. First, he sees no problem at all with the way the world appears today when viewed in isolation from evil human actions. The diversity of creation raises no questions about fairness; instead, through its harmony, it points to the wisdom of the creator God. Nothing is evil by nature; something can only be “bad” insofar as humans make evil use of it.38 Thus, every evil human act is really only an abuse of a good human capability: adultery and fornication are abuses of sexual relations that are good in and of themselves when practiced between a husband and wife for the purpose of procreation; even the act of killing another person is not inherently evil, since it is good to kill deserving criminals.39 When Methodius looks out at the world, nothing suggests to him that God must have something better in mind.

36 On the Resurrection 1.49-51 (= Panarion 64.41-43).
37 On Free Choice 22.3 (PO 22:825).
39 On Free Choice 15.2-3 (PO 22:789-91).
Second, because Methodius sees no evil beyond evil human acts, he sees no reason to look beyond humans themselves to explain that evil. This point constitutes Methodius’s main argument against the heterodox speaker’s theodicy. That speaker ascribes the existence of evil in the world to matter. By showing that human free will is a sufficient explanation for all the evil in the world, Methodius eliminates the need to look elsewhere in the structure of the world for an explanation of evil.

Third, as a result of the first two points, the eradication of evil should either leave the created order unaffected or restore it to its original state. Methodius does not discuss eschatology in On Free Choice, but his discussion of the relationship between evil and the created order eliminates all reasons for thinking that an eschatological victory by God would leave behind any aspect of the created order. (To be sure, Methodius does not think that sexual relations will continue into eternity. That is because the good purpose for which God created sex—procreation—is no longer necessary in eternity, not because there is anything problematic about sex.) As we will see, this perspective strongly affects Methodius’s perception of what Origen is doing when he declines to make matter the principle of bodily continuity.

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40 Symposium 2.1-2. Ernesto Buonaiuti strongly emphasizes the difference between the rationales given for ascetic sexual renunciation by Methodius, who looks forward to the reconstitution of the world in basically its current state, and Clement and Origen, who do not; for Buonaiuti, Methodius’s position represents a return to a primitive Christian eschatology and ethic. While his confident portrayal of earlier Christian thought might be questioned, his perception of a fundamental distinction between Origen and Methodius is accurate. See Ernesto Buonaiuti, “The Ethics and Eschatology of Methodius of Olympus,” HTR 14 (1921): 255-66.
6.3.2 *Symposium: Practicing the Eradication of Sin’s Entrenchment in the Body*

As we have seen, in the *On Free Choice* Methodius emphatically rejects the notion that matter is the *cause* of evil. In the *Symposium*, however, he supplements this point by maintaining that *sin* is connected to the human body in an important way. This is why the body must be dissolved in order to eradicate sin even though the body is not at all at fault for sin.

The *Symposium* is a genuine dialogue, and the speakers do not always agree with each other on every point. The text gains its coherence, rather, from the concerns shared among the speakers and the development of approaches to those concerns as the speakers correct and supplement one another. In the *Symposium*, the speakers focus on praising chastity. One important reason that chastity is to be praised, however, turns out to be that it combats the force that incites humans to commit evil acts. While *On Free Choice* does not touch on the consequences of the free human choices to disobey God, several speakers in the *Symposium* explain how the envious devil’s success in inciting humans to do evil caused humans to become the objects of constant incitements to evil from within. Correspondingly, chastity emerges as the Christian practice *par excellence* because it not

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42 Throughout the dialogue, the speakers tend to use the language of chastity (ἁγνεία) and virginity (παρθενία) interchangeably. By the end, however, it becomes clear that virginity is simply chastity *par excellence*. Thus, those who are married but do not enjoy sexual relations immoderately are practicing chastity, although to a lesser degree than virgins (*Symposium* 9.4).
only furthers the partial eradication of the vices in this life but also anticipates the eschatological state in which the evil that has become entrenched in the body has been eradicated. In this matter, the speakers appear to speak with one voice.

The first speaker, Marcella, compares the discipline of virginity to salt that preserves meat: Just as salt draws out the bloody fluids in meat that cause it to rot, so discipline draws away the irrational desires of the body (αἱ ἄλογοι … τοῦ σώματος ἐπιθυμίαι) that incite people to commit adultery and exclude them from the presence of God.43 She later describes the same desires as the flesh’s luxurious enjoyments (τὰς τῆς σαρκὸς ἡδυπαθείας) and habitual inclination towards intercourse (τὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἔθους ἐπὶ τὴν συνουσίαν καταφοράν).44 Chastity combats this problem through participation in heavenly life, directing the soul to think heavenly thoughts by gazing upon immortality itself.45 The soul, thus nourished by a heavenly draught, becomes anchored in the haven of incorruptibility.46 Marcella depicts this process as one of increasing conformity to God—which she takes to mean the banishment of corruptibility—through imitation of the virgin Christ.47

Theophila’s speech rebukes Marcella for implying that virginity is enjoined upon all after the coming of Christ; instead, she insists that a positive role remains for marriage

43 Symposium 1.1 (SC 95, 54).
44 Symposium 1.3 (SC 95, 60).
45 Symposium 1.1.
46 Symposium 1.2.
47 Symposium 1.4-5.
and procreation even after Christ, since God clearly continues to act as creator towards the complete unfolding of the created order.\textsuperscript{48} There is nothing wrong with the procreative process \textit{per se}; echoing a key theme from \textit{On Free Choice}, Theophila reminds Marcella that nothing is inherently evil, but rather that things are only evil insofar as they are abused by free creatures.\textsuperscript{49} Nevertheless, Theophila concurs with Marcella’s privileging of chastity and offers a rationale for it that rests on chastity’s participation in something that transcends this life. For Marcella, chastity involves contemplative participation in and conformity to present heavenly realities. For Theophila, on the other hand, chastity is directed towards a \textit{future} state, albeit one that is very reminiscent of Marcella’s: those who are called to virginity work to place before their minds (φαντάζεσθαι) the transformation of bodies into equality with angels (τὴν ἰσάγγελον μεταστοιχείωσιν τῶν σωμάτων), when people will no longer marry nor be given in marriage.\textsuperscript{50}

The third speaker, Thalia, says that the Word assumed human nature in order to defeat the serpent who had ruled over human nature since the first deception, thereby saving humanity from being overwhelmed by the waves and deceptions of pleasure (αἱ ἀπάται τῆς ἡδονῆς).\textsuperscript{51} While all within the church are making some progress along the

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Symposium} 2.1. \\
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Symposium} 2.4-5. \\
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Symposium} 2.7 (SC 95, 86). \\
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Symposium} 3.6 (SC 95, 102).
way of salvation, the “more perfect” are those who have withdrawn from the absurdities of the flesh (ἀποστερωθέντες τῶν τῆς σαρκὸς ἀτοπημάτων). As Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 7:34, they are free to set their minds on the things of the Lord rather than on the things of this world.

Theopatra, the fourth speaker, offers a fuller narrative of how humanity came to be afflicted with a body that pulls towards evil. After humanity was thrown out from paradise on account of the transgression, it became engulfed in the rushing waters of corruption (τὸ ῥέουμα τῆς φθορᾶς). These waters, which Theopatra subsequently glosses as “passions” (πάθαι) and a “flood of foolishness” (κῦμα τῆς ἀνοίας), overwhelmed the senses of the soul and thereby forced off course the “ship” that had once been easy to steer. The devil himself was actively involved in this process, like Pharaoh seeking to drown the rational (“male”) offspring in the flood of passions while encouraging the irrational (“female”) to multiply. The precise source of these waves of passion is not clear from her account. Do they come from outside the person? Do they come from the human body insofar as it is now ruled over by a soul that is cut off from God? What is clearer, though, is that they lead the soul astray through the body. Thus, the solution to this plight is for God to send down chastity so that humans can bind their bodies

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52 Symposium 3.8 (SC 95, 110).
53 Symposium 3.13.
54 Symposium 4.2 (SC 95, 130).
55 Symposium 4.2 (SC 95, 132).
(σῶματα) to it and so be led out of the storm and into the safe harbor of incorruptibility in paradise.\(^56\) Chastity, then, constitutes the best way for humans to be reconciled to God, transformed to incorruptibility, granted eternal life, and returned to paradise. As for Marcella and Theophila, chastity accomplishes all this insofar as it is constituted by contemplation of heavenly promises that will be fulfilled in the resurrection.\(^57\) Similarly, Thallusa praises virginity as the practice that causes the passions and lusts that destroy the soul to wither away (τὰ λυμαντήρια τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπομαραίνουσα πάθη καὶ ὑπεκκαόματα)\(^58\) and describes it as using the power of sight to take pleasure in looking at the things that are above (Col. 3:1).\(^59\)

Unsurprisingly, Thecla’s speech offers a detailed account of the nature and benefits of chastity. She begins by noting that παρθενία (virginity) and παρθεΐα (near to the divine) differ by only one letter, which she takes to indicate virginity’s unique capacity for producing likeness to God.\(^60\) Virginity accomplishes this by strengthening the wings of the soul so that it can fly away from human interests and bodily corruption

\(^{56}\) Symposium 4.2 (SC 95, 130-32).
\(^{57}\) Symposium 4.5.
\(^{58}\) Symposium 5.3 (SC 95, 148).
\(^{59}\) Symposium 5.4.
\(^{60}\) Symposium 8.1 (SC 95, 200). The manuscript tradition gives either παρθεία or πανθεία (all-embracing divinity). The former is the more likely reading for three reasons: (1) It is unattested in other Greek literature, while πανθεία is common; therefore, it is more likely that a scribe changed παρθεία to πανθεία than vice versa. (2) Thecla states that παρθενία differs by only one letter; παρθεία simply loses the ν, while πανθεία both loses the ρ and transposes the ν. (3) παρθεία, implying similarity to the divine, better fits Thecla’s overall argument. In either case, though, Thecla’s point remains the same: virginity is connected to the divine. See St. Methodius: The Symposium, a Treatise on Chastity, 105 n. 3.
(τὴν φθορὰν τῶν σωμάτων).\textsuperscript{61} What it flies towards is a vision of immortal life, contemplated from afar (μακρόθεν), that makes the goods of the world pale in comparison; this life borders that of the angels (τὸν τῶν ἄγγελων γείτονα βίον).\textsuperscript{62} Upon their death, the souls of those who practiced virginity in this life are escorted by angels into this immortal life, which they could previously only contemplate from afar.\textsuperscript{63} Thecla uses the promise of this reward to encourage the virgins to persevere in their chastity (ἄγνεία), through which they can counteract the wet weight of the flesh that pulls them downwards.\textsuperscript{64}

Insofar as all these speeches associate chastity with intimacy with God and the pull away from chastity with the body, they run the risk of blaming the body for evil (or at least for sexual evil). Tusian’s speech recognizes this danger and makes an important clarification: the human body was originally stable, but the transgression caused it to be toppled.\textsuperscript{65} Furthermore, the solution to this state of affairs involves more than adopting a chaste lifestyle. Rather, God interposes bodily death so that the transgression (παράπτωμα) can no longer live and the person will not live forever as an eternally-condemned sinner; only then can God raise up the person to immortality.\textsuperscript{66} As we will

\textsuperscript{61} Symposium 8.1 (SC 95, 202).
\textsuperscript{62} Symposium 8.2 (SC 95, 204).
\textsuperscript{63} Symposium 8.2.
\textsuperscript{64} Symposium 8.4 (SC 95, 208).
\textsuperscript{65} Symposium 9.2 (SC 95, 270).
\textsuperscript{66} Symposium 9.2.
see, Tusiane retains a strong emphasis on the importance of chastity in this life, but she transforms its purpose from producing immortality by eliminating sin in the body to preparing the person to praise God properly after God has removed sin from the body through death and resurrection. In this way, her speech acknowledges that the passions that pull the person towards evil are so strongly connected to the body that only the body’s dissolution can remove them; the tempering work of the soul, no matter how strong, cannot prevent a person from becoming a condemned sinner for all eternity.

Tusiane’s speech clearly anticipates the model that Methodius develops using the fig tree and temple analogy in the *On the Resurrection*.

