# "Suppers in the Times of the Kingdom": Food, Drink and the Resurrected Body in Early Christian Thought

# “Suppers in the Times of the Kingdom”:
# Food, Drink and the Resurrected Body in Early Christian Thought

A dissertation presented

by

Karen Elizabeth Connor McGugan

to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

The New Testament and Early Christianity

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 2020

Dissertation Advisor: Laura S. Nasrallah Karen Elizabeth Connor McGugan

"Suppers in the Times of the Kingdom":
Food, Drink and the Resurrected Body in Early Christian Thought

## Abstract

By the second and third centuries C.E., the resurrection had become a focal point of intra-Christian controversy. Writings from this period that insist on an eschatological resurrection of the flesh and/or body— themselves hotly contested concepts— debate which structures, substances, abilities, needs, and desires intrinsic to mortal existence will persist into the resurrection. This dissertation employs rhetorical analysis, together with consideration of material and statistical evidence for dietary habits and practices in the ancient world, to explore the ways in which five early Christian thinkers—pseudo-Justin Martyr, (pseudo-)Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen— conceived of the relationship of the resurrected body to food and drink. While some of these thinkers argued vehemently that the resurrected body will have no need or desire for nourishment (or even the ability to digest it), others insisted on a resurrection filled with lavish feasting. Behind these disparate constructions of the eating-drinking resurrected body lay differing hopes and desires for the afterlife, informed by a wide variety of factors: doctrinal debate and scriptural precedent, but also philosophical and medical discourses, dietary rituals and practices, and the realities of food scarcity. The resurrected body served as a laboratory for human functioning— an opportunity to envision what might be possible for the body in an ideal scenario, in light of particular constraints and concerns of mortality.

**Table of Contents**

**Acknowledgements**

This dissertation would not have come to fruition without the influence and support of many individuals. My mentors at UNC-Chapel Hill and Yale Divinity School, especially Bart Ehrman and Adela Yarbro Collins, recognized and nurtured my fascination with early Christianity and encouraged me to pursue doctoral work. My mentors during my time at Harvard University, particularly Outi Lehtipuu, Giovanni Bazzana, and Karen King, have given generously of their time and scholarship to guide and encourage me, and this project is much stronger for it. To my advisor, Laura Nasrallah—for her intellectual vibrance and generosity, unwavering support, and the example she has set for me as scholar/advocate/parent—I am deeply grateful.

I am fortunate to be part of a cohort comprised not only of excellent colleagues, but also of remarkable people. The members of Dissertation Seminar between 2015 and 2020 have offered smart and generous feedback on numerous iterations of the chapters that follow. Jung Choi, Eunyung Lim, Tyler Schwaller, Jennifer Quigley, Greg Given, Kelsi Morrison-Atkins, Lydia Bremer McCollum, Jordan Conley, and Sarah Porter, together with their partners, have cultivated a community that has immeasurably enriched my years at Harvard.

For their steadfast friendship and encouragement, I owe a debt of gratitude to Julie Miller, Jan Rivero, Breanne Forbes Hubbard, William McKinney, Lisa Klingenmaier, and especially Kara Scroggins and Kira Vine.

When I began doctoral work, I hoped for good colleagues; I did not expect to gain family. The most surprising but rewarding gift of this program has been my friendship with Sarah Griffis.

To Cathy and Kit Connor, for a lifetime of unconditional love and support, I am deeply grateful.

My children, Clayton and Catherine, have both come into existence and grown together with this project. I am thankful for the innumerable ways in which they challenge and motivate me, and for Clay's many offers of assistance with my "big paper."

The burden of completing a dissertation has been significantly lighter and more meaningful for having been shared with Will McGugan, who has sustained me over the past several years with incredible patience, humor, selflessness, and love.

Many of the questions that drive this work took shape around the sudden death of my father, William Clayton Connor, in 2014. He was one of my greatest supporters and closest friends, my partner in many challenging conversations about Christianity and even more so in the consumption of many excellent meals. I would like to think of him in some other realm of existence enjoying a massive plate of pancakes. I dedicate this project to his memory, with love.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

> *"Di-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es."*
> "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are."[1]

In August of 2016, a team of scientists from the Weizmann Institute published a study in *PLoS Biology* presenting a new estimate for the ratio of human cells to non-human cells that constitute the human body. An adult male of average height and weight, the study determined, contains approximately 30 trillion human cells—and approximately 39 trillion other cells.[2] As BBC health and science correspondent James Gallagher writes, we are only about 43% human material; the rest of us consists of the bacteria, viruses, fungi, and archaea that colonize us. The overwhelming majority of this "microbiome" resides in our bowels, where it is profoundly affected by our diets.[3]

Growing knowledge of the human microbiome has engendered a wave of scientific, philosophical, and theological speculation around the question of what makes us who we are. Is our identity shaped, as some scientists now argue, by the combination of our own genome (numbering just 20,000 genes) with that of our microbiome (numbering between two million and 20 million genes)?[4] The gut microbiome, which is transformed daily by the food that we take in, seems to play a crucial role in shaping everything from our digestive processes and hunger cues

---

[1] Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante; ouvrage théorique, historique et à l'ordre du jour, dédié aux Gastronomes parisiens, par un Professeur, membre de plusieurs sociétés littéraires et savants* (1825).

[2] Sender R, Fuchs S, Milo R (2016) Revised Estimates for the Number of Human and Bacteria Cells in the Body. PLoS Biol 14(8): e1002533. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1002533. Accessed October 23, 2019.

[3] https://www.bbc.com/news/health-43674270?fbclid=IwAR0Ruvxc1GIeR8bfa4dssYglOngVp8cUffTTg9ngq8dl0tXcKDJ-3i2hLSc. Accessed October 23, 2019.

[4] https://www.bbc.com/news/health-43674270?fbclid=IwAR0Ruvxc1GIeR8bfa4dssYglOngVp8cUffTTg9ngq8dl0tXcKDJ-3i2hLSc. Accessed October 23, 2019.

to our brain chemistry, hormones, stress levels, and mental aging.[5] If so much of our material composition, physiological function, and mental and emotional landscape is determined by the constantly fluctuating mass of organisms that colonize our bowels, is there any sort of static, stable kernel that makes us "us"? Simultaneously, if the nature of this mass of organisms is heavily determined by what we eat, is it possible to figure out what sort of diet or relationship with food would make us the best imaginable versions of ourselves?[6]

While our awareness of the human microbiome and its effects is relatively new, many of the issues it raises are not. Thinkers in antiquity attempted to figure out how the digestive system works, how the constant intake and output of food affects personal continuity, and what ideal access to, consumption of, and ethics and practices around food and drink would look like. These questions play out poignantly, and with high stakes, in early Christian debates around the resurrection of the body.

By the second and third centuries C.E., the idea of a general resurrection—a resurrection involving many or all persons, for which Jesus' resurrection was often understood as a template or prototype—had become a focal point of intra-Christian controversy.[7] Would this resurrection be a future event, or was it a state attainable in the present? Would it involve the substance of the flesh as it existed during life, some other sort of body, or no body at all? Various and conflicting answers to these questions became deeply intertwined with emerging rhetoric of "orthodoxy"

[5] Clayton D. Carlson, "I am plural: Trillions of foreign creatures in and on our bodies shape our health, desires, and behavior. Should we love them?" *Christianity Today* 60.9 (November 2016), 60-62.

[6] Carlson, "I am Plural," 60-62.

[7] While discussions of Jesus' resurrection are deeply entangled with those involving general resurrection, and will therefore be considered at several points throughout the chapters that follow, the body as it will exist in the general resurrection is the primary focus of this project. References to "resurrection" and "the resurrected body/flesh," unless otherwise specified, may therefore be assumed to pertain to general resurrection, rather than to that of Jesus.

and "heresy," such that particular conceptions of resurrection—most notably the idea of resurrection as a bodily, and particularly a fleshly, experience—served as a means of constructing identity, negotiating and renegotiating boundaries, producing and identifying deviance, and claiming authority.[8]

While those who argued in favor of a bodily and/or fleshly resurrection sought to deny the legitimacy of alternative understandings of resurrection, more was at stake for these writers than a sole desire to demonstrate that the resurrection would involve some type of body, fleshly or otherwise. The hypothetical resurrected body became a site around which clustered and coalesced various anxieties around mortality, the value of the flesh, and personal continuity: What aspects of mortal existence must transfer into the resurrection to guarantee that "I" am still "me"? What aspects would be superfluous to and even incompatible with a "perfect," heavenly existence?[9] In attempting to envision ideal versions of themselves, free from the requirements and realities of earthly life, early Christians debated everything from the material or other substance of the resurrected body to its appearance, age, gender, abilities, and physiological processes. The resurrected body served, in effect, as a laboratory for human functioning.

Not unlike modern scientists, philosophers, and theologians puzzling through the ramifications of the microbiome for how to understand what it means to be human, Christians in the second and third centuries used the resurrected body to "think with" as they contemplated the relationships between food, flesh, personal continuity, and bodily perfection. While alimentary

---

[8] Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12-13; see also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) and Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[9] Candida Moss, *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 2.

issues were far from the only issues at play in discussions of physical resurrection—sexuality and disability also appear with regularity— the question of the role of food and drink in the resurrection inspired a uniquely diverse and charged set of responses: While some early Christian thinkers argued vehemently that the resurrected body will have no need or desire for nourishment (or even the ability to digest it), others insisted on a resurrection filled with lavish feasting.

This dissertation analyzes second- and third-century Christian arguments both for and against an eating-drinking resurrected body, proposing that the divergence and even conflict apparent around this issue arises as a result of the remarkable diversity of factors that inform each argument. While all of the writers discussed here insist upon a general resurrection involving some sort of body and/or flesh, this body does particular work for each of them—theologically, culturally, aesthetically, emotionally, and materially. Behind differing constructions of the resurrected body and its relationship to food and drink lie differing hopes and desires for the afterlife, deeply informed by a wide variety of factors: doctrinal debate and scriptural precedent, but also philosophical and medical discourses, dietary rituals and practices, and the realities of food scarcity. Careful attention to the eating-drinking resurrected body complicates overly simplistic constructions of early Christian debates often perpetuated in both ancient texts and scholarship. It demonstrates that there existed no singular, agreed upon concept of a "resurrected body" or "flesh" to be pitted against an alternative model of a "resurrected" or "immortal soul." This investigation also contributes to a social history of food and drink in the ancient Mediterranean world, illuminating the ways in which early Christians considered what we eat to be essentially intertwined with who we are.

**Contribution to Scholarship**

This project lies at the intersection of multiple substantial bodies of scholarship. It is indebted to centuries of research and thought around resurrection, the body, and food in Early Christianity. From the 1990s until the present, a relatively small number of studies by Anglophone scholars have centered questions of the resurrected body's form and functionality. This scholarship asks not only whether early Christian thinkers understood resurrection to involve body/flesh and why, but also what a resurrected body would look like, what (if anything) it would be able to or need to do, and what various constructions of the resurrected body suggest about the ways in which early Christians were thinking through issues of physical change, personal continuity, sexuality and sexual difference, disease and disability, and the cultivation of bodily ethics and practices.[10] My project contributes to this conversation, introducing to it both an understudied emphasis—food and drink— and a different methodology—the combination of textual analysis with the consideration of statistical, bioarchaeological, and material evidence.

