ABSTRACT

“NEITHER WITH THE OPINIONS OF THE GREEKS NOR WITH THE CUSTOMS OF THE BARBARIANS”: THE USE OF CLASSIC GREEK IMAGERY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

by Jacquelyn Nair

Early Christianity is often conceived as having formed in a vacuum, but in reality the surrounding Greek culture—including the myths and cults—greatly influenced the fledgling religion. This paper seeks to flesh out the ways in which the early Christian communities in the Mediterranean adopted and redeployed Greco-Roman polytheistic symbols for their own purposes. On the one hand, the Christian communities may synthesize Greek and Jewish lore together to reduce a sense of “otherness;” but on the other hand the community may adopt a Greek symbol and redefine it as purely Christian, thus heightening “otherness.” This project seeks to do this by looking at two texts, book one of The Sibylline Oracles and the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, through a postcolonial and mimetic lens. This paper also suggests implications for future research.
“NEITHER WITH THE OPINIONS OF THE GREEKS NOR WITH THE CUSTOMS OF THE BARBARIANS”: THE USE OF CLASSIC GREEK IMAGERY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

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Chapter One: Graecia Capta Ferum Victorem Cepit

I. Introduction

Christianity did not form in a vacuum and while this sentiment is not necessarily revelatory it bears repeating often. From the time of its inception until the twilight of polytheism, the tension between the Hellenistic traditions that were the inheritance of the Roman Empire and this new fledgling belief system were inflamed and heightened. Christianity, which stressed the universality of salvation to all humankind—provided the converts relinquished their former allegiances to the Greek pantheon, local gods, and emperor worship—found itself in a veritable hodgepodge of religions, cults, and philosophies. As Nock states, “in this Hellenistic world there was then a great and confusing array of cults, old civic worship, sometimes now recovering after generations of decay, new Caesar-worship, and also the now rising religions of the individual.” Against this richly diverse backdrop, Christianity sought to bring the world under the One God of Judaism and his appointed savior, Jesus.

It cannot be overstated, however, that the term “Christianity” does not refer to a singular homogenous monolithic entity and is better left out of our conversation. Instead, I propose two different terms and ideas that are more suitable for the first three centuries of forming Christian identity. The first of these is proto-Christianity by which I mean to take a literal translation of the Greek adjective πρόσωπος as first. The delineated years of proto-Christianity ran from about 50–100 CE, beginning with Paul’s mission to the Gentiles and ending with the composition of the Gospel of John. I end with 100 CE because that encompasses all four of what will become the canonical Gospels as well as the other texts of the New Testament. Other texts were, of course, composed post 100 CE but were rejected from the canon, though this does not mean various individuals and communities did not utilize them. As Christianity moved into the second century, I would adopt the term formative Christianity, ending around 325 CE with the Council of Nicaea. These two terms are not wholly and radically different. Both types of Christianity were community driven, each individual community adopting their own practices, policies and in some cases texts. The main difference between the two is the lack of a steady hierarchy in proto-Christianity, whereas in formative Christianity the Church and its leaders

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1 Horace, Epistula 2.1 “Greece, having been conquered, captures its fearsome conquerors.” Unless otherwise indicated all Latin and Greek translations are my own.
2 What we in today’s modern world call Christianity bears little resemblance to the Mediterranean Jesus cult. The Christianity that we know was still forming, doctrinal wars still being waged, and texts being both rejected and accepted by the various communities who labeled themselves as followers of Christ. For this reason, I will refrain from using the word “Christianity” as it connotes something that is not yet in existence. I will continue to problematize this situation further below.
3 Arthur Darby Nock, Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1964), 17. There is, as we shall see, a feeling of dislocation when one aligns him/herself with this new cult. If the converts were formerly Jewish, the dislocation was already present in belonging to a religion that already stood against the polytheistic society. Adding the element of a messianic savior (soter) heightened the alienation from the center, made even more visible the difference between the convert and the norm. It is imperative that we understand and hold onto this complexity and alienation as we move forward.
4 It is important to note that by ending formative Christianity in 325 with Nicaea, the tension and conflicts of Christianity identity did not disappear. Christianity continued to assess and reassess its identity not only against polytheism but also within itself for much longer.
5 The Church in Jerusalem was perhaps the center of proto-Christianity but the relationship between it and the new converts living outside of Palestine is shaky at best. Paul’s relationship with the Church seems to be one of respect and awe but independence. Likewise, his converts owed little fealty to Jerusalem. And, thus,
began to form in earnest, and many of the individual communities identified themselves as
belonging to this hierarchy. For my present project, I would focus more on formative Christianity
which despite the appearance of a hierarchy and more pronounced Church was still having to
assert its identity over and against polytheism and other communities who considered themselves
followers of Jesus but resisted the policies and practices of the Church. When speaking of
Christianity for the remainder of this project, formative Christianity should be understood unless
otherwise noted.

To the polytheistic cultic worshipers of the Empire, formative Christianity was
something new, something without a long-standing history, and while novelty in the
modern world is valued, the opposite was true for the Greco-Roman world. While later
Christian apologists might wish us to believe that sizable quantities of polytheists
converted to Christianity, the truth is that there were only ever small pockets of Christians
living in various cities throughout the Empire. This is especially true for proto-Christianity
and continued to be true for formative Christianity, though I grant that the numbers
increased as more converts flocked to the growing Church. As time passed, the Empire
found itself confronted with this new religion that uncompromisingly claimed to know
ultimate truth. This refusal to accept the Christian “truth” on the part of the polytheists and
the stubborn rejection from the Christians to give any ground to the religious mores of the
Roman people, created a realm where both sides were hostile and suspicious of the other.
Tracts composed by Christian Fathers received responses from polytheists that were in
turn brought to criticism by other Christians. Amidst this dialogue of refutation and
defense, however, individual Christian communities who were still arguing their own
identity against both polytheism and the Church composed literature that not only sought
to prove their theology but also incorporated images, symbols and certain topoi that had
been drawn from the classic myths of Greece and Rome; the very myths the new formative
Christian hierarchy was disavowing.

The problem in 20th century scholarship is the reluctance of some members of the
academy to ascribe these images to Greek origins, preferring to see them as Jewish,
uncontaminated by Greek culture, cult, and mythology, despite the fact that Greek culture
overshadowed every aspect of socio-cultural experience in the ancient world. How can one
shuffle the clearly Greek images to the side, claim Jewish precedence or argue purely
Christian innovation, when Christianity was still in the process of forming its identity?
There does exist in this period, however, a long standing tradition that permeates the

\footnote{\textbf{6} It is important to note that by Church I do not mean one specific location or building from which all policy
and agenda emanated but rather the structure and hierarchy that was developing throughout the
Mediterranean.}

\footnote{\textbf{7} I cannot claim that the proto-Christians rejected all the mores of the Greco-Roman world, as texts such as the
Pastorals (i.e.: 1st Timothy) attempt to make the new churches behave more like Greco-Roman cults. What I
mean here is that accommodation and resistance go hand in hand; while rejecting the theology of the Roman
polytheist, the proto-Christians also embraced structures and forms in order to make themselves seem more
Greek and Roman. This is a vital component of postcolonial theory, which I shall tackle further below.}

\footnote{\textbf{8} For this project I specifically will be referring to and refuting the works of Daniel C. Harlow and Alexander
Kulik on the \textit{Greek Apocalypse of Baruch} in chapter three. See Daniel C. Harlow, \textit{The Greek Apocalypse of
Baruch: Greek-Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch}, Berlin: (Walter de Gruyter and Co), 2010 .}
world at large and offers a host of images, signs, and motifs that are ripe for plucking and inserting into one’s own text. The Greek myths and legends exist in every part of this world; even if one city preferred Zeus to Athena for their patron deity, the fact remains that escaping this pantheon and its rituals and traditions is impossible. To claim that the Christians were capable of evading such a powerful culture without adopting and adapting certain *topoi* of that culture would indeed be an incredible feat.

My intention here, sketched in more detail below, is to examine two texts that demonstrate ambiguity of origin (Christian or Jewish, both, or neither as we understand those terms today) but also demonstrate the kind of acceptance and resistance of a dominate culture that we expect using postcolonial theory: book one of *The Sibylline Oracles* and the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch)*, both of which contain certain images that I will argue were drawn directly from Greco-Roman mythology. The choosing of these two texts is not at random but rather both demonstrate a kind of ambiguity of authorship that is part of my broader argument. As they both stand now, they are Christian texts. Whether or not they began that way is up for debate, but we cannot pigeon hole them as strictly Jewish when so much ambiguity and cross-cultural interaction exists. I will conclude by laying out the methodological implications of my argument for the interpretation of the *Gospel of John*, which mythologizes the gospel tale, putting it more directly in line with the heroic tales of the past. There are, however, certain matters that must be defined first, including how scholars—Rudolf Bultmann in particular—have seen the role of mythology in Christian literature, the nature of Greek and Christian cultural interaction through the formative period, and my working theoretical model that undergirds my thesis for the prevalence of Greek mythology.

**II. Bultmann’s Legacy**

In the course of this investigation I must consider the work of German theologian and historian of religion Rudolf Bultmann. The theory of demythologization, for which Bultmann is famous, must be given careful weight, both in my explanation and my critique, for demythologization could prove the undoing for my own thesis should it be correct.

According to Bultmann, demythologization is a “method of interpretation of the New Testament which tries to recover the deeper meaning behind the mythological conceptions.”

9 For Bultmann, the mythology in the New Testament—those stories, which are fantastical, and deal with the supernatural including miracles, healings, and the resurrection—is just the surface of what Christians can hope to understand about their faith. Layers of myth must be stripped away to reveal the preaching, or *kerygma*, which is the true message of the Jesus movement.

Based on his differentiation between conceptions of the ancient and modern world, Bultmann writes, “the world picture of the New Testament is a mythical world picture.”

10 With heaven above, hell below, and humanity in between, the supernatural forces of both *loici* interfere, both to the benefit and detriment of humankind. Demons can posses a body, angels can deliver heavenly messages, and wonders, miracles, signs, and portents are commonplace. This faith, so heavily entrenched in this mythic world optic, had no choice

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but to adopt—unconsciously—the mythic worldview. Bultmann assures us that modern Christianity does not have that option.\textsuperscript{11}

Science, for Bultmann, is not only the foil to mythology, but also its antithesis. The idea of science—its existence and development more than any kind of application—informs much of Bultmann’s de democratization theory. Ironically, Bultmann’s elevation of science is biased, claiming: “All of our thinking is irrevocably formed by science.”\textsuperscript{12} Bultmann defines myth as “the report of an occurrence or an event in which supernatural, superhuman forces or persons are at work, mythical thinking is the opposite of scientific thinking.”\textsuperscript{13} For most contemporary scholars, Bultmann’s definition of myth is simplistic and demonstrates a rather elementary thinking about something that is complex and nuanced.

The writers of the New Testament, having no other means of expression, used mythology because “the mythological talk seeks to do nothing other than to express the significance of the historical event.”\textsuperscript{14} Bultmann believes that the writers had no choice but to turn to mythic language, a proto-language using pictures instead of abstractions.\textsuperscript{15} These pictures must be decoded and translated into modern categories. Thus, demythologization “seeks to bring out the real intention of myth, namely, its intention to talk about human existence as grounded in and limited by a transcendent, unworldly power.”\textsuperscript{16} By removing the mythological language and imagery we are left with the true essence of the faith.

Critique of Bultmann must begin with his definition of mythology. The Jesus movement would certainly have been familiar with supernatural forces interacting with humans. Bultmann is correct that these sorts of images are myth \textit{par excellence}. However, to avoid a simplistic definition, we should concede that myth is not synonymous with fiction. For Karl Jaspers the definition of myth is of great import. In contrast to Bultmann’s definition, Jaspers claims that myth denotes: “a language of images, ideas, figures, and events, all of which point to the supernatural. But this supernatural meaning is present in the images themselves; when they are translated into mere ideas, their actual meanings are lost.”\textsuperscript{17} Myth is, then, a language. Any attempt to translate it into our own language entails a loss of meaning. Moreover we must recognize that mythology is a series of codes delicately and inseparably enmeshed in the human world. Images, symbols, and the meanings myths convey significant power. In using myth, the writer is consciously choosing to conform to a cultural norm. Writing in mythic terms is not a cultural inevitability; it is not inescapable,

\textsuperscript{11} For example, Bultmann writes, “Can Christian proclamation today expect men and women to acknowledge the mythical world picture to be true? No; there is nothing specifically Christian about the mythical world picture, which is simply the world picture of a time now past that was not yet formed by scientific thinking Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{15}Bultmann writes, “Mythological language provisionally expresses that for which adequate language must still be found...the usual way of talking about mythical concepts and representations as ‘pictures’ and ‘symbols’ has to be patient of the question about the point of such pictures and symbols. For, clearly, they are supposed to express some point, and it is also to formulate in mythological language, so that the point of this language must in turn be interpreted—as so on \textit{in infinitum}? This is evidently absurd...” Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 99.
but rather a cultural *choice* deliberately made by the author because the codes are both valuable and powerful. To break these codes is go outside the cultural milieu, to reject his society, essentially descending into anomic, a proposition I reject given my understanding of mythology, and my acknowledgement of its importance to the culture I am examining.  

My second critique of Bultmann is that he disconnects myth and science. Scientific discovery, for Bultmann, eliminates the need for myth. The problem with this supposition, of course, is that it is demonstrably untrue for many modern peoples, regardless of the degree to which this assumption may apply to those of Bultmann's circle of scholars. Mythology has not been left behind in the ruins of the Roman Empire, but survives not only in biblical literalism but also in the mythologization of America, its founders and national heroes, and its institutions. We create unifying mythic codes that help us order and comprehend our world and negotiate our identity. So it is self-evident that even in our own society, science and myth are not mutually exclusive, and that humans are more than capable, despite the tension, of holding both together.

Bultmann's true motive behind demythologization theory is apologetic. Jaspers writes, “Science has destroyed a large number of Biblical beliefs. Bultmann's purpose is not to destroy religion; he wants to rescue it.” Bultmann makes no defense of his theological investment; an investment that critical scholars cannot afford.  

Finally, faced with an increasingly scientific world that continues to disprove the fantastical stories about Jesus, demythologization confronts its user with a choice: either Bultmann must abandon himself from those codes that have informed his life, or he must find a way to reconcile Christianity in light of science. Bultmann chose to become one of the great modern Christian apologists, developing a theory to assuage his inner turmoil, rationalizing his loyalty to his Christian faith. The solution to his crisis of faith is demythologization. As Jaspers puts it, “The myth, says Bultmann, is to be interpreted, divested of its mythological garb, and transposed into a *truth valid today.*”

Demythologization fails in several ways. Bultmann's definition of myth is far too elementary. The distance between science and mythology is not so great as Bultmann would have us believe. Finally, Bultmann’s theory is transparently an attempt to justify his continual belief in a religion floundering under the weight of modernity.

### III. Greek Culture and the Early Christians

In his monumental *Histories*, Herodotus recalls a poem from Pindar that gives insight into the ancient conception of custom, history, and antiquity: “νόμος ὁ πάντων βασιλεύς.” For the Greco-Roman world, the older an idea, a religion, a people, or a custom, the more venerable. Genealogies established one's family legitimacy; thus Virgil

18 This is evidenced by the fact that even if a Greek chose to use philosophy as his window into the world, he still existed in the same mythic world. There was no escape.
19“Bultmann,” writes Jaspers “regards mythological thinking as obsolete, something scientific thinking has left behind. Ibid., 15.
23 *Histories 3.38*. In Herodotus’ text, the formulation is different due to the grammatical construction of indirect speech. I have rendered the saying into Pindar's original for clarity, thus "Custom is the King of All"
takes great pains to establish Augustus as the legitimate heir of Julius Caesar in the process of tracing Caesar’s line back to the founding of Rome and Aeneas. Veneration of the antique allows the Romans to see Judaism, while not admirable, as preferable to the innovative Christ cult. Common knowledge since Hellenistic times assumed the antiquity of the Jews. So while their religion itself was an oddity—with its one god and refusal to acknowledge other deities—Jewish history, at least, signaled their ancient standing. It is this double perspective—alien theology but ancient history and customs—that allowed the Jews in the Empire a certain amount of tolerance. This tolerance was not extended to the Christian movement. As it became increasingly hard for the gaze of the Roman Empire to ignore the fledgling Christians, what they saw was a people attempting to establish themselves as venerable and antique like the Jews, but who, whether Jewish or later Greek, increasingly distanced themselves from the customs and laws that made the Jews, Jews. On the other side of the argument, the Christians, regarded the polytheistic Empire with equal abhorrence. While small pockets of Christians sprung up in various locales around the Empire, it was by no means the dominant religion. The Christians could not escape the polytheistic; a world dominated by Homer and Hesiod, by Socrates and Plato; a world where enlightened men pursued philosophy, where education meant reading the great classics, and a world where the axiom of Menander, “of all human things, the greatest is paideia,” was unequivocally the law of the land.

How did the Hellenized Roman world and the Christians understand each other, and how did Christians manage to live both within the world—through education and philosophy—and outside the world—demonizing classic mythology and its pantheon. My hypothesis depends on the fact that Greek polytheistic writers and their Christian counterparts, while perhaps not responding directly to each other’s texts, nevertheless created a dialogue between the two cultures. Only an apologist would say that the Christians denied all aspects of Greek culture, eschewing the past for the new. In reality the members of the Jesus movement were fully cognizant of their novel standing, knowing that the world at large would never see them as legitimate without a venerable pedigree.

1.3.2 Education in the Greco-Roman World

As with anything in the Late Antique world, literacy is always in question. The populace within the Roman Empire who could read, at any given time, has been “estimated at around 10 percent.” If one did not belong to the literate elite, the probability of literacy was lessened even further. While many, apart from the nobility, could not read, it did not mean the masses were ignorant of the classics and philosophical tracts that were the staples of Greek education. Theaters and forums provided a venue for any passerby to hear, watch, and observe the classics being acted out, discussed or refuted. Even those without an actual δίδασκαλος were capable of learning Homer. Those who could not read the words of the bard at least knew his works and had probably seen plays or heard a recitation at some point in their lives.

24 This is true for my purpose here, with the exception of my examination of Julian. By the time he rose to Caesarship, the pagan religion of the Greco-Roman world was in a steady decline in the face of a slowly solidifying Christian faith, which had been steadily on the rise since the conversion—whatever that entailed—of Constantine.
25 Taken from James Shiel, Greek Thought and the Rise of Christianity (Longmans: London, 1968), 71.
The question of literacy is especially important for the newly founded Jesus movement. There is, obviously, no question that the Early Church Fathers could read; their own written works attest to their educated status. But illiterate Christians, just as the illiterate polytheists, could still hear and know both Christian writings and the Greek classics so “by means of public reading and repeated hearing (orality), the illiterate majority was given access to the texts of liturgy and Scripture without themselves being able to read.” For my purpose here, I will center the conversation on those receiving an education, whether it be from a single Greek tutor or a gymnasium.

Christians who wanted a good education had to participate in the Greek education system: “the Christians took no initiative to organize common teachings of the children outside their homes and churches.” Inevitably “primary education was so intimately connected with values, identity, and traditions in ancient society [that] the schools thus provided the means for passing down key notions from Hellenistic culture.” While, the Christian children would hear the Gospel and letters of Paul in a communal setting, at school or with their tutor, they would learn to read and write from Homer. Reading was not limited to the actual act, but was also—especially as the student became more proficient—interpretation. Moral lessons were gleaned from Homer and company. Such cultural lessons meant that “the attendance of Christian boys (and presumably some girls) at these pagan schools became a hot issue among the Christians.”

However, attend them they did. The student not only encountered the bards and playwrights, but eventually philosophy. Thus the student traverses two cultures, two mediums and genres. On the one hand, the traditional Greek mythology detested by the Fathers and leaders of the Early Church found a place, on the other hand, alongside the philosophy of the most learned and respected men, men whom the Church could not devalue given the Church’s realization of their importance to their lives as well. The central conflict for the Christian Church was how to dismiss mythology as errant while embracing philosophy as fundamental to Christianity?

1.3.3 Mythology, Philosophy, and Pietas

Allegory was in high vogue during the formative Christian period of history and both Christian and polytheist would agree that these myths had not actually happened. The polytheist Celsus stressed paideia and pietas and wrote that the “old myths...are nevertheless evidence of their great and truly wonderful work for mankind.”

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27 Sandnes writes: “due to the bookish nature of early Christianity, this movement has more in common with contemporary philosophical schools...it became a religion heavily dependent upon books and reading.” Ibid. While this statement might tempt us to think Jesus’ followers enjoyed a higher than normal literacy rate it is likely that only Christians of higher status could read.

28 Ibid., 6.

29 Ibid., 7.

30 Ibid. Sandnes later highlights this idea, writing: “by teaching classical literature, the schoolmasters were gradually forming an identity based on the great traditions of the culture.” Ibid., 22.

31 Ibid, 7.

32 Hanson writes, “it is certainly true that at the period when the Christians were attacking the Greek myths no educated man would have defined them as literally true.” Richard P.C. Hanson, Studies in Christian Antiquity (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 160.