As we have already noted, Methodius’s account of this enemy within the body that is constantly tempting a person to commit evil allows him to explain Paul’s statements about the connection between sin and the flesh without denigrating the flesh *per se* (Rom. 7:5, 14-18, 23-25). By nevertheless acknowledging that the enemy within is very closely associated with the *body* specifically, though, Methodius is primed to argue that something must be done to the body in order to deal with the problem of sin. Of course, given this diagnosis of the source of the temptations that constantly afflict the soul, some might infer that the best solution would be simply to eliminate the seedbed in which sin has taken root—the body—and allow the soul to fly free. But Methodius’s prior commitment to the complete goodness of everything that God has created does not allow this solution; although the body is the site of sin’s infection, it is a good creation of God in and of itself and must be restored. Thus, the stage is set for Methodius to develop
a strong connection between the death and resurrection of the body specifically and the elimination of sin from the whole person.

Tusiane’s speech represents a significant step towards the position on the relationship between death and resurrection and the full eradication of sin that Methodius lays out in the *On the Resurrection*. It does not, however, quite get there. In particular, two issues remain unclear: What precisely happens to those who have not cultivated chastity in this life, and how are those who have cultivated chastity transformed into glory after the resurrection?

Tusiane’s primary aim, like that of the other women, is to praise chastity. She turns to the institution of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:39-43) to praise chastity, since the Israelites are instructed to gather branches of the chaste-tree—along with branches from other trees—to rejoice before the Lord (Lev. 23:40). These festivals are shadows of future blessings, and the Feast of Tabernacles is no exception: it is really

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67 LXX: ἀγνου κλάδους.
68 *Symposium* 9.1. For an overview of early Christian interpretations of this feast, see Jean Daniélou, “La Fête des Tabernacles dans l’exégèse patristique,” *StPatr* 1 (1957). Some exegetes—most prominently Origen—took the celebration of the feast of tabernacles in the wilderness to be about growth in the virtues during this present life on earth. Methodius’s eschatological interpretation, on the other hand, was followed by Didymus the Blind and, most notably, Gregory of Nyssa. Didymus combined Origen’s moral reading and Methodius’s eschatological reading while removing all hints of millenarianism. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Nyssen followed Methodius in reading the tabernacles as resurrected bodies but added the expectation that this resurrection would also constitute the reunification of the spiritual creation (humans and angels) in its original equality.
about the rebuilding of collapsed tabernacles (bodies) in the resurrection, and the days of the festival correspond to the millennia of world history and the *eschaton*.\(^{69}\)

As she describes it, the building of the tabernacles for the feast includes two steps.\(^{70}\) First, the tabernacle is erected. This is not, however, the building of a brand-new tabernacle. Rather, it is the rebuilding of the tabernacle that fell on account of human disobedience; this is the death and reconstitution of the body that eradicates that transgression, as described above. This first step appears to be accomplished completely by God’s power. Second, the reconstituted tabernacle is decorated. In contrast to the first step, this step depends on each person’s good works, since the person adorns (κοσμήσασα) the tabernacle with her good works—the branches that are gathered, including the branches of the chaste-tree.\(^{71}\) These branches are to be gathered on the first day of the festival (Lev. 23:40), since it is then that each person will be judged; those who come with the branches of chastity, which they were commanded to procure in this world, are those who are coming with what is required.\(^{72}\)

Tusiane’s description of this event thus far seems to imply that some might arrive at this judgment on the first day without what they need. In other words, some might

\(^{69}\) This passage is generally acknowledged to be the earliest evidence of Christians adopting Jewish millenarian readings of the Feast of Tabernacles. Nevertheless, Tusiana’s use of it departs from typical millenarian interpretations in confusing ways (e.g., putting the general resurrection and judgment before the millennial reign). See L. G. Patterson, “Methodius’ Millenarianism,” *StPatr* 24 (1993).

\(^{70}\) *Symposium* 9.2.

\(^{71}\) *Symposium* 9.2 (SC 95, 270).

\(^{72}\) *Symposium* 9.3.
possess rebuilt tabernacles but have nothing with which to adorn them. Presumably, this would be the case because they failed to acquire chastity and produce good works during their time in this world. The sense in which such people have risen in immortality to praise God, however, is unclear.73

Tusiane soon both confirms and complicates this picture when she says that those who come to the judgment seat of Christ on the first day of the feast without such good works will be unable to celebrate the feast with God and therefore—appealing to Revelation 20:5-6—will not have any part in the “first resurrection.”74 This claim confirms the earlier impression insofar as it assumes the possibility of coming to the judgment seat after the resurrection without the necessary good works, but its denial of participation in the “first resurrection” raises questions about the sense in which Tusiane thinks these people have been resurrected at all. In Revelation 20, the “first resurrection” is the resurrection of the martyrs into the millennial kingdom; this resurrection precedes the general resurrection, in which the wicked are raised to judgment. By making the judgment the entryway into the millennial kingdom, however, Tusiane appears to make the general resurrection the condition for the possibility of the “first resurrection.” Such a scheme raises questions about the fate of the resurrected wicked during the millennial kingdom.

73 Symposium 9.2.
74 Symposium 9.3 (SC 95, 272).
Tusiane’s solution to this problem is to portray those who have come to the judgment inadequately prepared as consigned to an existence that is simultaneously resurrected and excluded from the feast. They are excluded because they simply cannot celebrate the feast with God without having cleansed themselves of vice by conquering the passions; they are incapable of gazing upon the truth with sharp sight (ὀξυδορκεῖ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν). 75 They are free from the pains of this world but excluded from the joy of the next:

For in the new, pain-free creation, whoever is not found adorned with branches of chastity will not attain rest, having failed to fulfill God’s commandment according to the law, nor will he come into the land of the promise to reside there, since he has not first celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. 76

Thus, the practice of chastity in this life is desirable for the resurrection because, without it, no one will attain the promises. 77 By itself, chastity cannot completely eradicate sin from a person; if it could, God would not have needed to interpose bodily death in order to eliminate sin. In fact, strictly speaking, chastity is neither sufficient nor necessary for the elimination of sin, since the death and resurrection of the body ipso facto remove it. Nevertheless, Tusiane agrees with those who have spoken before her that the free practice

75 Symposium 9.4 (SC 95, 274).
76 Symposium 9.5. Ἐν γὰρ τῇ καινῇ καὶ ἀλύπῳ κτίσει, ὃς ἄν ἁγνείας μὴ εὑρεθῇ κλάδοις κεκοσμημένος, οὐ τεύξεται τῆς ἀναπαύσεως τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν νόμον, οὐδὲ εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐπιδημήσει τῆς ἐπαγγελίας μὴ ἐορτάσας πρῶτον τὰς σκηνὰς (SC 95, 278).
77 Symposium 9.4.
of the discipline of chastity in this life makes real progress in the battle against the vices and therefore is fittingly rewarded after the resurrection.\footnote{This formulation—that chastity, although neither necessary nor sufficient for the eradication of sin, nevertheless makes real inroads against sin and is fittingly rewarded in the resurrection—makes the best sense of Tusiane’s simultaneous emphasis on (a) the necessity and sufficiency of bodily death and resurrection for the eradication of entrenched sin and (b) the necessity of chastity for the beatific life in the resurrection. Methodius could be read, however, as failing to distinguish between these two processes quite so neatly. Tusiane herself speaks of the ascetical practice of the divine teachings (τὴν ἄσκησιν τῶν θείων μαθημάτων) purifying the soul from sin and conquering passions (9.4; SC 95, 274), and Domnina, who speaks immediately after Tusiane, claims that chastity immortalizes our bodies (ἡ ἁθανατοποιὸς τῶν ἁγνείας ἡμῶν ἁγνεία [10.6; SC 95, 302]). These claims appear to imply that chastity performs the same function as the death and resurrection of the body do for at least Tusiane. It is certainly possible that Methodius was not entirely consistent on this point. The reappearance of Tusiane’s overall model in the \textit{On the Resurrection}, however, strongly suggests that that model should be given primacy in interpreting Tusiane’s own claims and perhaps those of subsequent speakers like Domnina. In that case, Domnina’s ascription of immortalizing power to chastity could be read as a claim that chastity makes possible the \textit{beatific} resurrection life, including the further transformation and glorification that Tusiane describes as the entrance into the Promised Land.}

Tusiane clearly recognizes that her account resurrects both the righteous and the wicked into a blessed new creation and that she therefore needs a way to differentiate between how the resurrected righteous and wicked experience that new creation. As we saw above, she accomplishes this by excluding the wicked from the celebration of the Feast; she also excluded them from the further progression of the righteous into heaven, the Promised Land itself. Just as the Israelites celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the desert but then entered the Promised Land, so too those who have celebrated the Feast after the resurrection of their tabernacles (bodies) will follow Jesus into heaven. Furthermore, just as the Israelites’ entry into the Promised Land eventually produced the transition from tabernacle to temple, so too the “tabernacles” of the resurrected will be transformed from their human and corrupt forms into angelic greatness and beauty (ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων ἡμῶν ἁγνεία [10.6; SC 95, 302]).
By implication, the wicked are left behind, resurrected with perfect bodies into a pain-free world only to wander aimlessly. Methodius might have said that their punishment is their inability to attain the good that they now, being perfected, desire.

Ultimately, Methodius was apparently unsatisfied with both of these ways of explaining how it is that God imposed bodily death on humanity in order to eradicate the invasive sin that had become entrenched in the human body but yet that the death and resurrection of all do not imply that all can expect eternal beatitude. As we have seen, Methodius is much clearer in the *On the Resurrection* about the fate in the resurrection of those who failed to cultivate chastity in this life: God actually punishes them; they are not just left wandering somewhere. Similarly, Methodius drops any mention of a further transformation into glory after the resurrection for the virtuous. On this latter point, Methodius might have been worried that Tusiane’s view could be interpreted as an eschatological abandonment of embodiment. By abandoning this suggestion that the present body is transcended, Methodius returns in the *On the Resurrection* to a position that is more faithful to his emphasis in *On Free Choice* on the inherent goodness of creation’s harmonious order. 

Nevertheless, the logic driving Tusiane’s eschatological interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles, including the role in it of the pursuit of chastity

79 Symposium 9.5 (SC 95, 280).

80 Patterson, Methodius of Olympus, 110-12, 139-40, 166-68.
in this life, matches the logic of Methodius’s account in the *On the Resurrection*. The *On the Resurrection* thus represents a clarification more than a development.

### 6.4 Methodius on Sin and the Soul

#### 6.4.1 Methodius’s Anthropology and the Site of the Passions

In its discussion of the entrenchment in the body of the passions that prompt sins, the *Symposium* raises in an acute way the question of Methodius’s anthropology. Although Methodius does not devote a treatise to anthropology or psychology, a fairly consistent picture emerges from the various speakers in the *Symposium* and Methodius’s other works, and this view illuminates his account of bodily death and resurrection.

Methodius almost always describes human beings as bipartite, composites of soul (ψυχή) and body or flesh (σῶμα or σάρξ, rejecting a distinction between the two). In one text, *On Leprosy*, he speaks of the human flesh (σάρξ), soul (ψυχή), and spirit (πνεῦμα), but πνεῦμα functions this way nowhere else in his extant writings. A tripartite schema does, however, seem to appear in one passage in the *Symposium*. Thalussa interprets God’s command to Abraham to offer a heifer, goat, and ram (all three years old) as a command to offer the ψυχή (heifer), σάρξ (goat), and λογισμός (ram).

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81 See, for example, *On the Resurrection* 1.34.4 (= *Panarion* 64.26.7), 1.50.3-4 (64.42.4-5). Methodius uses “body” and “flesh” interchangeably in the latter passage, beginning by declaring that humans are soul/body (ψυχή/σῶμα) composites and then describing the Sadducees’ disbelief in the resurrection of the flesh (σάρξ) as belief in the resurrection of the soul (ψυχή) only. He later addresses and rejects the attempts by some to distinguish between σῶμα and σάρξ (*On the Resurrection* 1.62 [= *Panarion* 64.54]).

82 *On Leprosy* 9.4 (GCS 27, 463); 11.3 (GCS 27, 465). The latter passage is only preserved in Slavonic, and Bonwetsch translates the terms there as Leib/Fleisch (once each), Seele, and Geist.