Caroline Walker Bynum's 1995 monograph, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity: 200-1336*, foregrounds the metaphors—rather than the arguments—deployed in patristic and medieval debates around the nature of resurrection.[11] The early chapters focus on the imagery used in Paul's ambiguous discussion of resurrection found in 1 Corinthians 15, and on the considerable afterlife of this imagery in second and third century texts. Bynum explores the ways in which the thinkers behind these texts, informed by the philosophical, medical, and

[10] For discussion of parallel conversations and debates taking place in early Jewish and rabbinic sources, see C.D. Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism, 200 BCE-CE 200* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Julia Watts Belser, "Disability, Animality, and Enslavement in Rabbinic Narratives of Bodily Restoration and Resurrection," *JLA* 8.2 (2015): 288-305. Kevin J. Madigan and Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection: The Power of God for Christians and Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

[11] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), xv.

theological discourses in which they were immersed, found the resurrected body useful to think with as they puzzled through considerable anxieties around death, decay, and personal continuity. Similarly, Claudia Setzer, in "Resurrection of the Dead as Symbol and Strategy" (2001) and *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (2004), emphasizes the ways in which bodily resurrection functions as "a tool to make meaning."[12] The "imprecise and abstract" nature of the resurrected body, she writes, imbues it with infinite possibility: even more so than the mortal body, with its requirements and limitations, the resurrected body is socially constructed, able to "capture and contain the variety of subjective meanings and individual interpretations that any group of human beings entails."[13] Setzer's focus on resurrected body as symbol illuminates the ways in which it appears in ancient texts not as an isolated idea, but one around which many ideas cluster and coalesce. As such, she argues, it operates in both early Judaism and early Christianity as a touchstone around which communal identity forms and by which boundaries between groups are drawn.[14]

Published in 2015, Outi Lehtipuu's *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* asks why resurrection became such a contested topic in early Christian thought. Using as a framework the sociological study of deviance, Lehtipuu argues, like Setzer, that resurrection belief in its many iterations functioned as "an important identity marker and tool for group demarcation." By labeling one's own community's resurrection belief as uniquely and unequivocally correct, and those who subscribe to differing

---

[12] Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 4.

[13] Claudia Setzer, "Resurrection of the Dead as Symbol and Strategy," *JAAR* 69.1 (2001), 88.

[14] Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body,* 3-5.

beliefs as "deviant," various thinkers sought to shore up group identity and construct boundaries across a socio-cultural landscape characterized by remarkable fluidity.[15] Despite similar emphases on group and boundary formation, Lehtipuu's work differs from Setzer's in its narrower focus on intra-Christian controversies, as well as in its careful attention to differences between "resurrection," "resurrection of the body," and "resurrection of the flesh."[16] Lehtipuu devotes significant space to the resurrection of the flesh in particular, attempting to unpack the factors that gave this doctrine remarkable traction in early Christian thought. Like both Bynum and Setzer, Lehtipuu conceptualizes resurrection as "a core idea around which other relevant ideas and practices cluster," including "the power of God, the meaning of Christ, the way of salvation, anthropological ideas, ritual practices, and lifestyle issues."[17] Approaching the resurrection of the flesh in this way leads Lehtipuu to explore at some length the questions of physical form and functionality that inevitably accompanied it. Through an overview of the most prevalent early Christian arguments both for and against a resurrection including the flesh, as well as of the scriptural references that most frequently served to fuel these arguments, she briefly examines ways in which early Christian thinkers struggled to describe the relationship of the resurrected flesh to the mortal flesh in terms of composition, appearance, age, ability, health, and sexual and digestive function.

Taylor Petrey's *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference* (2016) argues that early Christian puzzling around resurrection resulted in the production of new theories of the human body, particularly as pertaining to sexual parts,

[15] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 8.

[16] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 14-15.

[17] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 15.

functions, and desires.[18] Through rhetorical analysis of five second- and third-century C.E. texts on resurrection, Petrey argues that these texts insist on the transference into the resurrection of the same individuals who exist during life, including in terms of sexual difference: The genitals are repeatedly "affirmed as necessary elements of the resurrected self." These parts nevertheless appear in the resurrection transformed, absent many aspects of the mortal body that are considered particularly problematic or subversive, including "sexual functions and desires, humors and change, mortality, and even the flesh itself."[19] Petrey's careful textual analysis thus reveals the ways in which ancient theorizing around resurrection gave rise to deeply unstable conceptions of human sexuality, maleness and femaleness, and bodily ethics and practices. It also challenges entrenched scholarly assumptions of a dichotomy between "resurrection of the soul" and "resurrection of the body/flesh," making clear that such a dichotomy does not take into consideration the diverse and complex nature of the body and/or flesh as it was variously understood to exist in the resurrection.

Just as Petrey focuses primarily on the idea of the resurrected body as it intersects with theories and practices of sexuality and sexual difference, the work of Candida Moss ("Heavenly Healing: Eschatological Cleansing and the Resurrection of the Dead in the Early Church," 2011; *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, 2019) centers the ways in which the resurrected body proved useful to think with around issues of bodily perfection and aesthetics, particularly as related to disease and disability. Navigating the familiar paradox of continuity and transformation, Moss argues, many early Christian thinkers

[18] Taylor Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 1-2.

[19] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 15.

imagined a resurrected body that—while it retained some identity markers, like gender—appeared without ailments, impairments, and imperfections that characterized it during life.[20] Moss draws attention to the ways in which resurrection was imagined as a sort of eschatological healing, and the paradisiacal existence it entailed understood as antithetical to disability.[21] As such, it may be interpreted as a broader statement about human values: what aspects of a person are considered necessary for his or her continued existance in the resurrection? What aspects are considered incompatible with "perfection"?[22]

My dissertation shares several core assumptions and methodologies with the works discussed above. Central to my project is the conception of resurrection, described in detail by Setzer and developed by Lehtipuu, Petrey, and Moss, as a symbol around which other ideas cluster and congeal. The resurrected body functions in ancient thought not in isolation, but as a tool to think with around questions of theology, philosophy, anthropology, medicine, aesthetics, and ethics, among others. Also foundational is the emphasis, present in each of these studies, on resurrection as navigating the paradoxical ideals of change and continuity. Each ancient theory of bodily resurrection explored in this dissertation endeavors to account for both the transformation of the body into something compatible with divine existence and also for the undeniable retention of "me-ness." It is in navigating this tension that early Christian thinkers must determine what a "perfect" body would look and act like, as well as what aspects of bodily

[20] Note that extremely similar conversations were occurring in rabbinic resurrection texts, as well. See Belser, "Disability."

[21] Candida Moss, "Heavenly Healing: Eschatological Cleansing and the Resurrection of the Dead in the Early Church," *JAAR* 79.4 (2011), 993-994.

[22] Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 2.

existence are intrinsic to selfhood.[23] Bynum focuses on this tension particularly as it is evoked through ancient authors' use of imagery to describe resurrection; Petrey and Moss highlight what various attempts to navigate it reveal about contemporaneous conceptions of gender/sexuality and disability. My work foregrounds a topic that, while intertwined with issues of sexuality and disability, is worthy of attention in its own right: that of eating and drinking. This issue is explored peripherally in the work of Moss and Petrey, but otherwise effectively not at all: the relationship of food and drink to the resurrected body, as imagined in second and third century Christian texts, remains understudied. In the analyses that follow, I endeavor to fill this gap.

Methodologically, the project is similar to that of Moss and especially Petrey in its focus on close reading of individual texts. I offer detailed analysis of four geographically diverse Christian texts from the second and third centuries. Each of these texts envisions a general

[23] It has been difficult to determine the most accurate and effective terminology with which to discuss this idea of continuity of "identity," or of "the self," between mortal life and the resurrection. Scholars have problematized the use of "identity" in the humanities and social sciences: Rodgers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper make the case that "identity" as a category of analysis is both ambiguous and essentializing (see e.g. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29 [2000]: 1-47). Todd Berzon similarly suggests that "identity" is best avoided in the context of the study of the ancient world: rather than focusing on the fluidity, constructed nature, and "varied formulations" of identity in antiquity, he argues, it is better to highlight the many "facets of individual and collective existence" that it often subsumes. This approach resists the anachronistic tendency of scholars to assume that ancient authors were thinking in terms of "identity" as well (Todd Berzon, "The Problem with Identity in Late Antiquity. On Aaron P. Johnson's *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*," *Marginalia*, November 11, 2014). Similarly, scholarship on the concept of "the self" in ancient thought emphasizes the ways in which "the category of the self, as it is used in a post-Cartesian world, implies a certain self-reflective notion of the individual that is often anachronistically imported into the ancient world" (Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 3; for more discussion of the concept of "the self" in antiquity, see Richard Sorjabi, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights About Individuality, Life, and Death* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006]; Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1996]). Even if thinkers in antiquity no doubt had a different sense of "self" than an "individuated sense of self," ancient funerary customs suggest an interest in the fate of the individual after death. Likewise, as Moss argues, "there does appear to be extensive conversation about the nature of the 'true self' and anxieties about the continuity of me-ness over time, bodily integrity, reassembly of atoms, loss of memory, punishment, and purpose…[these] questions remain consistent despite the fact that they disagree on matters of epistemology, cosmology, and anthropology" (Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 4). Many of my scholarly conversation partners—including Bynum, Petrey, and Moss—deploy language of "identity" and/or "self" to discuss these ideas of the continued existence of an individual in the face of various types of change; I attempt largely to use the terms "personal continuity" or "continuity of subject," or, in the case of thinkers who argue for the transference of physical substance of the flesh into the resurrection, "material continuity."

resurrection involving some sort of body (if not necessarily a fleshly one), and each of them engages in explicit discussion of the relationship of this resurrected body to food and drink. My work employs feminist rhetorical reading strategies, as it attends to the power dynamics at play between the writers and the persons and communities for and about which they write.

Using these textual analyses, I offer episodes toward a social history of food and drink in early Christianity through the lens of the resurrected body. Following in the footsteps of Setzer, I approach the resurrected body as a construction around which cluster various, often contested conceptions of the mechanics, practices, ethics, and realities of eating and drinking. Like Bynum, Lehtipuu, Petrey, and Moss, I devote careful attention to the variety of discourses in which the writers of my chosen texts are immersed. I unpack in detail their entanglements with scriptural interpretation, intra-Christian theological and doctrinal debates, philosophical conversations around necessary and unnecessary desires and the nature of physical change, and medical theories concerning the structure and function of the human digestive system.

Informing constructions of the resurrected body were not only issues of theology, philosophy, and medicine, but also what people ate, how they engaged in food-related traditions and practices, and whether or not they had access to adequate nourishment. Recognizing this, my dissertation engages with a wider variety of evidence than other recent studies of bodily resurrection. My methodology combines textual analysis with consideration of statistical and bioarchaeological evidence for food scarcity in the ancient world, as well as with material evidence for food-related practices in the times and places in which my texts were produced.

**Texts and Traditions**

In constructing their own versions of the resurrected body and its relationship to food and drink, second- and third-century Christian thinkers participate in ongoing conversations

concerning the nature of Jesus' resurrection, the nature of the general resurrection, and the relationship between the two. In doing so, they are dependent upon and deeply invested in the interpretation of particular traditions found in 1 Corinthians 15 and the canonical gospels. While some of these traditions were almost certainly circulating by the early second century CE, others may have been emerging in written form contemporaneously with the works that are the focus of this project.[24] Regardless, the frequency with which these materials appear in second and third century Christian writings is indicative of their status as flashpoints in early Christian debates around Christology, resurrection, and the valuation of the flesh. A brief introduction to several of these key passages and the larger discourses in which they participate—especially, for our purposes, the association of fleshly resurrection with food— provides necessary context for the detailed analyses to follow.

**The Nature of Jesus' Resurrection**

The letters of Paul make the earliest known references to Jesus' resurrection. Paul deploys this resurrection to support his own apostolic authority; his narration of the event, framed as a pre-existing formula that he has received and is replicating, emphasizes that the resurrected Jesus appeared to Paul himself later than but in the same manner as he did to the apostles who were with him during life.[25] Dismissing the idea that those who knew Jesus "according to the flesh"[26] possess a more valid claim to authority than he does, Paul does not focus on the fate of Jesus' earthly body and its role in his resurrection, just as he focuses very

[24] Recent scholarship has called into question the traditional dating of the canonical gospels, in written form, to the first century C.E. See e.g. Marcus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014) (but see also Clare K. Rothschild's review in the March 2016 *Review of Biblical Literature*); Matthew Larsen, *Gospels Before the Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[25] See 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

[26] See 2 Corinthians 5:16.

little on the details of Jesus' earthly life. His discussions of Jesus' resurrected body focus instead on its glorious nature, in which, Paul insists, those who take part in the general resurrection will share.[27]

Jesus' resurrection is represented very differently in the four canonical gospels, each of which contains some discussion of the relationship between Jesus' mortal body and his resurrected body. All four gospels reference the tradition of the empty tomb, indicating a common understanding that Jesus' resurrection affects and involves his corpse.[28] In the three of these gospels that narrate Jesus' post-resurrection appearances,[29] there is a suggestion that his resurrected body is tangible and/or functional, even as it also (in the case of Luke and John) boasts qualities that defy physicality. The women leaving the empty tomb in Matthew grasp Jesus' feet as they worship him.[30] John's resurrected Jesus is somehow able to appear suddenly

[27] See Philippians 3:21. Scholarship on Paul and resurrection is vast; see, for example, Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead,* trans. H. J. Stenning (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1933); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament,* Vol. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1951), 187ff; John Gager, "Body Symbols and Social Reality: Resurrection, Incarnation, and Asceticism in Early Christianity," *Religion* 12 (1982); 345-64; Antionette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 159-175; Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200 C.E.-1336 C.E.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 1-18; Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 207-398; Alan Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 399-440; Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2004); Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Thomas D. McGlothlin, *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[28] See Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:3; John 2-:1-7.