33 Henry Chadwick, Contra Celsum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 62. All translations of the Contra Celsum are from Chadwick.
On the other hand, the value of ancient philosophy was too great to be ignored, as Philo of Alexandria shows by his recasting of the Jewish Patriarchs as ancient philosophers like Plato.34 Philosophy was valuable to Christians because writers like Plato questioned the superiority of Homer’s ideas that provided a praeparatio evangelica.35 There is perhaps no greater example of the argument over myth and philosophy than found Justin Martyr’s in his First Apology and the writings of Celsus, drawn from Origen’s Contra Celsum. Justin does not mince words, myth is demonic and the antithesis of true reason:

Justin does not deny the reality of the gods of antiquity. They are sufficiently real as to act in our world, to corrupt boys and men, to seduce women, and generally terrorize mankind. The myths themselves served a nefarious purpose: “Oi δὲ παραδίδοντες τὰ μυθησθέντα ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν οὐδεμίαν ἀπόδειξιν φέρουσι τοῖς ἐκμαθήνοις νέοις, καὶ ἐπί ἀπάτη καὶ ἀπαγωγὴ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους εἰρήθαι ἀπὸ δικινμένων κατ᾽ ἐνέργειαν τῶν φαύλων δαίμονων.”37 Unlike the worshipers of these demons, the Christians recognize these evil forces and deny them their rites.38 If Justin could prove Greek religion illegitimate by showing that Moses and the Jewish patriarchs had come first, he could refute those who accused the Christians of promoting nothing but some novel cult. To the Hellenized Roman world this was anti-traditional and “Ἐνθέν δὲ καὶ ἄθεοι κεκλημέθα.”39

The charge of atheism, i.e. not believing in the traditional gods and not participating in the cults, recalled historic precedent. Sokrates had similar charges brought against him:

34 As Shiel wrote “the Christian assimilation of philosophy was part of a much larger syncretism. Shiel, Greek Thought, 56. As Numenius of Apamea is reported to have uttered: “What is Plato but Moses speaking Attic Greek?” See Arthur J. Droge, Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretation of the History of Culture (Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 2.
35 As Clement of Alexandria wrote: “indeed philosophy has been given to the Greeks as their own kind of Covenant, their foundation for the philosophy of Christ, even if Greek philosophers do close their ears to the Christian truth Shiel, Greek Thought, 3. Translation belongs to Shiel
36 First Apology, 5.2 “Since the olden days these evil demons, making a display (of themselves) commit adultery with women and utterly destroy children, and bring forth terrors to men, that they who did not use their reason were struck down by the business of those things that happened, but with fear they were carried away and not knowing that the demons were evil called them gods, and addressed each one with a name, which each one (demon) put to each demon.” Translation is my own.
37 Ibid., 54.1 “And those ones handing down the mythologies of the poets bear no proof for those young ones learning them, and we determine that they have been uttered according to the activity of the evil demons for the purpose of tricking and leading away the race of humans.” Translation is my own. The caveat for Justin is, however, that these “gods” are not actually gods, they are demons that have been stylized as gods by people who were fooled into believing their actions were divine.
38 Justin’s reasoning behind this is fairly simple: “by identifying the popular gods of Greek myth with evil demons, Justin attempted to overturn the history of the Greek religion in one bold stroke Droge, Homer or Moses?, 54.
39 First Apology, 6.1a. “Then, we are called atheists.” Translation is my own.
The Athenian *ekklesia* accused Sokrates of leading young men into atheism.\(^{41}\) However, Justin saw Sokrates as a man ahead of his time, possessing true wisdom and knowledge long before Jesus walked the earth. The Christians quickly latched onto the accusations hurled at Sokrates and used his philosophy as proof that God had sent men amongst the Greeks and barbarians to prepare them for Christ. However, the influence of the demons was far too great and they remained in ignorance until the establishment of the Church.

This prior knowledge about the coming of Christ was important to Justin and others. Many polytheist critics pointed to the great similarities between fledgling Christian theology and the Greek mythology.\(^{42}\) The Fathers had to respond. In his *First Apology* Justin stresses the demonic perversion of the myth-writers to keep the people in ignorance.\(^{43}\)

Celsus Λόγος Ἀληθῆς counters these attacks. Celsus saw Christian philosophy as “commonplace and in comparison with the other philosophers contains no teaching that is impressive or new.”\(^{44}\) In his response to Celsus, Origen argues that the still forming Church provides a good life\(^ {45}\) in contrast to the immoral life fostered by the Greek myths. Here, Origen follows the Platonic theory of mimicry; mimicry must lead to a good life, the models must be useful, hence Homer’s heroes should not be a source of mimesis. To summarize: Justin sees the Greek gods as demons who have lead humanity away from the clear prophecies and signs of Christ by giving them myths. Knowing this de-legitimates the Greek cultic religion. If Moses is older than Plato, Jewish history is thus truer than Greek. While Greek philosophers, having wisdom, discerned the impossibility of the myths they thus have merit in the Christian world. For Justin’s critics, Christianity fails in content and venerability.\(^ {46}\)

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\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*, 5.3 “And when Sókrates with true reason and the ability to examine, tried to bring these things into the light and to lead the men of the demons away, and the demons themselves through the men who are rejoicing in wickedness worked to kill him as an atheist and a profane man, saying that he was carrying in new demons.” Translation is my own.

\(^{41}\) According to the *Apologia* of Xenophone and Plato, there were two charges: corruption of the youth and introducing new gods. By reducing this to atheism, I am trying to show that the proto-Christians, also labeled as such, felt a special kinship to Sokrates.

\(^{42}\) As we shall see, these claims can be seen in the writings of Celsus who “has pointed to the stories of Adam and Eve, of Noah and the Ark, of the Virgin Birth of Jesus and of the other resurrection appearances and had asked why these stories should be treated with greater respect than the Greek myths were.” See, Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, 159.

\(^{43}\) For having heard, through the prophets, the heralding of Christ, who would be coming into being, and through fire the ungodly men would be punished, they put forward many to be called the sons of Zeus, believing them to be able to work in men that they things being said concerning Christ were marvelous tales, like those things said by the poet. And these things were said both amongst the Greeks and among other nations, especially where they heard that prophets foretold faith would be put in Christ. *First Apology*, 54.2-3. Translation is my own.

\(^{44}\) Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 8.

\(^{45}\) See Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 145.

\(^{46}\) By the time of Julian in history, as the Church became more self-assured and began converting more and more polytheists to Christ, the critics of Christianity became harsher.
By the time of Julian (355-360), traditional polytheism was under intense attack while Christianity was advancing. Christian reputation for charity and piety enhanced its popularity. For writers like Porphyry (c.300) and Julian, refutation of Christianity was now a matter of pietas or duty. \(^{47}\) Aelius Aristides writes, “like the Cynics, the Christian teachers are enemies of Greek culture, ridicule the philosophers, cause strife in households, do not see fit to attend the religious festivals, and refuse any form of civic duty.” \(^{48}\) Christians were disruptive to the Roman order, they stand so starkly against the old ways that the critics could not help noticing that as the Church grew in strength and number, so the Roman Empire appeared to be weakening at the seams.

Porphyry publicizes his distaste for the new religion claiming that: “far from being friends of the Empire, they are renegades waiting for their chance to seize control.” \(^{49}\) As the Roman Empire started toward decline, Porphyry noted with frustration that the Christians were doing exceedingly well. Echoing Celsus before him he charges that, “anyone will recognize that the Gospels are really fairy tales if he takes the time to read further into this nonsense story.” \(^{50}\) Ascending Christianity reversed the meaning of loyalty and duty, making it the opposite of what it has always meant for those living within the Empire.

Julian, the so-called Apostate, goes further. Like Porphyry, he noticed the steady decline of polytheism. \(^{51}\) In his first reforms, “he attempted to isolate Christians from the mainstream of Roman society by limiting their rights and abrogating certain benefits.” Secondly, Julian tried to follow the Christian example by creating a ‘pagan church’ and thus circumventing the trend toward Christian cultic dominance. \(^{52}\)

Julian’s supposed pro-Zionism manifested in his attempts to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem seems an expression of his inability to understand how Christians could claim descent from Judaism but fail to partake in any of its practices. In fact he writes, “their [Christians’] practices have no claim to validity because it is not grounded in antiquity, whereas the Greeks at least have temples, sanctuaries, altars, purifications, and precepts.”

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47 This is the easiest—and least helpful—translation of a term that encompasses one of the supreme virtues in the Roman world. While it can easily mean duty, it also incorporates religious duty, loyalty, and devotion, not only to your family but, most importantly, to the state and the religion of the state. Cicero defines pietas as: “pietatem, quae erga patriam aut parentes aut alios sanguine coniunctos officium conservare moneat” (“Pietas, thus is that which orders us to conserve our fatherland, our parents, and other blood relations.” Translation is my own) in his De Inventione, which seems to be the easiest way to define such a loaded term. Huffman writes “duty (pietas) required that loyal Romans should stand behind the traditions and honor the cults that had so far ensured their greatness.” See R. Joseph Hoffman, Porphyry’s Against the Christians: The Literary Remains (New York: Prometheus Books, 1958), 9.

48 Huffman, Porphyry, 142. Apart from pietas, the critics of the Church had other complaints, not the least of which was that “the gospel writers were not Homer. Their Greek was, by and large, that of the marketplace. They lacked skill...” Ibid., 18.

49 Ibid., 29. All translation of Porphyry are Hoffman’s

50 Ibid., 35.

51 Fading paganism seemed a particular thorn, “for Julian the charity and holiness of the Christians is especially cloying because their ‘atheism’ seems to be showing better than the faith of the heirs of Homer.” See R. Joseph Hoffman, Julian’s Against the Galileans (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), 18. See also, Julian’s own words: “the time has come for me to say for the benefit of all how I discovered beyond any doubt that the stories of the Galileans are the inventions of deceivers and tricksters.” Ibid., 91. All translations are Hoffman’s.

52 Ibid., 32.
Hoffman explains that this made "Judaism and Greek religion closer to each other than either to Christianity."  

Perhaps Julian’s harshest criticism returns to the notion of education. Christian teachers entered the gymnasium, Julian protested the hypocrisy charging, “that Christian teachers should be sacked not for their belief, but because they were poor models for their pupils—who would not help but notice the hypocrisy of a rhetoric or grammar master praising the classical stories but believing them impious at the same time, because they also passed along traditional forms of beliefs and worship.”  

Hanson reminds us that “generally Christians’ attitude to pagan religion compelled them to detach themselves from a large part of the activity, especially the communal and public activity, of the society in which they lived.” While the leaders of Christianity might have encouraged their congregants to avoid the polytheist festivals, games, cults, and public offices, they could not avoid the day-to-day religious activities that informed much of the world. It was not possible to live outside the world, so instead, the Church Fathers had to find ways to explain their existence within the world. This meant reaching back into antiquity and establishing themselves as older—and thus truer—than the Greeks. With one hand, they swept aside Greek mythology as the work of demons who attempted to claim the prophesies of Jesus as foretelling their own gods; and with the other hand, they embraced philosophers such as Plato who questioned the supremacy of Homer. In later times, when Neo-Platonist thought came on the scene, they pointed out how similar it was to their own doctrine—only lamenting that it did not recognize the importance of the Word, which was Jesus Christ. We are, of course, reminded how eerily prophetic these accusations are. By the late 5th century, Western Rome had fallen to the Germanic tribes and the East turned into a Christian empire. The irony is that despite battling polytheism and accusing the poets singing of demons, by the end of the Renascence both the Christian canon and the poems of Homer became the staples of Western Literature, something at which Justin Martyr, Celsus, Porphyry, and Emperor Julian surely would have scoffed.

IV: Toward a Better Methodology

1.4.1: Retuning the Gaze: Postcolonial Theory and the Ancient Mediterranean

Postcolonial theory is largely applied to literary evidence derived from modern colonial contexts: Africa, India, Hong Kong, Latin America, and Australia. Undoubtedly, the modern colonial period—the 17th through 20th century—provides evidence for Native literature that seeks to understand not only the Native’s sense of place in their own land, but also the dominators and how these two competing cultures coexist. The gaze of the dominated, seeking to maintain his own visibility against the overwhelmingly harsh gaze of his dominators, a gaze which is nothing but a projected stereotype, turns toward the

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53 Ibid., 83. Julian also writes, “the Galileans have accepted not a single admirable or important belief from those that we Greeks hold; nor any from those imparted by Moses to the Hebrews.” Ibid., 92.  
54 Ibid., 33. Julian’s solution to this is “either not to teach what they do not find worthy of belief, or if they still wish to teach, require them to convince their charges that none of the writers whose works they study—Homer, Hesiod, and the rest—should be counted guilty of impiety or naïveté or error, with respect to the gods, as they have said.” Ibid., 149.  
55 Hanson, Studies in Christian Antiquity, 156.
empire and, as Salman Rushdie has so accurately and poetically put it, "writes back to the center."56

In this realm exemplary and important works by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin57 have made significant contributions to the application of postcolonial theory. To be sure, some postcolonial theorists have been criticized58 for applying the theory to time periods outside the modern period of colonization. On several counts this critique is justified: economy, culture, warfare, technology, and ideology change over time, therefore, scholars must apply the theory judiciously. Recognizing the merit of some of the critique, I intend to apply certain propositions of postcolonial theory for my data. One of those propositions is that no culture is pure, especially one dominated by an overarching empire. The Roman Empire dominated a vast geographic expanse inhabited by hundreds of nations and ethnicities, each negotiating their place in the world, both with their traditional neighbors and with new ones through migration. The dominated, people living under imperial Roman rule and living under an overwhelming Greek culture influence, had a heightened sense of identity, ambiguity of self, caused by “othering” Roman stereotypes. This ambiguity can be detected in our evidence for social interaction between the dominated and the dominant and justifies my use of postcolonial theory. I could, as an example, point to one of the major metropolitan cities in the Roman Empire, such as Alexandria. The Egyptian city is a superb example of a Greek city wherein we could find every possible religion, including polytheists, Jews, and Christians. Here I expect to find the kind of cultural domination that existed not only in big cities, but also throughout the Empire. Because I will be focusing on Christian identity negotiation throughout this project, here I will briefly use a Jewish example. This is not to say that the Jews and the Christians are negotiating their identity differently; in fact, as postcolonial theory shows, I would expect both religions to be doing roughly the same thing. Both accommodate and resist by adopting and redeploying the dominant cultural codes. Therefore, by looking at specifically Jewish example, I am, in many

57 While the list of works for these authors is large, the most useful here are: Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (New York: Grover Press, 1967); Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994); Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature (London: Routledge, 1989).
58 For example see Irad Malkin, “Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization,” Modern Language Quarterly 65.3 (2004), 341-364. Malkin does make several interesting points and his sketch of paideia is accurate, however what I find troubling is statements such as “Each polis emphasized its distinctiveness even as each was a part of a network of hundreds of city-states. ‘Ancient Greece’ may exist in book titles, but it may not be used to denote a unified political entity.” (348). In some respects this is true, each city-state did operate according to its own needs. However while there may not be a unified political entity underlying the Greek world, there is a shared cultural landscape. It is this entity that unified the Greek (even during Rome) world. This understanding that there was no such things as a “False God” (provided his miraculous and divine power could somehow be demonstrated) is what allows Paul in the early days of the movement to move city to city converting polytheists using classic Greek methods of miracle working. But let me complicate this further, Greekness and even Greco-Roman are terms that are consistently being constructed and re-constructed in both the proto and formative Christian period. They are not monolithic terms that encompass a sole ideal and if I argue that Christianity is still forming their identity, then I must acknowledge that Rome and the Greek culture is doing the same. However, we must remember that even if Greekness was not fully formed, the idea of it permeated the world at large.
ways, also looking at a Christian one. In her book *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship*, Maren R. Niehoff "shows that in the middle of the second century B.C.E., the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* polemicizes against his famous contemporary, the Homeric scholar Aristarchus, in that he rejects the application to the Jewish Scripture of the latter's critical approach to Homer's text." Niehoff concluded, *ipsa facto*, "that there were Jewish contemporaries...of Aristeas who did apply these methods to Scripture." Jews using Homer, the most famous and respected of Greek bards, for their own Scripture seems counterintuitive when we mistakenly believe Judaism (and Christianity) to be a single entity existing in a vacuum outside of Greek influence, but in this world optic, Greek culture dominated and so despite some reluctance on the part of Aristeas himself to employ such a method, other Jews recognized the value of Homer, not only pedagogically but culturally.

To have their exegesis taken seriously (however far fetched that scenario might be to the dominant culture) by those that dominated them culturally and militarily, it had to at adopt and adapt the long-standing traditions of the Greeks. Perhaps the clearest example, and slightly more contemporaneous with the time period I am examining, is of course Philo of Alexandria. Scholarship has acknowledged for a long while now that Philo used allegory in an attempt to weave Greek and Jewish philosophy together. Because this example is so well known and so well attested, I will not flesh it out further except to say that Philo and other liberal intellectual Jews of this era clearly, “in the context of Homeric scholarship in Alexandria, liberal students of the Bible, 'did not shrink from textual emendations of the Jewish scriptures, hoping to restore their original consistency and beauty.' 61

Segovia points out that “postcolonial studies is a model that takes the reality of empire—of imperialism and colonialism—as an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming reality in the world.” He employs the notion of the postcolonial optic that, not only is purity of culture impossible, but that “the reality of empire should be seen as a structural reality that is largely defined and practiced in terms of primary binomial opposition.” Postcolonial theory often divides the world into metropolis and country, *urbs* and *rus*, in which the latter is economically, politically, and culturally inferior to the former. This was true in British India, and equally true for Christian groups under Roman rule. Finally, Segovia claims that “this reality is of such reach and such power that it inevitably affects and colors, directly and indirectly, the entire artistic production of center and margins, of dominant and subaltern, including their respective literary productions.” This is the crux of postcolonial theory—cultural interaction is messy, and when an empire oversees the governance of the land, both the dominant and subordinate discourses mirror each other because of the dominant’s role as subjugator and generator of culture and

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 106.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid, 126. See also, Justin Edwards who expresses that the literature of postcolonial theory can be simplified to one principle: "Above all, postcolonial literature, criticism and theory are about scrutinizing power relations and resisting imperialist prerogatives. Post colonial writing, then, offers a 'symbolic overhaul' to reshape meanings in light of dominant hegemonies and powerful ideologies." Justin Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11.
power. These two suppositions I take as self-evident and as foundational to my own use of the term postcolonial theory and the cultural interaction model I shall deploy.

Before delving into my cultural interaction model, there is one more point I should address: my use of the words “dominate” and “dominated” when describing the Roman Empire/Greek culture and the Christian communities. Typically, postcolonial theorists will split their subjects into the conquerors and the conquered. Binary thinking such as this is useful, but the terms present a problem for my present project. Strictly speaking, the Christian communities of the Roman Empire were not an ethnic race that had been taken over by Roman legions and therefore not “conquered.” Christians could belong to a host of ethnicities, including Egyptian, Syrian, Greek, Jewish, and perhaps most problematic for me, Roman. They do, however, fall into the category of dominated—no matter what ethnicity they were. First, the Roman armies dominated them militarily and secondly, Greek culture dominated the majority of the Empire. If the Christian was also Roman and thus not dominated militarily, the sense of “otherness” did not flee in the face of Roman citizenship, but, instead, allying oneself with a new cult that disavowed polytheism would draw attention to the “otherness” which had previously not existed for a Roman polytheist. The overarching point I am trying to make is that cultural and political dominance takes many forms and that newly formed groups, like the Christians, who exist in such a complex world must negotiate all types of dominance—be they military or cultural.

At this point, I believe it is helpful to introduce the ideas of Homi Bhabha, whose works have influenced the field for quite some time. I believe that I can establish a model of cultural interaction, drawn from Bhabha, which will serve my present purpose.

The first point of this model is the idea of seeing, both on the part of the dominated and the dominators. It has often been assumed that the dominated are essentially invisible to the dominants. The dominated are just part of the dominated landscape. The dominant ones view the dominated as other and savage, diametrically opposed to the civilized world of the dominants. The dominators gaze fixes the identity of the dominated, but the problem with the idea of “fixity” is that it rarely carries weight. Bhabha, following Fanon, writes “although fixed identities may seem to offer stability and certainty, in fact, they merely produce an idealization with which we can never be identical, and so in fact they introduce alienation into our sense of self.” In other words, the dominator, gazing at the dominated, is confronted with a mirror, seeing his own stereotypes reflected back at him. And the dominated, gazing at the dominator, is confronted with the reciprocal mirror, which gives him an image of his own self as his masters see him. The notion of invisibility can be put

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65 The dominance of Greek culture was particularly true in the East, but it was also true in the West, if to a lesser degree. Latin culture is certainly its own thing, but it took a great many cues from the Greeks. For instance, Virgil was the poet and bard par excellence but his epics are very much derivative of Homer; Ovid’s Metamorphosis is reliant on Hesiod. The educated masses of Rome knew their Homer and, more generally, their Greek. My point is that while it is true that the Western portions of the Roman Empire read and spoke Latin more than the inhabitants of the Eastern portion, the West was still dominated culturally by the Greeks.


67 Bhabha draws this image of the mirror from Lacan in which upon gazing into the mirror the image is both like and not like the gazer. This instills a combination of values and stresses the horror of alieness, that the dominator holds something in high regard that is effectively pushed onto the dominated. It is important to stress that this quality, whatever it may be, can never be achieved by the dominated because of his very status as dominated. So while he attempts to resituate himself in the image of the dominator, based on the dominator’s own stereotypes, he is marking himself as “other” by this very practice.
thusly: in an attempt to subjugate their new underlings with their preconceived stereotypes, the dominator makes his way of seeing the norm; the codes that inform his own self are projected onto the subjects in such a way that these codes are inescapable. The dominated must take these codes, these stereotypes, these notions of self that come from an outside source, and adapt to them or perish. While he is adopting the dominators way of seeing, his own gaze is turned inward and realizes that the two—dominant and dominated—are not as different as is believed.\textsuperscript{68}

The idea of invisibility in the formative time period is just as complex. How much did the Roman Empire see the Christian? Were they just more background noise in a vast, multifaceted, multicultural, kaleidoscope landscape? Contrary to what apologists—both ancient and contemporary—would have us believe, the Christian movement did not explode onto the Roman Empire’s world view, converting masses of polytheists and single handedly changing the world as it was then known. On the one hand, we have evidence from Paul who writes: “Παρακαλούμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μάλλον καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἰσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἱδία καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς χεραίς ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν, ἵνα περιπατήτε υὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἕξω καὶ μηδενός χρείαν ἔχητε.”\textsuperscript{69} His command for his new community of believers to keep their heads down and remain invisible would indicate that here, in this tiny pocket of the Roman world, the Christians had become visible to their polytheistic neighbors, so much so that Paul urges them to live quietly. However, even in this one tiny corner of a vast empire, the negotiation and identities are even more complex because joining a Christian group means not only further social fragmentation, but also entering a movement that itself is already fragmented into sub-groups; ethnic Jews have distinguished themselves from other Jews over Jesus. Those ethnically Jewish followers of Jesus are now distinct from non-Jewish followers of Jesus. Here, the now obvious and stark difference between the new and the old is brought to the forefront and cannot be ignored. But in most of the larger Roman world, where the polytheism remained unchallenged, the so-called Christian phenomenon was irrelevant. Furthermore, as it fought for its place in the world, Christianity was continually producing new hybridities. In every city, each group of new converts required new strategies conformed to serve. Thus, I can call Paul and his fellow travelers, hybridizers.