83 *Symposium* 5.2 (SC 95, 144).
then immediately summarizes the command as a promise that Abraham would be perfect if he offered to God his ψυχή, αἴσθησις, and νοῦς. Later in the same passage, Thalussa divides the human life into three stages: in the first, the person’s ἡγεμονικόν begins to be disturbed by the passions growing in the pubescent σάρξ; in the second, the person’s νοῦς begins to stabilize itself against tumults (θόρυβοι) and false opinion (οἴησις); in the third, the desirous phantasms (φαντασίαι) decline as the σάρξ withers.

How do these terms relate to each other? That Thalussa is not actually propounding a tripartite anthropology is clear from the summary statement with which she introduces the entire discussion: the perfect person must offer everything, both soul (ψυχή) and flesh (σάρξ). The other terms, then, should be understood as faculties of either soul or body/flesh, separated out in this particular passage for the sake of the allegory. And indeed a survey of Methodius’s works confirms this interpretation. Theopatra, interpreting the injunction in Jeremiah 2:32 that a virgin should not forget her breastband, defines the breast as νοῦς and φρένες before saying that the breastband therefore binds the intention of the soul (ἡ πρόθεσις τῆς ψυχῆς). Similarly, Tusiane can say that ascetical practice (ἀσκησις) purifies and adorns the ψυχή and then immediately specify that through such practice the νοῦς is cleansed so that it can see the truth.

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84 Symposium 5.2 (SC 95, 144).
85 Symposium 5.2 (SC 95, 146).
86 Symposium 5.2 (SC 95, 144).
87 Symposium 4.6 (SC 95, 140).
clearly. The λογισμός is also connected to the soul. Thalussa says that strongly alcoholic drinks upset the λογισμός even more than wine, which explains why any drink that intoxicates the ψυχή is called “strong wine” (even if it is not made from grapes). Luxurious things, like jewelry, intoxicate the ψυχή, and frivolous conversation confuses the λογισμός. Furthermore, there is significant overlap between Methodius’s descriptions of νοῦς and λογισμός. Just as the νοῦς can be prevented by deceitful thoughts from perceiving truth clearly, so can the λογισμός fail to get a clear view of the truth because of deceptive sense perception. Just as the νοῦς is spared from the assaults of φαντασίαι from the flesh by the onset of old age, so God rewards virgins who have avoided relaxing their λογισμός with straying φαντασίαι. Just as the evil one tries to ambush the νοῦς but fails when its intention (φρόνημα) has already been raised up to God, so also he tries to drag down the λογισμός to what is base by feeding pleasures through the bodily senses. Furthermore, φρόνησις functions in the same way: one gets a clearer vision of the truth when the inner man wipes clean the eye of the φρόνησις, and

88 Symposium 9.4 (SC 95, 274). See also Symposium 4.4 (SC 95, 134): our instruments of procreation can weigh down and burden the νοῦς.
89 Symposium 5.6 (SC 95, 156).
90 Symposium 5.6 (SC 95, 156).
91 On the Resurrection 1.30.5 (= Panarion 64.22.9). Methodius is here summarizing his opponent’s views, but on this point they agree. Their disagreement lies in the cause of those deceptive sense perceptions.
92 Symposium 4.5 (SC 95, 140).
93 Symposium 8.10 (SC 95, 224).
94 Symposium 5.3 (SC 95, 148).
95 Symposium 7.2 (SC 95, 182).
the demons, envious of the fact that God made the ψυχή rational (λογική) in his own image, lie in wait to defile the rational (λογικόν) and translucent (διορατικόν) beauty of the φρόνησις and thus commit adultery with the ψυχή that is betrothed to the Lord. 96 One further term, διάνοια, functions similarly: Procilla says that there are two powers of sight, one of the σῶμα and one of the ψυχή; the Word declares his love not for the σῶμα’s power of sight but for that of the διάνοια. 97 In the Symposium’s epilogue, Gregorion argues that it is better to practice virginity without experiencing concupiscence, because then both the διάνοια and the αἴσθησις are undefiled. 98 By contrast, those in whom the deceptive images from the senses produce a flood of desires have been defiled, even if they struggle against the desires, because they have been conquered in their λογισμός. 99

To summarize, then, the body/flesh (σῶμα/σάρξ) possesses the faculty of sense perception (αἴσθησις), which delivers prompts to the soul (ψυχή). The soul, in turn, has a faculty of discernment and insight, the λογισμός (or, apparently, the νοῦς, φρόνησις, or διάνοια). This faculty, which is free from outside compulsion, 100 seeks to discern the truth and decides what to do with the prompts from the body. As a result, its ability to discern the truth can be negatively impacted by what it receives from the body. The human soul (ψυχή) reflects God in its reason and immortality and resembles God insofar

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96 Symposium 6.1 (SC 95, 166).
97 Symposium 7.2 (SC 95, 182).
98 Symposium Epilogue (SC 95, 322).
99 Symposium Epilogue (SC 95, 326).
100 Symposium 8.13 (SC 95, 236).
as it faithfully contemplates God; it ceases to bear the image of God, however, if it turns away from the pure contemplation of God. 101 This tragedy occurs when the soul becomes overwhelmed by bodily passions and chooses to redirect its attention towards bodily desires.

For Methodius, the soul is overwhelmed by passions not because the soul has become weakened in some way, but because the stimuli assaulting the soul (and especially its discerning faculty) have changed or strengthened significantly. Since the soul receives its stimuli from the body, the event that occasions the soul’s turn away from God is thus a change in the body, not in the soul.

Methodius’s psychology is thus reminiscent of Plato’s in the Phaedo, wherein the passions that can lead the soul astray reside in the body. 102 For Plato, the body is the problem and the fitting solution to this problem is for the soul to escape or transcend the body. As we will see below, Methodius thinks that Origen holds this view. The problem with this view, from Methodius’s perspective, is that it makes the body per se the cause of the soul’s turn away from God and therefore tends towards the conclusion that the body should be discarded.

There are two possible solutions to this problem. The first is to shift the locus of the passions that lead the soul astray from the body to the soul itself. In this model, a change in the soul, rather than in the body, causes the soul to turn away from God.

101 Symposium 6.1.
102 Phaedo 66B-C.
was Gregory of Nyssa’s solution. The second solution, which Methodius adopts, is to account for the body’s role in leading the soul astray by positing an external invader that comes to inhere in the body. On this model, the solution is not the discarding of the body; rather, it is the eradication of the invader from within the body. As we have seen, the speakers in the Symposium assume just such a view. The irrational desires (ἐπιθυμίαι) are of the body (Marcella); people are overwhelmed by the absurdities of the flesh (Thalia); the soul that practices chastity flies away from the wet, heavy body (Thecla). Although the precise origin of the post-lapsarian overwhelming waters of the passions (πάθαι) that Theopatra describes is not clear, she does explicitly state that they assault the senses of the soul from without (ἐξωθεν). Thalussa, finally, confirms Theopatra’s claim that these waters were not always rushing in this way; the tabernacles of human bodies only became unstable after the initial transgression.

By locating the passions that lead the soul astray in the body, Methodius makes the body itself the focus of the reparative work necessary for salvation. To be sure, the


104 Symposium 4.2 (SC 95, 130).

105 Symposium 9.2. Methodius’s On the Leech, which only survives in Slavonic, contains a complementary discussion. He offers the following interpretation of the insatiable leech described in Proverbs 30:15: Once ingested, the leech attaches itself to the person’s throat and prevents the person from speaking. In the same way, the soul replaced the paradisiacal emotions (“Regungen” in Bonwetsch’s translation)—through which it was stirred to meditation on what is heavenly or anticipation of what is future—with unseemly lusts (ungehörige Begierden). Like the leech, these lusts sully the faith as if with blood and cause even the very prudent person to transgress from time to time (On the Leech 6.2-3). Although this passage leaves the location of these lusts ambiguous (body or soul?), it confirms the picture of lusts as outside invaders (albeit ingested by free choice).
ultimate problem is that the distracted soul has ceased to bear the image of God. Nevertheless, as we have seen, this has happened because the soul has allowed the body to be invaded by a power that causes the body to overwhelm the soul’s faculties and thereby lead it away from God. Chastity strengthens the soul’s resolve against the assaults of the bodily passions and weakens those passions, but true restoration to wholeness requires that the passions be eliminated altogether through the death of the body. (While this work is being done on the body, the soul is held safe in a habitation provided by the person’s good deeds.\textsuperscript{106} Methodius does not explain what happens to the souls of the wicked in this intermediate state, but this picture of the soul waiting while sin is eradicated from the body confirms that the problem afflicting humans fundamentally resides in the body.) To borrow an analogy from the world of computers, it is as if a computer is malfunctioning because of a hardware problem (a problem in the body) that is causing a secondary software problem (a problem in the soul). If a computer was malfunctioning because of a software malfunction or virus, the user would need to find a way to eliminate the virus from the software and then simply reboot the computer; the user would never need to pry off the computer’s cover to fix a problem inside the computer. The reboot is a necessary but minor step; the real work is done on the software, while the computer is running. In the case of a hardware problem, by contrast, the user would need to both (a) find ways of making the computer usable until the hardware can

\textsuperscript{106} On the Resurrection 2.15.7.
be fixed and (b) eventually shut down the computer, open it up, and remove or replace the offending piece of hardware. The former task corresponds to the cultivation of chastity within the soul, while the latter corresponds to the healing that God effects through bodily death and resurrection.

Since Gregory of Nyssa placed the passions within the soul rather than the body, he viewed the healing of the soul by the Holy Spirit as fundamental to the healing of the person. The salutary and necessary transformation of the body followed from the transformation of the soul. For Methodius, by contrast, the healing of the body and the redirecting of the soul were separate but related processes, together constituting the healing of the person. This view both provided Methodius with a strong rationale for God’s imposition of bodily death upon humanity and led to the affirmation that all will have the invasive passions removed from them through death and resurrection. Correspondingly, the discipline of chastity helps the soul to anticipate its eschatological return to pure contemplation of God, but it does not cause the death and resurrection that makes that complete return possible.

6.4.2 The Ontology of the Indwelling Sin

In light of Methodius’s emphasis on the privation theory of evil in On Free Choice, according to which nothing is evil in se, his descriptions of the passions as parasites entrenched in the body raise questions about their ontology. Is sin really a “thing” that can enter into the human body and that must be pried out? Methodius does not address this question directly, but his account of how humans fell into the present
state of constant affliction by the sin that inhabits the body, worked out in his exegesis of Romans 7, offers some hints as to how he would answer this question.

In *On the Resurrection*, Methodius offers a reading of Romans 7 that correlates it with the story from Genesis 3 of the first human couple’s transgression. He intends his interpretation to be an alternative to one that takes Paul’s laments about being fleshly (σάρκινος) and sold under sin (Rom. 7:14), having nothing good living in his flesh (Rom. 7:18), and needing deliverance from “the body of this death” (Rom. 7:24) to imply that the body itself is the problem from which salvation must free humanity. In contrast, Methodius argues that the body *infested by sin*, not the body *per se*, is the problem from which Paul cries out for salvation. When read together, Romans 7 and Genesis 3 tell the story of how the body fell into this plight.

The basic narrative runs as follows: The first parents of humanity, Adam and Eve, were created with free will. Before God gave them a commandment, though, they could neither do anything wrong nor be tempted to do anything wrong (since nothing had been forbidden). God gave them a commandment—to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—in order to give them an opportunity to exercise their free will in obedience and thus merit a great gift, eternal life; conversely, however, they would inherit death if they chose to disobey the commandment. This choice gave the

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107 *On the Resurrection* 2.2.7 (= *Panarion* 64.56.9).
108 *On the Resurrection* 2.1.1-3 (= *Panarion* 64.55.2-5).
109 *On the Resurrection* 2.2.4 (= *Panarion* 64.56.4).
devil just the opportunity he needed, and he made the most of it by successfully convincing Adam and Eve to disobey the commandment. With Adam and Eve now rightly sold to sin, evil settled in their bodies. The devil infused in them—and all their descendants—an overwhelming carnal desire. Methodius calls this a “material desire” (ἐπιθυμία ὑλική) and “material spirit” (τὸ ὑλικὸν πνεῦμα). In addition to infusing them with this desire, the devil continued to attack their souls with deceptive thoughts. Methodius summarizes the human situation in terms of Paul’s warring laws:

For it seems to me that Paul here clearly assumes three laws. The first law corresponds to the inborn good in us, which he clearly calls the ‘law of the mind.’ The second is the law that is being inserted by the attack of the evil one, which often drags the soul away to passionate fantasies, and which he says fights against the law of the mind. The third is the law according to sin that is hardened in the flesh by desire, which he called the law ‘of sin’ that dwells ‘in my members.’ The evil one, mounting and riding upon this last law, often urges it against us, driving us towards unrighteousness and evil deeds. For the law that is being breathed into us from the outside by the evil one and is being poured out into the soul itself through the senses [διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων] like a stream of asphalt is strengthened by the law that exists in the flesh in accordance with desire.
The human soul thus comes to be under assault in two ways, with the devil ultimately lying behind both: the soul is assaulted by the devil’s direct deceptive thoughts prompting to sin (the second law), and these thoughts are aided by the ingrained desire originally inserted into the body by the devil (the third law).118 Methodius invokes his earlier fig-tree analogy by calling the thoughts produced by this desire “shoots,”119 and he uses the entrenchment in the body of this lust that constantly produces these “shoots” to explain how Paul could say that he does what he does not want to do: Paul thinks what he does not want to think, but he obviously does not do what he does not want to do (since then he would not truly be an imitator of Christ).120 It is for the removal of this law of sin dwelling in the members that Paul cries out to God.121

What precisely, though, is the nature of this indwelling lust, which Methodius can also call sin or evil? It could either be an actual thing that the devil has infused from outside into the body or a distortion of something that already exists within the body.