[29] I follow established scholarship in considering the post-resurrection appearances in Mark (Mark 16:9-20) to be a later interpolation. See Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 43 n. 128.

[30] See Matthew 28:9.

inside a locked room, and yet proves his identity and the reality of his physical resurrection to the incredulous Thomas by inviting him to touch the wounds, or scars, on his hands and side.[31]

Of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances as described in the four gospels, Luke's account features the most significant emphasis on the fleshly quality of Jesus' resurrected body. Parts of this account prove highly relevant for later debates concerning the relationship of food and drink to the resurrected body:

> As they were saying these things, [Jesus] himself stood in their midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were terrified and frightened, thinking they saw a *πνεῦμα*. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and for what reason do debates arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet; that it is I myself. Touch me and see, since a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And saying these things, he showed them [his] hands and feet. But since they were still in disbelief from joy, and were amazed, he said to them, "Do you have anything to eat here?" And they gave him a piece of roasted fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.[32]

This passage describes Jesus' second post-resurrection appearance to his disciples, directly following an episode that occurs while two of the disciples are walking to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). In this episode, Jesus appears and walks alongside these disciples, but they are unable to recognize him; they do so only when he serves them a meal with strong Eucharistic overtones (the text gives no indication that he actually partakes of this meal). At this point in the narrative, there is little evidence to support the argument that the resurrected Jesus exists as a flesh-and-blood human. In fact, the two disciples' inability to recognize Jesus until he blesses and breaks

---

[31] See John 20:19-29. For a detailed analysis of the post-resurrection marks in John 20 as scars that offer proof of Jesus' life and identity, see Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 22-40.

[32] Luke 24:36-43 (my translation). *Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτῶν λαλούντων αὐτὸς ἔστη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. πτοηθέντες δὲ καὶ ἔμφοβοι γενόμενοι ἐδόκουν πνεῦμα θεωρεῖν. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί τεταραγμένοι ἐστὲ καὶ διὰ τί διαλογισμοὶ ἀναβαίνουσιν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν; ἴδετε τὰς χεῖράς μου καὶ τοὺς πόδας μου ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτός· ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι πνεῦμα σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα οὐκ ἔχει καθὼς ἐμὲ θεωρεῖτε ἔχοντα. καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας. ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς καὶ θαυμαζόντων εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἔχετέ τι βρώσιμον ἐνθάδε; οἱ δὲ ἐπέδωκαν αὐτῷ ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ μέρος· καὶ λαβὼν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ἔφαγεν*. Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece. Edited by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research under the direction of Holger Strutwolf. Twenty-eighth revised edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

bread is reminiscent of a narrative trope commonly found in angelophanies, in which humans are often prevented from recognizing their divine visitors either entirely or until a particular moment.[33]

The manner in which Jesus seems abruptly to appear standing among the larger group of disciples in Luke 24:36, as well as the disciples' fearful response, is also suggestive of an angelophany, as described throughout the LXX.[34] The disciples, Luke states explicitly, are sure that they are seeing a *πνεῦμα*— Jesus' spirit in the form of an angel, perhaps,[35] or, even more menacingly, his ghost, having emerged from Hades.[36] Luke's audience would likely have been familiar with the established tradition that angels do not eat; ghosts and spirits, likewise, would not have had bodily function.[37] Jesus' post-resurrection meal, then, has been interpreted by the vast majority of exegetes and scholars as offering proof of his fleshly materiality.[38]

**Eating as Evidence of Fleshly Resurrection**

Luke 24 is far from the only ancient resurrection narrative to emphasize a connection between flesh and food. On the contrary, Luke is one of a number of roughly contemporaneous

---

[33] See e.g. Genesis 18-19; Judges 6; 13. Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 62-63. In the two passages from Judges, the moment of recognition occurs when a sacrifice is offered; Fletcher-Louis wonders aloud whether Luke envisions Eucharist as a stand-in for sacrifice.

[34] Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 63-64.

[35] Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 64.

[36] Note that Luke 24:37 as preserved in Codex D reads *φαντάσμα* rather than *πνεῦμα*. See also 1 Peter 3:19, in which *πνεῦμα* appears to refer to a spirit incarcerated in Hades. Turid Karlsen Seim, "The Resurrected Body in Luke-Acts: The Significance of Space," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity,* ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Øklund, Ekstasis 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 20-21.

[37] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 45 nn. 139 and 151; Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts,* 64-64; Seim, "The Resurrected Body in Luke-Acts," 21.

[38] See e.g. Shelly Matthews, "Fleshly Resurrection, Authority Claims, and the Scriptural Practices of Lukan Christianity," *JBL* 36 no. 1 (2017), 167 n. 10; Seim, "The Resurrected Body in Luke-Acts," 20-21; Gerald O'Collins, "Did Jesus Eat the Fish (Luke 24:42-43)?" *Gregorianum* vol. 69 no. 1 (1988), 69; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke X-XXIV, Anchor Bible* vol. 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1574-1575.

texts, both Christian and non-Christian, that associate the ability to eat with fleshly resurrection. The raising of Jairus' daughter, for example, as described in both Mark and Luke, features Jesus' command immediately following the miracle that the girl be given food:

> And when they came into the house of the synagogue leader, [Jesus] beheld an uproar, with many people weeping and crying out. And entering, he said to them, "Why are you yelling and weeping? The child is not dead, but rather sleeping." And they laughed at him. But after he threw them all out, he took the child's father and mother, and those with him, and went into where the child was. And, grabbing the child's hand, he said to her, "*Talitha koum*," which means, "little girl, I say to you, get up!" And immediately the little girl got up and walked around. She was twelve years old. And they were [immediately] astonished with a great astonishment. And he commanded them emphatically not to let anyone know about this, and said to give her [something] to eat.[39]

Mark's narration of this event features a number of literary motifs typical of ancient miracle stories. In this context Jesus' request for food functions as "demonstration of the reality of the miracle": The fact that the child is able to eat is proof that she is truly alive, and not a ghost.[40]

The *Acts of Peter,*[41] likewise, includes the following episode:

> But Peter turned round and saw a smoked fish hanging in a window; and he took it and said to the people, "If you now see this swimming in the water like a fish, will you be able to believe in him whom I preach?" And they all said with one accord, "Indeed we will believe you!" Now there was a fish-pond nearby; so he said, "In thy name, Jesus Christ, in which they still fail to believe" (he said) "in the presence of all these be alive and swim like a fish!" And he threw the tuna fish into the pond, and it came alive again and began to swim. And the people saw the fish swimming; and he made it do so not merely for that hour, or it might have been called a *φάντασμα*, but he made it go on

---

[39] Mark 5:38-43, translation mine. *καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἀρχισυναγώγου, καὶ θεωρεῖ θόρυβον καὶ κλαίοντας καὶ ἀλαλάζοντας πολλά, καὶ εἰσελθὼν λέγει αὐτοῖς· τί θορυβεῖσθε καὶ κλαίετε; τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ. αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκβαλὼν πάντας παραλαμβάνει τὸν πατέρα τοῦ παιδίου καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τοὺς μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰσπορεύεται ὅπου ἦν τὸ παιδίον. καὶ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου λέγει αὐτῇ· ταλιθα κουμ, ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον· τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε. καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνέστη τὸ κοράσιον καὶ περιεπάτει· ἦν γὰρ ἐτῶν δώδεκα. καὶ ἐξέστησαν [εὐθὺς] ἐκστάσει μεγάλῃ. καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἵνα μηδεὶς γνοῖ τοῦτο, καὶ εἶπεν δοθῆναι αὐτῇ φαγεῖν*. See also Luke 8:51-56.

[40] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary,* Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 277, 286.

[41] William Schneemelcher dates this text to the late second century because it is referenced in the *Acts of Paul*, which is in turn referenced by Tertullian. Schneemelcher, "The Acts of Peter," in William Schneemelcher, ed., trans. R. L. McWilson, *New Testament Apocrypha: Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses, and Related Subjects* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 283.

> swimming, so that it attracted crowds from all sides and showed that the tuna fish had become a (live) fish; so much so that some of the people threw in bread for it, and it ate it all up. And when they saw this, a great number followed him and believed in the Lord.[42]

In the case of this fish, as with Jesus and with Jairus' daughter, the ability to eat is understood as a final and foolproof guarantee that physical resurrection has indeed occurred. Although the crowd is enthralled to see the fish swimming continuously, suggesting that its miraculous return to life is no mere *φάντασμα* (just as Luke's resurrected Jesus is no mere *πνεῦμα*), it is upon seeing the fish eat that "a great number follow[s] [Peter] and believe[s] in the Lord."[43]

A non-Christian comparandum may be drawn from Philostratus' *Heroicus,* an early third-century CE dialogue detailing the relationship between a vineyard worker at Elaious and his companion, the resurrected hero Protesilaos. As detailed in a much older tradition, Protesilaos—as the first person to step ashore on Asia Minor during the campaign against Troy—was prophetically doomed to die; his wife, Laodameia, mourned him so profoundly that he was allowed to return from Hades for a brief period to be with her.[44] By the first centuries CE, Protesilaos' story was, apparently, resurging in popularity; Protesilaos himself was embraced as the "new representative of bodily resurrection," appearing in the work of Chariton, Petronius, Aelius Aristides, and Lucian.[45]

In the context of the *Heroicus,* the worker at Elaious, who tends the vineyards and gardens around Protesilaos' heroon, fields a number of questions from a visiting Phoenician

---

[42] *Acts of Peter* 13. Translation from Schneemelcher, "The Acts of Peter;" translation modified.

[43] Janet E. Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 149.

[44] E.g. Homer, *Illiad* 2.695-709; see Spittler, *Animals*, 151.

[45] Spittler, *Animals,* 151; G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 113. See Chariton, *Chaer*. 5.10.1; Petronius, *Satyr*. 129.1; Aelius Aristedes, *Orat*. 3.365; Lucian, *Dial. mort*. 28 (23), *Luct*. 5.6.

merchant who is amazed at his relationship with the hero. How, the merchant wants to know, does the vinedresser interact regularly with someone who died long ago at Troy? "Has he come back to life," he asks, "or what?"[46] This question leads to a discussion of the appearance, nature and function of Protesilaos' body:

> "Can you then describe him, and share with me what you've seen?" "…I suppose he is about twenty years old. As suits the age at which he campaigned at Troy, a light down grows on his chin, and he smells sweeter than myrtle in the fall… He is perhaps ten cubits tall—I think he would have grown even beyond that if he hadn't died in his youth."… "How fares now the love he used to feel for Laodameia?" "He loves her as much as she does him. They treat each other like passionate newlyweds." "Do you embrace him when he comes, or does he elude your grasp like smoke, as he does the poets?" "He is glad to be embraced by me, and allows me to kiss him and linger on his neck."…"Where does he spend the rest of his time?" "Partly in the underworld, he says, partly in Phthia, and partly also in Troy, where his comrades are; when he is hunting wild boar and deer, he comes here at midday and stretches out for a nap." "Where does he meet Laodameia?" "In the underworld, stranger…" "Do they take meals together, or is that unlawful?" "I have never encountered him eating, nor have I known him to drink. I do, however, pour him a libation in the evening with wine from these Thasian vines, which he himself planted. When summer comes or fall begins I serve him fruits of the season at noon; in the spring when the moon is full I pour milk into this cooler and say, 'Here is the liquid of the season for you to drink.' When I've said this I depart, and what I've left is eaten and drunk quick as a wink." "What does he say about the age at which he died?" "He mourns about his sufferings… he has the scar imprinted on his right thigh; for he says he washed the wound away along with the rest of his body." "How does he engage in exercise…?" … "When he runs, one can't even find his tracks, and his foot makes no impression on the earth." "But there are footprints sunk into the racecourse large enough to fit a ten-cubit-tall hero." "Those are from when he is walking or exercising in some other way. When he runs, the earth remains unmarked, for he is almost suspended, and lifted up as if he were skipping across the waves."[47]

Here, the vinedresser and his Phoenician visitor discuss a list of criteria used to adjudicate the nature of the resurrected body: What does the resurrected Protesilaos look like—is he physically recognizable as the person he was when he died? Does he still bear wounds/infirmities he had at

---

[46] Philostratus, *Heroicus* 2.9. *Αναβεβιωκὼς ἢ τί;* Philostratus. *Heroicus. Gymnasticus. Discourses 1 and 2,* ed. and trans. Jeffrey Rusten and Jason König, Loeb Classical Library 521 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[47] Philostratus, *Heroicus* 10.1-13.3.

the time of his death? Can he have sex? Is he able to be touched and embraced, and does he leave footprints? Does he exist on earth, or in a divine realm? And, significantly, is he able to eat and drink?

