Preface

Throughout its long history, the church in Egypt has been home to a dynamic, multi-sensory tradition of reflection on the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the second century, Clement of Alexandria speaks of Christ, the divine Word, as a 'New Song' that has 'many tones of voice, and many methods for the salvation of humankind'.[1] In an early fifth-century sermon, Theophilus of Alexandria calls Christ's body in the eucharist 'the fruit of obedience that wards off the evil of the terrible one', and repeatedly exhorts his listeners to 'taste and see that I, the Lord, am good'.[2] A generation later, Cyril of Alexandria uses the metaphor of a flower and its aromatic fragrance to describe the relation of the divine and the human in the person of Christ.[3] For other Copts in late antiquity—from Coptic-speaking pilgrims to the increasingly Arabized theological elite—the powerful touch of Christ's hand in the Gospels and in local traditions about the Holy Family's flight into Egypt was seen as tangible evidence for his divine power and lordship. Finally, in antiquity as well as today, from the Upper Nile Valley to the modern Coptic diaspora in Europe and North America, Egyptian Christians have worshipped in churches and monasteries where their eyes gaze on images from the life of Christ—images woven into textile hangings, carved into limestone and marble reliefs, and painted on wooden icons and plastered walls.

As seen in these examples, the history of Egyptian Christology cannot be traced merely through an examination of systematic rubrics in theological treatises: also required is a keen sensitivity to different social and linguistic contexts, to different media and metaphors of communication. The aim of this book is to narrate some of the contours of this history. While my primary focus will be on late antique and medieval Egyptian Christology—especially the ways that Coptic Christians represented (and worshipped) Christ from the fifth

[1] Clement of Alexandria, *prot.* 1. 7. 3 and 1. 8. 3 (Stählin and Treu, 7 and 8). For a recent discussion of Clement's musicology and its relation to his Christology, see Charles H. Cosgrove, 'Clement of Alexandria and Early Christian Music', 276–81.

[2] Theophilus, *Homily on the Institution of the Eucharist* (*PG* 77: 1016–29); see G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, xxiii (under Cyrillus Alexandrinus). This homily was attributed to Cyril of Alexandria (*hom. div.* 10), but M. Richard ('Une homélie de Théophile d'Alexandrie', 46–56) has argued that Theophilus was the actual author, on the basis of close parallels with the anti-Origenist polemic found in his festal letter of 401.

[3] Cyril of Alexandria, *schol. inc.* 10 (*PG* 75. 1380); also *Jo.* 11. 2 (Pusey, i. 639); and L. R. Wickham, 'Symbols of the Incarnation in Cyril of Alexandria', 46.

to the thirteenth century—I plan to use my introduction and conclusion to situate this material within an even longer history of christological reflection and interpretation.

Thus, I begin my study with an extended introduction to early Alexandrian Greek Christology in late antiquity, in order to lay the groundwork for showing how early Alexandrian writings served as an interpretative basis for later Egyptian discourse (both verbal and visual) about Christ. Building on this, Chs. 1–4 explore the way that this Alexandrian Christology was contextualized in the teachings and ritual practices of Coptic-speaking communities in the Nile Valley. Here, I guide the reader on a virtual tour of various ritualized sites for the transmission of christological knowledge and *praxis*, with special attention to the monastic literature of Shenoute and the White Monastery (Ch. 1), Coptic liturgy (Ch. 2), processional and pilgrimage practices (Ch. 3), and the role of Coptic visual art in the christological construction of human bodies and church space (Ch. 4). Finally, in my last two chapters, I examine the early Arabization of Egyptian Christology in the tenth-century writings of Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (Ch. 5) and the continued Arabic Christian reception of Alexandrian Greek Christology into the thirteenth century (Ch. 6). Thus, my story formally ends with the Copto-Arabic 'Golden Age,' a flourishing of theological literary expression that took place in the context of Christian–Muslim cultural encounter. In my postscript, however, I provide the reader with something of an epilogue to this tale—a few select glimpses into how Coptic christological reflection and practice has continued into the modern period, in the writings of such figures as Patriarch Matthew IV (17th century), Mattā al-Miskīn and his fellow monks at the Monastery of Saint Macarius (20th–21st century), and Pope Shenouda III (20th–21st century).

In tracing this history, my intention is not to provide a comprehensive account of two millennia of Egyptian reflection on the person and role of Christ. Nor do I aspire to provide an encyclopedic treatment of each figure or work that I discuss in this book. Such an approach to this topic would require multiple volumes, an undertaking that lies well beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I intend to present a series of vignettes, or illustrative case studies, that will shed light on two particular aspects of the Egyptian christological tradition: (1) the doctrine of the Incarnation (i.e. the divine Word's act of becoming flesh in Christ), and (2) its implications for human salvation—especially notions of human participation in the divine, sometimes described by Alexandrian patristic theologians in terms of human deification. How have Christians in Egypt understood the union of the divine and the human in the person of Christ? In what terms have they addressed the problem of embodiment as it relates to the divine Word? How have Christians in Egypt understood the act of Incarnation itself to be related to human salvation? What were its consequences

for human nature, and more specifically, what were its effects on the human condition of embodiment? How have Egyptian Christians understood the Incarnation to enable human participation in divine or heavenly realities? In what ways have such christological beliefs been enacted in the life of local communities?

In order to answer such questions, I seek to analyse Coptic Christology from an interdisciplinary perspective. If one wants to understand how the doctrine of the Incarnation functioned—how notions of human participation in the Incarnation were lived out in the life of Egyptian communities—it is necessary to focus not simply on the traditional literary sources for histories of doctrine (i.e. theological treatises and letters), but also on other non-traditional sources. I have in mind here monastic, hagiographical, homiletical, and liturgical texts, as well as visual art—alternative media that provide the historian with more direct access to church practices intimately tied to christological reflection. In using this range and diversity of sources, one of my goals is to break down (or at least destabilize) the customary methodological divide between the disciplines of historical theology and social history. In the end, my goal is to provide a more textured description of how the history of doctrine may be fruitfully related to a history of religious practice.