To the larger Roman world, and indeed to Rome herself, the Christians were all but invisible, unseen, another in a long line of new religions that rose—and would, in all likelihood, die out soon enough. The letters between Pliny, governor in Bithynia and the Emperor Trajan, demonstrate both the lack of protocols for the trials of self confessed Christians and practices.\textsuperscript{70} In contrast, Rome dominated the thought of the Christians.

\textsuperscript{68} As Edwards writes: “postcolonial rewritings, then, sometimes illustrate the ways in which the cultures of the dominator and the dominated are inseparable, thus reflecting the intertwined histories that have developed out of control enterprises.” Justin Edwards, Postcolonial Literature, 59.

\textsuperscript{69} 1 Thess 4: 10b-12. “We urge you, brothers, to do more and more and to strive in earnest to keep quiet and to manage your affairs and to work with your hands, according to what we charged you, in order that you may pass decently before those ones outside and no one has any need.” Translation is my own.

\textsuperscript{70} Pliny, having been confronted with Christians for probably the first time, writes: “Cogitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut punier soleat aut quaerit.” [I have never interfered in the examination of the Christians: thus I do not know what and how far it is custom to punish or to question] and later “Affirmabant autem hanc fiuisse summan vel culpae suae vel erroris, quod essent soliti statio die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi de dicere secum invicem, seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta ne latrocinia ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne
Rome’s culture, military, economy, governance, and mandates hovered over all of the communities living within its borders. Apart from escaping the Empire itself, Roman rule and Greek culture imposed themselves over the landscape, covering everyone and everything it touched.

This dipole of visibility and invisibility, leads to my second point in my cultural interaction model: anxiety, ambivalence and ambiguity. One might frame the question as: “How do I make myself visible to this world?” In some cases, the visibility is too much for the community, and to ameliorate the hostility from the on-lookers, the dominated attempts to assimilate himself to his dominators as much as possible, while never becoming them. This can be done through conscious mimicry, adopting the language and codes of power and redeploying them in a way that is recognizable but subtly different to those Native who wield the codes. The dominated may choose to interpret their own customs and beliefs in ways that are known to the larger world. While some communities may feel anxiety over being seen too much, others are starkly invisible and feel the need to insert themselves into the world. What is interesting here is that in both situations, the solution is the same: adoption and appropriation of the code of the master and a resituating of that code—the language of those in charge—in a new way. It is not the language of the dominated, but the dominator, that must be appropriated and redeployed against the dominant. This is the ambivalence Bhabha emphasizes in his works: “the Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate his historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse.” Any power the dominated might have had—and in our case this applies to the Christians, was negated long after Rome had imposed itself over their homeland.

The notion of hybridity arises within this. Speaking of anxiety and hybridity, Bhabha writes:

The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The right to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of

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71 “The postcolonial writer whose gaze is turned in two directions, stands already in that position which will come to be occupied by an interpretation, for she/he is not the object of interpretation but the first interpreter.” Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, The Empire Empire Writes Back, 61.

72 Bhabha, Location of Culture, 31.

73 This is not to take away agency totally. But we must acknowledge that any agency the dominated possessed had to be negotiated against the more overwhelming agency of the Roman Empire and its Greek culture.
Hybridity, my third point in the cultural interaction model, is equally complex. Byrne highlights Bhabha’s theory of hybridity in the following manner: “culture hybridity is theorized as the result of the continual process of translation which is internal to any culture, which in turn stems from an apprehension of cultural difference. The translator acknowledges difference and cannot avoid drawing attention to the otherness internal to any migrant’s vision to undermine the illusory continuity of culture and history.”

When two cultures interact, they impact each other. If this interaction is peaceful, they may take certain topoi, motifs, and ideas from the other freely, discarding what they do not want and adopting and adapting what they find pleasing. However, when the interaction is set in the realm of dominated and dominant, the former have little choice but to use the topoi, motifs, and ideas of those in power. How else can their voice be heard, how else can they be seen, if they are not using the codes of power? This does not mean however that he replicates the codes and motifs line for line, image for image. He, as quoted above, is the first interpreter, and he can freely exercise creative liberty and redeploy these images in a manner of his choosing. This hybridity is what Bhabha will term the ‘third space.’ In my case, the texts I examine contain elements of Christianity and polytheism. The codes of polytheism while readapted for a Christian audience, and yet maintaining semantic connection with their origins, can occupy neither space.

Following Bhabha, I believe the mechanism of hybridity is mimicry. Adapting Said, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe “a process...of conscious affiliation proceeding under the guise of filiations that is, a mimicry of the center proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed.” Those in power create codes, language, and methods of interpreting that signal their own power. Those codes from the interaction between dominate and dominated. The dominated cannot refuse to use them, and must find ways of appropriating these codes, giving the appearance of assimilation, becoming reflections, mirror images, of the dominators. However, the appropriations or mimicry is never exact, but rather a hybridity, a new formulation of the code that is at the same time a resistance against the dominant code itself. One of the most important codes for the Greco-Roman world is myth. Myth informs the Empire itself, the Emperor, the cults, and the day-to-day activities of the empire’s inhabitants. These inhabitants, most of whom were dominated, mimic the dominant code for two purposes. First, as in the case of the Sibylline Oracles, the goal is to reduce the anxiety caused by being too visible, to demonstrate similarity in the midst of hostility. And secondly, in the case of 3rd Baruch, the goal is to demand visibility by corrupting the code of the enforcers by emptying certain signs of polytheist meaning and filling them with Christian interpretation in order to command a

contingency and contraditoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are ‘in the minority.’

74 Ibid., 2.
75 Eleanor Byrne, Homi K. Bhabha (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 36.
76 The idea, of course, of two races seeing each other as equals without at least some power differential is probably a fantasy. There will always be a struggle for dominance when two or more cultures interact.
77 “Diasporic identity is ambivalent, caught between nativist atavism and postcolonial metropolitan assimilation. It is not simply one thing or the other, nor both at the same time, but a kind of negotiation between both positions. Ibid., 42.
78 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back, 4.
presence in the world stage. Regardless of strategy adopted, mimicry is a form of resistance. It is a way to respond to Empire by adopting methods they will understand, but to subtly—and not so subtly—challenge their stereotypes. This is the strategy\textsuperscript{79} of the postcolonial writer—to adapt and adopt, to appropriate, to redeploy dominant images to alleviate the anxiety produced by the ambivalent gaze.

1.4.2: Excurses I: Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Indian Plight

Speculative untested hypotheses are doomed to failure. Fortunately, the successful track record of postcolonial theory in real world situations such as the African subcontinent under Imperialistic Europe, India under the British Empire, or the Native Americans under the United States, justifies my use of postcolonial theory. Edward Said, in \textit{Culture and Imperialism} writes, “even as we must fully comprehend the pastness of the past, there is no way in which the past can be quarantined from the present. Past and present inform each other, each implies the other.”\textsuperscript{80} In other words, models of the present can carefully be applied to the past.

To illustrate my application, I offer a brief analysis of Lakota author and historian Vine Deloria, Jr. Deloria writes from the colonial experience of a conquered nation crushed under the weight of American hegemony. Deloria’s intricate word play and manipulation of certain signs, symbols, and \textit{topoi} provides an analogy of the Christian relationship with the Greco-Roman world. Deloria lives between worlds, he is neither a pre-conquest Native American nor fully American. He is something else, a “third thing.” His vision is, as we should expect, skewed; on the one hand, he writes in English, is knowledgeable of American culture, national heroes and governmental affairs, but on the other hand, he feels dislocated in his own homeland.

His opening chapter highlights the ways of his white counterparts try to reduce his otherness by claiming connecting to the Lakota. Deloria reads this as an effort to purge the white’s demons of guilt over what their white ancestors did.\textsuperscript{81} Deloria’s identity must be negotiated, he his himself a hybrid, something problematic when members of the dominant society claim an even more prestigious Lakota decent than he does. Deloria is son of an Episcopal minister. He devoured the Christian word as a child and even entered seminary before retuning to his Native roots. From his Bhabha-esque third space and vantage he is capable of writing back to his own center, the America of the white man.\textsuperscript{82} Deloria’s strategy of taking signs, remaking them in his own “Native”\textsuperscript{83} way, and then redeploying them to resist the dominant culture is our focus.

\textsuperscript{79} See for instance, “Strategies of appropriation, then, seize the language and re-place it in specific cultural location, and yet maintain the integrity of that Otherness, which historically has been employed to keep the post colonial at the margins of power, of ‘authenticity’ and even of reality itself.” Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, \textit{The Empire Writes Back}, 77; See also, “Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.” Bhabha, \textit{Location of Culture}, 86.


\textsuperscript{81} Note the ambiguity of gaze. The conqueror can at once idealize and demonize the dominated.

\textsuperscript{82} The one criticism we will head off at the pass, is that these are not Deloria’s own historical circumstances. He is not the in process of being conquered; that has long since passed. While he is not in the process of being conquered, he and his Lakota brethren live in a state of continual colonization.

\textsuperscript{83} It is worth noting that in many ways, this Native way is already a hybridity after centuries of re-fixing in light of a changing America.
Deloria brings this together in his 1969 book *Custer Died For Your Sins* where he demythologizes his people and demolish the stereotype.\(^84\) In 1994 he wrote his other well-known book *God is Red*, in which he distinguishes between the Christianity of white America and the beliefs of the Natives, showing the hypocrisy of Christians in their treaties and treatment of the Native.

His manipulation of language and words to suit his agenda is clearly relevant to the present project. As one of the dominated, Deloria must use the dominant codes of his dominators. I would argue that this strategy is parallel to the strategy used by Christians and the Greco-Roman world. For example, for Deloria, “‘Indianness’ has been defined by whites, dominant observers whose gaze projects dominant values onto the Native, who can never fully emulate them, thus producing a stereotype supporting the superior self-image of the dominant.

In Deloria’s view: “America has always been a militantly imperialistic world power eagerly grasping for economic control over weaker nations.” For most Euro-Americans, Deloria’s accusation contradicts their self-understanding. Their history has taught them that America was born in the noble quest for religious freedom. For Deloria the Pilgrims are invaders, a hostile and greedy force, creating a “common bond” of suffering among all Native Americans.\(^85\) Deloria has devalued the dominate narrative then replaces it with codes that have new significations that turn the dominators sense of self back on them.\(^86\) Of all popular national heroes, none is more ridiculed by Native Americans than George Armstrong Custer, who “stands out as a man fighting against insurmountable odds”\(^87\) yet he unified those he fought, even former enemies.\(^88\)

With regards to “manifest destiny,” the quintessential American myth claiming that divine providence guided Americans westward to expansion, Deloria categorically refuses to use the words “manifest destiny” and dismisses it as “hucksterism” and “land theft,” which “have gone hand in hand in American history.”\(^89\) The only definition Deloria allows is: “a variant of manifest destiny is the propensity to judge a society or civilization by its technology and to see in society’s effort to subdue and control nature as the fulfillment of divine intent.”\(^90\) The West presented a dialectic symbolism: whites saw it simultaneously as a promised land and—Native inhabitants aside—as a wilderness, a wild expanse ready for

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\(^{84}\) “Americans,” writes Deloria “simply refuse to give up their longstanding conceptions of what an Indian is.”\(^85\) American Indians, having been stereotyped in literature and on both the small and big screen, as either “a villainous warlike group that lurked in the darkness thirsting for the blood of innocent settlers or the calm, wise, dignified elders” are seen through the different eyes of Deloria, who delights in providing anecdotes and inside jokes to show just how wrong those stereotypes. Ibid., 25.

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 147. This is seen further in a tale Deloria recounts between a Native and a white man; the white man “told them [the Natives] to forget about domestic policies and concentrate on the foreign policies...One Indian looked at him coldly and said that from the Indian point of view it was all foreign policy.” Ibid., 155.

\(^{86}\) An example that deserves mention but cannot be fully fleshed out is Deloria’s view on Christopher Columbus, a celebrated hero for many Americans. To Deloria, Columbus “didn’t know where he was going, didn’t know where he had been, and did it all on someone else’s money.” Columbus is very much a joke to Deloria and his people. Ibid., 148

\(^{87}\) Ibid., 149

\(^{88}\) “Custer binds together implacable foes because he represents the Ugly American of the last century and he got what was coming to him.” Ibid., 148.

\(^{89}\) Ibid, 30. In *God is Red*, Deloria writes “Western history is written as if the torch of enlightenment was fated to march from the Mediterranean to the San Francisco Bay.” Vine Deloria, *God is Red*, 69.

\(^{90}\) Ibid.
taming and occupation. While Deloria finds “taming the wild west” a bizarre notion,91 post-colonial critique would see it as an example of ambiguity of the colonial gaze, the bifurcated projection of self that negates the “other.” Deloria blames religion: “Where did Westerners get their idea of divine right of conquest, of manifest destiny, of themselves as the vanguard of true civilization, if not from Christianity?”92 The power of resistance is clear in redefinitions of Christianity, the highest American value, as the facilitating force behind America’s darkest evils.

For Native’s, Americans, just for as Christians resisting their oppressors, resistance is carried out through mimicry, by first assimilating the dominant codes—those concepts and ideas that are part of the grand mythology of the oppressor, recasting them and then redeploying them against the oppressors. This is how post colonial theory predicts cultural interaction will occur in situations of unequal social and cultural power.

1.4.3 Imitating the Good: Cultural Mimicry Theory

For us it is axiomatic: “Imitation is the most sincere form of flattery.” But, also for us imitation is plagiarism. However, in the ancient world playwrights and poets deliberately mimicked the classic authors. Homer was by far the one imitated and respected the most. According to one scholar, “If a Greek owned any books...he was almost as likely to own the Iliad and Odyssey as anything from the rest of Greek literature.”93 Not surprisingly, poets in the Roman Empire mimicked Homer. The Latin world’s equivalent to Homer, Virgil, very clearly and without much subterfuge imitated the bard.

Imitations went beyond them myths themselves to include Homer’s topoi, themes, motifs, and ideas. The μήνις and desire for κλέος of Achilles, the νόστοι of Odysseus and his Greek comrades, foolish companions, and dangerous women were just a few of the topics a writer could choose. And, naturally, the Roman world could pull from any author in addition to Homer.94

Assuming Homer, Hesiod, and the other Greek and Roman mythmakers form the common, inescapable literary heritage, I will argue that those classic topoi found in Christian literature were employed deliberately by the writers, not randomly in the service of cultural resistance. I must preface the demonstration of my hypothesis by explaining mimetic theory.

Scholars, philosophers, psychologists, and evolutionary biologists have long accepted that humans learn through mimesis (μίμησις). According to Aristotle “Man differs from the other animals in his greater aptitude for imitation.”95 His predecessor and δίδασκολος, Plato, in the Republic, highlights mimesis as essential for education. For Plato, “since young people learn essentially through imitation, one of the most important tasks of education is

91 Deloria relates a quote from Chief Luther Standing Bear: “We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams...as wild. Only to the white men was nature a “wilderness” and only to him was the land “infested” with “wild animals” and “savage” people.” Deloria, God is Red, 91.
92 Ibid., 113.
93 Dennis Ronald MacDonald, The Homeric Epics and The Gospel of Mark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).4. Greek students in the gymnasium would have learned their alphabet and first Greek lessons from the two epics “and only after demonstrating facility with the Iliad and the Odyssey were they promoted to other books.” Ibid.
94 Ovid’s Metamorphosis has elements of Hesiod’s Theogony. The literary legacy of the Greek world, in other words, was a “cultural inevitability.” Ibid., 3.
95 Aristotle, Poetics, 4.
the selection of objects to which they will be exposed.”96 Those objects “should imitate only brave, sober, pious, and noble men, not weaklings and insane and bad men,”97 in order to be helpful as the young man enters his field of work. This is why Plato is so harsh on Homer. Thus in Antiquity: “mimesis is deeply entangled in society.”98

The ubiquity of mimesis accompanies social contexts of complex cultural interaction such as Greco-Roman Mediterranean. According to Durix, “Unlike what some early anthropologists nostalgic of a mythic idea of cultural ‘purity’ would have us believe, most cultures have been cross-fertilized by others.”99 By the first century, the Roman Empire included: Roman citizens, Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, and a countless number of other national and ethnic groups each of which contested its identity. Though infinitesimally small in comparison, the Christians contested their identity within and over against these others. In addition to the pressure to conform felt by these others, those who adopted the message of Jesus as Messiah, felt pressure based on another element that marked them as different. Whether Jewish or polytheist before their conversion, the new Christian status intensified the feeling of social dislocation. Already marginalized as dominated people like so many they were now further marginalized by their distinct cult. Their mimetic resistance is our major concern. Gebauer and Wulf write:

It (mimesis) also implies a recognition of power: the inclusion of others introduces power if only in symbolic terms, into one’s own personal world, into the interpretive and perspective modes developed there. The history of mimesis is a history of disputes over the power to make symbolic worlds, that is, the power to represent the self and others and interpret the world. To this extent mimesis possess a political dimension and is part of the history of power relations.100

The control of dominate symbols, whether by the minority (Christian) or other subalterns in the Greco-Roman world is a factor concerning the modes of social pressure, encoding, and resistance, as well as the manner of deployment.

I agree with Gebaur and Wulf who write, “the daily actions of people in society are filled with encounters with the instances of power that establish the symbolic constitution of social reality.”101 Cults, shrines and temples along with statues of the Emperor, gods, goddesses, and local heroes were ubiquitous in Greek and Roman cities. Christians were inescapably embedded in a polytheistic culture; the more educated the more deeply embedded in the classics. Yet, even if that Christian were not educated in a gymnasium, either the theater or public art fully exposed audiences to classic myth. No Christian was immune to these social factors. Durix points out: “cross-culture or multiculturalism becomes relevant, when in an individual or in a given group, several systems of reference cohabit. And this is frequently encountered in societies affected by the process of conquest

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96 Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society trans. Don Reneau (Berkley: University of California, 1995), 33.
97 Ibid., 34.
98 Ibid., 6.
100 Gebauer and Wulf, Mimesis, 3.
101 Ibid., 23.
of colonization.”  

We must expect to find, therefore, that the texts I examine have been influenced, to some degree by the dominant culture codes of the Greco-Roman world. Regarding coding through literature and social pressure Gebauer and Wulf write: Literature is required to create a kind of verbal code, which then becomes the obligatory form of high speech in society in general, that is also for nonliterary speech. All-encompassing social pressure minimizes the difference in linguistic elevation between literary and nonliterary language for the elite group in society. In these circumstances, not only a specific style is compulsory but above all the specific ways in which thought, experience, and emotion are verbally codified.

Recalling our critique of Bultmann, the language of mythology encodes those living within its realm, i.e. societies predetermine writing modes. However I am not reiterating Bultmann. Those predetermined methods are not unconsciously employed. Rather they are replicated and adopted because they carry significant value and weight. Were Homer found invaluable, he would have been lost to time. That Christians adopt mythological language of polytheism shows the depth of their embeddedness in Greco-Roman culture. The dominated produces literature that “either supports dominant symbolic power, engages it in a rivalry, or avoids establishing relations altogether by withdrawing.”

Christianity’s very nature and history—its very theology of universality and supremacy demands that it engage the dominant society. We easily assume that because Christians saw polytheism as false that they would take a third option and withdraw. I will argue, however, that some Christian authors sought dialogue with the dominant culture using its codes. Again, according to Durix, “the historical factor of conquest and foreign occupation initiated a dynamic of domination, of appropriation, an attempt at times to eradicate the other. But it also paradoxically reactivated the potential for those ‘marginalized’ to strike back at the ‘center.’” This is what I mean when I speak of using those mythological codes as a mode of resistance. Rome represented the center, then Christians must offer a counter discourse that, on the one hand, appropriates the mythological codes while, on the other hand, devaluing them and modifying them—through a new Christian association and redeploying them. The hybridity of those forms are what I am most interested in: the creation, races, and flood in the Sibylline Oracles, or the phoenix of 3 Baruch. Each of these codes problematizes the relationship between the mythological world of Rome and the Christians living on the dislocated fringe of empire.

1.4.4 Excursus II: The Gospel of Mark and the Odyssey in Dennis Ronald MacDonald

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102 Durix, Mimesis, Genres, and Postcolonial Discourse, 150.
103 This is what Durix defines as acculturation: “the process resulting from the contacts between several civilizations: elements are borrowed from other sources and integrated into the original culture. Along with acculturation, we can also speak of interculturality, which Durix defines as a complex process “psychic, relational, institutional—generated by the interaction of cultures within the framework of mutual exchanges and with a view to preserving the relative cultural identity of the partners in this relation.” Ibid.
104 Gebauer and Wulf, Mimesis, 16.
105 Ibid., 23.
106 Durix, Mimesis, Genres, and Postcolonial Discourse, 3.
107 From Durix: “writers offer counter-discourses to the dominant logos of the metropolis.” Ibid., 189.
108 From Durix: “Post-colonial writers pursue their art through the adoption of hybrid and often problematic forms.” Ibid., 154.
Dennis Ronald MacDonald’s works and thesis are compelling and offer a brand new way of examining the literature both within and outside the New Testament. Our current focal point is MacDonald’s 2000 work *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*. In his work, MacDonald takes several vignettes from the *Gospel of Mark* and shows their parallels to the *Odyssey*. MacDonald theorizes that the author of *Mark* is doing this deliberately, imitating the bard but replacing certain Greek themes with Christian ones. MacDonald develops a series of criteria he employs to map the similarities between the classic and the gospel text. These criterion are “accessibility, analogy, density, order, distinctiveness, and interpretability.”