The rhetorical objective of the *Heroicus* in discussing Protesilaos' body is arguably different from that of the early Christian texts discussed above. The takeaway in this instance seems to be not so much that the resurrected Protesilaos is indubitably fleshly in some way, but rather that he defies easy understanding or categorization:[48] he retains the physical appearance he had when he died, wounds included; he is solid to the touch, can be embraced and have intercourse, and sometimes leaves footprints; on the other hand, he can travel freely between earth and the underworld, sometimes doesn't leave footprints, and is never seen to eat or drink, but rather consumes food and drink offerings in an ambiguous manner that is maybe human, maybe divine. At the conclusion of the *Heroicus*, the Phoenician finally admits that the nature of Protesilaos' resurrection is clearly not for him to understand: "But since you have lavished on me stories of heroes, I won't ask you any more how he came back to life, since you say that he considers this off-limits and perhaps a forbidden topic."[49] The nature of the boundary between death and life, between flesh and divinity, is mysterious and fluid; the ambiguity evident in the vinedresser's reports of Protesilaos' eating habits, among other factors, serves to demonstrate this uncertainty. Even with a somewhat divergent outcome, however, the links between eating/drinking and fleshly materiality are clear.

**The Nature of the General Resurrection**

[48] Note that some ambiguity exists concerning the resurrected bodies described by Luke and Pseudo-Justin as well: Pseudo-Justin's resurrected body, as we have seen, does not retain infirmities or reproductive capabilities; Luke's resurrected Jesus can prevent himself from being recognized, then appear suddenly. I suggest, though, that these early Christian texts have an investment in the fleshly nature of the resurrected body that Philostratus lacks.

[49] Philostratus, *Heroicus* 58.2.

Of the texts explored thus far, it is clear that the canonical gospels, if not Paul, focus to varying extents on the fleshly nature of Jesus' resurrection; Luke 24 in particular participates in a wider discourse that leverages eating as proof of the flesh's return to life. What, however, do these texts understand to be the nature of the general resurrection, and what is its relationship to Jesus' resurrection? How, if at all, does or will the flesh exist and function in this resurrection of all believers?

In contrast to their pointed statements concerning the nature of Jesus' resurrection and resurrected body, the gospels have relatively little to say about the general resurrection. As Lehtipuu argues, the passage of time after Jesus' death during which the much-anticipated general resurrection failed to occur may have contributed to a perception of the relationship between the two resurrections as somewhat fraught. The author of Luke-Acts, for example, seems to downplay the distinction between them, referring to Jesus' resurrection in one passage from Acts and the general resurrection in the next as if they are one and the same.[50] In fact, the writers of the canonical gospels have relatively little to say about general resurrection specifically, and do not depict it as a major subject of Jesus' teaching.[51]

A notable exception to the gospels' relative failure to address general resurrection may be found in Jesus' conversation with a group of Sadducees, as narrated in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.[52] The version that appears in Matthew is similar to that of Mark, which reads as follows:

> And some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a certain brother dies and leaves a wife and no child, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. There were seven brothers. And the first took a wife and, when he died, left no offspring. And the second married her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. All seven did

[50] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 48-49; See Acts 3:15; 26; 4:1-2.

[51] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 50.

[52] See Matthew 23:23-33; Mark 12:18-25; Luke 20:27-40.

> not leave offspring. Last of all, the woman also died. In the resurrection [when they rise], whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." Jesus said to them, "do you not err because of this—that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but rather they will be like angels in heaven.[53]

This passage proved popular among those wishing to argue against the possibility of a fleshly general resurrection. If the risen would not marry as they had on earth, but be "like angels in heaven," then the existence in the resurrection of a non-angelic, all-too-human body—with the capacity to perform all of the physiological functions that marriage was understood to require—seemed unlikely. Jesus' response to the Sadducees is, however, arguably ambiguous. As Lehtipuu argues, "being 'like angels in heaven' does not mean that the dead become angels or even that they will be in heaven."[54] Jesus does seem, at least in this version of the passage, to endorse the Sadducees' assumption that the resurrection, were it to occur, would be a future event. Luke's interpretation of Jesus' response is less clear:

> Jesus said to [the Sadducees], "The children of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection."[55]

---

[53] Mark 12:18-25, translation mine. *Καὶ ἔρχονται Σαδδουκαῖοι πρὸς αὐτόν, οἵτινες λέγουσιν ἀνάστασιν μὴ εἶναι, καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν λέγοντες· διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς ἔγραψεν ἡμῖν ὅτι ἐάν τινος ἀδελφὸς ἀποθάνῃ καὶ καταλίπῃ γυναῖκα καὶ μὴ ἀφῇ τέκνον, ἵνα λάβῃ ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ ἐξαναστήσῃ σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ. ἑπτὰ ἀδελφοὶ ἦσαν· καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἔλαβεν γυναῖκα καὶ ἀποθνήσκων οὐκ ἀφῆκεν σπέρμα· καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἀπέθανεν μὴ καταλιπὼν σπέρμα· καὶ ὁ τρίτος ὡσαύτως· καὶ οἱ ἑπτὰ οὐκ ἀφῆκαν σπέρμα. ἔσχατον πάντων καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἀπέθανεν. ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει [ὅταν ἀναστῶσιν] τίνος αὐτῶν ἔσται γυνή; οἱ γὰρ ἑπτὰ ἔσχον αὐτὴν γυναῖκα. Ἔφη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐ διὰ τοῦτο πλανᾶσθε μὴ εἰδότες τὰς γραφὰς μηδὲ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ; ὅταν γὰρ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῶσιν οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται, ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ὡς ἄγγελοι ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.*

[54] Lehtipuu, *Debates*, 51. See also Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God,* 416-422.

[55] Luke 20:34-36, trans. Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 52. *καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου γαμοῦσιν καὶ γαμίσκονται, οἱ δὲ καταξιωθέντες τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐκείνου τυχεῖν καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι δύνανται, ἰσάγγελοι γάρ εἰσιν καὶ υἱοί εἰσιν θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες.*

Luke's Jesus seems to make a distinction not between the present time (in which there is marriage) and the future time of the resurrection (in which there is no marriage), but rather between the "children of this age" (who marry) and the "children of the resurrection" (who do not). This leaves open the possibility of general resurrection as a phenomenon taking place in the present, a phenomenon that may be attained and embodied through the practice of a particular type of ascetic lifestyle.[56]

If, as we have seen, the gospels provide at least some details concerning Jesus' resurrected body, but a paucity of analysis concerning the body in the general resurrection, the opposite is true for the Pauline letters. 1 Corinthians 15 in particular arguably functions as the single most central text for second and third century debates around the (im)possibility of a general resurrection involving flesh and/or body.[57] In this, the conclusion of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Paul engages in dialogue with opponents—presumably members of the Corinthian community—who claim that "there is no resurrection of the dead."[58] Paul responds first by affirming Christ's resurrection—from which, Paul implies, his own authority derives[59]—as a prototype for general resurrection, and by citing a communal practice of offering baptism for the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ's resurrection didn't happen either, and baptizing the dead is pointless.[60]

---

[56] Turid Karlsen Seim, "Children of the Resurrection: Perspectives on Angelic Asceticism in Luke-Acts," in *Asceticism and the New Testament,* eds. Leif E. Vaage and Vincent L. Wimbush (New York: Routledge, 1999), 119; Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 53.

[57] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 24-26. See n. 24 for a sampling of relevant scholarship.

[58] 1 Corinthians 15:12.

[59] See e.g. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets,* 159-163. Paul leverages his own status as (he claims) the final witness in a list of legitimate witness to Christ's resurrection as proof of his own authority to speak about resurrection, denying the validity of the Corinthians' experiences of the resurrected Christ.

[60] See 1 Corinthians 15:1-29.

Scholarship is divided on whether the Corinthian opponents in question rejected bodily resurrection in favor of spiritual resurrection, or rejected the futurity of resurrection in favor of a resurrection available in the present.[61] Whatever the exact nature of their objection, the role of the body in the resurrection appears to have been a significant sticking point: "But someone asks, 'How are the dead raised? With what sort of body do they come?"[62] Paul responds to this hypothetical interlocutor with an extended comparison of the mortal body to a seed:

> Fool, that which you sow doesn't become alive unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that will come to be, but a naked seed, perhaps of wheat or one of the other grains. And God gives it a body as he has desired, and to each seed its own body… so also it is with the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruptibility. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a soulish[63] body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a soulish body, there is also a spiritual body.[64]

Just like the process by which a seed germinates—it is planted in the ground, decays, and produces a sprout of grain—Paul envisions the process of resurrection as one of "radical transformation."[65] The grain that sprouts is not the same as the seed that gave rise to it. Likewise, the body that will rise is not the same body that dies and decays: after all, Paul says explicitly in 1 Corinthians 15:50, "flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God, nor can the

---

[61] Christopher M. Tuckett, "The Corinthians who say 'There is no resurrection of the dead' (1 Cor. 15,12)," in *The Corinthian Correspondence,* ed. R. Bieringer (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 247-275; Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 53-54.

[62] 1 Corinthians 15:35. *Ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις· πῶς ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί; ποίῳ δὲ σώματι ἔρχονται;*

[63] I follow numerous scholars in translating *ψυχικός* as "soulish." As Lehtipuu argues, "even though this is not idiomatic English, it highlights the interconnectedness between the adjective and the noun *ψυχή* without carrying the unfortunate connotations attached to the adjective 'psychic'." Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 54 n. 206.

[64] 1 Corinthians 15:36-38; 42-44. *ἄφρων, σὺ ὃ σπείρεις, οὐ ζῳοποιεῖται ἐὰν μὴ ἀποθάνῃ· καὶ ὃ σπείρεις, οὐ τὸ σῶμα τὸ γενησόμενον σπείρεις ἀλλὰ γυμνὸν κόκκον εἰ τύχοι σίτου ἤ τινος τῶν λοιπῶν· ὁ δὲ θεὸς δίδωσιν αὐτῷ σῶμα καθὼς ἠθέλησεν, καὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν σπερμάτων ἴδιον σῶμα… Οὕτως καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν. σπείρεται ἐν φθορᾷ, ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει· σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. Εἰ ἔστιν σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἔστιν καὶ πνευματικόν.*

[65] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 6.

corruptible inherit the incorruptible."[66] Nevertheless, alongside this emphasis on transformation runs a parallel emphasis on continuity. Paul continues:

> Look, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we will be changed. For it is necessary for this corruptible thing to put on incorruptibility, and for this mortal thing to put on immortality. And when this corruptible thing puts on incorruptibility and this mortal thing puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will come to pass: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, Death, is your victory? Where, Death, is your sting?"[67]

As Bynum argues, "the sheaf of grain is not, in form, the same as the bare seed, nor is it clear that it is made of the same stuff. It acquires a new, a 'spiritual' body. But something accounts for identity. It is *that which is sown* that quickens."[68] Indeed, Paul is clear: the spiritual bodies that will populate the resurrection are *ours;* it is *we* who will be changed. The resurrection of the dead will somehow involve both profound transformation and undeniable continuity.