This book, therefore, seeks to forge a new path in the study of early Christian Christology. In addition to the well-tried approaches of historical theologians, I will draw on the fields of social history, discourse theory, ritual studies, and the visual arts in order to show how Christian identity was shaped by a set of replicable christological practices. How exactly did Egyptian Christians represent—and ritually enact—their beliefs about Christ in monastic liturgy, in pilgrimage, and in the visual production of sacred space? In what ways were such christological practices contested—i.e. shaped by theological controversy and inter-religious debate? Egypt provides an ideal geographical setting for the exploration of these questions: not only is it rich in ancient Christian documentation, but it is also a place where the survival of the Coptic church under medieval Islamic rule allows for a diachronic study of literary and material sources across periods of linguistic change—from Greek, to Coptic, and eventually into Arabic. As a social historian of late antiquity trained in theology, I am keenly interested in investigating how the Coptic church negotiated the cultural transition from late antiquity to *Dar al-Islam* both in thought and in practice.

One of the challenges in attempting to write a book that spans hundreds of years is the need to give adequate account of both discontinuities and continuities over such a long period. By organizing my chapters as a collection of vignettes or case studies, I try to convey something of the distinctiveness (or contextualization) of the Christologies produced by individuals and communities living in different eras and locales. At the same time, however,

I also point to certain diachronic continuities in the production of Egyptian Christology. To this end, I have chosen to highlight three key factors that definitively marked the way that early Alexandrian understandings of the Incarnation were received and 'traditioned' across subsequent generations in Egypt: (1) the interpretation of biblical texts and patristic authorities, (2) the production of apologetical literature in the context of theological controversy, and (3) worship and other ritual activities that functioned as privileged venues for christological communication and performance. These three themes—interpretation, apologetics, and especially ritual practice—serve as consistent points for conversation throughout this book as I seek to show how Egyptian images of the Incarnation were variously reappropriated, contested, and enacted in the life of the church.

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Introduction
The Roots of Coptic Christology: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique Alexandrian Greek Theology

From its earliest stages of development in late antiquity to its most recent manifestations in the modern era, Coptic Christology has shown a profound indebtedness to Alexandrian patristic views of the Incarnation and human participation in the divine. In many senses, the history of Coptic thought and practice related to Christ may be understood as a dynamic record of cultural reception in which successive generations have reclaimed and recontextualized the theology of the Alexandrian church fathers. Thus, it is essential that this book should begin with an introduction to early Alexandrian Greek Christology, since the literature produced by such figures as Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria ended up serving as something of an interpretative database for later theologians and practitioners of the Christian faith in Egypt. As we shall see, the processes of this history of reception were already set in motion in this early period, as Alexandrian authors variously endorsed (or censored), adapted, and elaborated upon the ideas of their predecessors, especially in the context of biblical exegesis and theological controversy.

Much, of course, has already been written about early Alexandrian Christology, and I will not attempt to present an exhaustive account here. Instead, my more modest goal is to provide the reader with a concise account that is textured enough to make my investigation into the later Coptic reception of Alexandrian theology intelligible. For the sake of cohesiveness, I have chosen to focus on a particular theme to guide my discussion—namely, the function of human bodies in Alexandrian theologies of the Incarnation. This focus on the body—especially the relationship between the body of Christ and the bodies of persons who participate in the incarnate Word—will serve as an important theoretical foundation for my account of how Christology became so closely linked to ritual practice in the Coptic church.

PROBLEMATIZED BODIES: ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

The earliest recorded Alexandrian meditations on divine embodiment and its consequences for human salvation come from the second and third centuries. The intellectual environment of Alexandria in that period was comprised of an eclectic mix of commonplace philosophical and religious assumptions—drawn from Pythagorean, Aristotelian, Stoic, and especially Platonic thought—which variously informed the ways that educated Christians of that city interpreted biblical texts and addressed theological questions. For those who participated in this intellectual environment (for Christians, Jews, and Greek philosophers alike) the imperfections of the material world and the human body were viewed as significant stumbling-blocks in their attempts to account for the existence of a perfect, rational, and non-corporeal God.[1]

It should perhaps not be surprising then that the earliest extant Alexandrian Christian writers betray some level of discomfort with the implications of proclaiming that the divine Word 'became flesh' (John 1: 14). The Christian

[1] This philosophical environment has often been labelled by modern scholars as 'Middle Platonic': see e.g. John M. Dillon, *Middle Platonists.* On Middle Platonism and the writings of the church fathers, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, 'Middle Platonism', and 'Platonism and the Fathers', in *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. A. DiBerardino, i. 557–8 and ii. 589–98.

In a recent study entitled *Origen Against Plato*, Mark Edwards has lodged a sustained critique of what he sees as modern scholars' misuse of the term 'Middle Platonic' in reference to the Alexandrian church fathers, and especially Origen. In particular, he argues that Origen 'wielded an autonomous philosophy, based chiefly on the Bible and the premisses of the catholic tradition', and that Origen's theology was shaped more by Jewish and (so-called) Gnostic patterns of biblical interpretation than by a dependence on Platonic sources (see ch. 1, esp. 36–8). Edwards's critique has had the benefit of discouraging the careless use of 'Middle Platonism' as a blanket label, and for this reason I avoid it here.

However, it should be noted that Edwards himself is equally guilty of using other terms such as 'Gnosticism' and 'catholic tradition' in an overgeneralizing, anachronistic, and sometimes tendentious fashion. In defending Origen against modern ecclesiastical scholars who have condemned the Alexandrian theologian for his Platonizing (and therefore supposedly 'unorthodox') tendencies, and in arguing that Origen (along with Clement) was instead influenced primarily by biblical rather than philosophical concerns, Edwards falls into the same binary trap in argumentation as those he seeks to critique. In the end, his attempt to defend the philosophical perspective of Origen as 'autonomous' and biblically based fails to do full justice to the ways in which philosophical and biblical concerns creatively intersect in the Alexandrian's writings.