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\text{τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐνσκιρρώσαντα ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ, ὁν ἀμαρτίας νόμον ὀικοῦντα ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἐκάλεσεν· ὁ ἐπιβαίνων ὁ πονηρὸς καὶ ἐποχοῦς πολλάκις καθάπερ ἢμῶν ἐγκελεύεται, πρὸς ἀδικίαν ἡμᾶς καὶ πράξεις συνελαύνον κακά· ὃ γὰρ ἐξώθην εἰσπνεόμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ νόμος καὶ διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων καθάπερ ἀσφαλτῶδες ῥεῦμα ἐνδόν εἰς αὐτὴν ἐκχεόντος ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ὑπάρχοντος κραταιοῦτα νόμου (GCS 27, 341-42).}
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118 On the Resurrection 2.7.1-2 (= Panarion 64.61.2-3).
119 On the Resurrection 2.6.4 (= Panarion 64.60.5). βλαστήματα νέα καὶ κλώνες (GCS 27, 340).
120 On the Resurrection 2.3-4 (= Panarion 64.57-58).
121 On the Resurrection 2.2 (= Panarion 64.62.3). For a similar summary of Methodius’s understanding of how sin came to indwell the human being and the consequences in this life of this fact, see Farges, Les Idées Morales, 109-13. Farges does not, however, speculate about the ontology of this indwelling evil.
Methodius’s broader theology suggests the latter, but his preferred language and imagery suggests the former. We have already seen that, for Methodius, the body as originally created is not evil in any way. As he points out in On Free Choice, this means that bodily actions like sexual intercourse are not inherently evil; they are only evil when twisted to evil ends. Presumably, then, Methodius would say that God created humans with desires for bodily needs like eating and reproduction. Since the devil caused the first transgression by deceiving Adam and Eve into choosing to follow one of these bodily desires (i.e., of eating), it would seem to be the case that the lust that the devil “infused” in humans is really an inordinate strengthening and misdirecting of desires that are actually inherent in human nature. On this account, rather than infusing something, the devil distorted something that was already there.\footnote{122 It is possible that Methodius equated indwelling sin with the devil himself, who, he notes, is called “sin” because he is the author of sin (On the Resurrection 2.2.4 [= Panarion 64.56.5]). This seems unlikely, however. Methodius gives no indication that he thinks everyone is actually possessed by the devil, and he speaks of the devil infusing lust into human bodies from the outside.}

If Methodius thought of indwelling sin and lust primarily as a distortion or agitation of something that was already there and good, however, one would expect him to describe God’s work to overcome that problem through death and resurrection in terms of straightening the distortion or stilling the agitation. But in general, he does not; rather, he speaks of death making possible the removal of sin. Since Methodius is at such pains to defend the inherent goodness of everything that God created—which is to say, everything whatsoever—and yet he fails to explain just what this indwelling sin is that

\footnote{122 It is possible that Methodius equated indwelling sin with the devil himself, who, he notes, is called “sin” because he is the author of sin (On the Resurrection 2.2.4 [= Panarion 64.56.5]). This seems unlikely, however. Methodius gives no indication that he thinks everyone is actually possessed by the devil, and he speaks of the devil infusing lust into human bodies from the outside.}
the devil infuses into bodies, it seems likely that he never really thought through the ontology of sin that could be drawn from his favorite metaphors about its infestation in and removal from the human body. Nevertheless, understanding the indwelling sin or lust as a distortion of originally morally neutral bodily desires preserves Methodius’s privation theory of evil, explains why the body seems to be the seedbed of the thoughts that constantly suggest evil to the soul, and is compatible with (although not immediately implied by) his claim that the body needs to die in order for it to cease being indwelt by sin.

6.4.3 The Death and Resurrection of the Soul

Methodius’s focus on bodily death and resurrection as the only means for the complete eradication of the passions from the person appears to have had one other significant effect, one that sets him apart starkly from Origen: he very rarely used the language of death and resurrection to describe something happening to or within the soul. For Origen, bodily death and resurrection are secondary to and reflect the more soteriologically important death of the soul to sin and resurrection to God. For Methodius, bodily death and resurrection are soteriologically significant in their own right because of their irreplaceable role in the eradication of sin. Although the soul is sullied by its failure to focus on God, it has not really been changed or damaged and therefore does not need to die and rise again in the way that the changed body does.

Methodius makes meager use of the Scripture passages that undergird Origen’s emphasis on the death and resurrection of the soul. Although he cites Colossians 3:1
several times—“So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above…”—he always focuses on the command to seek what is above and never quotes the first half of the verse, in which the Christian is described as already resurrected with Christ. He cites none of the key passages from Ephesians or Philippians.

Methodius quotes relatively few verses from Romans 6, and those that he does quote he interprets to be primarily about the resurrection of the body. Most of his citations from this chapter are concentrated in his discussion of Numbers 19, found in *On Foods*. In explaining the ceremony of the red heifer (Num. 19:1-10), he quotes Romans 6:3 (baptism into Christ Jesus is baptism into his death) to connect the sprinkling of the heifer’s ashes for purification to the purification received by Christians in baptism. He links the heifer’s ashes to the ashes of sorrow and repentance from sin; this link, in turn, accounts for the fittingness of connecting Jesus with the heifer’s ashes, since it highlights the fact that Jesus truly took on human flesh and suffering. Romans 6:9-10—death will no longer reign over Christ; his death was once and for all, and he now lives to God—concludes his explication, which Methodius sums up by stating that “he has led the flesh

123 *Symposium* 5.4; *On the Resurrection* 1.10.3; *On Foods* 4.3, 4.6, 5.7.
124 In *On Foods*, which only survives in Slavonic, Methodius responds to two female correspondents’ requests for interpretations of several Old Testament laws.
125 *On Foods* 12.6 (GCS 27, 444).
126 *On Foods* 12.6-8 (GCS 27, 444).
into eternal life.” Methodius’s deployment of these verses thus focuses squarely on the reality of the incarnation rather than the baptizand’s appropriation of Christ’s death.

Methodius again turns to Romans 6 in his interpretation of the corpse impurity law found in Numbers 19:16, according to which touching a corpse, human bone, or grave renders one unclean. His overall purpose is to show that corpses are not actually impure and that therefore the law requires spiritual interpretation. He proves this point with an oddly literalistic interpretation of Romans 6:7 (“for whoever has died is freed \[\delta\varepsilon\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\tau\alpha\] from sin”). The dead, he argues, are actually far more pure than the living, since they are no longer enslaved to sin—as proven by Romans 6:7. Furthermore, if corpses were impure, the Lord would not resurrect them and consider them worthy of the kingdom of heaven; but God cares for them in anticipation of the resurrection, as evidenced by the treatment accorded to Joseph’s bones. In Methodius’s hands, Romans 6:7 thus simply states that physically dead people have been freed from sin and are now pure. All implications for the Christian life after baptism but before physical death are lost.

Methodius offers similar interpretations of the language of death and life from Romans 6 in other works. His only citation of the promise of walking in newness of life found in Romans 6:4 appears in the On the Resurrection’s explication of 1 Corinthians

127 On Foods 12.8 (GCS 27, 444): Er hat das Fleisch in das ewige Leben eingeführt.
129 On Foods 13.6-7 (GCS 27, 445-46).
15, and he takes it to be a description of the experience of the eschatological resurrection.\footnote{On the Resurrection 2.18.6 (GCS 27, 369). The citation of Romans 6:4 is missing from both Photius’s (Bibliotheca 298a) and Oecumenius’s (PG 118:889b) excerpts of the passage, but Bonwetsch judges it to be original because it appears in the Slavonic translation and the Sacra Parallela. If the citation is actually spurious, then Methodius failed to cite Romans 6:4 in any of his extant works.} He makes no use of it as a description of the Christian walk in this life. In the same work, he likewise quotes Romans 6:10 (dying to sin and living to God) to describe the process of physical death and resurrection.\footnote{On the Resurrection 1.46.2 (= Panarion 64.38.5).}

Thus, throughout his works, Methodius assumes that Paul’s language of death and new life always refers to bodily death and eschatological resurrection. Furthermore, since Paul speaks of death “to sin” and claims that those who have died are justified from sin, Methodius deploys these verses as evidence for his understanding of bodily death as a therapeutic process given by God to eradicate sin from humans.

Methodius can, however, speak of a death of the soul in this life. In fact, he does so precisely in order to offer a spiritual interpretation of the corpse impurity laws. We have already seen how he argues that physical corpses cannot be a source of true impurity, since they are actually more pure than the living. But if this is the case, what is the true meaning of Scripture’s claim that those who enter the tent in which someone has died become impure (Num. 19:14)? The death in view here, he says, is the eternal death of the soul through sin. To enter the tent in which such a death has occurred is to enter into the mode of life that stains the conscience and darkens the spirit.\footnote{On Foods 12.3 (GCS 27, 445).}
This death of the soul is what Origen would call the death of sin. As we have seen, however, Methodius does not follow Origen in placing emphasis on the soul’s death to sin in this life; rather, he interprets the Pauline language of death to sin to be about the eradication of entrenched sin through bodily death in preparation for the eschatological resurrection. In fact, in the On the Resurrection, Methodius makes explicit the reason for his general discomfort with the application of the language of death to the soul. His main worry is that applying the language of resurrection to the soul can displace its application to the body. Since something can only resurrect to new life if it has previously fallen into death and corruption, Methodius points to the continuing existence of the souls of the rich man and Lazarus and to Wisdom of Solomon’s assurance that the souls of the righteous are protected in peace and immortality (3:1-4) to show that the soul, in contrast to the body, cannot fall into death and corruption. By establishing this point, Methodius eliminates the soul as a competing referent for death and resurrection.

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133 On the Resurrection 1.51.5-52.2 (= Panarion 64.43.9-44.4).

134 For the history of the argument that the body (rather than the soul) must be resurrected because only the body can fall into death, see A. H. C. van Eijk, “‘Only that can rise which has previously fallen’: The History of a Formula,” JTS NS 22 (1971).

135 Methodius’s use of this passage from Wisdom of Solomon is especially fascinating in light of recent debates about Jewish eschatology. Some, such as George Nickelsburg, point to this very passage as evidence that at least some Second Temple Jews believed in the immortality of the soul and not in the resurrection of the body (Nickelsburg, Resurrection, 112-15). N.T. Wright, on the other hand, has argued that the Wisdom of Solomon affirms both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body (Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 162-75). Methodius uses Nickelsburg’s reading but reasons from it to the opposite conclusion: since this passage establishes the immortality of the soul, Scriptural language from elsewhere about resurrection is inapplicable to the soul. Therefore, Wisdom of Solomon proves the resurrection of the body because it establishes the immortality of the soul! Obviously, Methodius’s desire to harmonize the views of different Scriptural texts underlies this striking interpretation.
language and, to his mind, proves that the only thing that can die and fall into corruption—the body—must be what Scripture promises will rise again.