The ambiguity inherent in this model allows for the proliferation, over the next few hundred years, of widely diverse conceptions of resurrection along a spectrum between the two poles of transformation and continuity. By emphasizing different aspects of the argument of 1 Corinthians 15 (as well as of a similar passage found in 2 Corinthians 5),[69] various second- and

---

[66] 1 Corinthians 15:50. *Τοῦτο δέ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομῆσαι οὐ δύναται οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ.*

[67] 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. *ἰδοὺ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω· πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα, πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα, ἐν ἀτόμῳ, ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ, ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι· σαλπίσει γὰρ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐγερθήσονται ἄφθαρτοι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀλλαγησόμεθα. Δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν. ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσηται ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσηται ἀθανασίαν, τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος·* κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νῖκος. ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ νῖκος; ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον;

[68] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 6.

[69] "For we know that if our earthly tent-dwelling is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not made by human hands. For in this tent we groan, desiring to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, if indeed, having taken it off, we will not be found naked. For being weighed down, we groan in this tent, from which we do not wish to be unclothed but further clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." *Οἴδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ*

third-century thinkers leverage Pauline authority to support everything from a resurrection involving no body in any sense to a resurrection incorporating every last long-decayed particle that once constituted the mortal flesh (although, as we shall see, defending the latter position in light of 1 Corinthians 15:50 requires more than a modicum of creativity). In constructing and debating various conceptions of the role of eating and drinking in the resurrection, the thinkers whose work the following chapters explore are, with few exceptions, immersed in and dependent upon the language and imagery of 1 Corinthians 15 perhaps more so any other text.

**Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection***

Just as participants in the second- and third-century debates about the nature of the general resurrection very often engage with a shared set of authoritative materials, so too do they draw on a relatively standard series of arguments. One relatively brief, likely second- or early third-century treatise, Pseudo-Justin Martyr's *On the Resurrection*, provides a particularly clear presentation of many of these arguments, and of the proof-like logic with which they frequently unfold. This text is not sufficiently substantial in its discussion of eating and drinking to merit extensive analysis in the chapters that follow. Yet it provides a useful "test case" for my introduction, allowing me to demonstrate the ways in which early Christian thinkers frequently presented and defended their particular conceptions of the resurrected body, including its relationship to food and drink. An examination of pseudo-Justin's rhetoric—particularly concerning the role of various parts of the body and their functions in both mortal and

*ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες, εἴ γε καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκήνει στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ' ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς*. (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). Note the difference between this imagery, which seems to emphasize the enveloping or incorporating of the mortal body into the resurrection body, and the seed metaphor, based on which the existence of material continuity between the two bodies seems more difficult to argue.

resurrected life, as well as the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and the general resurrection—will prove useful for the chapters that follow.

Dating and Authorship

Relatively little information is available concerning the origin and authorship of the treatise *On the Resurrection*. The text is extant only in fragmentary excerpts preserved in the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus (ca. 650-750), which attributes it to "Saint Justin, the philosopher and martyr" (τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰουστίνου τοῦ φιλοσόφου καὶ μάρτυρος ἐκ τοῦ *περὶ ἀναστάσεως*).[70] Recent scholarship has called this attribution into question, assigning the treatise variously to Athenagoras,[71] Hippolytus,[72] or "deutero-Justin" (a student of Justin's).[73] Regardless of authorship, scholars are generally in agreement that the pro-fleshly resurrection arguments the treatise presents fit within the context of the second or early third centuries CE, citing extensive parallels with the work of Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus.[74] Because it is the dating of the treatise, rather than the precise historical identity of

[70] Alberto D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino. Sulla Resurrezione: Discurso cristiano del II secolo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2001), 20; M. Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur: De Resurrectione Mortuorum* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 17.

[71] M. Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin: Über der Auferstehung: Text und Studie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 203-232.

[72] Alice Whealey, "Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione:* Athenagoras or Hippolytus?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 420-430.

[73] D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino,* 286-287.

[74] D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino,*100-106; Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin,*82; Whealey, "Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione,"* 420-430; M.J. Edwards, book review of A. D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino. Sulla resurrezione: Discorso cristiano del II secolo*; M. Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin: Über der Auferstehung* in *Journal of Theological Studies* 55,1 (2004) 333-336. A majority of scholars, including D'Anna and Heimgartner, argue that Irenaeus knows and depends on pseudo-Justin, thus providing a *terminus ante quem* of ca. 180 CE. Others argue that pseudo-Justin depends on Irenaeus (see F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Loofs' Asiatic Source [Iqa and the Ps-Justin's *De Resurrectione*," *ZNW* 37 [1936]: 35-60), while still others argue that there is no dependency, but rather use of a common source (see Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochen adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus,* Texte und Untersuchingen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Bd. 46, Heft 2 (4. Reihe, Bd. 1, Hft. 2) (Leipzig: J. C. Heinrichs, 1930), 211-232. See Taylor Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 32-33, n. 4.??

its author, that is significant for the purposes of this project, I refer to the author as "pseudo-Justin," following scholarly convention.

The Faith and Proof of All Things

The treatise opens with a pointed declaration concerning the character and identity of truth:

> The *λόγος* of the truth is free, and is its own authority. It is not at all willing to submit to any test of refutation, nor to endure scrutiny by its hearers for the sake of proof. For its nobility and persuasiveness demand that the one who sent it be trusted. And the word of truth is sent from God, and for this reason the freedom it has is not vulgar. For, being brought forth with authority, it does not reasonably wish that demonstrations of what is said be required, since there are no others outside of truth itself—the very thing that God is. For every proof is stronger and more trustworthy than whatever is being proven, if indeed that which is disbelieved at first, before the proof comes, finds belief when this [proof] is provided and it appears just as was said. But nothing is stronger or more trustworthy than the truth.[75]

Before engaging with the nuts and bolts of the anti-fleshly resurrection arguments that pseudo-Justin intends to counter, he presents a rhetorical frame that will govern the entire work. Responding, most likely, to criticisms leveled by non-Christian philosophers like Galen and Celsus—both of whom reportedly derided Christians as simpletons who relied on blind faith at the expense of rational thought[76]—pseudo-Justin argues that *πίστις* in the face of truth is not, in

[75] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.1-6. *Ὁ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας λόγος ἐστὶν ἐλεύθερός τε καὶ αὐτεξούσιος ὑπὸ μηδεμίαν βάσανον ἐλέγχου θέλων πίπτειν μηδὲ τὴν παρὰ τοῖς ἀκούουσι διὰ ἀποδείξεως ἐξέτασιν ὑπομένειν. Τὸ γὰρ εὐγενὲς αὐτοῦ καὶ πεποιθὸς αὐτῷ τῷ πέμψαντι πιστεύεσθαι θέλει. Λόγος δὲ ἀληθείας ἀπὸ θεοῦ πέμπεται. Διὸ καὶ τὸ ἐλεύθερον τὸ περὶ αὐτὸν οὐ φορτικόν. Κατ᾽ἐξουσίαν γὰρ φερόμενος εἰκότως οὐδὲ τὰς ἀποδείξεις τῶν λεγομένων ἀπαιτεῖσθαι θέλει, ὅτι μηδὲ εἰσιν ἄλλαι πάρεξ αὐτῆς ἀληθείας, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ὁ θεός. Πᾶσα γὰρ ἀπόδειξις ἰσχυροτέρα καὶ πιστοτέρα τοῦ ἀποδεικνυμένου τυγχάνει, εἴγε τὸ πρότερον ἀπιστούμενον, πρινὴ τὴν ἀπόδειξιν ἐλθεῖν, ταύτης κομισθείσης ἔτυχε πίστεως καὶ τοιοῦτον ἐφάνη, ὁποῖον ἐλέγετο. Τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας ἰσχυρότερον οὐδὲν οὐδὲ πιστότερον*. Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin*. Translations of *On the Resurrection* are mine unless otherwise noted.

[76] Cornelius Hoogerwerf, "Proving the Resurrection of the Flesh: The Use of Natural Philosophy and Galenic Epistemology in Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione*," in Joseph Verheyden, Andreas Merkt, and Tobias Nicklas, eds., *"If Christ has not been raised…": Studies on the Reception of the Resurrection Stories and the Belief in the Resurrection in the Early Church* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus/Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 115; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 141.

fact, vulgar or common, but rather is the only possible approach. Proof is, by definition, more trustworthy than that which it proves (otherwise, why ask for it in the first place?). Since nothing is more trustworthy than the λόγος of truth, which is both sent from and explicitly equated with God, submitting it to regular procedures for demonstration and proof would be both unnecessary and unacceptable—comparable, pseudo-Justin continues, to seeking additional confirmation for what the senses already perceive.[77] On the contrary, those who desire to know and understand truth need not look far:

> And God, the father of the entirety, who is the perfect mind, is truth. And the λόγος, which became his son, came to us, bearing flesh, revealing both himself and the father, giving us in himself resurrection from the dead and afterwards eternal life. And this is Jesus Christ, our savior and master. Therefore he himself is the both the faith and the proof of himself and of all things.[78]

This passage functions as the thesis statement of the treatise. God is ultimate truth, able to be apprehended only by means of faith, rather than proven by means of rational argument. Indeed, pseudo-Justin continues here, the only "proof" of God that is necessary or possible is readily available through faith in the person of Jesus Christ. As God's son and λόγος, it is Jesus

---

[77] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.6. Pseudo-Justin is not unique in this conception of epistemology as faith-based. In opposition to those who would dismiss πίστις as inferior to γνῶσις, Clement of Alexandria also defends πίστις as the sole means of apprehending God, the first principle, which precedes knowledge and serves as is its own proof: "What has to be judged is not to be trusted before it is judged, so that what is in need of judgment cannot be a first principle. Accordingly, while we reasonably grasp the indemonstrable first principle by faith, and receive from the first principle itself demonstrations concerning the first principle in abundance, we are educated by the voice of the Lord towards the knowledge of the truth" (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.(16.)95.5-6, trans. Hoogerwerf). Like pseudo-Justin, Clement explicitly equates truth/the "indemonstrable first principle" with God, and also draws a comparison between πίστις and sense perception as primary means of adjudicating truth. In making this argument, both Clement and pseudo-Justin seem to draw on the epistemologies of thinkers such as Aristotle and Galen, both of whom argued for the existence of rational first principles that precede knowledge and are self-evident, indemonstrable, and demand belief in and of themselves. See Hoogerwerf, "Proving the Resurrection of the Flesh," 141-146; Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin,* 83-86; D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino,* 191-202.

[78] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.9-10. *ἔστι δὲ ἀλήθεια ὁ θεός, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, ὅς ἐστι νοῦς τέλειος, οὗ γενόμενος υἱὸς ὁ λόγος ἦλθεν εἰς ἡμᾶς σάρκα φορέας, ἑαυτόν τε καὶ τὸν πατέρα μηνύων, διδοὺς ἡμῖν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν καὶ τὴν μετὰ ταῦτα ζωὴν αἰώνιον. ἔστι δὲ οὗτος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ δεσπότης. οὗτος τοίνυν αὐτός ἐστιν ἑαυτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ὅλων ἁπάντων πίστις τε καὶ ἀπόδειξις.*

himself—in the fleshly form in which he experienced life, death, and resurrection—who reveals and embodies truth.[79] In his ensuing attempts to refute what he presents as the anti-resurrection arguments of his opponents, as well as to demonstrate the inevitability of a general resurrection involving flesh, pseudo-Justin returns again and again to arguments based on the actions, functions, abilities, and characteristics of Jesus, which, he insists, are both compatible with and superior to those offered by various philosophical sects. In doing so, pseudo-Justin constructs a resurrected body whose form and functionality is profoundly shaped by that of Jesus' body.