J. Rebecca Lyman (*Christology and Cosmology*, 72–3) provides a more judicious description of the mix of elements at work in Origen: 'Ironically, the complexity of Origen's Christology lies not merely in the fact that Christian life is explained on the basis of a Platonic grid of hierarchical being, but that these levels of being are linked directly with the life of Christ as reported in Scripture.' More recently, Catherine Chin ('Origen and Christian Naming', 407–36) has shown how this complexity can be mapped out not only in terms of Platonic metaphysics and biblical narrative, but also along the lines of Stoic linguistic concerns, especially the *ars grammatica.*

philosopher Basilides, active in Alexandria around 132–5 CE, acknowledges that 'the unengendered, unnameable parent... sent its first-born, the intellect, called Christ, to save people who believed in it' and that Christ 'appeared on earth as a man'.[2] However, at the same time, he pointedly emphasizes that Christ's identity as 'an incorporeal power' meant that it was impossible for him truly to suffer in the body.[3] Another theologian who was presumably active in Alexandria, Valentinus (*c.*100–*c.*175 CE), was also reluctant to attribute to Jesus' human body any kind of change or alteration: 'Jesus practiced divinity (*θεότητα Ἰησοῦς εἰργάζετο*): he ate and drank in a special way, without excreting his solids. He had such a great capacity (*δύναμις*) for continence that the nourishment within him was not corrupted, for he did not experience corruption.'[4]

This emphasis on the rarefied nature of Christ's body in the Incarnation had significant repercussions for such writers' understanding of human salvation. Both prioritized the soul, and not the body, as the locus for salvific action. To this effect, Basilides explicitly asserts, 'Salvation belongs only to the soul; the body is by nature corruptible.'[5] For him, human communion with God was mediated through rational 'intellection' (*νόησις*), not through bodily means.[6] This rational intellection naturally corresponds to Christ's identity as the firstborn, divine intellect. Indeed, all who 'become acquainted with' (*cognoscere*) Christ attain a state where they 'are not even susceptible to suffering on behalf of the name'.[7] For Valentinus and his followers, even though the Word 'became a body' (ⲁϥⲣ̄ ⲟⲩⲥⲱⲙⲁ),[8] the salvific purpose of Christ's Incarnation likewise lay beyond the body. In his resurrection, Jesus himself is said to have 'put off the corrupt rags (ⲛⲓⲡⲗ̄ϭⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲉⲕⲁⲓ̈ⲧ, i.e. of the human body)', and 'put on incorruptibility (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲧⲉⲕⲟ)'.[9] The function of

[2] Basilides, *Myth*, preserved in Irenaeus, *haer.* 1. 24. 4 (Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 264 (1979), 326–8; trans. Layton, 423).

[3] Ibid. preserved in Irenaeus, *haer.* 1. 24. 4: (Rousseau and Doutreleau, ibid. 328; trans. Layton, 423).

[4] Valentinus, frag. E (Layton; = Völker, frag. 3), preserved in Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 3. 7. 59. 3 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (=15, 4th edn.) (1985), 223. 12–16; trans. B. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 239, slightly modified). Valentinus' teaching about divine modes of digestion may be based on his interpretation of Jesus' teaching in John 6: 27: 'Do not work for (*ἐργάζεσθαι*) the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.' In antiquity, the verb *ἐργάζεσθαι* could convey the sense of either 'to work' or 'to digest' (Layton, 238).

[5] Basilides, *Myth*, preserved in Irenaeus, *haer.* 1. 24. 5 (Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 264 (1979), 328; trans. Layton, 423).

[6] Basilides, frag. C (Layton), preserved in Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 5. 1. 3. 2 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (= 15, 4th edn.) (1985), 327.19–25; trans. Layton, 433).

[7] Basilides, *Myth*, preserved in Irenaeus, *haer.* 1. 24. 6 (Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 264 (1979), 330; trans. Layton, 425).

[8] Valentinus (?), *Gospel of Truth* 26. 8 (Attridge and MacRae, 94; trans. Layton, 257).

[9] Ibid. 20. 30–2 (Attridge and MacRae, 88; trans. Layton, 255).

his advent was to enlighten, to instruct, to guide: he came specifically to serve as a teacher of divine 'knowledge' or 'acquaintance' (Gr. *γνῶσις*).[10] For those who have heeded his instruction and have gained personal knowledge of God, the material world and the physical body ultimately pass away 'in the harmony of unity' with the Godhead.[11]

Like Basilides and Valentinus a generation or two before him, Clement of Alexandria (*c.*160–*c.*215) placed high value on divine knowledge (*γνῶσις*) in his theology, and this emphasis significantly informs his discussion of the Incarnation. Indeed, he explicitly depicts the Word as an instructor (*παιδαγογός*) who 'first exhorts, then trains, and finally teaches with all thoroughness'.[12] For Clement, knowledge of God is synonymous with 'everlasting salvation'; it is 'the first good work of the perfect person . . . to live one's life according to the image and likeness of the Lord'.[13] Accordingly, the function of the Incarnation itself is to instruct humanity in the sober, righteous, and godly life: 'The Word, providing us with life in the beginning when he formed us as our creator, taught us to live well when he appeared as our teacher, in order that, as God, he might later lead us into eternal life.'[14] Here, Clement specifically situates the Incarnation within the context of a larger biblical narrative that begins with the creation story in Genesis: the Incarnation is presented as the fulfilment of the Word's role as creator, as the remaking of the divine 'image and likeness' in humanity, to whom the Word has imparted knowledge (rationality) and eternal life (immortality).[15]

In this context, Clement conspicuously describes the salvific effects of the Incarnation—namely, the human reacquisition of God's image—in terms of a process of deification.[16] Thus, in his treatise called *The Instructor* (*Paedagogos*) he exhorts his readers to meditate on 'the heavenly way of life according to which we have been deified' (*ἡ ἐπουράνιος . . . πολιτεία, καθ' ἣν ἐκθεούμεθα*).[17] Elsewhere, in his *Exhortation to the Greeks* (*Protreptikos*), he specifically grounds this heavenly mode of life in the Word's revelatory act of taking on flesh: 'The

[10] Valentinus (?), *Gospel of Truth* 18. 18–19. 20 (Attridge and MacRae, 84–6; trans. Layton, 254).

[11] Ibid. 24. 25–25. 7 (Attridge and MacRae, 92–4; trans. Layton, 257).

[12] Clement of Alexandria, *paed.* 1. 1. 3. 3 (ed. Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 112).

[13] Id., *str.* 4. 22. 136. 2–137.1 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (= 15, 4th edn.) (1985), 308–9).

[14] Id., *prot.* 1. 7. 3 (Stählin and Treu, 7–8).

[15] Id., *paed.* 1. 12. 98. 2 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 284).

[16] On Clement's doctrine of 'deification' and the language he employs, see Norman Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 121–40; and Jules Gross, *La Divinisation du Chrétien*, 159–74. It should be noted that Clement employs several verbal forms to convey the concept of deification, including *θεοποιεῖν*, *θεοῦν*, and *ἐκθεοῦν*; however, the noun form (*θεοποίησις*) does not come into Greek Christian usage until Athanasius uses it in the fourth century: see the detailed study of Clement's vocabulary in Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 122–3.