Thus, despite being able to speak occasionally of the soul’s death through sin, Methodius does not use the language of resurrection to describe its redemption. In On Foods, he speaks of being purified; and, as we have seen, he fails to use Romans 6 to speak of the soul’s turn away from sin as a resurrection. Other Pauline descriptions of Christians as already resurrected (e.g., Col. 3:1) are conspicuously absent from his extant oeuvre. Furthermore, his primary discussion of baptism lacks any close link between baptism and resurrection. In the Symposium, Thecla offers an allegorical interpretation of the woman in labor described in Revelation 12:1-6. She identifies the woman as the church and the child with which she is in labor as Christians who are being conformed to Christ through baptism. Throughout, she employs the language of enlightenment, rebirth, and purification to describe what happens in baptism. The woman herself has been enlightened by the Lord, and she passes on this light in those whom she purifies from corruption and brings to rebirth through the water of baptism. In this age, the church is continually working through the Spirit to imprint on human souls the likeness of the Word in order to bring them forth as new Christs, new children of God.

136 On Foods 12.3 (GCS 27, 445).
137 Symposium 8.4-9.
138 Symposium 8.6.
139 Symposium 8.5-6.
140 Symposium 8.8.
course, the dragon seeks to snatch them away as soon as they are born, but they are taken up to heaven insofar as they train their attention on things that are above (clearly an invocation of the admonition in Col. 3:1-4 to set one’s sights on things that are above).\(^{141}\) Meanwhile, the woman herself is sheltered in the wilderness (which Methodius reads as a place barren of corruption and lust), surrounded by virtue in anticipation of the coming eternal life.\(^{142}\) At the eschatological resurrection, those who are her children by baptism will run to her to receive the Lord himself.\(^{143}\)

To be sure, some of Methodius’s focus on the language of rebirth can be attributed to the imagery of the passage that occasions this interpretation, Revelation’s woman giving birth. Nevertheless, Methodius felt free to draw on washing and purification imagery, which does not appear in Revelation 12. In this passage, Thecla leaves unclear the nature and extent of the purification from corruption effected by baptism. The later *On the Resurrection*, in developing the fig-tree analogy, clarifies that the purification effected by baptism does not go so far as to remove sin completely from the baptized person:

> For while the body is still living, before it has died, sin too must live with us, hiding its roots within us—even if it is being repulsed on the outside by cuts from moral teachings and warnings. Otherwise, we could not do wrong after being enlightened, inasmuch as sin would have been wholly and absolutely taken away from us. But now, even after believing and going to the water of purification, we

\(^{141}\) *Symposium* 8.10.

\(^{142}\) *Symposium* 8.10-11.

\(^{143}\) *Symposium* 8.5.
often find ourselves to be in sins. For no one will boast that he is free of sin in such a way that he does not even consider wrongdoing at all.\footnote{On the Resurrection 1.41.2-3 (= Panarion 64.33.4-5). ξόντος γὰρ ἔτι τοῦ σώματος πρὸ τοῦ τεθνήξεσθαι συζῆν ἀνάγκη καὶ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν, ἐνδόν τὰς ρίζας αὐτῆς ἐν ἡμῖν ἀποκρύπτουσαν, κἂν ἐξωθην τοιαῖς ταῖς ἀπὸ τὸν σωφρονισμὸν καὶ τὸς νουθετήσεως ἀνεστέλλετο, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἦν ἐντὸς τὸ φωτισθῆναι συνέβαινεν ἄδικεν, ἀπὸ παντάπασιν εἰλικρινῶς ἀφηρηθῆναι ἀπὸ ἡμῶν τῆς ἀμαρτίας. νῦν δὲ καὶ μετὰ τὸ πιστεῦσαι καὶ ἔπε τὸ ὑδόρ ἐλθεῖν τὸ ἀγνισμὸν πολλὰκες ἐν ἀμαρτίαις ὅπως εὐρισκόμεθα. οὐδὲς γὰρ οὕτως ἀμαρτίας ἐκτὸς εἶναι ἐστὶν καυχῆσαι ὡς μηδὲ κἂν ἐνθυμηθῆναι τὸ σύνολον ὅλος τὴν ἀδικίαν (GCS 27, 286-87).}

Thecla’s speech in the Symposium makes clear that baptism and the Spirit’s accompanying work play a crucial role in the formation of virtues in believers, shaping them into the kind of people who diligently attack the shoots that sin sends up. And although Methodius certainly could have described baptism as a death and resurrection on the basis of its partial anticipation of or analogical relationship to the full purification effected by the death and resurrection of the body, he did not.\footnote{Farges characterizes Thalia’s description of baptism as a mystical development of symbolism of death and resurrection that Paul had given to baptism (Les Idées Morales, 139). Given that Methodius never uses that language to describe baptism and is explicitly uncomfortable with descriptions of anything other than bodies dying, this assessment seems tendentious.} Instead, having ascribed all Scriptural discussions of death and resurrection to the body’s death and resurrection, Methodius developed an account of bodily death in which sin is eradicated and an account of the soul’s healing devoid of the language of death and resurrection.

6.4.4 The Work of Christ and its Scope

What role does the incarnation play in this eradication, through the death and resurrection of the body, of the sin that is entrenched in humans? Based on our explication thus far, the reader could be forgiven for wondering if Methodius gave the work of Christ much of a role at all in the economy of salvation. His description in On
the Resurrection of sin’s removal between the body’s death and resurrection makes no specific mention of Christ’s work; God is at work, but how that relates to the incarnation is left unclear. Nevertheless, Methodius’s discussions elsewhere of the role played by Christ in the economy of salvation provide hints of how he might have connected these themes.

Methodius’s understanding of the salvific effects of the incarnation and the logic of atonement are developed in only a few key passages.\textsuperscript{146} The most extensive discussion, and the one that receives the most attention from interpreters of Methodius, appears in Thalia’s speech in the \textit{Symposium}. Her discussion centers on the appropriateness and nature of the Adam-Christ link made by Paul, a question sparked by the claim in Ephesians 5 that the institution of marriage described in Genesis 2 can or should be referred to Christ and the church. She begins by laying out why the Adam-Christ link might seem problematic. Things that are linked together should be similar to each other, but Adam and Christ at first glance seem to be diametrically opposed: Christ is the Son of God, while Adam was caught in the fall of transgression and was declared to be from and returning to earth; Christ is the firstborn of every creature, while Adam was formed after the earth and firmament; Christ is the tree of life, while Adam was exiled from paradise

\textsuperscript{146} Several of the passages on this topic that are referenced by Bonwetsch and Farges come from the fragments to Methodius’s \textit{Against Porphyry}. Based on significant stylistic divergences from the surviving Greek of Methodius’s other works, however, Vinzenz Buchheit has argued convincingly that these fragments are not from Methodius’s famous, lost work against Porphyry. See Vinzenz Buchheit, \textit{Studien zu Methodius von Olympos}, TUGAL 69 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958), 120-29.
precisely so that he would never again eat from that tree.\textsuperscript{147} In response, Thalia points out two similarities that establish the link’s fittingness: Christ is the first-born and only-begotten offspring of God, just as Adam is the first-born human being; furthermore, Christ was re-molded from what existed from the beginning by the Virgin Mary and the Spirit, just as God made Adam from the dust and formed it from the virgin earth.\textsuperscript{148}

For Thalia, these similarities do more than simply establish the appropriateness of comparing Adam with Christ. They are actually clues to the role of Christ in the economy of salvation. Having drawn attention to the image of molding from dust that is triggered by the parallel between Christ’s generation from the Virgin Mary and Adam’s generation from the virgin earth, she draws on Jeremiah’s potter analogy to explain what happened in the incarnation: Just as the potter remakes a pot that fell when the clay was still wet and pliable, so in the incarnation God remade into Christ the same vessel (Adam) that had previously fallen.\textsuperscript{149} Thus, she emphasizes, Christ and Adam are not merely two distinct individuals who are similar enough that they can be compared with one another, with Adam as the type (τύπος) and image (εἰκών) of Christ; rather, “Christ has become the very same thing as him [Adam], because the Word that is before the ages fell upon him.”\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{147} Symposium 3.3.
\textsuperscript{148} Symposium 3.4.
\textsuperscript{149} Symposium 3.5.
\textsuperscript{150} Symposium 3.4. οὐ μόνον αὐτὸν τύπον ἠγούμενος εἶναι καὶ εἰκόνα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ τοῦτο Χριστῶν καὶ αὐτὸν γεγονέναι διὰ τὸ τόν πρὸ αἰώνων εἰς αὐτὸν ἐγκατασκῆψαι λόγον (SC 95, 96-98).
Thalia’s striking claim that the Adam-Christ link’s legitimacy rests on Christ actually having become the very same thing as Adam (rather than Adam being a type or image of Christ) has occasioned some debate.151 Her goal in making this claim, however, is clear enough: this close identification of Adam with Christ allows her to argue that the incarnation not only paralleled but also healed the generation of Adam, along with the effects of his subsequent transgression. God re-formed the ruined clay of Adam into a vessel for honor, shaping and hardening it in the Virgin’s womb, so that the clay of Adam finally emerged hard and unbreakable, impervious to the floods of corruption.152 Thalia makes the same point in her interpretation of the parable of the lost sheep. The shepherd (Christ) came down from the mountains (heaven), leaving behind the ninety-nine other sheep (the other immortal creatures), to seek and save the one sheep (humanity) that had fallen into mortality. The shepherd put the fallen sheep on himself and carried him back up so that he would never again be overwhelmed, and he did this by single-handedly defeating the evil one by whose deceit the sheep had fallen into this predicament in the first place. It is important to Thalia that this was a true rematch, with the same evil one being defeated by the same one, Adam, whom he first defeated: since it was the

151 The debate is over whether Methodius is claiming that the Logos descended upon the first human being, Adam, in the same way that it descended upon Christ. Bonwetsch took Methodius to be claiming just that (Bonwetsch, *Die Theologie des Methodius von Olympus*, 92). Jacques Farges, on the other hand, pointed to Thalia’s tendency to replace “Adam” with ἄνθρωπος elsewhere in her speech to argue that Methodius was really claiming that the Logos *in the incarnation* took on the very same human nature that has Adam as its head (*Les Idées Morales*, 126-28). Herbert Musurillo agreed with Farges, further noting that Thalia’s use of the potter analogy from Jeremiah involves the same soft clay (human nature) being molded twice (first into Adam, then into Christ) (*St. Methodius: The Symposium, a Treatise on Chastity*, 61 n. 11).

152 Symposium 3.5.
condemnation resulting from Adam’s first defeat that passed on to all other humans, the same Adam must overcome the evil one in order to repeal that condemnation and remove the state of sin. She concludes by paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 15:22: Christ overcame the evil one “so that, just as ‘in Adam all’ at first ‘are dying, so also’ indeed again ‘in the Christ’ who took on Adam ‘all would be made alive.’”\(^{153}\)

A little later in her speech, Thalia describes the salvific effects of the incarnation as the overcoming of corruption with resurrection. Humanity, originally placed between corruption and incorruptibility, chose corruption and was thereby changed into that which it chose. Life (Christ) then came to indwell and anoint humanity, overcoming corruption with immortality and incorruption, which Thalia also describes as justice and harmony (ἁρμονία). She continues: “and when he [humanity] received harmony—which is justice—he became a harmonious and fine instrument, so that the Lord, the incorruptibility that conquers death, might euphoniously sing the resurrection to the flesh, not allowing it to be inherited again by corruption.”\(^{154}\)

At least according to Thalia, then, the incarnation produces the rescue of humanity from corruption into incorruption and resurrection. The conjunction of the immortal Word of God with fallen human nature remakes the latter and bestows upon it

\(^{153}\) *Symposium* 3.6. διότι, καθὼς «ἐν τῷ Άδαμ πάντες» πρότερον ἀποθνῄσκουσιν, οὔτω δὴ πάλιν καὶ «ἐν τῷ» ἀνειληφώτι «Χριστῷ» τὸν Άδαμ «πάντες ζωοποιηθῶσιν» (SC 95, 102).