Parts versus Functions

After presenting the criteria by which he intends to adjudicate truth and falsehood, pseudo-Justin introduces the position of "those who say inferior things,"[80] ostensibly a group of people who argue that the general resurrection will not include the flesh. Even if these "opponents" are likely rhetorical foils rather than specific individuals or groups, their objections—and pseudo-Justin's responses—are indicative of the ongoing debate around the nature and possibilities of the resurrected flesh (or lack thereof).[81] Indeed, the anti-fleshly resurrection arguments they offer are nearly ubiquitous in second- and third-century treatises on resurrection: that the flesh, once decayed, cannot be restored to its former condition; that the flesh is both sinful and gross, and its resurrection would be undesirable.[82] Following these is a third argument, which pseudo-Justin treats as the crux of his opponents' objection to fleshly resurrection:

---

[79] Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin,* 137.

[80] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 2.1.

[81] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 19-21.

[82] See pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 2.2-4.

> And they contrive empty arguments such as these: If the flesh is raised, it will surely be raised either complete and in possession of all its members (*μόρια*), or imperfect. But it being raised incomplete indicates powerlessness on the part of the one doing the raising—if some [members] are able to be saved, but some aren't—and if all the members [are saved], [the flesh] will clearly have its parts (*μέρη*). How is it not unnatural to say that these [parts] exist after the resurrection from the dead, since the Savior has said, "They will neither marry nor will they be given in marriage, but they will be like angels in heaven"? And the angels, they say, neither have flesh nor do they eat nor do they have sexual intercourse, and thus neither will there be a fleshly resurrection.[83]

In this passage, as Petrey demonstrates, pseudo-Justin's opponents marshal Jesus' response to the Sadducees as found in the Synoptic Gospels in support of the "parts versus functions" argument. Based in the Aristotelian notion that every part of the human body has a particular *telos* ("goal" or "purpose"), without which its existence would be pointless,[84] this argument operates on the assumption that the body's members are inseparable from the various functions they perform. If all of the parts that constitute human flesh are included in the resurrection, they will therefore necessarily continue to perform their intended functions, as they did during life. Conversely, if any bodily function is incompatible with resurrection, the part or parts that perform it cannot exist in the resurrection either, making resurrection of the entire flesh impossible.[85]

For pseudo-Justin's opponents, Jesus' comparison of resurrected persons to angels clearly implies that the flesh and multiple functions performed by it cannot transfer into the resurrection: "the angels, *they say,* neither have flesh nor do they eat nor do they have sex." This perspective would likely have been consonant with contemporaneous understandings of the nature and

---

[83] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 2.5-12. *Καὶ σοφίσματα πλέκουσι τοιαῦτα. Εἰ ἡ σάρξ ἀνίσταται, ἤτοι ὁλόκληρος ἀναστήσεται καὶ πάντα τὰ μόρια ἔχουσα ἢ ἀτελής. ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἐλλειπῆ μέλλειν αὐτὴν ἀνίστασθαι ἀδυναμίαν ἐμφαίνει τοῦ ἀνιστῶντος, εἰ τὰ μὲν ἠδυνήθη σῶσαι, τὰ δὲ οὔ. εἰ δὲ πάντα τὰ μέρη, καὶ τὰ μόρια ἕξει δηλονότι. Ταῦτα λέγειν ὑπαρχειν μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν πῶς οὐκ ἄτοπον, τοῦ σωτῆρος εἰρηκότος.* Οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίσκονται, ἀλλ᾽ἔσονται ὡς ἄγγελοι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ; *Οἱ δὲ ἄγγελοι, φασίν, οὔτε σάρκα ἔχουσιν οὔτε ἐσθίουσιν οὔτε συνουσιάζονται, ὥστε οὐδὲ σαρκικὴ ἀνάστασις γενήσεται.*

[84] Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 70-72.

[85] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 21-22.

abilities of angels. A widespread tradition dating from the late Second Temple period insists that angels do not eat and drink as humans do, but instead receive some form of sustenance from their proximity to God.[86] Interpreting Genesis 18, in which Abraham prepares a meal for angels disguised as humans, Philo's *On the Life of Abraham,* Josephus' *Antiquities*, *Targum Neofiti*, and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* are clear that Abraham's angelic visitors do not actually consume the food and drink he offers, but only appear to do so.[87] Similarly, in the first-century CE *Testament of Abraham,* the angel Michael is commanded by God to "Go down to my friend, Abraham, and whatever he should say to you, this do, and whatever he should eat, you also eat with him" (4:7). The following interaction results:

> [Michael] said, "Lord, all the heavenly spirits are incorporeal, and they neither eat nor drink. Now he has set before me a table with an abundance of all the good things which are earthly and perishable. And now, Lord, what shall I do? How shall I escape his notice while I am sitting at one table with him?" The Lord said, "Go down to him, and do not be concerned about this. For when you are seated with him I shall send upon you an all-devouring spirit, and, from your hands and through your mouth, it will consume everything which is on the table. Make merry with him in everything."[88]

Michael eats only in appearance. The food Abraham presents is actually consumed by an "all-devouring spirit."

The tradition concerning angels and sexual intercourse is somewhat more equivocal. Jesus' response to the Sadducees as described in the Synoptic Gospels seems to operate on the logic that angels were celibate—logic that, as we see, pseudo-Justin's opponents adopt without difficulty. Genesis 6:1-4, however, which describes sexual relations between "sons of God" and

---

[86] D. Goodman, "Do Angels Eat?" *JJS* 37 (1986) 174; Kevin P. Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 179; 182; Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 45 nn. 139, 151.

[87] Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels*, 182-184. See Philo *Abr*. 118; Josephus *Ant*. 1.196-197; *Tg*. *Neo*. and *Tg*. *Ps-J*. on Genesis 18-19.

[88] *The Testament of Abraham* 4:9-10. See Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels*, 189-191.

human women (and resulting hybrid offspring), loomed large in the imagination of the Second Temple period and beyond. A number of texts, including *1 Enoch* 1-36 ("The Book of Watchers"), at least one version of Genesis 6 in the LXX, *Jubilees*, Josephus' *Antiquities,* Philo's *Questions and Solutions on Genesis,* and the Epistle of Jude explicitly identify the "sons of God" as angels.[89] It was not, therefore, considered outside the realm of possibility that angels could have intercourse, even with humans. It was, however, made overwhelmingly clear that angel-human relations constituted an inexcusable transgression of the boundary between divine and human, and that the offspring resulting from these relations should never have existed. Most interpretations of Genesis 6 understand this transgression as the cause of the Flood, and many identify it as the origin of evil on earth.[90] The position that angels were celibate, then, seems to have been a moral one rather than a technical one: even if angels are capable of intercourse, it represents such a fundamental violation of their nature that those having engaged in sexual activity are no longer considered angels.[91] A passage from *1 Enoch,* in which God speaks to the angels in question, supports this interpretation:

> Indeed you, formerly you were spiritual, (having) eternal life, and immortal in all the generations of the world. That is why (formerly) I did not make wives for you, for the dwelling of the spiritual beings of heaven is heaven.[92]

If, then—according to pseudo-Justin's opponents— angels do not have sex, and those having attained resurrection are like angels, it follows that those having attained resurrection will not have sex. Because the parts of the flesh are inseparable from the functions they perform, the

---

[89] Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels,* 200-224. See 1 Enoch 6:1-4; Genesis 6:2 in LXX Codex A; *Jubilees* 4:15; Josephus *Ant*. 1.73; Philo *QG* 1.92; Jude 5-10.

[90] Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels,* 224-225.

[91] Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 79.

[92] *1 Enoch* 15:6-7. See Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 79.

absence of sex from the resurrection necessitates the absence of the sexual organs. The absence of the sexual organs, in turn, necessitates that the flesh, were it to exist in the resurrection, would be incomplete. An incompletely resurrected fleshly body would, as the opponents point out, constitute evidence of a lack of power on God's part to raise the entire flesh. One must inevitably conclude, then, that the resurrection will not involve any sort of flesh at all.

Pseudo-Justin is quick to launch an extended counter to this argument. He ignores, for the moment, the issue of eating, focusing instead on sexual activity. "So [the opponents] say," he elaborates, "if the body[93] is raised entire and in possession of all its members, it is necessary for the functions of these members to exist also: for the womb to conceive, and the male member to impregnate, and the other members likewise."[94] His opponents' entire position, he argues, hinges on the soundness of this claim,[95] which contains an obvious fallacy:

> Now on [the] one hand it seems clear that the parts doing these things do them here, but on the other hand that it is not necessary to do these things according to principle. In order that this might be clear, let us consider thus: The function of the womb is to get pregnant and the male part to sow seed. But just as, if these parts are destined to do these functions, so it is not necessary for them to do them on principle (at least we see many women who do not get pregnant, such as the sterile, even though they have wombs), thus it is not immediately necessary to both have a womb and get pregnant. But even some women who are not barren abolish sexual intercourse, being virgins from the beginning; and others from a certain time. And we see also men being virgins from the beginning, and some from a certain time; so that through them unlawful marriage on account of desire is destroyed.[96]

---

[93] Note that pseudo-Justin seems to use σάρξ and σῶμα interchangeably, with no obvious difference in meaning. See Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 20.

[94] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection*, 3.1. *φασὶ τοίνυν, εἰ ὁλοκληρον ἀναστήσεται τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὰ μόρια αὐτοῦ πάντα ἕξει, ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν μορίων ὑπάρξαι, μήτραν μὲν κυΐσκειν, σπερματίζειν δὲ μόριον ἀνδρὸς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ δὲ ὁμοίως.*

[95] See pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 3.2.

[96] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 3.3-10, trans. Petrey. *Τὸ μὲν οὖν τὰ μόρια ἐνεργοῦντα ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖν, ἅπερ ἐνταῦθα φαίνεται, δῆλον. Τὸ δὲ κατ᾽ἀνάγκης αὐτὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐνεργεῖν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον. ἵνα δὲ σαφὲς ᾖ τὸ λεγόμενον, οὕτω σκοπήσωμεν. Μήτρας ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια τὸ κυΐσκειν καὶ μορίου ἀνδρικοῦ τὸ σπερμαίνειν. ὥσπερ δὲ εἰ ταῦτα μέλλει ἐνεργεῖν ταύτας τὰς ἐνεργείας, οὕτως οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον αὐτοῖς ἐστι τὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐνεργεῖν. ὁρῶμεν γοῦν πολλὰς γυναῖκας μὴ κυΐσκούσας ὡς τὰς στείρας καὶ μήτρας ἐχούσας. Οὕτως οὐκ εὐθέως καὶ τὸ μήτραν ἔχειν καὶ κυΐσκειν ἀναγκάζει. ἄλλαι καὶ μὴ στεῖραι μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς*

Pseudo-Justin does not, in fact, disagree with his opponents' insistence on the absence of sexual function from the resurrection: on the contrary, he argues that abstinence is both possible and advantageous even during life. The point, however, is that the mortal body's capacity for celibacy clearly demonstrates that the separation of parts from their functions is possible: women who do not become pregnant, whether by choice or not, still have reproductive organs, as do men who elect to become or remain celibate. This is observable, pseudo-Justin continues, even in the animal world: both male and female mules are biologically incapable of procreation.[97] If reproductive parts can exist without performing their intended functions on earth, why not in the resurrection as well?

Categorizing Desire

In debating the extent to which sexual intercourse is necessary during life, pseudo-Justin draws heavily on a broader philosophical discourse concerning the nature of, and the appropriate human response to, various types of desire.[98] In his *Letter to Menoeceus*, for example, Epicurus writes,

> We must consider that of desires some are natural, others pointless, and of the natural some are necessary and others merely natural; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness, others for the repose of the body, and others for very life.[99]

---

*παρθενεύουσαι δὲ κατήργησαν τὴν συνουσίαν, ἕτεραι δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ χρόνου. Καὶ τοὺς ἄρρενας δὲ τοὺς μὲν ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς παρθενεύοντας ὁρῶμεν, τοὺς δὲ ἀπὸ χρόνου, ὥστε δι᾽ αὐτῶν καταλύεσθαι τὸν δι᾽ ἐπιθυμίας ἄνομον γάμον.*

[97] See pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 3.11-12.

[98] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 27-28; Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 77.