[17] Clement of Alexandria, *paed.* 1. 12. 98. 3 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 284).

Word himself speaks to you distinctly now, shaming your lack of belief; yes, I say, the Word of God became human, in order that you may learn from a human being how a human being may possibly become a god.'[18] Clement is the first Alexandrian theologian to utilize the language of 'deification' to describe the fruits of the Incarnation for humankind, and (as we shall see) his reciprocal conception of this salvific transaction would later be adopted and popularized by Athanasius of Alexandria in the fourth century.[19]

For Clement, it is the Word's embodiment that specifically enables this human appropriation of the divine life; yet he says fairly little about the salvific effects the Incarnation had upon human bodies. Indeed, his comments on this subject are primarily restricted to his treatise, *The Instructor*, where he describes how Christ, by taking on a body, grants incorruptibility to human flesh: 'He says, "I will be their Shepherd, and I will be near to them, as the garment for their skin." He wishes to save my flesh by clothing it in the garment of immortality, and he has anointed my skin.'[20] Here, the Word's own flesh functions as a garment of incorruptibility for the bodies of human beings who are being perfected by the Word. In the same way, the sanctified human body, now rendered incorruptible, is seen to function as 'incorrupt clothing for the soul' (*ἡ ἀκήρατος τῆς ψυχῆς ἐσθής*).[21] Ultimately for Clement, the true beauty of the human body is realized not through cosmetics or other artificial adornments, but through self-restraint (*σωφροσύνη*). Through effective self-restraint, a person embodies incorruptibility (the particular kind of beauty belonging to the Word's own body) and thereby 'becomes a god because God wishes it'.[22]

However, despite these isolated instances where Clement speaks of the body's role in deification, the primary locus for such deification remained

[18] Id., *prot.* 1. 8. 4 (Stählin and Treu, 9).

[19] Irenaeus earlier originally introduced such an 'exchange formula' expressing the relationship between the doctrines of Incarnation and deification in his treatise *Against Heresies* when he affirmed that the Son 'became what we are in order to make us what he is himself' (*factus est quod sumus nos, uti nos perficeret esse quod et ipse*): Irenaeus, *haer.* 5. praef (Rousseau, Doutreleau, and Mercier, SC 153 (1969), 14). On Irenaeus' use of this formula and its possible influence over Clement and Athanasius, see N. Russell (*Doctrine of Deification*, 106, 125, 169). Papyrological evidence has shown that Irenaeus' work was already circulating in Egypt in the second or third century CE: see *P. Oxy.* iii. 405; C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 23; and H. I. Bell, 'Evidences of Christianity in Egypt during the Roman Period' 202. Elsewhere, Clement also makes reference to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus in supporting a similar point: 'Therefore Heraclitus correctly said, "Human beings are gods and gods are human beings." It is the same Logos. This is a manifest mystery: God is in a human being, and the human being is a god...' (Clement of Alexandria, *paed.* 3. 1. 2; Marrou, SC 158 (1970), 12).

[20] Clement of Alexandria, *paed.* 1. 9. 84. 3–4 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 260).

[21] Ibid. 2. 10 bis. 109. 3 (Marrou, SC 108 (1965), 208).

[22] Ibid. 3. 1. 2 (Marrou, SC 158 (1970), 12). Here, I am particularly indebted to Norman Russell (*Doctrine of Deification*, esp. 127, 135) for his observations on Clement's theory of deification and its implications for the human body.

for him, in the end, the human intellect or soul. Thus, he writes in his treatise entitled *Stromateis*, or *Miscellanies*, 'With respect to likeness according to the image, it is not made known according to the body... but according to mind and reason, on which the Lord fittingly impresses his likeness both with regard to good work and with regard to rule.'[23] The Incarnation mediates a knowledge (*γνῶσις*) of God that 'guides us to the endless and perfect end' in anticipation of 'the life that we will have according to God and with gods'.[24] Knowledge purifies human beings, 'it relocates the soul to what is akin to it—to the divine and holy—and it transports humanity by a certain light of its own across the mystical stages of advancement... having taught the person who is pure in heart to gaze (*ἐποπτεύειν*) upon God, face to face, with knowledge and comprehension'.[25]

Clement significantly draws on both biblical and philosophical terminology in speaking about this divinization of the soul. On the one hand, he borrows Paul's language of christological 'imitation' in 1 Corinthians 11: 1 (*μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε καθὼς κἀγὼ Χριστοῦ*) to describe the soul's 'assimilation' (*ἐξομοίωσις*) to God as the aim of faith.[26] On the other hand, he borrows from Platonic and Pythagorean thought to underscore that such assimilation is primarily attained through philosophical contemplation. Invoking Plato's theory of 'ideal forms', Clement writes about how human beings partake of 'the good' and receive their likeness from it by appropriating virtue and philosophy.[27] Elsewhere, appealing to the Pythagorean ideal 'that humanity ought to become one' just as God is one, he describes how the person who practises contemplation is 'deified into a passionless state' (*εἰς δὲ τὴν ἀπάθειαν θεούμενος*), and 'becomes a unit' (*μοναδικὸς γίνεται*).[28] According to Clement, it is ultimately the 'gnostic' (*ὁ γνωστικός*)—the one who has attained knowledge of God through contemplation of God's self-revelation in the Incarnation—who has been made

[23] Id., *str.* 2. 19. 102. 6–7 (ed. Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (=15, 4th edn.) (1985), 169).

[24] Ibid. 7. 10. 56. 3 (ed. Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 17, 2nd edn. (1970), 41).

[25] Ibid. 7. 10. 57. 1 (ed. Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, ibid. 41). The verb *ἐποπτεύειν* ('to gaze upon') can also convey the sense of being philosophically initiated into the divine mysteries. In commenting on this passage, J. Gross (*La Divinisation du Chrétien*, 163) notes that, for Clement, 'deification is realized by degrees or stages', leading from 'kindness' to 'faith' and then from 'faith' to 'knowledge' (*γνῶσις*).

[26] Ibid. 2. 22. 136. 5–6 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (=15, 4th edn.) (1985), 188); J. Gross, *La Divinisation du chrétien*, 160–1.

[27] Ibid. 2. 22. 131. 2 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (=15, 4th edn.) (1985), 185). On Clement's use of Platonic philosophy, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria* (1971).