After laying out his criteria, MacDonald offers twenty examples from the *Gospel of Mark* in which he sees direct imitation of the epics of Homer. It is worthwhile to examine one, with a direct relevance to the *Gospel of Mark*. MacDonald asks us to consider the story found in Acts 20:7-12. When one is not expecting a Homeric similarity, this story reads as proof of Paul’s healing power through Christ. However, when we take in the breadth of the mythological world in which this story was composed it shares many, almost eerie, similarities with a well-known story from the *Odyssey*. From the 10th book where we find the hero and his comrades held by the goddess Circe for a year, Odysseus gives the sad tale of Elpenor. According to MacDonald, the parallels of the two, more than just the two tales of young men who died in a tragic manner, are extensive. These similarities include “both narrators shift voice from the first person to the third; both call the victim of the fall of a youth; both name him; and both contain the words δὲ τίς (“and a certain”) in the

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109 MacDonald, *The Homeric and Epics*, 8. The first criteria, accessibility, “assess the likeliness that the author had access to the hypotext” in this case, Homer. That Homer was available in every corner of the Empire is irrefutable. Criteria number two, analogy, “seeks to place the proposed Homeric parallels within a tradition of imitations of the same model. The more often ancient authors imitated a particular story, characterization or plot element, the more likely the case that Mark did too.” Criteria the third, density, “pertain to the volume of contacts between the two texts.” These parallels could be few in count but if their weight is significant, MacDonald counts it toward this criteria. The fourth criteria, order, “assesses the sequence of the parallels. The more often two texts share content in the same order, the stronger the case for literary dependency.” Fifth, distinctiveness in which “two texts contain distinguishing characteristics, such as peculiar characterizations, or a sudden, unexpected change of venue, or an unusual word or phrase.” Finally, interpretability, “the capacity of the proposed hypotext to make sense of the hypertext.” For a full discussion, see Ibid, 8-9.

110 While the story I use here is from Acts, MacDonald will later tie into back to *Mark*.

111 “On the first day of the week, when we convened to break bread, Paul spoke to them, and because he wanted to leave the next day he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were plenty of lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. A certain young man named Eutychus was seated at the window and was carried off by a deep sleep, because of Paul’s having spoken for so long. Carried off by sleep, he fell from the third story and was lifted up dead. Paul went down, lay upon him, embraced him and said, “Don’t raise a ruckus! His soul is in him.” Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, and once he had eaten and had spoken for a long time until dawn, he left. Then they took the lad, alive, and were not a little relieved.” Translation from MacDonald.

112 To summarize: Elpenor, the youngest of the Greeks returning to Ithaca, falls asleep on Circe’s roof. Startled out of sleep by shouts, he falls, headfirst, off the roof; his neck snaps and his soul flies to the house of Hades. Odysseus, journeying to Hades, encounters the soul of Elpenor who beseeches our hero to give his fallen comrade the proper funeral rites, which, upon returning to Circe’s house, Odysseus does.

113 It would be impossible for me to give a full detailed list of these similarities, so cogently sketched out by MacDonald. Full a full review and list see, MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 11-14.
second and third positions.”¹¹⁴ Both youths died in their sleep, both fell to their deaths, however the differences between the two are just as important as their similarities. From MacDonald: “Twice Homer says that the soul of Elpenor rushed off to Hades...bel... wrote in Troas, on the other hand, did not need to lament, for unlike Elpenor’s soul, immediately and forever banished to Hades, Eutychus’s soul stayed in him...Odysseus could only mourn and bury his dead comrade, whereas Paul’s God raised the fallen youth back to life.”¹¹⁵

Here is the major distinction, the kind of symbolic play I expect to find. The gods of the mythic world are unable or unwilling to revive Odysseus’s comrade. Even though Odysseus meets Elpenor’s soul in the abode of the Lord of Death, he knows there is no saving him. Regarded as the wisest and most clever man in the mythic age, Odysseus cannot hamper death. Compare this inability to conquer death with that of Paul, a humble internet preacher. For him, his Christ, and his God, death has no power and Paul can easily raise the dead by a simple embrace.

V. Definitions and Intentions.

5.1.1 Polytheism
It must be acknowledged that while we all understand “pagan” to be a problematic term, scholarship has yet to offer up another more suitable term. Again and again religious historians use this term that comes from an early Christian understanding of a highly intricate cultural experience. According to Chauvin, “the word pagan in essence represents two ancient words: the Greek Hellene and the Latin paganus.”¹¹⁶ This first term, which is rarely used in scholarship, “was widely used by upholders of the ancient faith as by their adversaries, with the occasional qualification of in matters of faith.”¹¹⁷ The second term, the one in contention here, comes from the Latin paganus who “is the inhabitant of a pagus, a country district, a man whose roots, unlike a soldiers are where he lives.”¹¹⁸ A pagan, then, quite simply is a person who resides in one place and upholds the traditions of and customs of his forefathers.¹¹⁹ I use the term polytheist and variations thereof to mean those that participated in the cults and rituals of the classic Greek and Roman pantheon.

5.1.2 Christianity
The Christianity with which we are familiar today took several centuries to fully come into fruition and even when most of the doctrinal and theological debates had been resolved, so called heresies continued to appear on the medieval landscape. Christianity has never quite settled in itself, though the fluctuations became less tidal as years progressed. However, in the first and second centuries, “Christianity” cannot possibly cover every variation thereof. Different communities read—and in some cases produced—a myriad of texts. It would be too simple to state that they all followed Jesus, for while they may acknowledge Jesus the manner in which they did, differed. Was he God? Was he a

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 11.
¹¹⁵ Ibid.
¹¹⁷ Ibid.
¹¹⁸ Ibid., 8.
¹¹⁹ As proto-Christianity becomes more and more integrated into the Empire the pagan becomes the “other.” They are the opponents to the slowly rising Christians, they represent all that is “bad” to the Christian “good.” Whereas previously the alieni or ‘people from elsewhere’ had been the proto-Christian, now the alienated culture were the polytheists and the term pagan became synonymous with backwater ways of thinking, ancient (not in a good way) and crude.
man? Was he the Logos? Was he part of the pleroma? Did he really die? Could he feel pain? What was his relationship to his disciples? What did he really preach? These lists of questions could potentially go on *ad nauseam*. There is no checklist available for the Christian faith. The writers could pull from classic Greek mythology just as easily as they could pull from their Jewish roots and it would still be “Christian” in their eyes.

### 1.5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established the likelihood that formative Christian writers deliberately used classic Greek mythology and mythic imagery in their texts not simply because it was available and they had no other language with which to speak, but rather because the Greek myths were valuable, constituting the dominant culture codes. The stories of Homer, Hesiod, and the other playwrights had been inscribed into the cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman world. Further, the mythic world was not only culturally significant but also politically significant. To write in the language of myth was to write in the language of power. The Emperor was referred to in mythic terms, the individual cities had their mythic founders and mythic tales of foundation, the cults of the gods’ structured day-to-day life. To stand against this culture was to dislocate oneself from the world. To live fully outside Roman polytheistic imperialism was impossible for the Christians who were continually confronted with their marked differences. This ambiguity between assimilation and resistance of the larger world creates hybrid texts incorporating classic Greek elements along with their own Christian literature and theology. The dominated need to create similarity to the dominators is produced by the harsh and ambiguous gaze of the dominator and to ameliorate the intensification of dislocation and difference.

To test my proposal I shall examine two texts: *Sibylline Oracles*, book one, and *3 Baruch*. Cuisinarted together, *Sibylline Oracles* 1 provides us a chance to see the first way in which Christians could respond to the gaze of the dominators, by looking back and demonstrating similarities in myth. On the other hand, often times the gaze of the dominator is oblivious and refused to acknowledge the dominated. Our example for this comes to us from the *3rd Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch)*, specially the chapter in which a fiery phoenix bird takes flight to save the world from the harsh polytheist image of the sun god.

What follows will demonstrate that we cannot ignore Greek mythology’s influence on “other” dominated writers. We cannot assuage our uneasiness over these “pagan” images by resorting to more familiar and theologically safer Jewish parallels. Scholars must recognize that the Greek, Jewish and Christian world did not exist independently of the other. Judaism and Christianity exist within a thoroughly Greek and imperial world and as Horace so poetically put it, “Greece, having been conquered, conquers her fearsome conquerors.”
Chapter Two: ὁμοια μορφὴ γλῶσσα σου γηρύεται: The Synthesis of Classic and Jewish Lore in Book One of the Sibylline Oracles

1. Introduction to the Sibylline Oracles

In order to test my hypothesis that formative Christian communities employed classic Greek mythology to both alleviate and draw the gaze of the dominant culture, I will examine two texts that have an abundance of classic imagery. The first, book one of the Sibylline Oracles, seeks to synthesize classic and Jewish lore into a cohesive package, demonstrating that the differences between the two cultures are not so great, but rather that both mythologies can be interwoven to provide a coherent origin tale. I propose that the text of the Oracula Sibyllina was written by a community that was under constant pressure to appropriate classic traditions, being constantly aware of their status as “other.” Their beliefs, practices, and texts marked them as different and elicited hostility from those who lived harmoniously with the Greek and Roman traditions.

The Sibylline Oracles “were assembled in their present form by some Byzantine scholar in about the sixth century AD. They consist of twelve books, numbered one to eight and eleven to fourteen.” The texts present a history of the world from the time of creation but, unlike the traditional tale presented in Genesis, with an omnipresent and omnipotent author, the writer of the Sibylline Oracles puts the prophecies of the future and tales of the archaic past into the mouth of one of polytheistic Greece’s most well known characters, the Sibyl. Since the Sibyl is such an important figure in Greek prophetic history, I will pass over a discussion of her nature and her importance in the Oracula until discussing the Greek heritage in these texts. It suffices, at present, to remark that the author used the Sibyl deliberately to speak to the overall synthesis of the two cultures in one text.

J. L. Lightfoot, author of a major commentary on book one and two and from whom I will draw many of my observations, writes, “the main witness to books 1-8 of the collection are eight manuscripts, none earlier than the fifteenth century...” Throughout history the texts were continually transmitted and as such have been subject to many changes as “the Sibylline writers both borrowed from one another and drew on a common repertory of themes, and divergences between parallel passages within the corpus offer evidence for other sorts of ancient variation.” Naturally, many historians have come to the table with

120 Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound 78
121 There is, of course, debate among scholars whether or not book one is originally Christian or Jewish. The ending of book one, which draws heavily from the Gospel of Matthew, foretells the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ, is assuredly from a community we can identify as formative Christian, but this could mean that Christian authors added and adapted an originally Jewish text to suit their theological needs. However, I contend that this question of origin is irrelevant. As I have shown in the first chapter, the categories we now call Jewish, Christian, and even “pagan” are not fixed in this time period. They are fluid, with worshipers from the first two classifications moving independently between all options, taking what lessons and images they will. While the beginning of the book might be classified as originally Jewish because of its reliance on Genesis and apocryphal texts like The Book of Enoch we cannot claim that those who identified Jesus as Christ would not also draw on those texts for their own purposes. What is of greater import in book one of the Sibylline Oracles is the way in which the authors weave myths from different cultures together, making them seem like one creation myth instead of two.
124 ibid.
different opinions about these books. Lightfoot states, “the first critics of books 1-2 regarded them essentially as the work of a single author.” Some critics, like Aleandre, acknowledged that there were differences in style and tone between the two books “but tried to resolve them in terms of the author’s biography (the attitude towards the Jews seemed to vary, but this was because the author was a Jewish Christian; the passages more sympathetic towards them reflected his origins).” Friedlieb was the first to argue that the book may have had two different theological outlooks. Scholars set about trying to determine where the line between the Jewish section and the Christian section was located, with most critics locating the divide toward the end of book one, with the beginning roughly thirtyish lines of book two being primarily Jewish. J. J. Collins, in a more recent survey, places the end of the originally Jewish oracle some one hundred lines into book two. After two centuries of debate, scholars are still divided over this question but, as I contended (see footnote 2), this question is irrelevant; terms like “Jewish” and “Christian” assume that these religions were fixed and unyielding to outside influence and that the adherents to these religions never moved between categories. This is simply impossible given what we know of cultural contact. Creation of a text like the Sibylline Oracles is an exploration of that Bhabha-esque third space, where the author can pull from all traditions and myths to create something that neither is one thing nor the other.

Book one begins with our main character, the Sibyl, explaining what the text seeks to do: “Ἀρχομένη πρώτης γενεῆς μερόπων ἄνθρώπων ἄχρις ἐπ᾽ ἐσχατήσῃ προφητεύσω τὰ ἑκαστα.’” Like oracles in the Greco-Roman world, whether a historic figure like the Pythia or a mythic figure like Cassandra of Homeric and Aeschylean fame, the tale the Sybil spins is not unprompted but rather “πρῶτον δὴ κέλεται με λέγειν θεὸς ὡς ἐγενήθη ἄτρεκέως κόσμος.” What follows is both usual and unusual: the world is created in the manner of Genesis, with sea life, plant life and animals, but the text neglects citing any kind of delineated time period for creation, the creation of life is out order from Genesis and, whereas in the Torah, God must command each item to come into creation, here God utters “γεινάσθω” just once for time period for creation, the creation of life is out of order from Genesis. We can imagine that the author took Hesiod’s account of creation in Theogony, the most popular Greek account of creation—where creation just occurs without any kind of divine command—and couples it with the Jewish legend, unable and unwilling to completely divest his text of Jewish garb by having the God of the Torah create with language.

God then creates the wedded couple of Adam and Eve who live “ἐν παραδείσῳ ὄμβροσίῳ.” The so-called “fall” follows in a somewhat typical fashion—the serpent tempts

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125 ibid., 553.
126 ibid.
127 ibid.
128 This movement is to be expected as part of continual cultural contact. It can be both unconscious and conscious. The former because of the compulsive pressure surrounding the group and the latter because of resistance often takes the form of mimicry.
129 1.1-2 “Beginning with the first race of mortal men, down to the very last, I shall prophecy each thing.”
130 1.5 “Fist God commanded me to speak how the cosmos truly came into being.” I will discuss below that while Pythia, the Sybil, and a mythic figure are all commanded by a God to speak, the Sybil is unique among the three because she retains her identity and speaks with her voice, not with God’s.
131 1.30 “κουριδίην ἅλοχον.”
132 1.24. Note the adjective that is used to describe Eden, “ambrosial.” These callback terms from the classical world (in this case nectar and ambrosia as being the food and drink of the gods) appear throughout book of the Sibylline Oracles and will be explored further below.
Eve who shares the fruit from the tree of knowledge with Adam, which causes them to forget the commands of God who, in His anger, casts them from paradise. Dispersed throughout this Genesis like episode, however, are Hesiodic and Homeric ideas and phrases such as line 46: “τούνκεν ἄντε ἀγαθοῖο λάβον κακόν, οίον ἐπράζαν.”134 Similarly, instead of God condemning Adam and Eve to eventual mortal death, they “ἐπὶ μοίραν ἀπελθεῖν τοῦ θανάτου,”135 which is “a phrase based on Homer (Il 13.602; Od. 2.100) which always refers to the event of death itself.”136

Following the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, other races appear, each one increasingly becoming worse, the sinfulness of their deeds increasing. While implements of civilization (plowing, artwork, sailing, and woodworking) begin to appear, it does not stop the rising tide of sinfulness and, eventually, God decides to destroy his creation. As in Genesis, only Noah is found to be pious enough to survive: he is unable to convince mankind to give up their evil ways and the great flood commences. Lightfoot points out that “the destruction happens in a single night (like the Fall of Troy) and is caused by a deity with pagan epithets.” While Lightfoot contends that “these epithets are usually Poseidon’s but the oracle in its present context cannot be crediting the pagan deity with responsibility for the flood. Rather they must be understood to apply to God himself.”137 I would argue that using the polytheistic epithets when describing the deity responsible for the flood, and not specifically using a more traditional Hebrew understanding of Yahweh, is the author’s attempt at synthesizing the two cultures and myths into one, demonstrating similarity in the face of open hostility for being “other.” So while the Christian may believe this is the work of their God, the polytheist is free to inject his own cultural understanding of the flood myth.

The tale of Noah and the flood is the longest section of book one, and just as in the Adam and Eve section, there are plays on classic myths and traditional Greco-Roman stories. For example, while in Genesis the dove is the final bird to be sent out from the ark, in the Sibylline Oracles it is the raven which, instead of being untrustworthy, “is a hearty enthusiastic creature… based on Homeric expression for trusting in a natural endowment (swiftness of foot, strength, beauty, ect.).”138 The human race, having reached dry land and ready to begin again, goes through a kind of Golden Age. This story is lacking in several key elements: there is no covenant with Noah, no promise of safety for future generations. Also, three kings (line 292) are sent out to parcel the world amongst themselves, and once again what is textually lacking is equally important. There is no identification of these kings, allowing readers of different religions to read

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133 I say somewhat here because like with the creation tale, the story of the fall is missing several elements. The account is rather truncated; the deletions include neglecting to mention the various exchanges between the serpent and Eve; Adam and Eve and the Lord. Even the famous tree of knowledge receives little detail. The author omits the more distracting details, that would have been recognizable to the Jewish and Christian communities, but not to the polytheistic audience.

134 Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 34.6. The similarities between the Greek “fall” and the Jewish-Christian “fall” have been cited before, and it is nothing revolutionary. Here, the author, recognizes the similarities and keeps the story in line with Genesis, but writes it with classic language to resonate with a Greek reader, familiar with Hesiod’s account of Pandora. This “motif of evil for good is taken from Theogony 585, 692, both times in the context of evils brought to man by woman (or woman herself. In the Pandora story, the good is fire, the evil woman, here it is paradise lost.” Homer comes into play in line 33: “σοφοίς δ’ ἠμείβετο μόθος αὐτομάτος ἰδεῖσθαι” which “is Homeric and always introduced direct speech” as it does here

135 1.40

136 Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 344.

137 ibid., 397.

138 ibid., 406.
this passage differently: for a Jew, they could understand it to be Shem, Ham, and Japheth (the sons of Noah), but to a polytheist who was equally familiar with a story of three brothers parceling out the world between themselves, they could very well be Zeus, Poseidon and Hades. By leaving the identity of the three kings open to interpretation the author has provided ambiguity sufficient for either tradition, evidence of the author’s syncretistic tendencies.\footnote{To further confuse the identity of this royal triumvirate, Lightfoot points out that based on book 3 of the \textit{Sibylline Oracles} where again the idea of three kings appear (3.114), they may be Kronos, Titan, and Iapetus. See Lightfoot, \textit{The Sibylline Oracles}, 413. Also, it has often been noticed that Iapetus and Japhet’s names are strongly reminiscent of each other. See Jan N. Bremmer, “Remember the Titans!” \textit{The Fall of the Angels}, (Leiden: Brill), 42.}

While the Golden Age cannot and does not last, the book ends with a prophecy of Christ. Here, the author switches from \textit{Genesis} and the Torah to the New Testament, specifically the \textit{Gospel of Matthew}. This gospel in particular provides a majority of the tropes including the magi, holy gifts and treatment of the Jews. The author speaks of Jesus’ ministry, including his miracles and demon fighting, in many cases quoting from the gospel. The Israelites receive the blame for Jesus’ crucifixion and the fall of Jerusalem is placed squarely on their shoulders. Book one ends on a pessimistic note of apocalyptic woe. Book 2 begins with God quieting the Sibyl’s distress before commanding her to continue with her tale.

This overview reveals that \textit{Sibylline Oracles} has to be a reservoir of worthy topics, but we shall narrow the focus to the impact of Homer and Hesiod. To ignore these literary giants, especially Hesiod, in our discussion about this book would be scholastically irresponsible given the degree to which their words have shaped this text. Next, I will discuss why the author chose the Sibyl to speak to both what we assume to be an insider audience as well as to any outside audiences looking in at the community. Finally, I will explore in detail the story of the second race as purposeful construct delicately balancing \textit{Genesis}, an apocryphal Jewish text (\textit{The Book of Enoch}) and a classic Greek play (\textit{Prometheus Bound}).

\section*{II. The Content and Form of the Oracles}

\subsection*{2.2.1 The Influence of Homer}

The connection between the Sibyl and Homer was believed to be strongly rooted in antiquity, although “the first reference to Sibylla in a mainland Greek author occurs in Aristophanes, it is possible that it was not before the Peloponnesian War that her oracles reached Athens in a relevant form.”\footnote{Parke, \textit{Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy}, 102.} Once she had been established as an intermediary between mortals and gods, specifically Apollo, authors attempted to stretch her legacy back to the age of Homer and Hesiod because of their similarities in her speech and style. It is, of course, more likely that the authors of Sibylline prophecy copied the Homeric style, rather than the other way around, but certain legends persisted that Homer had stolen his unique voice from the Sibyl. “The background to the Sibyl’s strident claims that Homer stole from her is the extent to which she herself was influenced by Homeric legend.”\footnote{Lightfoot, \textit{The Sibylline Oracles}, 12.}
While the character of the Sibyl might protest, her voice is not unique, but instead mirrors conventions, believed passed down from antiquity. By speaking as Homer, the Sibyl draws on the power of antiquity, aligning herself with the commanding Greek figures in literature forcing her audiences to listen. Lightfoot understood the implications: “given the Homeric and oracular background of the Sibyl’s meter, and the tendency over time for Sibyl to be associated with certain words, phrases, formulae, and metrical patterns, it cannot be assumed that the Sibylline meter is as it is just because the authors could do no better.” By using Homeric language, the author appears to assume that at least part of his audience will be polytheistic and that they will be more willing to listen to a Homeric voice. Using Homer in this manner was commonplace, and seems to confirm the author’s assumption that to garner any respect from the polytheistic community, he, as a member of a minority community contesting its place must follow the trend set by the world that has not been classified as “other.”

Book one contains many Homeric type epithets. For example, the animals God creates in the Sibyl’s reinterpretation on Genesis are described as: “θῆρας λασιαύχενας.” The adjective, rough and shaggy necks, used to modify the noun, wild beast, is a very classic Homeric ornamental description, like swift-footed Achilles or white-armed Hera. The Torah does not give such descriptions of God’s creation; this is poetic license and the author uses the greatest poet in Greek memory to embellish his own creation. When speaking of God, the Sibyl often adapts the epithets of Zeus, drawn primarily from the Iliad, as Lightfoot demonstrates: “The substitution of God’s name for Zeus is well illustrated in 1.216 θεοὶ ἐπελείεστο βοθλή (cf. Il. 1.5) and editing in the interests of decorum by 1.21 οὐρανότθεν καθορῶν (contrast Il. 11.184 οὐρανόθεν καταβάς). Perhaps the Sibyl’s favorite θεὸς ἄφθιτος is a remodeling of the epic κλέος ἄφθιτον (Il. 9.413) although it occurs at a different position in the line.”