[99] Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127-128, in Cyril Bailey, *Epicurus: The Extant Remains* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926), translation modified. *Ἀναλογιστέον δὲ ὡς τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μέν εἰσι φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ κεναί, καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ μόνον. τῶν δ᾽ ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν.*

Epicurus envisions a sort of spectrum of desire, encompassing desires absolutely necessary for survival, health, and happiness, desires that, while not necessary, are at least natural, and "empty" desires that have no basis in nature or necessity. Various thinkers in antiquity locate the desire for sex at different points on this spectrum. Plato's *Republic*, for example, categorizes sex, together with eating, as a fundamentally natural and necessary activity, when practiced with restraint:[100]

> "So the desire to eat would be essential to health and well-being, meaning bread and relishes, wouldn't it?" "I think so." "The desire for bread is essential on both counts as it's beneficial and if it ceases we cannot stay alive." "Yes." "And so is the desire for relishes if it contributes in any way to one's well-being?" "Very much so." "But what about the desire going beyond this, for foods of a different sort from these, which, when it is disciplined and trained from an early age, most people can get rid of, and is harmful both to the body and to the soul's capacity for intelligence and temperance? It would be right to call it inessential, wouldn't it?" "Absolutely right." … "And we shall say the same about sexual and other desires?" "Yes."[101]

Although, according to Plato, an excessive appetite for food or sexual activity can be harmful, both desires, when realized unindulgently, are simultaneously beneficial and necessary for survival. Other participants in this conversation were less inclined to lump these two desires together. Elaborating on Epicurus' categories, Plutarch writes,

> Temperance, then, is a curtailment and an ordering of the desires that eliminate those that are extraneous and superfluous and discipline in modest and timely fashion those that are essential. You can, of course, observe countless differences in the desires… and the desire to eat and drink is at once natural and essential, while the pleasures of love, which, though they find their origin in nature, yet may be foregone and discarded without much inconvenience, have been called natural, but not essential. But there are desires of another kind, neither essential nor natural, that are imported in a deluge from without as a result of your inane illusions and because you lack true culture.[102]

---

[100] Kathy Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003), 39-41.

[101] Plato, *Republic* 8.559a-c. In Plato, *Republic, Volume II: Books 6-10*, ed. and trans. Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Loeb Classical Library 276 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[102] Plutarch, *Beasts are Rational,* 6, 989b-c. In Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume XII: Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon. On the Principle of Cold. Whether Fire or Water Is More Useful. Whether Land or Sea Animals Are Cleverer. Beasts Are Rational. On the Eating of Flesh,* trans. Harold Cherniss and W. C.

The desire to eat is the only desire that Plutarch places explicitly in the category of "both natural and necessary." Sexual activity, while at least recognized as natural, is considered to be inessential: it can, as Plutarch points out, be "foregone and discarded without much inconvenience."

The conclusion to pseudo-Justin's counterargument is reminiscent of Plutarch's point above, but with a significant difference:

> And when [Jesus Christ] was born and lived his life by the rest of the conduct of the flesh—I mean, by food, drink, and clothing—this one thing alone, through sexual intercourse, he did not do. Yet he allowed those desires of the flesh that are necessary to exist, but those that are not necessary he did not submit to. For lacking food, drink, and clothing, the flesh would die, but deprived of unlawful sexual intercourse, it experiences no harm.[103]

The strongest possible proof of the nonessential nature of sexual function is provided not by angels, mules, or even ordinary humans, but by the bodily needs and actions of Jesus himself. Unlike food, drink, and clothing—without which Jesus would have been unable to exist in the flesh—an individual can survive, as he did, without succumbing to sexual desire. Whereas, for Epicurus and Plutarch, desires are legitimized or delegitimized based in part on their "origin in nature," nature does not play a central role for pseudo-Justin.[104] It is, rather, Jesus—as "the faith

---

Helmbold, Loeb Classical Library 406 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957). *ἡ μὲν οὖν σωφροσύνη βραχύτης τίς ἐστιν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τάξις, ἀναιροῦσα μὲν τὰς ἐπεισάκτους καὶ περιττάς, καιρῷ δὲ καὶ μετριότητι κοσμοῦσα τὰς ἀναγκαίας. ταῖς δ᾽ ἐπιθυμίαις ἐνορᾷς που μυρίαν διαφοράν . . . καὶ τὴν περὶ τὴν βρῶσιν καὶ τὴν*[5] *πόσιν ἅμα τῷ φυσικῷ καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἔχουσαν· αἱ δὲ τῶν ἀφροδισίων αἷς ἀρχὰς ἡ φύσις ἐνδίδωσιν, ἔστι δέ που καὶ μὴ χρώμενον ἔχειν ἱκανῶς ἀπαλλαγέντα, φυσικαὶ μὲν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖαι δ᾽ ἐκλήθησαν. τὸ δὲ τῶν μήτ᾽ ἀναγκαίων μήτε φυσικῶν ἀλλ᾽ ἔξωθεν ὑπὸ δόξης κενῆς δι᾽ ἀπειροκαλίαν ἐπικεχυμένων γένος ὑμῶν μὲν ὀλίγου δεῖν τὰς φυσικὰς ἀπέκρυψεν ὑπὸ πλήθους ἁπάσας…*

[103] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 3.14-15, trans. Petrey. *Καὶ γεννηθεὶς καὶ πολιτευσάμενος τὴν λοιπὴν τῆς σαρκὸς πολιτείαν—λέγω δὲ ἐν τροφαῖς καὶ ποτοῖς καὶ ἐνδύμασι—ταύτην δὲ τὴν διὰ συνουσίας μόνον οὐκ εἰργάσατο, ἀλλὰ τὰς τῆς σαρκὸς ἐπιθυμίας ἅς μὲν ἀναγκαίας ὑπάρχειν κατεδέξατο, ἅς δὲ μὴ ἀναγκαίας οὐ προσήκατο. Τροφῆς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ποτοῦ καὶ ἐνδύματος ὑστερουμένη σὰρξ καὶ διαφθαρείη ἄν, συνουσίας δὲ στερουμένη ἀνόμου οὐδὲν ὅτι πάσχει κακόν.*

[104] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 29.

and the proof both of himself and of all things"[105]—whose body constitutes the final word on what is possible.

Moreover, the proof Jesus provides of the non-essential nature of sexual activity applies not only to the mortal body, but to the resurrected body as well. After all, argues pseudo-Justin,

> At the same time, [Jesus Christ] foretold that in the coming age the mixing through sexual intercourse is going to be destroyed, as he said: "The children belonging to this age marry and are given in marriage, yet the children belonging to the coming age neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they will be as angels in heaven." Let not those who are outside of belief marvel, if the flesh abandons these functions even now, that it will abandon them in the coming age.[106]

Laying claim to the central prooftext of his opponents' argument, pseudo-Justin re-deploys it (in a form closely resembling the Lukan version) to demonstrate that sexual *activities*—not sexual *body parts*—are incompatible with the resurrection.[107] Thus, a resurrection that includes the entire flesh—even the reproductive organs and genitalia—is possible.

Pseudo-Justin's focus on sexual parts and functions as primary areas of contestation is typical both of ancient debates around resurrection and of the scholarship that discusses them. As is so often the case, however, the issue of eating and drinking is also operative, if somewhat more peripherally. The engagement in *On the Resurrection* 2.11 with the tradition that angels do not eat or drink has led some scholars to assume that, for pseudo-Justin, an eating-drinking resurrected body would be just as impossible as a resurrected body that has sex.[108] Pseudo-Justin,

---

[105] Recall pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.10.

[106] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 3.16-18, trans. Petrey. *ἅμα δὲ καὶ τὴν μέλλουσαν καταργεῖσθαι διὰ συνουσίας μίξιν ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι προεμήνυσεν, ὥς φησιν*, οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος τούτου γαμοῦσι καὶ ἐκγαμίσκονται, *οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος* οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίσκονται, ἀλλ᾽ἔσονται ὡς ἄγγελοι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. *Μὴ θαυμαζέτωσαν οὖν οἱ τῆς πίστεως ἐκτός, εἰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καταργουμένην ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τούτοις σάρκα καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι καταργήσει.*

[107] See Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 26.

[108] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 134.

however, distances himself from this tradition, placing it squarely in the mouths of his opponents ("the angels, *they say,* neither have flesh nor do they eat nor do they have sex"). On the contrary, the parallel pseudo-Justin draws between Jesus' body and the resurrection body is dependent upon the supposition that eating and drinking, unlike sexual activity, are *not* functions that are separable from the parts that perform them. While pseudo-Justin doesn't explicitly play out this logic to its conclusion, a resurrected body constructed on the basis of pseudo-Justin's argumentation here would necessarily retain its digestive capabilities. Jesus, according to pseudo-Justin, participates only in those aspects of the "conduct of the flesh" that are absolutely necessary for the flesh to survive: eating, drinking, and wearing clothes. Eating, drinking, and wearing clothes are what make it possible for Jesus to exist as a fleshly entity. It therefore follows that the resurrection body—which, pseudo-Justin takes great pains to demonstrate, is also a fleshly entity—must do these things. Because (Jesus') flesh can exist without sexual intercourse, sexual intercourse will not have a role in the resurrection; because (Jesus') flesh cannot exist without food and drink, these things *must* have a role in the resurrection. Otherwise, pseudo-Justin's central argument—that "in the resurrection the flesh will rise complete"[109]—does not stand.

The section of the treatise directly following the "parts vs. functions" conversation further confirms the soundness and pervasiveness of the parallel that pseudo-Justin draws between Jesus and the resurrected human body. In this case, his opponents' challenge pertains to yet another popular topic in second- and third-century discussions of resurrection, the role of disease and disability. If a person is suffering from any sort of physical infirmity at the time of death, wouldn't a fleshly resurrection require the transferal of that infirmity into the resurrection?

[109] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 4.4.

Wouldn't the flesh necessarily "rise the same as it falls"?[110] Pseudo-Justin refutes this argument as follows:

> Truly the eyes of their hearts are blind, for they have not seen on earth "the blind seeing, the physically impaired walking" at [Jesus'] word. Everything the Savior did, [he did] firstly in order that the words [spoken] about him through the prophets might be fulfilled, that "the blind will see, the deaf will hear," et cetera, but also in service of the belief that in the resurrection the flesh will rise entire. For if on earth he healed the weaknesses of the flesh and made the body whole, how much more will he do so in the resurrection, so that the flesh will rise unharmed and complete?[111]

Just as the actions and abilities of Jesus explicitly define the sexual potentialities of the resurrected body (or lack thereof), so also do they guarantee the elimination of disease and disability in the resurrection. "*Everything* the Savior did," in fact, was done for the specific purpose of propagating belief in a fleshly resurrection.

Eating as Proof of Materiality

At this point in the treatise, pseudo-Justin turns from concerns surrounding the specific capabilities and limitations of the resurrected body to address a series of three more general anti-fleshly resurrection arguments: the flesh is impossible to raise;[112] the flesh is not worth raising;[113] the promise of eternal life given to the soul did not include the flesh.[114] Each of these claims appears with frequency in contemporaneous texts debating the nature of resurrection, and

---

[110] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 4.1.

[111] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 4.3-5. *Τετυφλωμένοι ὡς ἀληθῶς τὰ τῆς καρδίας ὄμματα. Οὐ γὰρ εἶδον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* τυφλούς βλέποντας, χωλοὺς *περιπατοῦντας τῷ ἐκείνου λογῳ. ἅ πάντα ἐποίησεν ὁ σωτήρ, πρῶτον μὲν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν περὶ αὐτοῦ διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, ὅτι* τυφλοὶ βλέπουσι, κωφοὶ ἀκούουσι *καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ἔτι δὲ καὶ εἰς πίστιν τοῦ ὅτι ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἡ σὰρξ ὁλόκληρος ἀναστήσεται. Εἰ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τὰς ἀσθενείας τῆς σαρκὸς ἰάσατο καὶ ὁλόκληρον ἐποίησε τὸ σῶμα, πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τοῦτο ποιήσει, ὥστε καὶ ἀκέραιον καὶ ὁλοκληρον ἀναστῆναι τὴν σάρκα.*

[112] See pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 5-6.

[113] See pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 7.

[114] See pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 8.

pseudo-Justin responds to them using, for the most part, relatively standard counterarguments:[115] the phenomena of creation and human reproduction demonstrate that God is sufficiently powerful to resurrect the flesh; the flesh was made by God and in God's own image and likeness, making it worthy of redemption; the whole human, composed of both body and soul, has been given the promise of resurrection. This series of counterarguments builds, unsurprisingly, toward pseudo-Justin's final, and, in his epistemological schema, most indisputable point: that the example of Christ's resurrection constitutes proof of a fleshly general resurrection.