[28] Ibid. 4. 23. 151. 3–152. 1 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (=15, 4th edn.) (1960), 315). Gross (*La Divinisation du chrétien*, 169–70) also connects Clement's description of this passionless state to the Stoic virtue of 'impassibility' (*ἀπάθεια*).

'divine... holy, God-bearing, and God-borne' (θεῖος... ἅγιος, θεοφορῶν καὶ θεοφορούμενος).[29]

Finally, Clement also draws on images from the agape meal celebrated at the eucharist to illustrate the way that the Word provides the soul with such knowledge of God through the Incarnation. Presenting a creative, figurative reading of John 6: 54, 56 ('eat my flesh and drink my blood'), he interprets the flesh as the Holy Spirit and the blood as the Word—as a result, the food shared in the meal signifies 'the Word of God, the Spirit made flesh, the heavenly flesh sanctified'.[30] Following ancient medical theories about the conversion of blood into milk within the body of a nursing mother, Clement further allegorizes the Word and the blood as milk provided by the 'care-soothing breast of the Father'.[31] The sacrament, along with the image of the nursing mother, serves as a metaphor for the way that the Word inclined toward humankind as his children and became 'nourishment' (τροφή) for human souls. In Clement's eyes, 'the Word is everything to the child, father and mother, tutor and nurse'; and accordingly, he interprets the milk of the Word not as a form of physical nourishment but as 'knowledge which comes from instruction'.[32] Ultimately then for Clement, participation in the eucharist does not so much mediate this nourishment in any direct sense; rather, it points mystically toward the Incarnation as the event whereby the Word communicates knowledge of himself—a knowledge that nourishes (ἐκτρέφειν) to immortality and utterly abandons (ἀπολείπειν) the desires of the flesh.[33]

A generation after Clement, in the writings of Origen of Alexandria, one encounters really the first systematic attempts by an Alexandrian theologian to think about the problems of divine embodiment posed by the doctrine of

[29] Ibid. 7. 13. 82. 2–3 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 17, 2nd edn. (1970), 58). In laying claim to the designation, 'gnostic', Clement distinguishes between the knowledge held by true Christians and the (false) knowledge claimed by 'heretics' (*str.* 7. 15. 90. 1–91. 3; GCS 17, 2nd edn. (1970), 64).

[30] Id., *paed.* 1. 6. 43. 2–3 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 188; trans. ANF ii. 220).

[31] Ibid. 1. 6. 43. 4 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 188; trans. ANF ii. 220). See also ibid. 1. 6. 35. 3 (SC 70 (1960), 174), where the Word is likened to 'the life-giving substance of milk that wells out from tender-loving breasts'.

[32] Ibid. 1. 6. 42. 3 and 1. 6. 36. 4 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 186–8 and 176). Clement writes, 'We are enjoined to cast off... the old nutriment, receiving in exchange another new regimen, that of Christ, receiving him, if we can, to hide him within; and that, enshrining the Savior in our souls, we may correct the affections of our flesh.'

[33] Ibid. 1. 6. 47. 1 (Marrou, SC 70 (1960), 194); see also 1. 6. 47. 3 (SC 70, 196), where he makes the allegorical function of the eucharistic wine explicit. On the eucharistic associations of Clement's use of John 6 and the image of mother's milk, see A. H. C. Van Eijk, 'The Gospel of Philip and Clement of Alexandria' 106–17; and Annewies (van de Bunt) van den Hoek, 'Milk and Honey in the Theology of Clement of Alexandria' 27–39. Denise Kimber Buell's resistance to the notion that Clement held to a doctrine of real presence (a resistance that I wholeheartedly share) leads her to take a somewhat equivocating stance on Clement's symbolic concern with the eucharist in this passage: see *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy*, 145–6.

the Incarnation. In his masterwork, *On First Principles*, Origen articulates the philosophical dilemma he faced in imagining how God became human, of envisioning how the perfect supreme Being took on imperfect flesh.

When . . . we see in him some things so human that they appear in no way to differ from the common frailty of mortals, and some things so divine that they are appropriate to nothing else but the primal and ineffable nature of deity, the human understanding with its narrow limits is baffled, and struck with amazement at so mighty a wonder knows not which way to turn, what to hold to, or whither to betake itself. If it thinks of God, it sees a man; if it thinks of a man, it beholds one returning from the dead with spoils after vanquishing the kingdom of death.[34]

Origen expresses the paradox or mystery of the Incarnation as part of a divine 'economy' (*οἰκονομία*) that encompasses God's providential actions even before the creation narrated in Genesis.[35] As in the case of Clement, Origen trains his attention on human souls as the primary beneficiaries of this plan of salvation, but he goes far beyond Clement in developing a fuller account of Christ's own human soul and the role it played in the Incarnation.

As a speculative theologian, Origen was keenly interested in conjecturing about the nature of the divine realms and raising questions regarding the existence of the cosmos before the creation of the material world. In an attempt to answer such questions, he envisioned a primeval cosmos in which all rational beings (*οἱ λογικοί*) or 'minds' (*οἱ νόες*) enjoyed a blissful union with God and shared in God's eternal attribute of love, which is conceived of as a form of warmth or heat.[36]

However, according to Origen's cosmology, this original union was disrupted by a heavenly fall of these rational beings from the singular, divine perfection. He pictures this fall as one grounded in free will: after becoming distracted from the contemplation of God and choosing to sin, the rational beings begin

[34] Origen of Alexandria, *princ.* 2. 6. 2 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 141. 5–11; trans. Butterworth, 109); J. W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy*, 100.

[35] J. W. Trigg, *Origen* (1998), 26–9. Clement of Alexandria uses the term 'economy' (*οἰκονομία*) extensively to refer to God's plan of salvation manifest in creation and fulfilled in the coming of Christ: see, e.g., *str.* 1. 11. 52. 2–3; 2. 5. 20. 2; 2. 6. 29. 2; 4. 12. 88. 2; 4. 23. 148. 2; 5. 1. 6. 2; 5. 8. 55. 3, 5. 14. 108. 2; 6. 6. 47. 1, 6. 13. 107. 2; 6. 15. 124. 2; 6. 15. 127. 1; 7. 9. 53. 5 (Früchtel, Stählin, and Treu, GCS 52 (=15, 4th edn.) (1985), 34, 123, 128, 286, 314, 329, 363, 398, 455, 485, 494, 496; GCS 17, 2nd edn. (1970), 40. For selected examples of Origen's use of the same term, see *princ.* 3. 1. 17 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 226. 7 and 228. 10); and *Cels.* 2. 65, 69; 4. 8, 14; 5. 50; 6. 78 (Borret, SC 132 (1967), 438, 446; SC 136 (1968), 206, 216; SC 147 (1969), 142, 376).