\(^{154}\) *Symposium* 3.7. διότι δὲ τὴν ἁρμονίαν, τούτοις τὴν δικαιοσύνην, γέγονεν εὐάριστος ὁργανός καὶ εὐφρενές, διότι ο κύριος, ἡ ἀφθαρσία νικήσασα τὸν θάνατον, εὐήχως τὴν ἀνάστασιν μελῳδήσῃ τῇ σάρκι, μή ἔσας αὐτὴν κληρονομηθῆναι πάλιν ὑπὸ τῆς φθορᾶς (SC 95, 104-6).
permanent righteousness and incorruptibility. Of course, without corroboration from other texts, taking the contents of one of the speeches in the *Symposium* to be an adequate statement of Methodius’s own position is perilous; Thalia’s speech, after all, begins with a critique of Theophila’s speech! The prayer that closes *On the Resurrection*, however, confirms at least Thalia’s point that the redemption of humans from corruption results from the impassible Word’s overcoming of suffering and corruption in the incarnation (including in the passion). Methodius praises God for sending the Word who

> took on this very possible body through your will, so that, having become a possible thing for the sake of the fight against suffering, he might free it from suffering, and so that through the death of the deathless—a death contrived for death—he might extinguish death,\(^\text{155}\) so that the mortal might be transformed into immortality and the possible into impassibility on account of your compassion.\(^\text{156}\)

Thalia’s speech and the prayer that closes *On the Resurrection* thus suggest that the eradication of sin from the body through the body’s death and reconstitution in resurrection can only happen because of the prior overcoming of humanity’s fallenness in the incarnation. In other words, it is really Christ who removes the roots of the infesting tree from the temple, and Christ does this because of the eradication that he already accomplished in the incarnation.

\(^{155}\) Methodius’s language here could be read as suggesting that bodily death *per se* is the enemy against which God must fight. As we have seen, however, Methodius strongly emphasizes that death is God’s own therapeutic response to the problem of human sin. In light of this fact, Methodius’s point here is probably that God is fighting against that which makes death necessary, the corruption in human nature.

For whom, though, does Christ do this? Here the picture becomes less clear. We have already seen how, in *On the Resurrection*, Methodius makes it clear that God will restore both the righteous and the wicked to a kind of perfection in the resurrection, although the former will be made into perfectly-formed vessels for honor and the latter into perfectly-formed vessels for dishonor. If restoration to permanent incorruptibility is an effect of the incarnation, then it would seem that this effect is universal. The victory over corruption in humanity won by the incarnation extends to everyone.

Other aspects of Methodius’s thought, however, suggest a different picture—one in which this saving effect of the incarnation is mediated by and restricted to the church. Thalia immediately follows her discussion of the incarnation with a discussion of the church. Taking advantage of the strong Adam-Christ link, she reads the story of Eve’s generation from Adam as the story of the church’s generation from Christ. Then, in a strikingly sexual passage, she reads Christ’s passion as his impregnation of his wife, the church: In the ecstasy of his passion (ἡ ἔκστασις τοῦ πάθους), Christ cleaved to his wife (the church), dying for her in order to present her to himself as a glorious church without blemish (Eph. 5:27) so that she might receive his spiritual seed and eventually bear virtues. Christ continues to implant this virtue-bearing seed in the church even now through the memorial of his passion (presumably the celebration of the Eucharist). People

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157 Symposium 3.8 (SC 95, 106).
enter into this relationship through the laver of regeneration, in which the Spirit regenerates them into immortality.

Once again, other works support this overall view. In *On the Resurrection*, Methodius counters the claim that the body must be left behind in the resurrection because the mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God (Rom. 8:7).\(^{158}\) He does so by arguing that the body is capable of serving the good, a point that he establishes by pointing out that Paul commands people to overcome the sins of the body (such as fornication or drunkenness) and promises that the Holy Spirit will indwell them.\(^{159}\) Furthermore, as promised by Romans 8:11, it is through this very Holy Spirit that God will give life to the Christian’s mortal body. The fact that the Holy Spirit indwells human bodies thus clinches Methodius’s point in two ways, not only proving that the body can serve the good but also providing the very means by which the body is resurrected. This tight connection between the suppression of the body’s vices, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the bodily resurrection supports the view that Christ’s saving work, culminating in the resurrection of the body, is restricted to those who have received the Holy Spirit in baptism.\(^{160}\)

\(^{158}\) *On the Resurrection* 1.59.1 (= *Panarion* 64.51.1).

\(^{159}\) *On the Resurrection* 1.60-61 (= *Panarion* 64.52-53).

\(^{160}\) See also the prayer that concludes the work, in which Methodius beseeches God to save him from the coming fire of judgment by reforming his mind (*On the Resurrection* 3.23.7-9). This passage, too, would suggest that the reforming work that God performs on a person is restricted to those who will not suffer in the fire of judgment.
This picture is difficult to square with that developed around the fig-tree analogy in *On the Resurrection*, for it appears to make participation in Christ through baptism and bearing the fruit of the virtues in this life the means through which incorruptibility and, eventually, resurrection are received. How, then, are those who have not been baptized to be resurrected? One possible solution would be to say that Thalia’s description of Christ’s bestowal of incorruptibility through the church is only meant to address how sin is eradicated and replaced with incorruption in the righteous. Recall that Methodius distinguished between vessels re-formed through death and resurrection for honor and for dishonor, and Thalia said God in Christ was re-forming Adam *for honor.*161 Furthermore, Thalia emphasizes how Christ produces virtues through the church, and both Tusiane’s speech and *On the Resurrection* tie the final fate of the resurrected to their acquisition of virtues in this life. If this reading is correct, though, Methodius would be claiming in *On the Resurrection* that the righteous are perfected and raised through Christ while the wicked are perfected and raised through some other, unspecified means. He never, however, hints at such a distinction in the means by which all people will participate in the resurrection of the body.

In the end, the question of how precisely to relate the general resurrection to the resurrecting work of Christ in the incarnation does not seem to have been one that Methodius addressed directly. Jacques Farges took Thalia’s connection between the

161 *Symposium* 3.5.
church and Christ’s work in the incarnation to imply that he never—even in *On the Resurrection*—discussed the resurrection of the wicked,¹⁶² but we have seen how Methodius did indeed describe the resurrection of those who completely lack good works and virtues. It seems unlikely that these are baptized members of the church who have failed to cultivate the virtues, since Methodius has no problem speaking of gradations of virtues within the church (with virgins at the top, of course) and seems assured that those who are immature in the virtues will eventually be brought into maturity.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, we have already observed the ways in which his positions developed across his writings, and it seems likely that Methodius simply never arrived at a carefully worked-out answer to this question. Unlike defending the resurrection of the body and promoting continence, explaining the general resurrection—in which he clearly believed—was not one of his primary concerns.

Even if Methodius gave no account of the resurrection of those outside the church, the idiosyncrasies in his explanation of the eradication of sin through death and resurrection and his use of the New Testament’s discussions of resurrection and moral transformation would remain. As we have seen, these two areas are interrelated. Unlike the New Testament, Methodius never invokes the language of resurrection to describe the moral regeneration and transformation of the Christian. When he quotes passages that do this, such as Colossians 3:1-4, he leaves out their mentions of resurrection. Alternatively,

¹⁶³ *Symposium* 3.8.
he interprets the resurrection language of Romans 6 as referring to the eschatological resurrection of the body. (Methodius does place great emphasis on the new moral life of the Christian, but he consistently uses the language of regeneration rather than resurrection to describe it.) But instead of thereby severing the Pauline connection between moral transformation and resurrection, Methodius preserves the connection by shifting decisive and permanent moral transformation to the event of the death and eschatological resurrection of the body—the only event that he is comfortable describing as a resurrection—and reversing the direction of causality, so that death and resurrection produce moral transformation instead of vice versa. As Paul himself stated (on Methodius’s reading), the one whose body has died is justified from sin (Rom. 6:7) and will rise again eschatologically in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

### 6.5 Methodius and Origen

We have seen thus far that Methodius’s surviving writings reveal the coherent development of a view on the relationship between moral transformation and resurrection that creatively maintains causal connections between the two at every point without making the body expressive of the person’s new moral state, restricting resurrection to the righteous, or producing universal and undifferentiated beatitude in the resurrection. His notion that moral effort in this life affects the degree of beatitude that a person will enjoy after the resurrection is hardly original, but his view that bodily death and resurrection *ipso facto* eradicate sin from a person is striking. Methodius insisted on
resurrection as the reconstitution of the same fleshly body but made that very reconstitution the solution to the problem caused by sin’s connection to the body.

Methodius is important for the story of the early Christian struggle to relate moral transformation and resurrection not only because he develops a creative view but also because he is the most important early critic of Origen’s teachings on the resurrection. In fact, his *On the Resurrection* is often cited purely for the ways in which Methodius got Origen wrong and thereby influenced later interpretations of Origen.164

Indeed, Methodius badly misunderstood Origen’s account of the principle of continuity between the body of this life and the body of the resurrection. In *On the Resurrection*, where he first invokes and critiques Origen by name, Methodius has the speaker Proclus produce a passage from Origen’s commentary on Psalm 1 in support of Aglaophon’s view denying that resurrection is the reconstitution of the present body’s material parts. In the course of this passage, Origen notes that the body’s constituent material parts are always in a state of flux: one takes on new material when one eats and sloughs off old material through excretion, bleeding, etc.165 He even poses the chain consumption problem addressed by Athenagoras.166 Nevertheless, despite the fact that human bodies’ constituent material parts are always in a state of flux, one can rightly say that one has the *same* body from infancy to old age because one’s body retains the same


165 *On the Resurrection* 1.20.3, 22.2-3 (= *Panarion* 64.12.4-5, 14.2-3).

form (εἴδος) throughout.\(^{167}\) Thus, when the soul once again takes up this same bodily form at the resurrection (now appropriately glorified for its new, heavenly environment), it takes up the same body without needing to take up any of the particular underlying matter that flowed through it during this life.\(^{168}\)

In Methodius’s summary of this passage through the mouth of Proclus and direct critique of it later in the dialogue, it emerges that he took the form (εἴδος) to be that which preserves the outward shape (μορφή) and appearance (σχῆμα) of the body rather than identity of the body itself.\(^{169}\) This is a grave misunderstanding of Origen’s view that makes it extremely easy to refute, as Methodius proceeds to do: it is empirically false that bodies retain the same shape throughout even this life, and Origen’s own hints that resurrected bodies will lack certain body parts such as teeth that will be useless in the eschatological existence appears to contradict the notion that outward shape is guaranteed by the principle of bodily continuity, the εἴδος.\(^{170}\) For if the εἴδος preserves outward

\(^{167}\) On the Resurrection 1.22.3 (= Panarion 64.14.3-4).

\(^{168}\) On the Resurrection 1.22.3-4 (= Panarion 64.14.5-9). Although Origen’s basic move of accounting for bodily continuity in change without appealing to an incorporeal principle of continuity fundamentally mirrors the Stoic distinction between corporeal qualities and substrate, he employs the terminology of the εἴδος for the corporeal qualities, separates the qualities from the substrate with the popular Platonic analogy of the body as a river (taking in the Aristotelian claim—formulated as a critique!—that the corporeal qualities are not only appropriately called εἴδος but also are themselves a σώμα), and uses the very separation of this εἴδος from its material substrate to account for something unimaginable for Stoics—bodily resurrection. See Boulluec, “De la croissance selon les Stoïciens à la résurrection selon Origène.”

\(^{169}\) On the Resurrection 1.25 (GCS 27, 251-252; = Panarion 64.17), 3.3.4-5. Methodius’s misunderstanding of Origen’s notion of the εἴδος has been noted and explored by many. See, e.g., Crouzel, “Les critiques,” 693-99; Jon F. Dechow, Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen, Patristic Monograph Series 13 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 384-88; Patterson, Methodius of Olympus, 171-74.

\(^{170}\) On the Resurrection 3.7.
shape and appearance, and the latter change, then the εἰδος too must change and therefore cannot bear the weight of guaranteeing bodily continuity. Furthermore, since the body is dissolved in corruption after death, this shape has nothing in which it can inhere; therefore, it cannot exist.\textsuperscript{171} Understandably, Methodius takes Origen’s view—as he understands it—to be a completely inadequate account of the continuity between the body of this life and the body of the resurrection.