I could point to both the Sibyl’s dependence on and adaption of Homer, but I leave it to rest here. In drawing on Homer, the Sybil is simply following a long-standing tradition among Hellenistic authors, by following the norm the author attempts to displace the “otherness” of his community.

2.2.2 The Influence of Hesiod

If Homer gave the Sibyl her voice, then Hesiod gave the Sibyl her ideas. This is not to say that the Sibylline writer directly copies Hesiod’s Theogony and Works and Days. For example, Hesiod places his Golden Age at the start of the world, the first race, where one might logically assume it belongs. The Sibyl waits for her Golden Age until the sixth race, living after the flood story—the beginning of creation 2.0, as it were. So while the story the Sibyl tells is her own, “the underlying biblical account comes into complicated interplay with Hesiod.”

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142 ibid., vii.
143 We must acknowledge that “the application to the Sibyl’s vocabulary, motifs and conceptions of poetic inspiration…were associated with the rhapsodies in Early Greek hexameter poetry. The Sibyl tells her tale in dactylic hexameter, otherwise known colloquially as Homeric Greek.” ibid., 12.
144 ibid., 161.
145 ibid., 190. The Sibyl adopts more from Homer than his meter. Lightfoot writes, “her (the Sibyl) preference for Homeric and occasionally hyper-Homeric formulations is clear. Her Homerizing word-formation runs parallel to her Homerizing meter.
146 1.17
147 Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 165.
148 ibid., 125.
Perhaps the most readily seen example of this adoption and adaption of Hesiod is in the division of human kind into races (γένος/γενει). The first race does share some similarities with Hesiod’s original people: longevity and freedom from disease, which “is derived from Hesiod’s account of the Golden Age.” In due course, I shall explore in detail how the second age combines classic and Jewish lore. First, I would note that the third through fifth races are vicious, bloodthirsty men. While their exact characteristics aren’t the same, the Sibyl’s races and Hesiod’s generations do become less noble and grand as time passes. Hesiod’s Bronze Race and the Sibyl’s third “destroy themselves in battle,” while the Sibyl’s fourth race seems to mirror the Heroic age in Hesiod, using similar word patterns.

Sibylline Oracle 115-119

καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόλεμοι τ᾽ ἄνδροκτασία τε μάχαι τε εἰς ἔρεβος προῖσαν ὀξύρους περ ἐόντας ἄνδρας δυσσεβέας, τοὺς δ᾽ αὐτὸς ἐπιτόπισθε χόλοισιν οὐράνιοσ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἐσὺς μετεθήκατο κόσμου Ταρτάρῳ ἁμφιβαλῶν μεγάλῳ ὑπὸ πυθμένι γαίης.

Hesiod Works and Days 160-165

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖ τε ἐκάλυψεν, αὐτίς ἐς ἄλλο τέταρτον ἐπὶ χθονί πουλυβοτείρῃ Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ποίησε, δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον, ἄνδρον ἡρώων θείων γένος, οἱ καλέονται ἡμίθεοι, προτέρη γενεη...καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόλεμος τε κακὸς καὶ φύλος μεταφεῖν, τοὺς μὲν ὑπὸ ἐπαπτύλῳ θήβην, Καθιμίδι γαῖη, ὀλσεσ μαρναμένους μῆλων ἔνεκ’ Οἰδιπόδαι, τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐν νήσεσιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λατιμα θαλάσσης ἐς Τροίην ἀγαγόν Ἐλένης ἔνεκ’ ἡμκάλαιον. ἐνὶ ἦτοι τοὺς μὲν θανάτον τέλος ἀμφεκάλυψε, τοὺς δὲ δῆξ ἀνθρώπων βιοτον καὶ ἦθε’ ὀπάσας Ζεὺς Κρονίδης κατένασε πατήρ ἐς πείρατα γαίης. 170καὶ τοὺς μὲν καύσωσιν ὕπερ ὀχυῖς θυμῶν ἐξοντες ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι παρ᾽ Ωκεανὸν βαθυδίνην, ὄβιοι ἦρως, τοῦτοι μελιθεάκαρπον τρὶς έτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζειδωρος ἀποῖμα.

149 “For her ages the Sibyl alternates between γένος and γενει...in the myth of ages, Hesiod more markedly prefers γενει though uses γενει for heroes.” See, Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 323.
150 ibid., 348. Of course, the ages of the fist families in Genesis lives to exaggerated ages, but the “formulation is rather in terms of freedom from old age” rather than living hundreds of years. See Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 349.
151 ibid., 362.
152 Sibylline Oracles 115-119: "and on the one hand, wars and murders and battles sent some of them, being woe full profane men, to Erebus. And on the other hand, afterwards in his anger, the Heavenly God himself dispatched them from his cosmos, casting them into great Tartarus, under the floor of the earth.” Hesiod Works and Days 160-165: “But when the earth covered this race, again Zeus, son of Cronos, made another one, a fourth, on the fruitful earth, more just and better, a god-like race of hero men who are called demi-gods, a race before over the boundless earth, and they died, some of them, on the one hand, by 7-gated Thebes, land of Cadmus, fighting the flocks on account of Oedipus. And on the other hand, some died, carried on ships over
The Sibyl bases her fourth race on Hesiod’s fourth race, both thematically and grammatically. Following Lightfoot:

One lot (of men) perishes in war and is dispatched to Erebus, the other is removed from the κόσμος and dispatched to Tartarus.\textsuperscript{153} On what model are they distinguished? The model is the Hesiodic heroic age, where one lot of heroes (τοὺς μὲν…) is killed in war, fighting before Thebes or Troy, the other (τοὺς δὲ…) removed from the human sphere and settled in the Isle of the Blessed \textit{(Op. 161–71)}…the structure of the Hesiodic passage is also reproduced: the first lot are the accusative objects of a verb of destruction whose subject is war…the second are dispatched by God himself.\textsuperscript{154}

And, as I previously mentioned, the fifth race is so horrible, God himself destroys them in a catastrophic deluge. It is not just Hesiod’s races the Sibyl mimics, but she also retells the Titanomachy, the myth of the fearsome giants whom Zeus casts into Tartarus during his rebellion against his cannibalistic father, Kronos. The Titans are the seventh (second after the flood) race created: “τότε δ’ αὐτὲ βαρὺ σταματὸν μετέπειτα δεύτερον αὐ γένος ἄλλο χαμαιγενέων ἀνθρώπων, Ττήνων.”\textsuperscript{155} Of course, this retelling does not strictly follow the Hesiodic myth where the Titans are, in many ways, victims of Zeus’s aggression; instead, in the Sibyl’s tale, “ἄλλα καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπέρβουν ἦτορ ἔχοντες ὡστάτα βουλεύονται ἐπειγόμενοι πρὸς ὀλέθρον ἀντίβιον μαχέσασθαι ἐπ’ ὀφρανῷ αστερόεντι.”\textsuperscript{156} We can imagine why the author would change this classic story. If the original Hesiodic myth shows Zeus, the high god with whom Yahweh shares epithets throughout the Sibylline text, as a vindictive and cruel warmonger, it wouldn’t do to carry those traits over to the God of the Old and New Testament, thus the story was readapted to more accurately reflect a different theological stance.\textsuperscript{157} This time, the aggressors are the Titans, who are rightly destroyed by God.

2.2.3 The Sibyl

Until now, I have refrained from discussing the importance in choosing the Sibyl as the mouthpiece for these texts. There were many other options open to the writer, not the least of which would have been a Jewish prophet of the Tanakh, a common option. The

the great depth of the sea to Troy on account of fair-haired Helen. Truly there the end of death enfolded them, but to those ones (who did not die) Father Zeus, son of Cronos placed a living and a place (house/abode) in the ends of the earth. And they dwell having untroubled spirit on great islands near the deep-swirling Ocean, happy heroes, for whom the fruitful earth bears honey sweet fruit three times a year, far away from the immortals.”

\textsuperscript{153} This is not the first time Tartarus has appeared in the Sibyl’s work, it was also part of the creation story. It is interesting to note that when speaking of Tartarus, the Sibyl uses the same description as Hesiod, the land resting upon Tartarus, which lies deep beneath the surface. See Sibylline Oracle 1.9.

\textsuperscript{154} Lightfoot, \textit{The Sibylline Oracles}, 364.

\textsuperscript{155} 1.307. “And then again thereafter, another race, a second, of earthly born men, the Titans.”

\textsuperscript{156} 1.312 “But they being arrogant in their hearts, at last shall plot, rushing toward doom, to wage war against starry heaven.”

\textsuperscript{157} For further analysis of this section, see Lightfoot who argues that the Titans here are not only the Titans from antiquity, but also combined with those who built the Tower of Babel, thus the idea that they were “assailants of heaven, but even (at its strongest) theomachic adversaries of God” \textit{(Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 415)}. This also might draw Nimrod, a giant and tyrant, and believed builder of the Tower into the pictures, thus further synthesizing the different cultural myths.
Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, to be examined in due course, clearly proves, Baruch was the prophet Jeremiah’s scribe. We can safely assume that say the author of the Sibylline Oracles would have had no qualms about using a figure from Jewish tradition.

So why the Sibyl? It will be helpful here to first eliminate the other two Greek figures the author could have used. If one is in need of an inspired prophetess “two...are particularly relevant to the depiction of the Sibyl: the Pythia, who is historical, and Cassandra, who is not. All three are linked to Apollo. The Pythia is particularly important as the ultimate authority for the oracular use of hexameters...”\footnote{Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 12.} The Pythia, or the Oracle at Delphi, was widely regarded as one of the most important figures in classical Greece. She was a direct line to the god Apollo and his (vis-à-vis the Pythia) wisdom was sought from many. Using the voice of the Pythia in our text would have leant just as much authority and credence to the polytheistic world as the Sibyl. On the other hand, since the author clearly has no qualms about using classic mythology in his text, using an important mythic figure like Cassandra, who was also inspired by Apollo, likewise would have elevated the Oracula. However, there is one difference between the three female prophetesses, and the difference is significant enough to warrant using only the Sibyl: “the Pythia’s inspiration differs from the Sibyl’s in that Apollo usually speaks through her in his own first person, whereas it is essential to Sibylline prophecy that, although she is inspired, she nevertheless retains enough autonomy to speak in hers.”\footnote{Ibid.} This reasoning also applies to Cassandra, who in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon is not only unable to control her prophetic abilities but raves, ending as a tragic figure. When the god takes over either the Pythia or Cassandra, the women are lost in the divine inspiration. The Sibyl does not have this problem. She, more than the other two, retains her identity, independent of the god. In this regard, she closely mirrors the prophets of the Tanakh, meaning that the Sybil is not an ecstatic prophetess like Pythia or Cassandra. Using one of the prophets from the Tanakh would not have served the community the way the Sibylline author wished; these prophets were not widely known in antiquity, certainly not to those outside the community. Making them the voice of this text would have served to further mark difference—a reinforcing of “otherness” rather than of similarity. The Sibyl bridges the cultural divide, “the Sibyl was seen as a prophetess who stands expressly outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but whose paganism does not seem to undermine authority.”\footnote{Ibid., 85. Further to this point, the Christians Fathers, normally so hostile toward classic culture, agreed that “the Sibyl was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew prophets.” In fact Augustus in the City of God remarks that, “This Sibyl...has nothing in her whole poem (of which this is a tiny extract) which is connected with the worship of false or fictitious deities. On the contrary she even speaks against them and their worshippers. Therefore it seems that she ought to be reckoned in the number of those who belong to the city of God.” See Parke, Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy, 170.} I would go further than Lightfoot and state that her status as belonging to the dominators heightens her authority in this case. Hers is a voice to which polytheists, carefully watching this “different” community, had and continued to listen as their means of communicating with the gods.\footnote{The popularity of the Sibyl is attested in the usage of her person as Aeneas’ guide through the underworld. The Sibyl of Cumae subsequently became very popular.}
The special nature of the Sibyl as intermediary grants her a sort of semi-divinity. She is inspired by God, but maintains her identity and is therefore more than human.162 Dare we say she occupies a third space? This recognition, that the Sibyl is neither human nor god, but something else that cannot be classified, could be another reason why this community of Christians chose to adopt her as their mouthpiece. She can speak to all communities, move fluidly between their porous boundaries, much like her text does, and much like the author’s community must in order to alleviate the gaze of their dominators: “what she does is to realize the classic bardic formula in its full potential: here, as in other respects, the formulation, themes, and topoi are pagan, adapted to Jewish or Judaeo-Christian needs, yet developed into something new.”163

III. Excursus III: The Second Race

I have discussed, thus far, in broad terms the interconnectivity and intertextuality of classical mythology and Jewish tradition in the Sibylline Oracles, but now, as promised, I will shift to focus on one specific case: the second race of man. The tale of the second race draws on many legends and myths: the war in heaven, the Nephilim on Earth, giants, the invention of culture, and finally the inherent wickedness of man that directly leads to the great flood. Before I delve too deeply into this scene, I would like to address certain problems of textual dependency. Scholars have long noted that Greek mythology is not necessarily independent; Hanson, for example, postulates “the presence of an unbroken stream of influence of mythic structures of thought which ultimately trace their parentage to their great Near Eastern religious systems of the second millennium.”164 That is to say that while Hesiod’s mythology may have influenced works like the Book of Enoch and in turn the Sibylline Oracles, there exists some original eastern myth from which Hesiod derived his myth. Ancient myths like the Enuma Elish or the Epic of Gilgamesh influenced mythology across time and space, an argument that certainly holds its weight and one that I have no interest in disputing. If we were to trace topoi in the Sibylline Oracles back to their original, it would not stop at Hesiod but would continue back to the ancient Near East. However, for my purposes here, this argument is irrelevant. For eastern Mediterranean Jews and Christians of the Roman Imperial period, the most pervasive cultural influence was Greek. No authors embodied this cultural dominance more than Hesiod and Homer. And to the degree that their major themes and topoi preserved and resonated with the ancient stories of Mesopotamia their influence as models for current literary production was on enhanced.

The vignette of the second race in the Sibylline Oracles is an amalgam of a rather odd section in Genesis (6: 1-6), the apocryphal expansion on the Genesis section in the so-called “Book of the Watchers” (chapters 6-11) in the Book of Enoch165, and finally the Greek tragedy

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162 Lightfoot comments on this: “The Sibyl tends to assume one of two positions. On the one and, vis-à-vis God, her role is as a subordinate, a recipient of inspiration, and she occupies the mortal position. On the other hand, and vis-à-vis man, she herself is the more-than-mortal figure, speaking in the person of a Muse, and addressing human beings in the haughty tone appropriate to a semi-divinity.” See Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 16.


164 Paul D. Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel and Euhermistic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11,” Journal of Biblical Literature 96.2 (1977), 203.

165 The Book of Enoch is by no means the only Jewish interpretation of the book of Genesis. There are several examples that deserve my attention but do not belong in the paper proper as the Sibylline Oracles is not concerned with them. The Oracles themselves are an example of a much larger phenomenon in Jewish scholarship over an extensive time period that dealt with the exegesis of Genesis. The first of these if the Book
Prometheus Bound, which is attributed to Aeschylus. A brief synopsis of each of these will suffice for now. Genesis 6:1-6 states that the Nephilim—offspring of the “sons of God” and “daughters of men”—were on Earth preceding the great flood and took for themselves human women for wives and bore children with them. These generations were so wicked that God decided to destroy the world. It is interesting, however, that the Nephilim are not blamed with the downfall of mankind, but rather are called “heroes of old.” Later tradition in Numbers 13:33 claims they are giants, though Genesis has nothing to say on this subject. The “Book of the Watchers” is set in the days before the flood, like Genesis, but “the Watchers are interpretations of the ‘sons of God’ who formed unions with the ‘daughters of men’ in Gen. 6:2.” The Nephilim are reclassified as fallen angels under the leadership, in the first strand of the story, to Semyaza and they too take human women as wives. In the second strand, “angels under Azazel teach men various arts…” Among the arts Azazel taught are warfare, ornamentation, and, with the help of other fallen angels, certain aspects of magic. Genesis is silent on this subject matter, and instead Enoch seems to have drawn from the motif of a divine or semi-divine culture-bringer that was a part of other legends. Finally, Prometheus Bound, finds the Titan

of Jubilees, from a much earlier time period, which covers much of the same material in Genesis but goes into more detail, especially concerning the types of angels. For our project here, Jubilees speaks of a race of giants called the Nephilim and their descendents, all of whom increase in lawlessness (a common characteristic among the Giant trope) and are eventually bound in the earth (much like the Titans) before God wipes out creation through the Flood (v. 1-20). The second example is perhaps the most pertinent; in the Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus writes “πολλοὶ γὰρ ἄγγελοι θεοῦ γυναῖξι συνιόντες ὁμοσιᾶς ἐγένησαν παῖδας καὶ παντὸς ὑπέρτας καλὸν δίὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ δυνάμει πεποίησαν; ὅμως τοῖς ὑπὸ γυνάντων τετολμήσατε λεγομένοις ὡς Ἥλληνες καὶ οὗτοι δρᾶσαν παραβιδόντας.” (Ant 1.3). Josephus clearly aligns those called the Nephilim in the Hebrew Bible with the classic myth of the Giants (Titans) from Greece. This is in line with Josephus’s overall purpose in the Antiquities, which he lays out in the prologue: “ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἐνσάτωσαν ἐγκεχείρσαι πραγματεύσαι νομίζων ἅπασι φαινεσθαι τοῖς Ἐλλησιν ἄξιον σπουδῆς.” (Ant prologue, chapter 2). The aim of Josephus in the Antiquities is to appeal to the Greeks, thus he tries to draw the two cultures together through similar mythology. The final example of exegesis I wish I discuss comes from the Genesis Rabbah. Here many Rabbis converse over the intricacies of the original meaning of the Hebrew text. They debate what “sons of God” mean and the various names assigned to the Nephilim, including Avim, which they translate as “they ruined the world.” These three examples show that exegesis on Genesis is not limited to the Oracles or even the “Book of the Watchers.” But for my purpose here, it is the “Book of the Watchers” that concerns us.

166 There is debate among scholars concerning whether or not Aeschylus actually wrote Prometheus Bound, hence the reason many attribute this work to “pseudo-Aeschylus”. I admit that there are issues in claiming the Greek tragedian is the author; for example in the uncontestted works of Aeschylus, like his Agamemnon trilogy, the author comes across as a man who lived in a kind of awe of the gods. In Prometheus Bound, however, the main character—the Titan Prometheus—reveals his unfair punishment from a tyrannical Zeus, a god who is normally treated with great piety in the works of Aeschylus. Whether or not the actual Aeschylus wrote this play is of little consequence for us. Instead I point out that the play was very popular in its time and long afterwards, indicating that both polytheists and others probably would have been aware of it, either through reading or in public performance. To avoid confusion, I will refer to the author as Aeschylus throughout.

167 Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 352.
168 Ibid., 353.
169 “And Azazel taught men to make swords, and daggers, and shields and breastplates. And he showed them the things after these, and the art of making them: bracelets, and ornaments, and the art of making up the eyes and of beautifying eyelids, and the most precious and choice stones, and all (kinds of) colored dyes...Amazarak taught all those who cast spells and cut roots, Armaros the release of spells, and Baraqiel astrologers, and Kokable portents, and Tamiel taught astrology, and (Asrael) taught the path of the moon.” Mitchell G. Reddish, ed., Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.), 1990. 149. All translations of Enoch belong to Reddish.
Prometheus chained to his mountain by Kratos, Bia, and Hephaestus. Most of the play is a series of speeches wherein Prometheus tells the audience and chorus of Oceanids that he is being punished not just because of the theft of fire, thereby following Hesiod, but also because he thwarted Zeus’ attempt to destroy the world and humankind. As his story continues, the audience learns that fire was not Prometheus’s only gift to humankind but also, as listed in the so called Catalogue of the Arts (447-506), cultural implements like writing, medicine, mathematics, architecture, and astronomy. According to Lightfoot, “scholars have long suggested a possible connection between the myth of the Watchers and the Greek culture-hero Prometheus.”

The Sibyl’s account of the second generation is as follows:

And when Hades had claimed them (the preceding race) another multicolored race, of shining and very just men he made, to whom lovely works, both urgent and beautiful noble, conspicuous awe and enduring cleverness were their concern. And they practiced all sorts of skills having discovered inventiveness in [their] want of means/resources. And one discovered [how] to farm the earth with ploughs, another to work with wood, and another cared for sailing, and another to study astronomy and to dreams and the birds, and for another [it was] drugs, and for another it was magic. But others executed skillfully each of the other [skills] they were interested in. The enterprising Watchers, sharing in this namesake because it their care they had sleepless minds and insatiable physical character/stature. They were sturdy and great in form. And likewise they went down the horrible Tartarean house, being kept in unbroken chains until they paid the penalty of fierce and furious unceasing fire in Gehena.  