[36] Peter Heimann (*Erwähltes Schicksal*), and Hendrik S. Benjamins (*Eingeordnete Freiheit und Vorsehung bei Origenes*, 140–4) have argued that Origen espoused a doctrine of pre-existent souls that was profoundly indebted to Platonic thought. However, Mark Edwards (*Origen Against Plato*, 89–97) has sharply critiqued this viewpoint, arguing that Origen's dependence on Plato has been overstated in patristic scholarship and that the Alexandrian theologian does not, properly speaking, hold to the pre-existence of souls.

to cool, condense, and fall away from God.[37] In the process, they become souls; for, as Origen observed, the Greek word for soul, *psychē*, comes from the verb *psychesthai,* meaning 'to cool'. As these souls fall, God transforms their ethereal bodies into material bodies that differed according to their degree of merit or demerit. Some souls end up being assigned to archangels and angels, some to human beings, some to demons and the devil (who is cast as the most material of all such beings).[38]

According to Origen, the mind of Christ was the only one that did not become distracted and sink away from God; his was the only 'soul' that did not cool off in this primeval fall. In remaining united with God, Christ's soul thoroughly assimilated God's 'essential attributes' (*substantiae*),[39] and was therefore ideally equipped to function as the crucial mediating element between the divine Word and Christ's human body in the Incarnation.[40]

Therefore, in Origen's thought, the Incarnation marks the union of both the Word and Christ's human soul (which are bound together from eternity) with the body of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary.[41] As in the case of Christ's soul and its union with the divine Word prior to creation, so too in the case of his human body assumed by the Word in the Incarnation: in both instances, the superior power of the Word effects a change in that with which it unites.[42]

[37] Origen of Alexandria, *princ.* 2. 1. 1–2 and 2. 8. 3 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 106–8, 155–61; trans. Butterworth, 76–8, 122–7). On the role of free will in Origen's theological system, see H. Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*, 26–8.

[38] It is important to note here that in Origen's thought 'the imprisonment of the *logikoi* in coarse and painful material bodies was not entirely punitive', but rather was intended 'to rehabilitate the mind by rekindling the heat/fire of their desire to return to the bliss of their heavenly contemplation of God' (Warren Smith, *per litt.*, 16 January 2007). On this point and others, Warren Smith's comments were invaluable in helping me present a concise summary of what is a dauntingly complex aspect of Origen's theology.

[39] In comparing the nature of God with that of creatures, Origen contrasts the essential attributes (*substantiae*) of the former to the accidental attributes (*accidentes*) of the latter: see *princ.* 1. 2. 10, 13 and 2. 6. 6 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 44, 48, 146; trans. Butterworth, 25–6, 28, 113). On this subject, it should be noted that Origen, in drawing a philosophical distinction between the categories of essence and attributes, still leaves room for both the absoluteness and relativity/relationality of God's attributes. Thus, while he recognizes some of God's attributes are absolute (e.g. wisdom and power), he also can affirm that some others are relative or relational in character (e.g. sanctification, redemption): see *Jo.* 1. 34. 248 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 44).

[40] Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy*, 100–1. On the human soul of Christ, see also Rowan Williams, 'Origen on the Soul of Jesus', 131–7.

[41] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 392–4. Wolfson argues that, in Origen's thought, this union took place 'not at the conception of the body nor at its birth but at the completion of its human form in the womb' (393–4), which in antiquity was thought to take place around forty to fifty days after conception: see Philo of Alexandria, *Quaestiones in Genesim* 1. 25 (Mercier, 90); and Aetius, *De placitis reliquiae* 5. 21. 1–2 (Diels, 433).

[42] Wolfson (*Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 392, 394) describes Origen's model of incarnate union as one that emphasizes the 'predominance' (*κρατοῦν*; *ἐπικρατοῦν*) of the Word over Christ's human body and soul: on the roots of this model of union in the philosophy of Aristotle and Alexander Aphrodisiensis, see ibid. 377–86.

Having already conferred the 'essential attributes' of his divinity upon Christ's soul, the Word deifies Christ's body as well. 'We say that (the Word's) mortal body and the human soul within it have received the greatest things not only by their communion (κοινωνία) with him, but also by their union (ἕνωσις) and mixing up (ἀνάκρασις): after having partaken of his divinity, they were changed into God.'[43] This passage is taken from his apologetic work *Against Celsus*. Earlier in the same treatise, he characterizes Jesus himself as a 'partaker in the divine nature' (cf. 2 Peter 1: 4), and then goes on to emphasize that through the Incarnation 'the human nature and the divine began to be woven together, in order that the human, by communion with that which is more divine, might become divine, not in Jesus alone, but in all those who, with the help of faith, grasp hold of the life that Jesus taught'.[44]

In such passages, one begins to discern how Origen's doctrine of deification takes the mechanics of the Incarnation as its generative model. In Origen's other writings, this 'life that Jesus taught' is variously described as a form of progress into 'the order of angels', a process in which the faithful become 'sons of God' and 'one spirit' with the divine Son, and a means by which they 'become superior not only to their bodily nature, but even to the wavering and fragile movements of the soul itself', by which the soul itself casts off the vestiges of irrationality and is made 'wholly spiritual'.[45] Thus, through imitation of Christ's example, human beings too may be transformed (through the vital agency of the Godhead) into 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1: 4).[46]

Like Clement of Alexandria before him, Origen describes the fruits of such deification primarily in terms of the rational activity of the human mind or soul.[47]

[43] Origen of Alexandria, *Cels.* 3. 41. 7–11 (Borret, SC 136 (1968), 96). For a study of Origen's christological use of the term ἀνάκρασις, see Annewies van den Hoek, 'Origen's Role in Formulating Later Christological Language', 39–50, esp. 45 ff.

[44] Ibid. 3. 28. 46–9 (Borret, SC 136 (1968), 68); see also Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, 91–2; P. Brown, *Body and Society*, 175.

[45] Id., *princ.* 1. 8. 4 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 101–2; trans. Butterworth, 72).