That Methodius misunderstood Origen’s account of the bodily εἰδος is clear and uncontroversial. It is also not terribly surprising, since the excerpt from Origen is easy to misinterpret in this way. The problem is that Origen’s analogies have to do with the body’s outward appearance. He compares the bodily εἰδος to physical characteristics, like scars, that characterize a person’s body over time.\textsuperscript{172} He also points to the transfiguration: just as the forms of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah remained the same during their glorious transformation in the transfiguration, so the bodily forms of the resurrected will remain the same in the glorious transformation of the resurrection.\textsuperscript{173} To be sure, the passage from Origen closes with his explication of Paul’s grain and wheat analogy from 1 Corinthians 15, and there he emphasizes that the mature ear of wheat is vastly different in shape from the grain.\textsuperscript{174} Nevertheless, even Origen’s great defender Henri Crouzel admits

\begin{footnotes}
\item[172] On the Resurrection 1.22.3 (= Panarion 64.14.4).
\item[173] On the Resurrection 1.22.5 (= Panarion 64.14.9).
\item[174] On the Resurrection 1.24.5 (= Panarion 64.16.7).
\end{footnotes}
that the scars and transfiguration analogies could easily suggest that Origen’s εἶδος is really the principle of continuity for the body’s outward shape.\textsuperscript{175} Thus, while Methodius is certainly culpable for failing to read Origen’s discussion with sufficient care, the direction taken by his misinterpretation finds strong promptings within Origen’s discussion itself.

Although Methodius misunderstood Origen’s technical discussion of the principle of bodily continuity and therefore found it rather easy to dismiss, he does seem to have grasped a key function of Origen’s account within his broader theology. As we have seen in our explication of \textit{On First Principles}, a principle of bodily continuity that is neither the soul nor the body’s constituent material parts allows Origen to emphasize radical bodily transformation without abandoning bodily continuity in resurrection. In turn, this potential for radical bodily transformation in resurrection allows the body to reflect its soul’s moral state, whether for good or ill (although Origen, following Paul’s lead, usually discusses only the case of those who have changed for the good). Origen’s account of bodily continuity allows rational creatures to slide up and down a scale and to have bodies that are always suited to their changing environments. With respect to this present world, then, Origen’s account made it possible for humans to transcend—one might even say escape—life on earth in pursuit of a heavenly existence in God’s

presence, for which many features of the current body would be unnecessary and inappropriate.

In the *On the Resurrection*, Proclus quotes the passage from Origen to lend authority to his argument that the resurrection cannot be the re-gathering of scattered material parts because the material constitution of the body is always in flux. Proclus’s debating partner Aglaophon had himself earlier made the same argument in considerable detail. Aglaophon’s purpose in pointing this out is to make room for an understanding of resurrection that does not end up reproducing the life of this current world, with all of its bodily needs and pleasures. Such an eschatology, he says, would amount to the perishing of the heavenly life of the holy. By contrast, he emphasizes, Jesus taught that the resurrected will live like the angels in heaven, Isaiah prophesied that the earth will grow old like a garment (Isaiah 51:6), and Paul declared that the form of this world is passing away (1 Cor. 7:31); through these events, everything that is spiritual in nature attains to the perfection of holiness. In other words, there is something about the current form of human embodiment on this earth that prevents humans from attaining the full measure of holiness to which they are called. Furthermore, simply making this form of embodiment permanent changes nothing about the fact that it hinders holiness. Thus, a

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177 *On the Resurrection* 1.9-11.
178 *On the Resurrection* 1.7.
179 *On the Resurrection* 1.8.
resurrection that does so by re-gathering dissolved material parts would be
counterproductive, even if it were possible. Transcendence from this worldly existence,
not permanence in it, is what humans need.

By making Origen’s account of transformation and continuity in resurrection
serve, through Proclus, Aglaophon’s eschatological transcendence, Methodius accurately
reproduces its place within Origen’s own thought. Thus, while it is true that Methodius
misunderstood the technical aspects of how Origen maintained bodily continuity without
continuity of material substratum in the resurrection, he did in fact understand where
Origen was trying to go with his account. In other words, he grasped the point of
Origen’s argument without grasping its details.

Having grasped Origen’s overall point, Methodius firmly rejects it. The way he
rejects it, though, shows that he failed to understand why Origen would value
transcending this worldly existence in the first place. In other words, despite seeing
where Origen wanted to go (while misapprehending how Origen wanted to get there),
Methodius misunderstood Origen’s view at the most fundamental level: he did not grasp
why Origen wanted to go there. I would suggest that this misunderstanding is more
significant than Methodius’s misunderstanding of Origen’s technical terminology.

For Origen, as we saw most clearly in On First Principles, the transcendence of
this life’s mode of bodily existence made possible by his theory of the principle of bodily
continuity is important because of its role in the rational creature’s return to the glorious
contemplation of God for which it was created. Although rational creatures currently
possess diverse modes of bodily existence, with angels and archangels having one kind, humans another, and demons yet another, this state of affairs could not have been the original one. God must have created all rational creatures equal in every way: “Therefore, because he himself, in whom existed neither any variety nor change nor inability, was the cause of the things that were to be created, all things that he created he created similar and equal, inasmuch as there was no cause of variety and diversity in him.”¹⁸⁰ The current diversity of bodies is a pedagogical response to the diversity of the rational creatures’ free falls away from loving contemplation of God. By making possible bodily transformation without bodily discontinuity, Origen’s theory of the principle of bodily continuity allows rational creatures to move back towards this primal unity while keeping the “same” body along the way. Embodiment into a particular mode of bodily existence, death, and resurrection are all aspects of a therapeutic process.

Methodius, however, assumes that one would only seek such transcendence of this life’s mode of bodily existence because one thinks that matter (as it characterizes one’s current body) is evil or that God clumsily erred in creating the variety of bodies possessed by rational creatures. This assumption emerges clearly in Methodius’s response to Aglaophon’s argument that the angelic life of the resurrection must lack flesh.¹⁸¹ Methodius offers a two-stage response. First, he simply points out the diversity

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¹⁸⁰ On First Principles 2.9.6. Quia ergo eorum, quae creanda erant, ipse exstitit causa, in quo neque varietas aliqua neque permutatio neque impossibilitas inerat, aequales creavit omnes ac similes quos creavit, quippe cum nulla et causa varietatis ac diversitatis existeret (SC 252, 364).
¹⁸¹ On the Resurrection 1.7.2-4.
that exists among the rational creatures created by God. God created angels, ministers, principalities, authorities, and thrones, and each of these is a different species (γένος) of immortals. Furthermore, there can be no movement across the borders that divide these species from each other: “For not even the cherubim abandon their own nature and are transformed into the nature (φύσις) of the angels, nor again are the angels transformed into a different nature. For they must be the same thing, both what they are and what they have been.” This diversity is a product of the work of the one who “created and ordered everything from the non-existent.” In the same way, humans too were created to be what they are and cannot change into the nature of a different species. Since God created humans to inhabit the world and rule over the creatures in it, the deliverance brought by Christ is the transformation of human nature back into the original nature that it possessed before the fall, not its transformation into some other nature. Methodius reveals the overall view underlying these claims in a clear, programmatic statement:

For each thing must remain in its own place in the order of things that have come into being, in order that all may be filled with all: heavens with angels, thrones with powers, lights with ministers, the more divine places and the pure and

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182 On the Resurrection 1.49.1-2 (= Panarion 64.41.3-4).
183 On the Resurrection 1.49.2 (= Panarion 64.41.4), καὶ οὐ τὰ Χερουβὶ τῆς ἱδίας ἐξιστάμενα φύσεως εἰς τὴν τῶν ἄγγελων ἱδέαν μετασκευάζονται οὕτω αὐτὸ πάλιν εἰς ἑτέραν οἱ ἄγγελοι. εἶναι γὰρ αὐτὰ χρή καὶ ὃ εἰσί καὶ ὁ γεγόνασιν (GCS 27, 302-03).
184 On the Resurrection 1.49.1 (= Panarion 64.41.3). ὁ ποιήσας καὶ διακοσμήσας εξ οὖκ ὄντων τὸ πᾶν (GCS 27, 302).
185 On the Resurrection 1.49.3 (= Panarion 64.41.6).
untouched lights with seraphim that stand beside the great will that holds up everything, and the world with humans.\textsuperscript{186}

The diversity of species is thus a necessary good for the complete flourishing of the universe that God has created. To suggest that rational creatures can move between species, then, would be to lose sight of the fact that these creatures were created to, so to speak, sing assigned parts in the harmonious chorus of the universe.

The second stage of Methodius’s argument enumerates what he perceives to be the unacceptable entailments of alternative views. The first is that allowing humans to become angels begins a dangerous series of transformations into ever-higher species. Methodius does not explicitly state why this series is dangerous, only that the account becomes a “danger” (κίνδυνος) as the creature rises higher and higher. The implication might be that the creature will eventually rise so high as to become God.\textsuperscript{187} The second unacceptable implication is that God created humans in error. Otherwise, if it is a good thing for humans to become angels, why do humans exist in the first place? Why did not God create only angels from the beginning? God thus appears to have been either indecisive about what to create or unable to create the angels that he desired. Methodius can see no possible valid reason for God first creating humans as they are now and then,

\textsuperscript{186} On the Resurrection 1.49.4 (= Panarion 64.41.7), χρὴ γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τῆς τάξεως αὐτοῦ τόπῳ τῶν γενητῶν ἐκαστὸν μένειν, ἵνα πάντα πάντων ὀσι πεπληρωμένα, οὐρανοὶ μὲν ἄγγελον, θρόνοι δὲ εξουσίων, φῶτα δὲ λειτουργῶν καὶ οἱ θειότεροι τόποι καὶ τὰ ἄκρα καὶ ἀκραιφόν φῶτα τῶν Σεραφί, ὃ παρεστήκασι τῇ μεγάλῃ βουλῇ διακρατοῦσα τὸ πᾶν, ὁ δὲ κόσμος ἀνθρώπων (GCS 27, 303).

only later, turning them into something better (angels). In interpreting Jesus’s comparison of resurrected humans to angels, Methodius prefers to focus on way of life rather than nature: the resurrected will be like the angels because they will occupy themselves with seeing God rather than attending weddings and banquets, not because they will lack bodies.

These objections confirm that, from Methodius’s point of view, Aglaophon’s fundamental mistake was to pay inadequate attention to the fact that God filled the created order with diverse creatures. Had Aglaophon considered this fact more carefully, he would have understood that the diversity of species does not imply that some species are better than others. If that were the case, God would turn out to have created imperfectly. Thus, the diversity that God created must remain; all transformation must occur within the rigid categories of that diversity. Furthermore, that transformation must really be a return to what God created each category of creature to be, not an emendation of that category’s purpose. Having perceived that Aglaophon’s errors stem from neglect of the true role of creaturely diversity in the created order, Methodius’s main response is simply to point it out.

188 On the Resurrection 1.50.1-2 (= Panarion 64.42.1-3).

189 On the Resurrection 1.51.2 (= Panarion 64.43.2-3). Of course, since Origen insists that only God lacks a body, he would agree with Methodius that the resurrected do not lack bodies. Even if Methodius recognized this fact, though, he would still disagree with Origen’s understanding of the kind of continuity (non-material) and transformation between the body of this life and the body of the resurrection.
Since Aglaophon and Proclus are Methodius’s literary creations, there is no point in attempting to assess his diagnosis of their theological error. Insofar as they appeal to Origen, however, and Methodius does eventually train his sights on Origen as his primary antagonist, it is fair to ask whether or not Methodius’s diagnosis accurately captures Origen’s concerns. The answer to this question is clear: it does not. Origen would find Methodius’s focus on the fact of creaturely diversity to be beside the point. After all, it is not as if Origen failed to notice that there is a wide array of rational creatures or chose to deny that God created this diversity. Origen noted these facts well and meditated on them deeply. Because of his commitment to the notion that God would create all things equal, however, he refused to take the fact of creaturely diversity to be proof that this array is what God desired. Instead, he looked elsewhere for an explanation of creaturely diversity and found it in the diverse, freely-willed falls of rational creatures away from God. As we have already seen from *On Free Choice*, however, Methodius shared none of Origen’s qualms about inequality among God’s creatures. Furthermore, we noted in our discussion of *On Free Choice* that Methodius does not appear to have realized that someone might object to this inequality. His discussion in *On the Resurrection* shows the same blindness to the concern with inequality that underlies Origen’s theodicy and understanding of bodies.