Chart 2.1 is presented here to display this information more cohesively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Presence of Giants</th>
<th>Designation as “wicked”</th>
<th>Culture or art bringer</th>
<th>Fornication with women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>NO (The book of Numbers later calls them Giants, but it is not in Genesis)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book of the Watchers</td>
<td>YES; (Offspring of fallen angles and mortal women, but not the fallen angels themselves)</td>
<td>YES; “fallen angels”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

170 Lightfoot, The Sibylline Oracles, 355. It is an interesting hypothesis and one that deserves careful consideration, but for my purposes here I would prefer to see them as two separate texts, each one contributing something to the Sibyl’s reinterpretation.
171 1.87-104. Translation is my own.
The Sybil presents several unique features. For one, while the second race is gigantic and receive the epithet “watcher” they are mortal. They are not described as being the offspring of angels and mortal women (*Genesis*), angels themselves (*Enoch*) or some sort of divine/semi-divine figure (*Prometheus Bound*).\(^{172}\) Second, in a complete departure from any Jewish tradition, these mortal giants of the second race do not engage in association with women. This lack of association is strictly drawn from the way Prometheus is presented to Aeschylus’s audience. In making the figures of the second race human, the Sybil appears to ensure that they are read more sympathetically. They have not “fallen” in any sense of the word, instead their punishment is quite unexpected and never fully explained. They are sent to Tartartus, which is solely reserved for those that rebel against Zeus. But unlike past and future races, whose transgressions the Sybil explicitly lays out the transgressions of that race, the second race remains innocent. Partly, the innocence may be keeping with the *Enoch* tradition “where the Watchers are bound and imprisoned in the depths of the earth until the day of judgment, when they will be hurled into hell fire (1 Enoch 10:4-7, 12-14, 13:1, 14:5).”\(^{173}\) Nevertheless, they remain human. Moreover, the Watchers of *Enoch* are condemned for being “fallen,” for fornication, and for giving humankind cultural gifts, whereas the Sybil’s telling is more in line with Prometheus in Aeschylus. The gifts from Prometheus are seen as a boon in light of Zeus’s plan to obliterate the human race. In the *Sibylline Oracles*, no divine figure gives humanity the cultural gifts, humans are shown benefiting from these gifts using “their own initiative and intelligence (which) is in keeping with Greek accounts of the emergence of civilization.”\(^{174}\) Likewise, the character of Prometheus is no longer the trickster of Hesiod, but a sympathetic figure who was condemned by a tyrannical god for daring to give humans the much-needed gifts. This trend toward sympathy might be more in line with Greek sensibilities according to which polytheists would not understand why “fallen angels” (a motif that would have needed explanation to a Greek anyway) would have been condemned for these gifts, all of which, as we shall see shortly, were very important to the order of their world. The incorporation of the motif of the rehabilitation of Prometheus found in Aeschylus into the story of the Watchers by the Sibylline writer seems certain to have appealed to both Jewish and Greek sensibilities.

Secondly, the editing out of fornication with human women, a major theme in the first strand of “The Book of the Watchers” under the angel Semyaza, again to make the second race more human and sympathetic. This is because instead “all attention is fixed on cultural advance, a theme continued from the generation before.”\(^{175}\) This editorial change is also, of course, a kind of play on Hesiod, but backwards: if each race in Hesiod falls further from the Golden Age, the Sybil’s second race is actually more advanced than the first. This is a somewhat complicated and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Prometheus Bound</strong></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Prometheus is a Titan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Sibylline Oracles** | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

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\(^{172}\) It is true in that in *Genesis* there is no answer either way whether the Nepilim are mortal though my inclination leads me to believe they were so understood.

\(^{173}\) Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 361.

\(^{174}\) ibid., 357.

\(^{175}\) ibid., 353.
messy section of the *Sibylline Oracles* but the main point is this: the author is picking and choosing from two different cultures and their respective texts, “The Book of the Watchers” and *Prometheus Bound*, to create one myth to answer the question of how culture came into the world. The author could have stuck to just one story, Jewish or Greek, but instead synthesizes the two. This is very apparent in the list of cultural implementations laid out, which again is adapted from both texts.

According to the Sibyl, the second race is responsible for: agriculture, woodworking, sailing, astronomy, pharmacology, magic, ornithomancy, and oneromancy. As Lightfoot points out, “the Sibyl’s list of the Watcher’s cultural boons overlaps only very partially with those in *1 Enoch*. She shows no particular interest in the Azazel material…”\(^{176}\) In fact, what the Sibyl and *Enoch* share in common, *Prometheus Bound* also shares, but further, where the Sibyl diverges from *Enoch*, *Prometheus* picks up and provides. Chart 2.2 lays out the cultural gifts in a more cohesive manner, where a “X” indicates the presence of the cultural item in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Book of the Watchers</th>
<th>Prometheus Bound</th>
<th>Sibylline Oracles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metal Working</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautification</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodworking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oneiromancy</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornithomancy</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only cultural advance that is unique to the *Sibylline Oracles* is agriculture, which is absent from both *Enoch* and *Prometheus Bound*, something of a curiosity since “it is among the very oldest tokens of the emergence of civilized life…”\(^{177}\) However, the idea of agriculture as part of civilization is treated in other Greek and Latin texts including Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*. Perhaps the most interesting items on the Sibyl’s list are oneiromancy and ornithomancy, both of

\(^{176}\) ibid., 355.
\(^{177}\) ibid., 358.
which take up considerable space in *Prometheus Bound* (485-92) and are so inherent to Greek culture—particularly ornithomancy—that “the reader must think immediately of paganism, in which it was the mantic method *par excellence*, perhaps the oldest and best-established in Greece.”

Lightfoot argues that this is an attempt to paganize the actions of the Watchers, even speculating that this might be “an attempt to sketch the idolatry that prevailed before Abraham advanced the to the worship of Yahweh, or even to portray the origins of present-day pagan culture in past transgressions against divine authority.” However, I disagree with both theories Lightfoot puts forward; instead I contend that by using the list from *Prometheus Bound*, especially the two items that are most important to Greek culture, the author is including what is important to polytheists as a way to include their traditions along side the more Jewish ones. In effect, to assimilate the polytheists’ culture to Jewish culture, the Sibylline writer shows them developing together, interactively. Instead of these two cultures being irreconcilably different, with the Jewish traditions being treated as “other,” the author has brought them together, blurring the boundaries between Jew and polytheist.

This then speaks to the over all message of the author, not just the message in the second race section. The strategy of the author of this text in combining classic myth and Jewish lore creates a third space in which cultural forms more or less distinctive of hitherto more or less distinct communities—on culturally dominant, one forced to negotiate that dominance—come together in the service of simultaneously assimilative and resistance cultural creativity. The writer that produced the *Sibylline Oracles* thereby achieve a sense of their own unique identity while adhering to cultural norms including the assimilation of values more often associated with the dominant culture. By drawing language from Homer, ideas from Hesiod, and even characters from Aeschylus, the author of the *Sibylline Oracles* has blurred the line presumed between the two communities. The aim of the text is to counter the othering gaze of the dominators, a gaze that projects values and priorities that because of its perceived inability to truly embody those values and priorities marginalizes the minority community. The Sibylline author has chosen one of the strategies for contesting identity mentioned in the first chapter. The other strategy, one that deploys open hostility and proving their superiority, a process of usurping the dominant culture’s symbols in the service of the non- dominant community, will be explored in our next chapter.

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178 *ibid.*, 356.
179 *ibid.*
Chapter Three: δοξα θεο: The Juxtaposition and Significance of Gods and Monsters in the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch

I. Introduction

When it first appeared in printed translation in 1897, the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch) was met with a certain amount of unconstructive—and unnecessary—derision. C. C. Torrey, for example, in his Jewish Encyclopedia, describes the text as "a good example of a degenerate Apocalypse...the account of which is grotesque rather than impressive. Next to nothing is said about the future; and the religious element usually so prominent in this literature, is almost wholly wanting." Thankfully, in more recent years, scholars have ceased labeling Baruch in such careless terms. However, there is still a trend, to misread sections of the Apocalypse, seeing the eccentricities presented in the text as a continuation only of Jewish narratives with little or no regard to the language and myths of the Greco-Roman world. This is not to say that past scholars have disregarded the Sitz im Leben of Baruch altogether, but the importance of Greek literary traditions has been given small consideration.

This is not to suggest that the author of 3 Baruch could not have accessed Jewish manuscripts; communities living so closely together intermingle and share ideas, myths, and legends whether through text, orally, or day-to-day living. It is therefore highly possible that the author or authors of 3 Baruch had access not only to Jewish text, which were considered critically important to individual communities, but also to Greek myths, thus the blending to create a third thing. The difference with 3 Baruch from the Sibylline Oracles is its polemic nature.

I do not thereby negate the “Jewishness” of the text, but I keep in mind what Boyarian calls the “fuzziness” of the categories “Christian” and “Jewish,” any attempt to deploy them while restricting the terms within strict and unyielding definitions, can only distort the religious realities of the cultural context. To call a text strictly Jewish with only the most minor of Christian redaction, and to stress that Greek symbology is not being used at all, as scholars of 3 Baruch are wont to do, is to ignore the reality of the culturally creative interaction these religious communities were undergoing.

While I argued, in the previous section, that the Sibylline Oracles is an example of a hybridity produced by an “other” attempting to synthesize their beliefs with Greek mythology in an effort to move closer to the dominant culture; here I will argue something slightly different, that in 3rd Baruch we also have a hybridity, but one produced by an “other” religious community that intends to appropriate symbols from the dominant community, recast and redeploy them in a project of a resistance—a group trying to declare its distinctive identity by mimicking the values of the dominant community. While in postcolonial theory, acceptance and resistance go hand-in-hand, 3 Baruch is decidedly more hostile. If the author of the Sibylline Oracles wishes to alleviate the hostility directed toward his community, the author of 3 Baruch, is trying to confront that hostility, attempting to argue his way into the religious world of the day, to engage in a dialogue of “correct” interpretation of mythology. Both the Sibylline and Baruch communities will use the same technique to accomplish different goals: a redeployment of mythological symbols.

The author of *3 Baruch* is highly ambiguous. It could be either someone who classifies themselves as a Christian or a Jew. While not a line of inquiry I wish to pursue at present, the Jews of the same time period (and indeed before) were using the same strategies as the Christians. Jews were also engaging the dominant culture and using dominant cultural forms. The Jewish examples seem plentiful: Philo, Ezekiel the Tragedian, and the authors of the *Letter of Aristeas*. The issue arises when we acknowledge that both Jews and Christians are engaging in Greek culture with both acceptance and resistance; it becomes hard to tell what is Jewish and what is Christian—and for that matter what is Jewish-Christian. Any definitions one might suppose fail in light of textual evidence that makes it impossible at times to distinguish.

The ambiguity, then, is one of the foundations on which I base my analysis of certain scenes in the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*. I intend to examine carefully the use of gods and goddesses and their fantastical companions. While some scholars have denied that the *Apocalypse of Baruch*’s personified celestial entourage directly parallels Greek world mythic patterns, I intend here to argue that Baruch’s cosmic beings are, more than parallel to Greek gods, *they are* the gods of Greek myth. Further, I purpose to look at the appropriation of Greek divine beings as an attempt by a Christian author to demonstrate the superiority of his version of the Jesus cult to polytheistic religions by showing that his community’s god has complete control over the Greek gods. I do this with the ambiguity factor mentioned above. I argue primarily against a hard lined Jewish reading of this text by demonstrating how these images could be Christian and that trying to make it one or the other is pointless. For this thought experiment, I will also show that the phoenix, probably the most interesting aspect of this narrative, is a representation of Jesus Christ. This representation of Jesus is unique in its de-emphasis of the resurrection, on the one hand, and its emphasis, on the other hand, as the one who carries away the sins of the world. This is not to say that you cannot read Judaism into *3 Baruch* or that it is devoid of Jewish legend. It is ambiguous and taking a hard line—either Jewish or Christian—is scholastically irresponsible and potentially tendentious. This text contains multitudes, however contradictory that may seem, and my intention in this chapter is to argue against hard lined scholars by showing how this text could be considered Christian.

In the history of scholarship concerning the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, two distinct lines of thought can be drawn: first, there are those who argue that the appearance of the Phoenix in chapter 6 and the celestial entourage are Jewish in origin; second are those who argue that the text and the above mentioned vignettes are Christian metaphors—they have been either strategically placed by a Christian editor into an original Jewish text or they and the *Apocalypse* itself is Christian in origin. There can be no question that the *Apocalypse of Baruch* has some purely Christian elements—with phrases such as άιμα θεού and using Ἡσοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Εμμανουήλ 181 as the product of that blood, a Christian’s hand is readily seen. Further the text’s use of ἔκκλησία and πνευματικούς πατέρας 182 appear rooted in Christian theology.

### 3.1.1 Jewish Origins and Jewish Symbols

The theory that *3 Baruch* is an originally Jewish text is perhaps best exemplified—if not the most recent work—by Daniel Harlow’s 1996 monograph *The Greek Apocalypse of*

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181 4:15 “The blood of god” which leads to “Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel.”
182 13:4. “the church and spiritual fathers.”
Baruch (3 Baruch) in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity.  
Harlow followed works such as Picard’s, who wrote that the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch was a “Jewish rather than a Christian work” and this fact “has been recognized for some time now by a number of scholars.” Harlow first establishes that while “in its present form, 3 Baruch undeniably qualifies as a Christian document,” he counters that “the narrative setting and theological outlook of the prologue are oriented toward distinctively Jewish concerns and that this orientation provides the only secure basis for establishing the Jewish origin of 3 Baruch.” The prologue of Baruch is itself a strange scene. One can already see a Christian author with the opening statement: “Διήγησις και ὁ ποκάλυψις Βαρούχ...” The term “narration” is “very common in later Christian compositions,” and as Kulik points out that “the use of [apocalypse] as a title or genre definition is not attested in the present corpus of Hebrew or Aramaic texts” and the combination of the two “is unique for early Jewish literature” and thus is probably the work of a Christian editor.

This one stipulation aside, Harlow argues that this section is completely and originally Jewish. Baruch, sitting by the river Gel, weeping over Jerusalem is visited by an angel of the Lord who reprimands him, saying: “Σύνες, ὅ ἀνδρωτε ἄνερ ἐπιθυμίων, καὶ μὴ τοσούτον σε μέλη περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ἱεροθεσαιμ...” He is commanded to be silent and is informed that God is annoyed with the unceasing laments over Jerusalem: “Παύσον τὸν θεὸν παροξύνειν, καὶ ὑποδείξω σοί ὅλα μυστήρια τούτων μείζονα.” These greater mysteries include Baruch’s otherworldly journey, the Phoenix, and the celestial beings that exemplify the “δοξа θεοῦ.” But in order for the journey to commence, it is essential that Baruch cease weeping for “mourning is inappropriate and hope for a restoration is not worthwhile.” Note that this sentiment appears potentially both formative Christian and Jewish. Individual communities, like the one that produced 3 Baruch, had varying opinions about Jerusalem. We could be dealing with a Jewish community whose Rabbis turned their focus to the Synagogue instead of the Temple and thus made Jerusalem less of a concern. Or we could be dealing with a formative Christian community whose theology continually distanced themselves from Jewish tradition and Jerusalem. The point here is that we cannot use putative attitudes toward the Temple as the definitive characteristic of a Jew or a Christian. As Harlow reads our text, “the full truth and inner meaning of Jerusalem’s fate are deemed inconsequential in comparison with the ‘other mysteries’ the unveiling of which ensues during the cosmic tour.” However, this characteristic could be used to argue for a number of implied authors; on the basis of what criterion does one decide the identity

185 Harlow, The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, 77.
186 1:1a. “The narration and apocalypse of Baruch”
187 Alexander Kulik, 3 Baruch: Greek-Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co), 92-93.
188 Harlow assumes what is Jewish and does not provide a working definition of what his limits of the term actually are.
189 1:3b. “Understand, oh man, most beloved man, and do not concern yourself with the deliverance of Jerusalem.”
190 1:6. “Cease urging God and I will show to you mysteries greater than these.”
191 Harlow, 89.
of the referent? Harlow continues by concluding that, “neither the narrative setting nor the theological issues set forth in the prologue of 3 Baruch has even the remotest analogies in Christian literature.”\(^{192}\) In contrast, he argues that because this theme has parallels in other Jewish literature—including 4th Ezra, 2 Baruch, and others—3 Baruch is simply following a trend in Jewish apocalyptic literature—that is not present in the Christian corpus.\(^{193}\)

However, with literature of this nature, very little is common; how many times have scholars attempted to redefine apocalyptic literature, for example, in light of new or different works?\(^{194}\) Each text is the work of an individual community not a translocal religious whole. To categorize this text as belonging to a certain religion that cannot even be defined by a strict catalog of criteria appears apologetic and tendentious. There is nothing to suggest that a Christian of a specific anti-Jerusalem community could not write a message such as the angel gives to Baruch. And there is nothing to suggest that a Jewish community of a specific anti-Jerusalem disposition could not write this either.

Having set the foundation of his argument upon the opening passage in 3 Baruch, Harlow then moves into the elements that he believes are also originally Jewish: the vision of Hades, the Phoenix, and the ordering of the cosmos. For Harlow “the most striking aspect of 3 Baruch’s description of the bird is the complete absence of any distinctly Christian themes. This silence is rather surprising in light of the centuries-long transmission of the Apocalypse in Christian circles.... in some Christian texts, the bird becomes a symbol of Christ himself, and the main emphasis falls on the resurrection.”\(^{195}\) Harlow argues that because the Phoenix is not shown dying and coming to life again it is not being used as a Christian symbol for Christ and is therefore Jewish. Again problematic; while the phoenix of 3 Baruch does appear in Jewish legend, as demonstrated by Ginzberg in volume one of Legends of the Jews,\(^{196}\) who is to say how this legend came about. Did the Jews pick it up from the Greeks? Did a Christian community pick it up from the Jews? From the Greeks? Did the Jews pick it up from the Christians? Did it pass through all three at various stages, each community adding a little bit or taking a little bit away? These three cultures mix and interact on such a level that we cannot say anything for certain.

3.1.2 Christian Origins and Christian Symbols

There are two basic problems involved in sketching the scholarship associated with the second approach to the question of the origin of Baruch. One the one hand, the overwhelming majority of scholars believe that 3 Baruch is Jewish in origin. There are very few who argue for a strictly Christian text or that the scenes examined in my work are Christian. Secondly, those scholars who do believe that 3 Baruch is a Christian text do not offer any evidence to support their claims. For example, Martha Himmelfarb writes: “I am inclined to see it [3 Baruch] as a Christian work, but the question requires careful reconsideration, with due attention to the Slavonic. For my purposes the question is not of

\(^{192}\) ibid., 90–91.

\(^{193}\) This is Harlow’s only point around which he basis his whole argument.

\(^{194}\) A list for this work would be extensive, but to point to the work done for Semeia 1979, headed by J. J. Collins, would suffice.

\(^{195}\) Harlow, 134. Harlow’s operative is “distinctly.” What does that even mean? What criterion makes a scene distinctly Christian?

great importance.” Because the question of origin does not factor into her overall argument, she offers no evidence to support her statement—unfortunate since she one of the few scholars who believes that 3 Baruch is a Christian text.

Since the majority of scholars believe that 3 Baruch is an originally Jewish text, it would be prudent here to establish what sections of the text they believe are Christian. The three most explicitly Christian statements found in 3 Baruch are: the digression of the vine in chapter 4 and the idea of church building and spiritual fathers in chapter 13. We can extend this list to include the blessing of the righteous in chapter 15, which is a citation—to a small varying degree—of Matthew 23:21. Also included are several vice lists in 3 Baruch (4:17, 8:5, 13:4) in which such vices as “πορνείας, μοιχείας, κλοπᾶς, ἄφαγας, εἰδωλολατρείας, μέθας, φόνους, ἔρεις, ζηλη, καταλαλίας, γογγματίας, ψιθυρισμοῦς, μαντείας, καὶ τὰ τούτων ὅμως” are reprimanded. Vice lists are fairly common in Early Christian literature and while these vice lists in particular “do not contain uniquely Christian material...the items and their ordering do have close parallels in Christian sources.”

II. Finding the Discourse: Who is Talking to Whom

As I have contended throughout it is uncertain which community originally authored this text. There is no definitive checklist. However, I would contend that Christian communities were far more likely to convert and proselytize polytheists to the worship of Christ than Jewish cults. In his article on Jewish acceptance and rejection of Hellenism, Jonathan Goldstein uses the well-known Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates as a demonstration of the kind of acceptance of Hellenization that was occurring amongst Diaspora Jews. While masters of the Torah, says Goldstein, might claim “that now Jews must not live in the Diaspora, must not submit to pagan rulers, must not use Greek, must not associate with Greeks, must not read Greek literature, and must not dabble in Greek philosophy,” the letter is a refutation of such thought. Rather, it stresses that “association with Gentiles can be compatible with the Torah...but only if the law of diet, ritual purity, and abstinence from idolatry are strictly observed.” While I recognize that the Letter of Aristeas was probably composed around 138 BCE, my previous chapter demonstrates the kind of acceptance of polytheism Jews and Christians were likely to experience. Evidence of the acceptance of certain Greek cultural forms is well known and easily found: the architecture and

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198 8:5. “fornications, adulteries, theft, extortions, idolatry, drunkenness, murder, strife, jealousy, slander, grumbling, whispering, divination, and other things such as these.”
201 ibid.
202 Jews expressly reject polytheism/idolatry. But Jews in the Diaspora do accept certain Greek cultural forms.
decoration of the early synagogues, or the telling of Jewish national story in the forms of a Greek tragedy.\textsuperscript{203}

Jewish acceptance of Hellenistic cultural forms were not limited to Greek literature, but extended to interaction between the two groups. Goldstein again says that while the Rabbinic authorities might have “disapproved of the close and friendly social contacts between Jews of the Diaspora and their pagan neighbors” they were lenient in these social interactions. Reena Basser sketched an example of this out more thoroughly in her article concerning interactions of Jews and polytheists vis-à-vis the polytheists’ fairs. Using textual evidence such as the \textit{Mishnah}, the author shows that the rabbis were frequently lenient toward Jews who went to polytheists’ fairs for economic exchange, and that the writers “did not in fact want their readers to refrain from all interactions with pagans, but only those [fairs] that took place on certain days.”\textsuperscript{204} This interaction between polytheists and Jews would naturally lead to an exchange of ideas, however passively. Like the Christians, the Jews had to negotiate their identity over and against the dominant Greek culture. However, there is one difference between Jews and Christians, following Goodman: proselytizing.

To quote Martin Goodman, “other religions spread either because worshippers moved or because non-adherents happened to find them attractive.”\textsuperscript{205} We know that both of these causes are hardly separable and apply to most of the migrating religions of the period—Adonis, Cybele, Isis, and Saraphis—including Christianity.\textsuperscript{206} Paul and his subsequent followers traveled the Mediterranean, speaking and preaching among the Gentile communities, seeking converts to the faith of Christ, as savior. If there was evidence of a Jewish mission to convert the polytheists of the Greco-Roman world, then we could argue that their interaction went beyond negotiation and was openly hostile. However, according to Goodman: “it is my belief that no parallel to the Early Christian mission was to be found in the ancient world in the first century.”\textsuperscript{207}

There is an important difference between a religious community that pursues an active mission that seeks out new converts and a religious community that accepts individuals who sincerely want to eventually convert. Goodman points out that while there is evidence that Jewish communities welcomed those who sought them out, “conversion to


\textsuperscript{207} Goodman, 53.
such a new life [Judaism] and to the new social group which went with it was a major undertaking.” Adherence to the laws of Moses, sexual purity, and circumcision are all precepts that converts to Judaism would have had to undergo in order to join the community and even then “a proselyte to Judaism became in religious terms a member of a clearly defined, separate and, in a few cases mostly concerned with marriage, less privileged group within the Jewish commonwealth.” Thus, while there is evidence that certain Jewish regulations regarding conversion could be lax, it was not only a religion the convert was undertaking, but also a new lifestyle. Hence, there were few conversions to Judaism and very few, if any at all, missions to convert the polytheists.