[46] Ibid. 4. 4. 4 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 355; trans. Butterworth, 319). Norman Russell ('Partakers of the Divine Nature', 55) describes Origen's concept of human participation in the divine as a 'dynamic' one in which 'the higher reality "informs" the lower, endowing it with its attributes', and eliciting a response of moral imitation. H. Crouzel (*Théologie de l'image de Dieu*, 173) has likewise highlighted how, in Origen's doctrine of deification, human beings 'are made gods and sons and *logika*' through the volitional action of the Father and Son/Logos. Even though Origen can describe both humans and Christ himself as 'partakers of the divine nature' (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως) in *Against Celsus* and *On First Principles*, Russell ('Partakers', 56) is careful to emphasize that the Alexandrian theologian, in his writings on the Psalms, maintains a functional distinction between a person's becoming a god 'by participation' (κατὰ μετουσίαν) and Christ's self-existence as God 'by nature' (κατ' οὐσίαν): see Origen of Alexandria, *sel. in Ps.* 135 (*PG* 12. 1656A).

[47] See e.g. Origen of Alexandria, *princ.* 4. 4. 9 (Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 362; trans. Butterworth, 326), where he defines divine nature as 'intellectual light': N. Russell, 'Partakers of the Divine Nature', 53.

This is especially evident in ch. 2 of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, where he emphasizes the connection between the Word's singular status as divine Reason and our multiple participation in the Word as rational beings: 'The Word (ὁ λόγος) is the source of the reason (ὁ λόγος) that is in each rational being (ὁ λογικός); the reason (ὁ λόγος) which is in each creature is not like the former called, *par excellence*, the Word (ὁ λόγος).'[48] Later in the same work, Origen similarly describes how human beings are endowed with reason, how 'we become rational creatures (λογικοί) in a divinely inspired manner (ἐνθέως)'.[49]

Thus, Origen defines human deification in terms of a parallel correspondence between God's divine essence and our participation (μετοχή) in God's attributes.[50] 'Everything that exists besides the Very God is deified by participation in God's divinity, and is not to be called 'God' (ὁ θεὸς, with the article), but rather, more properly, 'god' (θεὸς, without the article).[51] In the end, it is the incarnate Christ who effects this transformation in human beings: having drawn divinity from the Godhead like water from a well 'so that they might be deified, he gave them a bounteous share of it according to his good nature'.[52] Human beings are said to 'take the form of gods' (μορφοῦσθαι θεοὶ) when they remain, along with the Word, 'in unceasing contemplation of the Father's depths'.[53] Through such rational contemplation, human souls hold the potential for reattaining union with God.[54]

While Origen could readily envision the divinization of the human soul, the human body also began to play a role (albeit, a somewhat more ambivalent one) in his doctrine of human salvation. The fact that Christ's body attained union (ἕνωσις) with divinity to such an extent that it was 'changed into God' (εἰς θεὸν μεταβεβληκέναι) raises the potential that it should serve as

[48] Origen of Alexandria, *Jo.* 2. 2. 15 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 54).

[49] Ibid. 1. 37. 268 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 47).

[50] Origen is the first Alexandrian writer to use the term 'participation' (μετοχή) in a technical, metaphysical sense to describe the relation of human beings to the divine Word: see H. Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu*, 172–5; and Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 147–52. Russell (147 ff.) notes three implications of Origen's idea of divine participation: (1) its non-corporeal nature, (2) the fundamental kinship between participant and participated, and (3) the distinction between natural or ontological participation on the one hand and supernatural or dynamic participation on the other.

[51] Origen of Alexandria, *Jo.* 2. 2. 17 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 54). Later in the same work, Origen describes human appropriation of divine attributes in terms of a correspondence of images mediated through the person of Christ: 'For as the Very God and True God the Father relates to his image (i.e. Christ) and to the images of his image (i.e. human beings) . . . so too the Very Word (ὁ αὐτόλογος) relates to the reason (ὁ λόγος) in each human being' (*Jo.* 2. 3. 20; Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 55).

[52] Ibid. 2. 2. 17 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 55).

[53] Ibid. 2. 2. 18 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 55).

[54] Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy*, 103.

a model for the 'deification' of human physical bodies as well.[55] Indeed, in Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Christ is identified as 'the pattern for the entire unified body of the saved'.[56] However, Origen notably characterizes the nature of Christ's bodily participation in divinity in terms of a 'lightening' of the flesh: 'It follows upon this to investigate whether it is possible to see in human affairs something between "the Word became flesh" and "the Word was God"—in such a way that the Word was reconstituted and made lighter little by little after he had become flesh, in order that he might become what he was in the beginning, God the Word who is with the Father.'[57] Thus, when Origen speaks about the deification of the body assumed by the incarnate Word, he in fact is envisioning a process whereby that body is increasingly divested of its fleshly aspects.

One sees a mimetic correspondence to this christological lightening of the flesh in Origen's eschatological descriptions of human bodies and the forms they are to take in their final redeemed (i.e. deified) state.[58] While he does not arrive at a definitive answer on the subject, he tends to support the notion that, in this state, human bodies either 'lead a bodiless existence', or at the very least are 'united to best and purest spirits' and 'changed . . . into an ethereal condition'.[59]

However, in this life, it is the soul's contemplation of God that specifically anticipates and enacts this future condition: 'An intellect which has been purified and has transcended all material things is deified (*θεοποιεῖται*) by what it contemplates in order that it may perfect the contemplation of God.'[60] Furthermore, prayer and the cultivation of moral virtues are prerequisites for those who wish to be deified: by 'praying without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5: 17), one acquires 'a condition that is being deified by the Word'.[61] Through such prayerful contemplation, souls are 'fed' (*τρεφόμενοι*) by the Word—'the suprasubstantial bread' (*ὁ ἐπιούσιος ἄρτος*)—and thereby experience a foretaste of deification.[62] Here, Origen invokes the image of eucharistic participation in the

[55] Origen of Alexandria, *Cels.* 3. 41. 11 (Borret, SC 136 (1968), 96). Along these lines, Gross sees in Origen's writings 'an echo of the physical theory of divinization,' which provides that doctrine with 'a proper physiognomy' (*La Divinisation du chrétien*, 179, cf. 175).

[56] Origen of Alexandria, *Jo.* 1. 31. 225 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 40).

[57] Ibid. 1. 37. 276. 1–6 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 48–9).