The consequences of Methodius’s failure to grasp Origen’s fundamental concern with inequality can be summarized in the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embodiment per se</th>
<th>Methodius’s own views: Gift from God; part of membership in this created order.</th>
<th>The views of Origenists in Methodius (Aglaophon, Proclus, Origen): Punishment for and cause of sin.</th>
<th>Origen’s actual views: Necessary for all creatures in order to distinguish God from everything else.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embodiment in diverse forms</td>
<td>Necessary for the harmony of the created order.</td>
<td>Punishment for and cause of sin, plus possibly result of creator’s incompetence.</td>
<td>Pedagogical, therapeutic response to diverse falls away from God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily death</td>
<td>Therapeutic response to sin, preventing sin from living forever in an immortal body; extraneous to embodiment per se.</td>
<td>Punishment for sin; inherent to embodiment per se.</td>
<td>Therapeutic response to sin: inherent to certain forms of embodiment, makes possible bodily resurrection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>Therapeutic response to sin: returns the body that has been cleansed of sin through death to its original place in the created order.</td>
<td>Escape from the punishment of embodiment.</td>
<td>Therapeutic response to sin: provides a body freshly (and pedagogically) calibrated to new moral state of rational creature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important difference appears in the second line, “Embodiment in diverse forms.” Methodius’s own view causes him to insist that resurrection (line four)
must be a return. Origen’s view allows him to view resurrection as a fresh pedagogical step. Methodius’s inability to understand Origen’s view, though, causes him to infer that, for Origen, embodiment in any form is punishment and resurrection is escape.

Methodius’s positive understanding of the role of diversity in the created order accounts for the way in which he allows for eschatological glorification. He acknowledges that this world will become better and more glorious in the eschaton, and that Scripture calls this transformation “destruction” when it states that heaven and earth will pass away.  

Similarly, through a great conflagration, every creature will die and be created anew in the newly-created world that is free from sorrow.  

Although both of these transformations are cataclysmic, the things that are transformed—the world, humans—remain fundamentally what they always were. Methodius confirms this point by pointing to the eschatological preservation of creation’s fundamental structure:

For since there will be an earth even after this age, there is every necessity that there will be inhabitants, too—ones who will no longer die or marry and be born, but rather, like angels, will do the most excellent things unchangingly in incorruptibility. Therefore, what is asked about in what sort of way of life bodies will exist at that time is foolish, since it is based on the assumption that there will be neither air nor earth nor the other things.

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190 On the Resurrection 1.48.1-2 (= Panarion 64.40.1-4).
191 On the Resurrection 1.48.3 (= Panarion 64.40.5).
192 On the Resurrection 1.48.4 (= Panarion 64.40.6-7). ἐσομένης γὰρ καὶ μετὰ τοῦτον τὸν αἰῶνα γῆς ἀνάγκη πάσα ἔσεσθαι καὶ τοὺς οἰκήσοντας, οὐκέτι τεθνηκότες καὶ γεννησόντες, καὶ γεννησομένως, ἄλλῳ ὡς ἀγγέλους ἀμεταστρόφους ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ τὰ ἄριστα πράξοντας. διὸ ληρῶδες τὸ ἐν ποίῳ διαγωγῇ τότε δὴ τὰ σώματα ἔσονται λέγεσθαι, μήτε ἀέρος μήτε γῆς μήτε τῶν ἄλλων ἐσομένων (GCS 27, 301-02).
In other words, the order of the created order stays unchanged throughout this great transformation. Earth and air remain, and therefore so must their inhabitants. Some of those inhabitants’ activities will change, but that is not because they have become something they were not before (e.g., angels) or now inhabit a completely new environment. This transformation truly is a glorification, but it is an in-place glorification rather than a mobile glorification; that is to say, things are glorified by becoming better versions of what they already are, not by changing from what they are into something new. As long as the boundaries between species are maintained, glorification and transformation do not threaten the goodness of the created order. Thus, rather than constituting a fatal and unnoticed concession to Origen’s system, Methodius’s acknowledgment that the resurrected are glorified fits neatly within the constraints imposed by his concern for the integrity of the created order.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, deep questions of theodicy have emerged as the key to understanding Methodius’s interpretation of Origen—and this despite the fact that Methodius does not disagree directly with Origen’s theodicy. While Methodius and Origen agree that a thoroughgoing free-will theodicy is the only option open to the Christian theologian, they disagree dramatically on what precisely constitutes the evil for which a theodicy is necessary. Origen thinks that all inequality among rational creatures calls for an explanation; for Methodius, only acts that are disobedient to God and intended to harm others, such as idolatry, rape, and murder, require explanations. For both, death and resurrection constitute an essential aspect of God’s gracious response to
the (differently conceived) problems caused by the abuse of free will by rational creatures. For precisely this reason, however, Methodius’s failure to comprehend Origen’s understanding of the problem for which theodicy is necessary and the economy of salvation is a solution doomed him to misapprehend Origen’s understanding of resurrection. The eschatologies of both reflect their deeper concerns and assumptions. Methodius grasped this fact, but unfortunately it led him to make inaccurate inferences about the concerns underlying Origen’s view.

6.6 Conclusion

Methodius’s best-known contribution to early Christian debates about resurrection is of course his influential (mis)interpretation and criticism of Origen’s views on the purpose of human embodiment and the nature of the continuity between the mode of bodily existence in this world and that which will be experienced in the resurrection. We have seen, however, that his significance extends far beyond his effects on Origen’s legacy. Methodius’s own understanding of the resurrection (which was for him always eschatological), developed over the course of his writing career, grappled with the role of resurrection in the eradication of sin and reversal of the consequences of the first transgression no less than Origen’s understanding of resurrection.

Methodius’s key move was to posit two distinct and even separate processes, each of which accounted for one of the main understandings of resurrection that can be found in Scripture. In one process, people learn to resist the promptings of sin in this life with the help of the Holy Spirit, and their success in this endeavor translates into a blessed
experience in the resurrection. This process allowed Methodius to account for Scripture’s link between the Spirit’s work producing moral transformation in this life and the new life of beatitude of the resurrection. In the second process, God removes the impulse to sin from all people after the death of their bodies and then resurrects them to new life as perfected creatures. This process allowed Methodius to preserve the generality of the eschatological resurrection, as suggested in Daniel, John, and Revelation, without severing the Pauline link between resurrection and moral transformation.

The limitation of Methodius’s view can be seen in his apparent avoidance of Scriptural suggestions that these two processes might be quite closely tied together. Since Methodius was so concerned to preserve the bodily, eschatological referent of the language of resurrection, he only employed the terminology to talk about that eschatological event. Thus, Pauline uses of the language of resurrection to describe events in the Christian’s life before the death of the body posed significant problems for him. In some cases, such as his readings of Romans 6, he persistently interpreted all possible mentions of resurrection as references to an eschatological event—even when the context would seem to suggest otherwise. In other cases, such as the claim in Colossians 3 that Christians have already been resurrected with Christ, he simply avoided citing those key parts of the verses even as he frequently cited the admonition to set one’s mind on things above (which fit well with his first process but not his second). On the verge of the fourth century, those who rejected Origen’s synthesis were still searching for a model that could integrate all the Scriptural data.
Conclusion

This study can be compared to the study of plate tectonics. Whereas the study of geography seeks to accurately describe the surface features of the earth’s crust, plate tectonics seeks to discern and explain the deeper forces that produce those surface features. Why are there mountain ranges here and rift valleys there? Why is there a line of volcanoes in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? Why do the outlines of South America and Africa fit like puzzle pieces? Plate tectonics explains these phenomena as products of discrete sheets of rock (plates) floating upon a sea of circulating magma. These subterranean currents cause the movement of the plates and the resulting geographical features on the surface. Since scientists have yet to drill down into the magma and directly observe these currents, though, theories about their movements must be based on the indirect evidence provided by very careful analysis of surface features, like the growth of mountain ranges.

In the same way, this study has used careful description of the “surface features” of important second- and third-century theological texts to open a window into the deeper forces generating what those texts say about resurrection. The key clue for where to look for evidence has been provided by the opening observation that the New Testament simultaneously speaks of resurrection as a prerequisite for the judgment of all and as itself an outworking of salvation (with the latter view developed most fully in the Pauline epistles). These two understandings of the purpose of resurrection are prima facie in tension with one another. How, then, did the confluence of these two streams of thought
about resurrection shape the views of those who came later, explaining both their positive developments of these views and the tensions that remained in their thought?

The results show remarkable diversity. Irenaeus, combating an understanding of “spiritual” that ruled out the resurrection of the body, articulated the narrative of God’s saving economy as the progressive reception of the Spirit of God by the human person (including the body). He therefore argued for the plausibility of the resurrection of the body by explaining it as a work of the life-giving Spirit of God that is already received in this life and produces moral transformation now. In this way, Irenaeus harnessed the power of the current represented by the Pauline resurrection schema. He affirmed the eschatological resurrection of those who have not received the transforming Spirit in this life, but he gave no account for it.

Tertullian was much more worried about those who would conflate resurrection with Christian salvation in such a way as to deny the eschatological resurrection of the body. In response, he worked to disassociate resurrection, the return of dead bodies to life through their reunification with their souls, from salvation. For Tertullian, resurrection is a prerequisite for judgment and therefore happens to all. Correspondingly, his anthropology allowed the soul to provide life to the body when reunified with it, without needing to receive life continually from the Spirit of God (a requirement for resurrection in Irenaeus’s system). At the same time, he was forced to try to mitigate the power of the Pauline schema by explaining the connections between moral transformation and resurrection as imprecise: the Christian actually looks forward to what comes after
resurrection—the rewards meted out to the righteous at the judgment—rather than to the resurrection per se.

The Valentinian texts made this very connection between salvation and resurrection central to their account of resurrection. While not going so far as to deny that a future event is properly called “resurrection,” they emphasized resurrection as the present participation in salvation and never hinted that those who are not participants in salvation will be resurrected in any sense. They drew exclusively on the Pauline schema.

Origen connected resurrection to moral transformation in yet another way, making it an event that pedagogically reflects the moral transformation of rational creatures—whether for the better or worse. This view took full advantage of the Pauline resurrection schema without sacrificing the resurrection of all, but it did so at the price of making the form of corporeality experienced by humans today a pedagogical rather than ultimate good and therefore one that can and indeed ought to be transcended.

Methodius saw Origen’s denial that the current form of human corporeality is an ultimate good as a denial of its goodness tout court. This was unacceptable. His own view, however, was a creative synthesis of the two currents inherited from the New Testament: the resurrection of the body produces the moral transformation that is the eradication of the entrenched inclination to sin, but the moral transformation in this life that is the resistance of the promptings of that entrenched inclination produces reward after the resurrection. Methodius’s position only makes sense once one sees the dual
pressures exerted on his understanding of moral transformation and resurrection by the New Testament.

The question, then, of faithfully developing the Pauline resurrection schema while affirming the resurrection of all to face judgment remained open. This fact calls for more study, especially in the theologically turbulent fourth century. Bookended by controversies over the legacy of Origen, this century saw not only the articulation of trinitarian doctrine but also the theological theorizing of the Christian life by ascetic authors like Antony, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea, to name only three. As the worry about “gnostic” views that so shaped the concerns of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and Methodius faded, new space opened up for explicitly theorizing the Christian life as resurrection. It is my hope that the present study has not only illuminated second- and third-century views of resurrection and moral transformation but also laid a firm foundation for understanding the continued articulation of these issues in the fourth century and beyond.
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All abbreviations follow the SBL Handbook of Style (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).


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Biography

Thomas Dwight McGlothlin was born in Roseville, California on January 19, 1982. He grew up in Osaka, Japan and graduated from Worthington Christian High School (Worthington, OH) in 2000. He attended Wheaton College (IL) and graduated in May 2004 with majors in Philosophy and Integrative Bible and Theology. He enrolled at Duke Divinity School in August 2005, graduating in May 2007 with a Master’s of Theological Studies. In August 2009, he entered the Ph.D. program in Religion at Duke University, studying Early Christianity, New Testament, and History of Judaism. He has published two journal articles, “Resurrection, Spiritual Interpretation, and Moral Interpretation: A Functional Approach to Resurrection in Origen” (Studia Patristica 54 [2012]) and “Contextualizing Aphrahat’s Demonstration 8: Bardaisan, Origen, and the Fourth-Century Debate on the Resurrection of the Body” (Le Muséon 127 [2015]). His research was supported by the James B. Duke Fellowship, the Graduate Program in Religion Doctoral Fellowship, two Gurney Harriss Kearns Summer Research Fellowships, and a Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) 10-month research grant.