Jews negotiate a place to live within the polytheistic world, sometimes, as in the case with the Letter of Aristeas, making appeals for common ground (with the dominant outsiders) and simultaneously for acceptance for dominant structure (a discourse with insiders arguing for the acceptance of Greek as the language of scripture). More often than not, Jews devote their effort not toward others but toward deepening the understanding of their own stories and their identity, without investigating deeply in a discourse of religions but this is not to say that their interactions with Greek culture were few and limited. For my present study, this helps demonstrate the ambiguity of the authorship of 3 Baruch. The text is openly hostile to polytheistic cults, which is perhaps more in line with formative Christian proselytizing communities who openly sought to take polytheists from their cults and bring them into Christ but the theology also has parallels in other Jewish literature.

**III. Gods and Monsters**

My sketch of the figures encountered in 3 Baruch will be limited to two foci: the sun god/cult, and the myth of the Phoenix. By the time of composition and redaction of 3 Baruch, the cult of the sun had long been established. The Roman period marked the zenith of sun worship. While the sun god always had high standing among Greeks, not until the Roman period did the sun become ruler of the cosmos. According to Dean-Otting, Sol “was a god indigenous to Rome and was probably worshiped as early as the fourth century” and later became associated with Empire and Emperor with epithets such as invictus and aeternus. While it is impossible to know exactly when 3 Baruch was composed, due to the heavy cosmological imagery in chapter 6, it is not a stretch to hypothesize that “by the time 3 Baruch was written solar pantheism had reached the height of popularity.” Thus, Dean-Otting believes that 3 Baruch was mainly composed as a polemic against the solar cult of the Roman Empire, a proposition with which I agree, though I would contend that she does not go far enough. In sum: the sun is the ruler of the cosmos, his agent on earth is the Emperor, and the sun cult is enjoying a surge in popularity.

The phoenix has always been a vibrant image in Greek mythology. Its popularity stretches into the modern era and its longevity perhaps has its roots in the myths of India. The history and development of the phoenix is extensive and would require too much time

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208 ibid., 70.
209 ibid.
210 Whether it was the god Helios (the same word in Greek as sun) or the later instantiation of the sun god, Apollo, or the Roman adaptation of Greek worship in Sol Invictus, the sun god and his cult had always enjoyed a high standing.
211 Mary Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature*, (Bern: Verlag Peter Lang), 139.
212 ibid., 140.
to review it properly here. However, a few things. First, according to van den Broek, the oldest surviving Greek text to mention the Phoenix is from Hesiod, fragment 304. Hesiod presents a rather opaque riddle concerning the life span of the Phoenix in relation to other creatures. According to van den Broek "the bird is the symbol of a specific non-astronomical period," which may account for the legend of the bird's longevity. The phoenix narrative grows richer in Herodotus. But this version is still not the version most familiar. It does move the narrative one step closer to the beginning of the rebirth myth associated with the Phoenix. Artemidorus in his *Oneirocritica* writes that there are many versions of the myth:

some say that the phoenix does not bury its father at all, that it does not even have a father or an ancestor at all but goes to Egypt when its end approaches and there burns itself on a pyre it has constructed of cinnamon and myrrh. They also clam that after some time a worm appears from the ashes, develops into a new phoenix, and flies back to the original dwelling-place.

Second, one item remains: the use of the Phoenix in Jewish literature. According to M.R. Niehoff's article "The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature," the rabbis were familiar with the details of the Hellenistic phoenix myths, and not only adapted the story to their own values but even enhanced its mythological dimension. However, this process occurred in stages and even after the phoenix had become part of the mythos of the Jews, its depiction is different from its presentation in *3 Baruch*, as I will show. First, the rabbis, following the collapse of Jerusalem, "domesticated the bird within a monotheistic framework, omitting its connection to foreign cults and subordinating its originally independent characteristics to Gods commands...." For example, in one of the earliest examples Midrash exegesis into the phoenix (*Genesis Rabbah* 19.5), "the phoenix myth is thus recontextualized and serves as a culturally significant explanation of an ancient crux...the rabbis retain the mythological

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213 While the history of the myth of the phoenix, journeying from India, to Arabia, finding a home in Egypt, and then with Greeks—always having more elements added to it—is fascinating, we pass over this in order to focus on the myth that the Greeks—and consequently, the Romans—inherited.

214 R. van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix: According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 76. APUD Plutarch reads: "Nine generations long is the life of the crow and his cawing, Nine generations of vigorous men. Lives of four crows together equal the life of a stag, and three stags the old age of a raven; Nine of the lives of the raven the life of the Phoenix doth equal; Ten of the Phoenix we Nymphs, fair daughters of Zeus of the aegis."

215 There is another sacred bird, too, whose name is phoenix. I myself have never seen it, only pictures of it; for the bird seldom comes into Egypt: once in five hundred years, as the people of Heliopolis say. It is said that the phoenix comes when his father dies. If the picture truly shows his size and appearance, his plumage is partly golden and partly red. He is most like an eagle in shape and size. What they say this bird manages to do is incredible to me. Flying from Arabia to the temple of the sun, they say, he conveys his father encased in myrrh and buries him at the temple of the Sun. This is how he conveys him: he first molds an egg of myrrh as heavy as he can carry, then tries lifting it, and when he has tried it, he then hollows out the egg and puts his father into it, and plasters over with more myrrh the hollow of the egg into which he has put his father, which is the same in weight with his father lying in it, and he conveys him encased to the temple of the Sun in Egypt. This is what they say this bird does. Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.73

216 van den Broek, 151.


218 Ibid., 246.

219 Ibid., 265.
dimension of the phoenix while adapting it to a specifically Jewish context.”220 In another example (b. Sanhedrin 108b) the phoenix is given long life after its considerate attitude toward Noah on the ark. Again, the bird retains a characteristic of its previous Hellenistic life, but is put into Jewish context. There is one major difference, in this first stage of Rabbinic use of the phoenix, in respect to how the Christians use it; Niehoff explains, “...the rabbis do not use the bird symbolically. They accept the story literally and integrate the phoenix as a real bird into the rabbinic framework.”221 This is in contrast to how the Christians, who “interpreted the pagan myth as a symbol of the dogma of Jesus’ resurrection,”222 use the bird.

As Judaism continued to develop and change, the way of discussing the phoenix from the first stage also changed: “in the second stage the rabbis reinvest the phoenix with mythological qualities, associating it with subversive elements such as the serpent and the leviathan.”223 What Niehoff means here is that the bird becomes one of the primordial monsters. In Genesis Rabbah 19.4, the rabbis clearly have knowledge of 3 Baruch and its phoenix; 19.4 describes a massive bird that flies with the sun, wings outstretched. However, the bird is not a symbol of hope, but instead “the later Midrash renders this victory [God’s dominance over natures and the foreign cults] fragile and challenges God’s sovereignty by using the serpent’s speech, which postulates that the bird’s power over the sun as a paradigm for human dominance over God.”224 In other words, the bird is not working with God in the protection of mankind, but in this exegesis is a sort of foil for God’s power. The bird is placed on the same level as the serpent of the garden and the leviathan monster. As I shall show, this is not how the phoenix of 3 Baruch is depicted but rather that phoenix is the promised “glory of God.”

There is one final consideration for the appearance of the phoenix in Jewish legend—volume one of Louis Ginzberg’s monumental Legends of the Jews. Ginzberg’s telling of the phoenix incorporates the previously mentioned Midrash and b. Sanhedrian material, all woven together to present one myth. In Ginzberg’s myth, the phoenix bird “was the only bird that refused to eat thereof [from the tree of knowledge] and he was rewarded with eternal life...the phoenix is also called ‘the guardian of the terrestrial sphere,’ and he spreads out his wings and catches up the fiery rays of the sun. If he were not there to intercept them, neither man nor any other animal being would keep alive.”225 Ginzberg’s bird also has the same writing on its wings as 3 Baruch, eats manna of heaven and dew of the earth and it excretes a worm that in turn excretes cinnamon as 3 Baruch. As we shall see, this resembles the phoenix of 3 Baruch. However, Ginzberg collected this legend from a variety of sources, including the Midrash, which as I showed above, obviously had knowledge of 3 Baruch. There are also differences from 3 Baruch; there is no mention

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220 Ibid., 259. In this Midrash, an explanation is given to the phoenix’s eternity, but it is put in Jewish terms. Eve seduced the animals in Eden to eat of the tree of knowledge, but the phoenix refused and thus was given eternal life. Note that the Hellenistic myth of an eternal bird is there, but it has been conceptualized in Jewish biblical terms.

221 Ibid., 259-260.

222 Ibid, 246. Perhaps the primary example of this is Clement in 1 Clement. Here, “he uses the bird in symbolic fashion, namely as a type for the doctrine of the resurrection of the faithful.” Ibid. 252.

223 Ibid., 265.

224 Ibid., 263.

225 Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 32.
of the rays of the sun as sins and the Ginzberg bird is highly embellished with colors. The phoenix of 3 Baruch, while wondrous, is missing such embellishment and Niehoff points out that such descriptions are pagan and now Jewish, but not Christian.\footnote{Niehoff, “The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature,” 252.}

Together we cannot take any of this as evidence that Jews wrote 3 Baruch, but rather only that the Rabbis had knowledge of it, which should not be surprising given the level of interaction between Jews, Christians, and polytheists. Kugel, writing the forward to the edition of Ginzberg’s Legends, reminds us that, “Jewish legend can be culled not from the writings of the Synagogue alone; they appear also in those of the Church….Nearly all of them [the texts] are embellished with Christian interpolations, and in some cases the inserted portions have choked the original form so completely that it is impossible to determine at first sight whether a Jewish or a Christian legend is under examination.”\footnote{Kugel, Legends of the Jews, forward, xxvi.}

\section*{IV. Manuscript History}

3 Baruch survives in two languages: the Greek text we examine here and Slavonic, the latter having been discovered prior to the former.\footnote{There are currently two extant Greek manuscripts; the first was discovered in 1896 in the British Museum, and the second in 1956 by French scholar Jean-Claude Picard in the Monastery of the Hagia on Andros Island. Harlow, Greek Apocalypse of 3rd Baruch, 8.} According to Picard, his text is the older of the two because it omits the initial superscription and the lines at 6:16. The two Greek texts are from the 15th/16th century, respectively, while the Slavonic comes to us from the 13th. According to Harlow, there are no telltale signs that the text was originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, and the Greek itself is of the simple Koine variety.\footnote{Harlow, 10.}

While the author of the text itself places the setting just after the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587, it is more probable that this text was composed sometime after the second fall of the city in 70 CE,\footnote{\textit{Though “beyond the reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, there are no specific, historical data that would help fix its date more precisely }ibid., 14.} and given the sun imagery probably much later during what I have termed the formative Christian period.

While lamenting by the River Gel, wondering how and why God could allow the destruction of Jerusalem, the angel Phamael appears before Baruch and offers to take him up into the divine realm and show him the mysteries of the world and the glory of God.\footnote{\textit{Δέι όρο καὶ ὑποδείξεις ταύτα μυστήρια τοῦ θεοῦ “Wait and the mystery of God will be revealed to you.”}}

Upon reaching the first heaven, Baruch sees human beings with animal parts, and questioning the angel he learns they are the builders of the Tower of Babel. The second heaven is much the same as the first, except those who gave counsel to build the tower now occupy it. A pericope concerning the “plant which led Adam astray” occurs between the vision of Hades and the following image of the Sun God and the Phoenix (chapter 3). Passing into the fourth (perhaps fifth as the author seems to have confused his numbers) heaven, Baruch sees a great plain full of bizarre birds who continually sing praises to God. Here he also meets the archangel Michael who judges the merits of the angels who carry the virtues of men in baskets. Some baskets are full, some only partly full, and some are completely empty. Michael proceeds to bless the whole congregation and give out a stern
warning to those who do not follow God, before Baruch is “returned to himself” (Καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθὼν)\(^{232}\) and awakes to praise the Lord.

V. The Meaning of the Myths According to 3 Baruch

In my view, to understand 3 Baruch, we must understand the three beings Baruch encounters as the divine Greek mythic characters in the Greco-Roman world. The first of these three, the Lord of the Underworld, is the most difficult to pinpoint since the author of 3 Baruch made this section of text particularly puzzling. The issue arises because Baruch uses the term “Hades” several times for different points of reference. The second half of verse three of chapter four reads: “Καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὸν Ἅδην, καὶ ἤν ἡ εἰδέα αὐτοῦ ᾔδρωδης καὶ βέβηλος.”\(^{233}\) This is the first mention of Hades, and it is important to notice that Baruch recognizes who he is seeing without needing the angel to explain the vision. This is the first time this has happened in the Apocalypse. In the previous heavens, Baruch must always ask the angel to interpret what he is seeing. He does not recognize the landscape, the people, the situation, or the particular punishments of those located in heavens one and two.

Baruch’s role in the Apocalypse until this point is that of the questioner; he is the reader’s eyes, seeing the visions but needing the angel of the Lord to explain what he (and by extension, we) are seeing. There are two possibilities: either Baruch is seeing the underworld or he is seeing the god of the underworld, Hades himself. The normative way to read this section, following the commentaries of Harlow and Kulik, is to understand this as the first option: this is the underworld. However, I assert that it is more likely to be Hades himself.

This interpretation rests, first, on the surrounding Greek text. The sentence immediately preceding the first mention of Hades reads: “Καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι πεδίον, καὶ ὕψος ὑπάσσεως πέτρας.”\(^{234}\) Baruch first sees a serpent, on a plain, and some sort of seeing rock (the meaning of this is unclear and not important to our purposes here, the snake is of greater import). The rendering of the Greek is important between this sentence and the next: if Baruch were to connect the serpent to the Hades he sees, then Harlow and his contemporaries would perhaps be correct in reading this section as the underworld which has a large serpent encircling it. However, the kai and the repetition of the verb edeixen demonstrate that Baruch is seeing something else. He is not focusing on the serpent at this point, but his view has shifted to another element on the plain and this element is given the title of Hades. His gaze, understanding that he is seeing Hades, again shifts back to the serpent, which he now addresses as ὁ δράκων, and asks his standard questions.

The interpretation of Hades as the god rests on one more piece of evidence: a parallel structure located further in the text. If this were the place Hades, then it would follow that Baruch would recognize other locations without needing Phamael to explain what he see. Secondly, he would not recognize the other deities—the sun and moon—and would require an explanation of their identities. Chapter 10 of the Apocalypse provides a counterpoint for the first of these two conditions. Entering a large plain, Baruch gazes upon a pool of water around which birds gather. Baruch’s first question to his interlocutor does not concern the birds or even the pool of water but rather: “Καὶ ἠρώτησα τὸν ἄγγελον. Τί

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\(^{232}\) 17.3

\(^{233}\) 4.3 “And he showed me Hades and the appearance of him was dark and terrible.”

\(^{234}\) 4.3b “And he showed me the plain and a snake as a seeing stone.”

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He needs an explanation from Phamael as to the meaning of what he is seeing. This is not the case in the Hades section: he knows Hades when he sees him. Likewise, Baruch knows the Sun God and Moon Goddess when he encounters them on their level of heaven. Chapter six of the Apocalypse begins: “Καὶ λαβὼν με ἡγαγέν με ὑπὸ τοῦ ἢλιος ἐκπορεύεται. Καὶ ἐξειδέξ μοι ἄρμα τετραήλαστον ὁ ἤν υπόπυν. Καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄρματος ἀνθρώποις καθήμενος φορῶν στέφανον πυρός, ἐλαθόμενον τὸ ἁμα ὑπ’ ἀγγέλων τεσσαράκοντα.” This personification of the sun—a clear depiction of Apollo or Sol Invictus was recognizable to anyone living within this Greco-Roman world and equally clear to Baruch. He does not need to question what he is seeing, much like he does not need to question Hades just a few scenes before. The same applies to the Moon Goddess (chapter nine). Baruch sees the appearance of a woman—Selene—and his question does not concern who she is, but rather the nature of the Moon’s waxing and waning. I conclude that the way in which Baruch reacts to seeing the personified celestial beings is parallel to his reaction to the sight of Hades, he recognizes, without questioning. These are the Greek mythic gods, whose cults (with the exception of Hades who, admittedly, had very little cultic worship, but was important to Greek myths) pervade world of the formative Christians and Rabbinic Jewish communities.

I contend that the appearance of three Greek mythic deities in this text can be explained by fleshing out the main sin in 3 Baruch. I agree with both Kulik’s and Harlow’s opinion that the archetypal sin in 3 Baruch is the invasion of the divine realm by those who are not worthy and attempt to usurp the Judeo-Christian God’s power. Whereas for these two scholars this invasion is by human beings, I would contend that the author, sees the Greek gods as rebels. They have attempted to displace God and control humanity through false power; but what Baruch discovers is that God is in complete control of the cosmic forces, and tempers his wrath against his creation by providing protection against the false deities, namely the Phoenix which potentially stands in for Christ.

An example of this type of sin and punishment is best exemplified in the treatment of the Moon Goddess. The moon, personified as a woman in a chariot, similar to the Sun God, correlates directly with the Greek moon goddess, Selene. Questioning why the moon waxes and wanes, is told that the she is being punished for a sin of disobedience and the angel gives an analogy of kings and slaves: “Καὶ ἐπον ὁ ἄγγελος: Ἀκουσον. ὡσπερ ἐνώπιον βασιλέως οὐ δύνανται οἰκέται παρρησιασθῆναι οὕτως οὐδὲ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Ἱλίου δύνανται ἥ σελήνη καὶ ἁστέρες αὐγάσαι.” Here the moon goddess is equated to a slave who must remain silent in front of the king, which we understand to be God. While the analogy also emphasizes the sun’s special relationship with the “king,” the analogy is contingent on the sun god’s relationship with the Phoenix. To reiterate my earlier points:

235 10.5 “And I asked the angel, ‘What is the plain?’”
236 6.1-3. “And taking me he led me to where the sun goes out. And she showed me a four-wheeled chariot which was under fire. And in the chariot there was a man sitting, wearing a crown of fire, the chariot was born by four angels.”
237 3 Baruch 9.3 “καὶ τῇ ἐπαύτιγον ὅρῳ καὶ ταῦτῃ ἐν σχήματι γυναικὸς καὶ καθημένην ἐπὶ ἄρματος τροχοῦ.” “And on the marrow I saw it in the form of a woman, sitting in a wheeled chariot.”
238 Baruch 9:8b. “And the angel said, “Listen. As in the presence of a king, a slave is not allowed to speak thus the moon and the stars are not allowed to shine in the presence of the sun.”
First, the author’s overall theme is that sin is the attempt of usurping God’s power in the cosmos. God punishes those deities who make such an attempt. He dictates the sun and moon’s comings and goings; he makes the moon wax and wane due to her insolence.

This punishment is not localized to the two cosmic deities, but extends to the lord of the underworld, Hades. In this case, his existence is dependent upon God and God’s creation. Returning to chapter 4 of 3 Baruch, the vision of Hades becomes more complex when we consider the god’s relationship with the dragon/serpent. Scholars of 3 Baruch have often taken this vignette to signify that the Hades mentioned is the underworld and is somehow intricately connected to the dragon, whose belly, to add to the confusion of the overall scene is also called Hades, thus a locative, not personal reference. I take this scene to signify that because the god Hades is connected to the dragon and necessarily the belly of the dragon is also connected to the god the underworld (Hades) essentially derives from or is the extension of the god, Hades. The survival of the underworld and the god is dependent upon God’s creation: “Καὶ εἶπον ὁ ἄγγελος: Ὁ μὲν δράκων ἔστιν ὁ τὰ σώματα τῶν κακῶς τὸν βλένες μετερχομένου ἐσθίων. καὶ ὑπ’ ἀυτῶν τρέφεται. καὶ ὑπὸ ἄυτος ἐστὶν ὁ Ἀδής, ὅστις καὶ ἄυτὸς παρόμοιός ἐστιν ἄυτού, ἐν ὦ καὶ πίνει ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάσσης ὅσει πῆχυν μίαν. καὶ οὕς ἐκεῖπει ἀπ’ αὐτῆς της.”239 Taken literally, the dragon/Hades god combination are eating and drinking God’s creation (human beings and the rivers God provides) in order to survive. The Hades god/dragon hybrid is completely dependent upon God for its nutrition. It is important to note that the Greek god of death is emphasized here, implying that the writer is not only emphasizing God’s power over the lesser cosmic deities, but also over death itself. The concept of the god of death eating and drinking and being dependent upon the true God is juxtaposed to the image of the Phoenix found in chapter six.

Because the Phoenix is our main interest, I include the relevant Greek passage in full.

Καὶ ἱδοὺ δράκων περιτρέχον ἐμπρόσθεν τοῦ ἑλίου, ὡς ὅρη ἑννέα. Καὶ εἶπον τὸν ἄγγελον: Τί ἔστι τὸ δράκων τοῦτο; Καὶ λέγει μοι: Τοῦτο ἐστίν ὁ φύλαξ τῆς οἰκομηνίας; Καὶ εἶπον, Κύριε, πῶς ἐστὶν φύλαξ τῆς οἰκομηνίας; διδάξον με. Καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὁ ἄγγελος: Τοῦτο τὸ δράκων παρατρέχει τῷ ἑλίῳ, καὶ τὰς πτέρυγας ἑφανέρωσεν δέχεται τὰς πυριμόρφους ἀκτίνας αὐτοῦ. Εἰ μὴ γὰρ ταύτας ἐδέχετο, οὐκ ἂν τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐσώζετο, οὔτε ἔτερόν τι ἦσον. ἄλλα προσέταξεν ὁ θεὸς τοῦτο τὸ δράκων.