[58] Gross (*La Divinisation du chrétien*, 172) characterizes resurrection in a glorified body as the final fulfilment of the process of human divinization in Origen's theology.

[59] Origen of Alexandria, *princ.* 2. 3. 7 (P. Koetschau, GCS 22 (1913), 125; trans. Butterworth, 93); cf. ibid. 1. 7. 5; 2. 2. 1–2; 3. 6. 1–4. For a discussion of Origen's eschatology of the body, see Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy*, 112.

[60] Origen of Alexandria, *Jo.* 32. 27. 338–9 (Preuschen, GCS 10 (1903), 472).

[61] Id., *or.* 25. 2 (Koetschau, GCS 3 (1899), 358. 21–4). On prayer as a form of spiritual participation and on Origen's understanding of the word *ἐπιούσιος* in the Lord's Prayer, see Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 142–3.

[62] Ibid. 27. 13. 1–4 (Koetschau, GCS 3 (1899), 371. 27–372. 2).

body of Christ, but (like Clement) interprets this participation as one that primarily pertained to the spiritual faculties of the human soul.[63] For this third-century Alexandrian author, the significance of the human body for eucharistic practice still remained largely unexplored.

REALIZED BODIES: ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed a marked shift in the way that Alexandrian Greek theologians understood the Incarnation and its salvific import for the process of deification. In the writings of Athanasius and Cyril, one encounters a more positive reassessment of the body's role, both as the locus and vehicle for the Word's action, and as an indispensable setting for human participation in the Word. Earlier, Clement and Origen had understood such deifying participation primarily in three different senses:

1. nominally, or titularly, as a means of interpreting the application of the term 'gods' to human beings in biblical texts such as Psalm 82: 6;
2. analogously, as a means of drawing comparisons between e.g. the status of human beings as sons and gods 'by grace', and the status of Christ as Son and God 'by nature'; and
3. ethically, as a means of describing human 'attainment of likeness to God' through philosophical contemplation, prayer, and the cultivation of moral virtues.[64]

In the fourth and fifth centuries, the writings of Athanasius and Cyril began to introduce into Alexandrian Christian discourse additional ways of understanding human participation in the divine. While retaining aspects of the earlier models, Athanasius embraced what has been called a 'realistic' approach to the doctrine of deification, in which human beings are actually understood to be transformed in some way through the action of the incarnate Word.[65] For

[63] For broader studies of Origen's eucharistic theology, see Lother Lies, *Wort und Eucharistie bei Origenes*; and Hermann Josef Vogt, 'Eucharistielehre des Origenes?', 277–88.

[64] Here and in the following discussion, I utilize the system of classification employed by Russell, in *Doctrine of Deification*, 1–2, 163. According to Russell (154–61), the fourth-century Alexandrian monk and teacher, Didymus the Blind, largely followed the paradigm set by Origen on the question of deification.

[65] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 14; see also Carolyn Schneider ('The Intimate Connection between Christ and Christians in Athanasius', 1–12), who likewise highlights the 'realness' of Athanasian participation in Christ. However, Schneider's almost exclusively Platonic reading of Athanasius' christology prevents her from analysing fully the function of the body in his doctrine of divine participation.

Athanasius, it was expected that such a transformation would make itself manifest in ethical (especially ascetic) action, but its ontological basis was understood to precede such action, to have been actualized in the Word's act of taking on a body. In the following century, Cyril would expand upon Athanasius' 'realistic' approach by exploring more thoroughly the role of the sacraments as a venue for enacting and embodying the ontological transformation brought about by the Incarnation.[66] In the case of both of these Alexandrian theologians, the relationship between the body of Christ and the bodies of Christians takes on a vital, new significance for their Christology.

Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius' *On the Incarnation* (*De Incarnatione*) was the first large-scale treatise by an Alexandrian theologian devoted to the subject of the Word made flesh. Written sometime between 328 and 335 CE, it in fact was the second half of a double work whose first part was entitled, *Against the Nations* (*Contra Gentes*).[67] In this pair of treatises, Athanasius presented the Incarnation

[66] While I find Russell's classification system helpful for characterizing and contrasting the different ways that Clement and Origen (on the one hand) and Athanasius and Cyril (on the other) applied the doctrine of deification in their writings, I disagree with his decision to characterize Athanasius' christology as both 'realistic' *and* 'sacramental'. In applying the latter term to the fourth-century Alexandrian father's christology, Russell (*Doctrine of Deification*, 163) falls prey to an anachronistic tendency to read Athanasius' theology in the light of later developments only fully realized in his fifth-century successor, Cyril.

[67] Athanasius' treatises *Against the Nations* and *On the Incarnation* bear no traces of the heated issues that arose during the Arian Controversy, and for this reason it was long assumed that the two works were composed prior to the onset of that debate (318 CE), or at latest prior to the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) where Arius' doctrine was condemned. This early range of dating, introduced in the nineteenth century, has been generally adhered to by J. C. M. van Winden and E. P. Meijering: see Winden, 'On the Date of Athanasius's Apologetical Treatises', 291–5; Meijering, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes*, 1–5; and Meijering (with Winden), *Athanasius: De Incarnatione Verbi*, 11–20. Based on the theological maturity of these works and a possible allusion to Athanasius' being in exile (namely, his complaint about not having his teachers' writings at hand in *Against the Nations*, ch. 1), Charles Kannengiesser has pressed for a later date of around 337: see 'La Date de l'Apologie d'Athanase *Contre les païens* et *Sur l'Incarnation du Verbe*', 383–428, esp. 418. The absence of any mention of an Arian threat is explained by Kannengiesser as a result of Athanasius' need to be politically circumspect during his first exile.

More recent theories have targeted the time period between these earlier and later datings. T. D. Barnes (*Athanasius and Constantius*, 12–13), has suggested the date range of 325–8, arguing that Athanasius composed the two works with Eusebius' *Theophany* (*c.*325) in mind. Finally, Khaled Anatolios (*Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 29) argues that Athanasius' 'subtly magisterial tone' suggests 'a date after Athanasius's ascendancy to the episcopacy and before his exile to Trier', sometime between the years 328 and 335—a period after the condemnation of Arius, during which the Alexandrian bishop 'could pretend, as far as the purposes of this treatise went, that the Arians did not exist', a perspective 'consistent with the philosophy of history propounded by the treatise, wherein the victory of the Word is rapidly gaining ground

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