Καὶ ἠπέλασε τὰς πτέρυγας αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἶδον εἰς τὸ δεξίον πτερὸν αὐτοῦ γράμματα παμμεγέθη ὡς ἰδιομον ¯πον ἄχων μέτρον ὅσει μοδίων πτησακισιλίων. καὶ ἔστιν τὸν ἄγγελον: Ἀνάγνωσθαι τοῖς. Καὶ ἀνέγνων. Καὶ ἔλεγον οὖτως; ὢτε γῆ με τίκτει οὔτε οὐρανός, ἄλλα τίκτουσι με πτέρυγας πυρός. Καὶ ἐστὶ τὸ δράκων τοῦτο, καὶ τὸ τὸ ὅρμα αὐτοῦ; Καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὁ ἄγγελος: Φοινίξ καλεῖται τὸ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ τὰ ἐσθίει; Καὶ εἶπον μοι: Μὴ μάνεν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τὴν δράκων τῆς γῆς. Καὶ εἶπον Αροδεύει τὸ δράκων; Καὶ εἶπέν μοι Ἀροδεύει σκώληκα, καὶ τὸ τοῦ σκώληκος

239 3 Baruch 4:5-6. “And the angel said, the dragon is he who eats the bodies of the those who live wickedly. And by them he is fattened. And he is Hades which is also the double of him, in that it drinks the sea, one cubit, but it does not sink.”
This scene contains several interesting points that are useful in my discussion of sin and punishment, the parallels between the Phoenix and Hades, and Christian motifs. First, Kulik writes, “the Sun Bird of 3 Baruch is ‘phoenix’ only in name. It bears the Greek name, but lacks the main features of the phoenix of Hellenistic and Christian traditions...the name ‘phoenix’ here is misleading and appeared only in order to ‘translate’ the image from one culture to another.”241 Obviously, I disagree with this conclusion. To begin, it is important to note that the writer uses phoenix. Using the name phoenix is deliberate, just as choosing Hades for both the lord of the underworld and for the name of the underworld is deliberate. To take the name out of the original semantic domain in Greek and claim that the object in question, the phoenix, stands apart from the original is a fallacy of scholarship. The name phoenix alone conjures up the Greek myth, and it is impossible to separate the name from its myth. Secondly, according to Niehoff, “when the rabbis spoke about the phoenix, they did not use its classical name.”242 Finally, I believe that the phoenix of Baruch does resemble the phoenix of Greek legend. The imagery of a fiery bird is typical, and the description of the worm and cinnamon are also linked back to the Greek bird. All these elements are found in some version of the myth. Now the Jewish phoenix legend also displays these characteristics. However, this does not mean that this bird was plucked directly from the Jewish legend. It has Greek characteristics; it has Jewish characteristics; it has Christian motifs and characteristics. We cannot solely assign it to one culture and religion as if that religion was a monolithic homogenous entity that deployed symbols and myths identically. Kulik and Harlow argue that because the bird is not shown dying and rising from its ashes, it is not the phoenix and thus a Jewish mythic bird. However, I would contend that the main emphasis of this bird is not its resurrection but rather the protection the bird offers God’s creation from the false polytheistic cults.

If Hades is the lord of death and consumes the bodies of the unrighteous, then I am justified in seeing the phoenix standing in contrast as a symbol of life. God has appointed the bird to protect the inhabitants of the earth, for if the phoenix were not present the rays

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240 3 Baruch 6: 2-12. “And I saw a bird, flying in front of the sun, about nine cubits. And I said to the angel, ‘What is this bird?’ And he responded to me, ‘This is the guardian of the earth.’ And I said, ‘Lord, how is this the guardian of the earth? Teach me.’ And the Angel said to me, ‘The bird flies with the sun and the wings stretching out receive the fiery rays. If it did not do this, then the race of men would not be saved, nor any other living creature. But God placed the bird.

And he spread out his wing and I saw on his right side very large letters, as large as the threshing floor about 4 thousand modi. And the angel said to me, ‘Read them.’ And I read them and they read, ‘Neither heaven nor earth bring me forth, but wings of fire bear me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, what is this bird, what is the name of it?’ And the angel said to me, ‘He is called Phoenix.’

‘And what does he eat?’ And he said to me, ‘The manna of heaven and the dew of the earth.’ And I said, ‘does the bird produce waster?’ And he said to me, ‘He excretes a worm, and the worm excretes cinnamon which kings and rules used. Wait and you shall see the glory of the lord.”

241 Kulik, 243.

242 Niehoff, “The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature,” 255. Clearly this text is written in Greek and not Hebrew so this proof is perhaps shaky. But it’s worth nothing that in other Greek texts, Jewish words do appear written in Greek; “gehenna” for example appears in the Sibylline Oracles bk 1. The more common application for this bird in Hebrew would be chol or ziz.
of the sun would consume all forms of life. If we take this imagery seriously, I can understand the rays of the sun as the powers of the sun god. Iconography clearly shows the sun to be the Greek/Roman god. The phoenix accompanies him on his daily journeys protecting the world below from the sun’s harmful brightness. In keeping with the tradition of the Greek phoenix, this bird becomes a symbol of life from certain death. The phoenix also plays the counterpoint to the Hades/dragon/underworld scene through what the bird consumes. While Hades is dependent upon the unrighteous bodies of the sinful, the bird is given heavenly cuisine—literally consuming the manna of the earth and the dew from heaven.

This phoenix not only protect the inhabitants of the earth, it is also the promised δόχα θεοῦ that Phamael promised Baruch would see. Beginning in 7:2, the angel once more promises that Baruch will see the “glory of the lord” and immediately we are told this: "Καὶ ὅμα τῷ λαμψάτω τὸν ἡλίον ἐξετείνει καὶ ὁ φῶς τῆς αὐτοῦ πτέρυγας. Ἐγὼ δὲ ἰδὼν τὴν τοιαύτην δόξαν ἐπανειώθην φῶς μεγάλῳ, καὶ ἐξέφυγον καὶ ὑπεκρύβην ἐν ταῖς πτέρυξι τοῦ ἀγγέλου."²⁴³ Note that it is not the sun that frightens Baruch, but it is the glory of the phoenix stretching out its wings that sends Baruch to seek shelter with the angel. Even Baruch, worthy enough to receive his apocalyptic vision from God, cannot bear to behold the glory of God.

I also contend that the phoenix in 3rd Baruch is a symbol for Christ. Allow me to demonstrate how this might play out; this is a sort of thought experiment to show how scholars cannot take such a hard lined view of this text. First, it is important to continue the Greek text, as the story of the Phoenix does not end with Baruch becoming frightened at the impressive sight: “Τὸ δὲ ὀρνεόν ἔστη τεταπεινωμένον καὶ συστέλλον τὰς πτέρυγας αὐτοῦ...Περὶ δὲ τοῦ ὀρνεοῦ, τὸ πῶς ἐπανειώθη. Ἐπει διὰ τὸ κατέχειν τὰς τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτίνας, διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τῆς ὀλομέρου καύσεως, ὡς δὲ αὐτοῦ τασπεινοῦται. Εἰ μὴ γὰρ αἱ τοῦτοι πτέρυγες, ὡς προείπομεν, περιέσκεπον τὰς τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτίνας οὐκ ἂν ἔστη ἐν ἐσώθη πᾶσα πνοή."²⁴⁴ Flying under the hot rays of the sun, the phoenix is exhausted. However, there is a greater reason for his exhaustion than just the stress of the heat: the rays themselves are witnesses to the vices of men and those vices are put on the phoenix. While Harlow seems to realize the implication when he states, “God tempers his just wrath with mercy by providing the phoenix,”²⁴⁵ he fails to make the connection that there are Christian motifs here. We know that the Christian editor of 3 Baruch has knowledge of the canonical gospels, and the conception of Christ as the one who carries away the sins of the world. However instead of actually portraying a crucified/resurrected Christ, the editor appropriates, then mimics, the Greek mythology then to deploy it to carry the Christian story of forgiveness of sins. The exhaustion of the bird is also a key to this understanding, since the phoenix’s experience can be linked to the believers who endure the persecution while continuing to live in the sinful Greco-Roman world awaiting the promised Parousia of Christ. They too are weary from the stress of living in a world of temptation, but the

²⁴³ 7:5 “‘And as soon as the sun shone, the phoenix stretched out its wings. And I seeing such great glory was humbled with great fear and I fled and hid in the wings of the angel.’”
²⁴⁴ 3 Baruch 8: 2; 6-7. “And the bird was exhausted and stretched out its wings...and concerning the exhaustion of the bird, why it is exhausted because it holds the fire and burning heat of the whole day and thus it is exhausted. For if its wings did not, as we have said, hold the rays of the sun, no living thing would be saved.”
²⁴⁵ Harlow, 142.
Phoenix represents the promise of Christ’s protection from the influences of the cults.\textsuperscript{246} In other words, the writer of this section is using the bird symbolically not literally. Recall my earlier discussion of how the Jewish rabbis used the phoenix in their \textit{Midrash}. The first stage sees the phoenix as a real bird that has been placed in a Jewish context, such as the Garden of Eden or the Ark of Noah. The phoenix is not placed in either of these two situations or indeed in any other biblical story. This proof is slightly shaky, but grows stronger when we recall the second stage of Rabbinic \textit{Midrash}; here the Rabbis use the phoenix as a subversive factor, a monster that tests the power of God. Clearly the phoenix of \textit{3 Baruch} is not being used in such a way. The phoenix in this text is awe-inspiring and wondrous; it is the closest Baruch will come to seeing God. This fits more in line with Church Father Clement’s depiction of the bird in which he “refers to it as a mere bird [by] which God demonstrated the greatness of his promise.”\textsuperscript{247} The phoenix Baruch sees is just a bird, but it was what the bird represents, God’s power over the cults and nature and his continual protection of mankind, that are at the forefront for the author of this text. The author is not challenging God’s power and the bird is not being taken as a literal real bird. Therefore, I hypothesize that the phoenix in \textit{3 Baruch} is more closely aligned with Christian theology and thought.

The fact that this is not the “typical” or “expected” interpretation of the Christian phoenix does not necessitate a Jewish mythic bird, or exclude the image from some Christian reservoir of images. It has elements of a Greek phoenix, a Jewish phoenix, and a Christian phoenix. We cannot pigeon hole this phoenix as one thing. A Christian writer, more concerned with how to avoid the punishment of death, and with demonstrating in Greek terms the superiority of Christ over temptation, sin, and death could appropriate common Greek cultic figures to construct a narrative designed to show that the merciful god of the Christ cult is the true cosmic power who has provided a way to escape the underworld. Just as the Phoenix in \textit{3 Baruch} carries the sins of the world away, so Christ bears the sins of men. This is the true glory of God and, for \textit{3 Baruch}, as the writer engages in dialectic with the Greek religions, the true meaning of the myths emerges. The deities of the Greco-Roman world may exist, but they are subject to the greater power of the Christian God.

The purpose of this chapter has been two fold. First, to show another strategy of early communities when negotiating identity against the dominant culture. \textit{3 Baruch} is more openly hostile then the \textit{Sibylline Oracles} yet both appropriate classical images of the dominant culture as a form of acceptance and resistance (\textit{3 Baruch} being more heavy on the resistance front). Second, I wanted to conduct a sort of thought experiment. So often, \textit{3 Baruch} is read as a solely Jewish text with minor Christian redaction. I wanted to show that this text is ambiguous when it comes to authorship by showing how one could see Christian motifs in \textit{3 Baruch}. It is not possible to say for certain what is Jewish and what is Christian; the interconnectivity and blending of cultures during this time period makes it ambiguous.

\textsuperscript{246} Niehoff writes, “the bird mainly serves as an illustration for those for whom the repetitive cycles of natures does not provide sufficient evidence for the doctrine of the resurrection.” Niehoff, “The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature,” 252.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 253.
Chapter 4: Conclusions

4.1 Future Implications

Thus far, I have stayed silent on how my methodology and theories could be applied to the canon of the New Testament. The literature examined in the two preceding chapters were both non-canonical texts that were used by individual communities, but not accepted or used enough to be added to the canon. It might be easy to claim that the Gospels of the New Testament do not qualify for examination using my methods: unlike book one of the Sibylline Oracles and The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, the gospels are lacking in obvious polytheistic symbology. At first glance, the Gospels do not contain elements so readily found in myth: they make no reference to Greek gods, legends, heroes, or icons. However, as Dennis Ronald MacDonald has shown, and adopting what I sketched in chapter one, we should not expect that they are lacking in references to Greek mythology. MacDonald shows that the Gospel of Mark contains some very surprising, and in some cases, obvious topoi to the epics of Homer. I contend that we can extrapolate MacDonald’s work and my methodology and apply it to other gospels.

The leading candidate for such an examination is the Gospel of John, which already stands out as being uniquely different from its brethren. In the beginning of John the logos, which is an aspect of God, descends into the human world and becomes flesh. This divine essence, which takes its name and therefore its original semantic context from Stoic philosophy, then proceeds to perform the most amazing miracles. Each miracle, more awe inspiring than the next, culminates in the power over death, as Jesus raises the leper Lazarus from his tomb. These feats of strength, these labors, are almost Herculean. Heracles/Hercules, a semi divine man cast out into the mortal world and tasked with thirteen labors and the logos-Jesus seem to share certain parallels.248 Aelian, in his Varia Historia, claims that Hercules’ feats made the world safe for mankind, and the gospels proclaim that Jesus’ ultimate feat, death and resurrection, made the afterlife possible for mankind.249 Ovid’s Metamorphosis (book IX) has Hercules shed his mortal self at the end of his life and his immortal self rises to Olympus, in a grand apotheosis moment, to be with his Father Zeus/Jupiter.

This is not to say that the writer of John is making Jesus exactly match the legends of Hercules or to say that the two are the same person, but rather the author’s telling of Jesus is constructed much like the stories of the great cultural hero. The writer used the mythic tropes to construct his own cultural hero in order to make Jesus fit into a world already populated by the likes of Hercules, Odysseus and Achilles. If you want to introduce a new hero into the Greek world, it is necessary to make him read similarly to the ones that came before because they are the standards which judges all others.

These ideas deserve more fleshing out than I can give them here, but I argue that scholars can no longer ignore the Greek legends when discussing any Christian text, canonical or not. These myths surround the world and to claim that the Christian author

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248 Hercules is perhaps the most obvious choice here, but it could be argued that John’s Jesus reflects culture heroes in general, not just one specific one.

249 Varia Historia 5.3
was immune to their influences in his own writings is to ignore the culture in which they lived.

4.2 Conclusions

In his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Eusebius of Caesarea claims "οὐτε γὰρ τὰ Ἑλλήνων φρονοῦντας ὃραν οὐτε τὰ βαρβάρων ἐπιθεδεύοντας." The Bishop may wish to distance himself from the opinions and customs of the Greek world, but I have shown that the individual communities of Christians did not share Eusebius’s desire. Communities freely used and adapted classic images from Greek mythology. They did not do this unconsciously, as Bultmann would have one believe, but carefully and consciously, knowing that these symbols were powerful. Using Greek mythology could serve two purposes. First, by combining Greek myths with their Jewish lore, the communities hoped to avert the gaze of their dominator. Such is the case in book one of the *Sibylline Oracles*. Verse, meter, figures and images are woven together to make the Jewish lore and the Greek myth look one and the same. Second, the images were used to draw the gaze of the dominator, to invite their scrutiny so that the “Other” could defend their practices and their religion against polytheism. This polemic was designed to refute the religion of the Greco-Roman world by claiming superior knowledge. This is the case in the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* where a Greek phoenix becomes a symbol for Christ who guards mankind against the polytheistic deities.

Whether they were drawing the gaze or averting it, Christians used Greek mythology and moving forward, we must be aware that the Christian community did not exist independently, did not form in a vacuum, away from the Greco-Roman world, but instead inside it, surrounded by its myths, legends, and cults. The reach of this culture was too far flung to suppose that the newly forming Christian communities could escape it.

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250 “They will see that we are neither with the opinions of the Greeks, nor with the customs of the barbarians.”

*Praep. Evan 1.2*
Appendix

One of the most important observations in modern scholarship is the realization that despite their important distinctive characteristics Christians and rabbinic Jews shared in substantive cultural and intellectual relations through their respective formative periods. To illustrate the complexities of these interrelationships I turn to N. R. M. de Lange and his 1976 monograph dealing with the Origen and the Rabbis.\footnote{N.R.M. Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.}

de Lange seeks to highlight the evidence that Origen, the late 2\textsuperscript{nd} - early 3\textsuperscript{rd} century Church Father of Alexandria and later Caesarea, was not only influenced by Jewish Rabbinic tradition but that Origen consulted with Jewish Rabbis and scholars on exegesis of the Bible. In our day and age this may not seem particularly revelatory, but at the time of de Lange’s writing “students of Origen [had] on the whole been slow to investigate this [the influence and use of Jewish traditions] aspect of Origen’s writings” (2). Previous attempts at scholarship on Origen, such as P.D. Huet’s work, “ignores Origen’s Jewish contacts and does not seem to entertain the possibility of Jewish influence on Origen’s thought” (2). It is difficult for us to contemplate the dizzying array of cultures and religions that lived side by side during these early centuries; groups intermingled and intermixed both at will and without choice. In Caesarea, where Origen spent the second half of his life, there were Christians, Jews, Jewish-Christians, Samaritans, and Semitic- and Greek-speaking polytheists—with probably many more besides—but de Lange specifically focuses on these. Each of these groups contributed, however minimally or majorly, to the cultural landscape; groups did not exist in self-contained bubbles and Christians, as the newest player on the scene, could draw from both their Jewish roots (history, myth, and exegesis) and the polytheistic systems that dominated. It may seem contradictory, a combination of monotheism and polytheism, but in reality Christianity contained a vast array of cultural and intellectual possibilities, and Origen did not hesitate to call upon them. de Lange, specifically, wishes to prove that much of Origen’s knowledge of Judaism—seen readily in his tracts, specifically his response to Celsus—came from his contacts with the Jews (20). Scholarship on Origen readily admitted his dependence on Plato and philosophy, but de Lange takes the reader into uncharted waters in showing similar dependencies on Jews.

de Lange’s first chapter lays out the inadequacies of past scholarship, particularly, as previously mentioned, its slow realization of an Origen/rabbinic Jewish association. de Lange insists that “we can be certain, from the evidence of Origen himself, that he was familiar with some at least of the ideas contained in the Mishnah and the Makilta” (8). Despite, as de Lange points out in chapter two, his inability to read or speak Hebrew, Origen “was fortunate in having acquaintances who did, and who gave him such help as he demanded” (22) which probably included “several Jewish scholars who were prepared to pass on to him Jewish interpretations and traditions” (21). Besides the association with Jewish Rabbis of the city, Origen could also draw on a number of Jewish and Christian sources such as the Greek Bible, extra canonical books, Philo, Josephus, Clement, and the New Testament. Origen’s knowledge of Judaism and Jewish customs and practices, as seen in his refutation of Celsus’ more rhetorical and literary Jew with “the more exclusive Judaism of the rabbis” (41), was thus drawn from a number of elements. de Lange spends a considerable amount of time on the Contra Celsum and concludes that Origen’s Jew and
understanding of Judaism is more "genuine" because of the experience he had with Jews personally (67-68) and thus "what we do see from the contra Celsum is how much common ground there could still be in the mid-third century between the Church and the Synagogue, when both faced the same attack from outside [polytheism]" (73).

This is not to say that while "Origen realized early the importance of consulting the Jewish scholars on the question of the transmission and the canon of the Bible" (50), he is wholly consistent in his treatment of the Jewish people. He was, after all, a Christian of the earliest centuries, and to be completely tolerant of Judaism and the Jews would be theologically improper. For Origen, the Jews are too literal in their interpretation of the Bible and law; he prefers an allegorical approach. And, of course in Origen’s mind as we must expect, the destruction of Jerusalem is because of the sin of the Jewish people. But de Lange reminds us that "for the most part Jews, as well as Christians, came to accept that Jerusalem had been destroyed because of the sins of the Jews" (79).

However, Origen is more relaxed than his contemporaries and those that followed in his criticisms of the Jews. de Lange points out that the Contra Celsum “was a great opportunity to castigate the Jews at length for their deafness to the message of Jesus and for their part in his death, to echo the pagan indictment of everything that was Jewish, and to condemn the contemporary Synagogue for its vicious and slanderous campaign against the Church. Yet, whenever he opens his mouth to criticize the Jews, he almost stifes himself in an attempt to remain calm and reasonable” (76). This may be in part to his continued association with the Jewish people. Origen obviously frequented the Rabbis and scholars seeking translation and exegesis assistance and thus “there was a continuing mutual flow of ideas between the two sides” (103).

de Lange does make one very interesting point concerning symbology: “Origen was working within a Christian tradition which had already absorbed a large dose of Jewish symbolism; when we turn to the Christian tradition it is often impossible to say at what precise point Jewish symbol is accepted by Christians, when it stops being used by Jews or by what steps it changes its meaning” (116). The same can be said for Greek symbols that were adopted and adapted by the Christians and Jews. There is no definitive key to knowing exactly when a symbol has been taken over by a new people or culture, and even then it must always retain at least some of its original signification. The overarching point, and in specific reference to my thesis, is that identity negotiation is messy and tricky. All of these groups are examining each other, taking bits and pieces at will for their own devices. A Christian Father, like Origen, might defend or explain Jewish customs in the face of polytheism but also castigate the Jews in light of his own Christian theology. Conversely, a Jewish Rabbi might be open to assisting a Church Father with their exegesis, but would not hesitate to also engage in debate over a literal or allegorical interpretation of the text. A curious polytheist might attend a Synagogue one day and a Christian reading the next. As each of these groups interact, they pick up ideas that are recognizable and work them into a language they understand.

In the end, de Lange stresses that it was not just Greek philosophy or Jewish historians and allegorists from which Origen drew, but rather the great multitude. de Lange writes, “Origen devoted close attention to the theory and methods of exegesis. In this study he took account of the work of the Greek literary critics, of Hellenistic Jewish and Christian commentators, particularly Philo and Paul, and of the Rabbis” (134).
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