> If [the Savior] didn't need the flesh for anything, why did he heal it—and, more powerfully than anything, why did he raise the dead? Was it not in order to show what the resurrection is going to be? How, then, did he raise the dead—their souls, or their bodies? Obviously it was both. If the resurrection were merely spiritual, it would have been necessary for him, when raising [the dead], to show the body lying by itself and the soul existing by itself. But now he did not do this, but raised the body, proving in it the promise belonging to the soul. Why, then, did he rise in the flesh that suffered, if not to demonstrate the fleshly resurrection?[116]

Jesus' capacity to heal the flesh is a powerful testament not only to its ability to be resurrected free of infirmities, as previously discussed, but also to its ability to be resurrected at all. Traditions in which Jesus returns to life those who have already died provide even stronger

---

[115] But see excursus in chapter 7, in which pseudo-Justin insists that the doctrine of fleshly resurrection is consonant with natural philosophy as understood by the three major philosophical schools, Platonism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism. Pseudo-Justin argues that, since each of these three schools subscribes to a version of the idea that all things are derived from and eventually return to fundamental and imperishable "elements" (τὰ στοιχεῖα), they should not object to the compatible idea that the flesh, dying and dissolving back into the elements from which it came, can be reconstructed by God at the time of the resurrection from these exact same elements. This excursus is, notably, at odds with the epistemological position that pseudo-Justin takes in his prologue, in which he argues against the use of rational/"worldly" arguments as evidence for truth. He justifies this move by insisting that no aspect of the natural world is outside of God's purview, and that such arguments are necessary to convince nonbelievers of the truth of resurrection. See Hoogerwerf, "Proving the Resurrection of the Flesh," 138.

[116] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 9.1-5. *Εἰ εἰς μηδὲν ἔχρῃζε τῆς σαρκός, τί καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτήν, καὶ τὸ πάντων ἰσχυρότερον, νεκροὺς ἀναστῆσαι τίνος ἕνεκεν; οὐχ ἵνα δείξῃ τὴν ἀνάστασιν, οἵα μέλλει γίνεσθαι; πῶς οὖν τοὺς νεκροὺς ἀνέστησε, πότερον τὰς ψυχὰς ἢ τὰ σώματα; ἀλλὰ δηλονότι ἀμφότερα. Εἰ δὲ ἦν πνεθματικὴ μόνη ἡ κατ᾽ ἰδίαν δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπάρχουσαν. Νῦν δὲ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἐποίησεν, ἀνέστησε δὲ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἐν αὐτῷ πιστούμενος. Τίνος οὖν ἕνεκεν τῇ σαρκὶ τῇ παθούσῃ ἀνέστη, εἰ μὴ ἵνα δείξῃ τὴν σαρκικὴν ἀνάστασιν;*

evidence: these traditions, pseudo-Justin points out, feature the resuscitation of the flesh, not just the revival of the soul. The most conclusive evidence possible, however, resides in Jesus' own resurrected body:

> Why, then, did he rise in the flesh in which he suffered, if not to demonstrate the fleshly resurrection? And wishing to confirm this, when his disciples didn't believe that he had truly risen in body, and were looking at him in doubt, he said to them: "Do you not yet have faith?" He said, "See that it is I!" And he permitted them to touch him, and he displayed the marks of the nails in his hands. And perceiving in every way that it was he himself, and in the flesh, they asked him to eat with them, in order that through this as well they might learn for certain that he had risen bodily. *And he ate honeycomb and fish, and thus demonstrated to them that there truly is a resurrection of the flesh*. And wishing to demonstrate this also, that it is not impossible even for the flesh to ascend into heaven (as he had said, our dwelling exists in heaven), he was taken up into heaven as they watched, just as he was, in the flesh. If, therefore, after everything that has been said, someone should demand a word of proof concerning resurrection, that person in no way differs from the Sadducees, since the resurrection of the flesh is the power of God, and is above all discourse, being confirmed by faith and observed through works.[117]

The idea of Jesus eating post-resurrection is, as we have seen, not unique to pseudo-Justin. On the contrary, pseudo-Justin appears to know and use a version of Luke's gospel, both in this discussion of Jesus' post-resurrection meal, which closely resembles Luke 24:36-43, and in several other instances throughout *On the Resurrection*. Nevertheless, his treatment of the episode differs from Luke's in one significant way. In the context of pseudo-Justin's treatise, Jesus' act of eating post-resurrection has particularly high stakes: his meal of fish and

---

[117] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 9.5-9. Emphasis mine. *Τίνος οὖν ἕνεκεν τῇ σαρκὶ τῇ παθούσῃ ἀνέστη, εἰ μὴ ἵνα δείξῃ τὴν σαρκικὴν ἀναστασιν; καὶ τοῦτο βουλόμενος πιστῶσαι, τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ μὴ πιστευόντων, εἰ ἀληθῶς σώματι ἀνέστη, βλεπόντων αὐτῶν καὶ δισταζόντων εἶπεν αὐτοῖς,* οὔπω ἔχετε πίστιν; *φησίν,* ἴδετε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, *καὶ ψηλαφᾶν αὐτον ἐπέτρεπεν αὐτοις καὶ τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἥλων ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν ἐπεδείκνυε. Καὶ πανταχόθεν αὐτὸν κατανοήσαντες, ὅτο αὐτός ἐστι καὶ ἐν τῷ σώματι, παρεκάλεσαν αὐτὸν φαγεῖν μετ᾽αὐτῶν, ἵνα καὶ διὰ τούτου βεβαίως μάθωσιν, ὅτι ἀληθῶς σωματικῶς ἀνέστη, καὶ ἔφαγε κηρίον καὶ ἰχθύν, καὶ οὕτως ἐπιδείξας αὐτοῖς, ὅτι ἀληθῶς σαρκὸς ἀνάστασίς ἐστι. Βουλόμενος ἐπιδεῖξαι καὶ τοῦτο, καθὼς εἴρηκεν, ἐν οὐρανῷ τὴν κατοίκησιν ἡμῶν ὑπάρχειν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀδύνατον καὶ σαρκὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνελθεῖν, ἀνελήφθη βλεπόντων αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ὡς ἦν ἐν τῇ σαρκί. Οὐκοῦν εἴ τις ἀπαιτεῖ μετὰ πάντα τὰ εἰρημένα λόγους ἀποδεικτικοὺς περὶ ἀναστάσεως, οὐδὲν τῶν Σαδδουκαίων διαφέρει, ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἀνάστασις τῆς σαρκὸς δύναμις θεοῦ ἐστι καὶ ὑπεράνω λόγου παντὸς, βεβαιουμένη μὲν πίστει, θεωρουμένη δὲ ἐν ἔργοις.*

honeycomb serves as proof not only of the resurrection of *his own* flesh, but also of the ability of flesh *in general* to be resurrected. "Why, then, did he rise in the flesh in which he suffered, if not to offer proof of the fleshly resurrection? … And he ate honeycomb and fish, and thus demonstrated to [the disciples] that there truly is a resurrection of the flesh." Moreover, as Justin tells it, Jesus' ascension—which proves that it is possible not only for the flesh to be resurrected on earth, but also for this resurrected flesh to exist in heaven—occurs immediately after his meal: "And wishing to demonstrate this also, that it is not impossible even for the flesh to ascend into heaven (as he had said, our dwelling is in heaven), he was taken up into heaven as they watched, *just as he was*, in the flesh." This suggests that, for pseudo-Justin, eating—unlike sexual activity, as we saw earlier—is not incompatible with a heavenly existence. Lastly, for pseudo-Justin, Jesus' resurrection and the events that follow—including his meal and subsequent ascension—constitute not just any proof of the fleshly resurrection, but the final and ultimate proof: "If, therefore, after everything that has been said, someone should demand a word of proof concerning resurrection, that person in no way differs from the Sadducees, since the resurrection of the flesh is the power of God, and is above all discourse, being confirmed by faith and observed through works." Indeed, this discussion of Jesus' resurrection and ascension constitutes pseudo-Justin's last major line of argument before the treatise's conclusion.

This brief treatise is in many ways representative of the conversations around resurrection taking place in the second and third centuries CE. It engages a sort of list of popular objections to the possibility of fleshly resurrection, including the "parts versus functions" argument—the context in which the role of food and drink in the resurrection very frequently comes into play. Pseudo-Justin does not address extensively or even explicitly the digestive capabilities of the resurrected flesh, focusing instead on issues of sexual function, disease, and dis/ability.

Arguments concerning food and drink are nevertheless consistently present in and fundamental to pseudo-Justin's pro-fleshly resurrection stance, and, as a result, profoundly shape and constrain his construction of the resurrected body.

**Overview of the Project**

The thinkers discussed in the chapters ahead take up the subject of food and drink in the resurrection in a manner similar to pseudo-Justin. Their references to the issue are both relatively brief and clearly in service to a larger theological goal: to promote a particular understanding of the general resurrection as involving body and/or flesh; to promote a particular view of salvation history. Centering these references, however, sheds new light on the ways in which the resurrected body served not only as a flashpoint in intra-Christian theological and doctrinal debates, but also as a laboratory for human functioning.

Each of the following three chapters focuses on one or more treatises that date from the second or third centuries C.E., envision a general resurrection involving a body of some sort, and feature explicit discussion of the relationship of this resurrected body to food and drink.

In the first chapter, I read Athenagoras' *On the Resurrection* in tandem with book five of Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*. I argue that conceptions of the resurrected body in both texts are deeply shaped by their engagement with widespread and ongoing discourses concerning digestion. Digestion, like resurrection, was understood to be a site of simultaneous continuity and change: the assimilation of food and consequent growth constitute undeniable change to a subject, who nevertheless remains the same subject. Medical and philosophical puzzling around precisely how digestion worked, then, proved particularly useful—if sometimes too close to home—for early Christians attempting to explain how the body could rise for the resurrection both radically transformed and irrefutably and recognizably itself. Such was the case for

Athenagoras and Irenaeus, both of whom, I suggest, understand some form of digestion to make physical resurrection possible. Like their larger projects, these thinkers' approaches to digestion are extremely different. For both, however, the form and function of the hypothetical resurrected body—including, and especially, its relationship to food and drink—are imagined based at least in part on the relationship between the mortal body and the process of digestion as they each understand it.

The second chapter examines the role of food and drink in the resurrection as portrayed in Tertullian's treatise *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. As is so often the case in Tertullian's work, this text's approach to food and its relationship to the resurrected body is characterized by ambiguity and paradox. Eating and drinking are necessary and even noble activities that make possible the relationship between flesh and soul as it exists during life—the same relationship, Tertullian argues, that must be reconstituted in the resurrection in order for judgment to take place. Additionally, scriptural references to feasting in heaven are used as prooftexts in Tertullian's case for fleshly resurrection. Within the same treatise, however, the desire for food and drink are characterized as among the mortal flesh's worst qualities, qualities that will absolutely not transfer into the resurrection. Similarly, the resurrected flesh that Tertullian describes is incapable of consuming or digesting food; the body parts used for this purpose during life will have other functions in the resurrection. I suggest that these inconsistences are a result of Tertullian's simultaneous engagement with multiple competing discourses involving the inherent value of the flesh (or lack thereof), the correct interpretation of scripture (particularly 1 Corinthians 15), and the participation of Tertullian's local Christian community in funereal practices involving the offering of food and drink to the dead.

The persuasive projects that underlie constructions of the resurrected body as explored in the bulk of the dissertation are arguably indicative of the elite nature of our sources: the resurrected body's relationship to food is imagined and deployed in discourses around necessary and natural desires, Christ's resurrected body, medical and philosophical theories of digestion and change, millenarianism, theological debates around the valuation of the flesh, and Christian involvement in Roman burial traditions. One topic seems conspicuously absent: nowhere in the extant literature is the question of nutrition in the resurrection explicitly used to think about hunger. In the third and final chapter, I ask: Is it possible to reconstruct a greater diversity of ancient ways of imagining the resurrection body? Origen's *On First Principles* polemicizes against (supposedly) unintelligent and lustful Christians who insist that they will eat in the resurrection, using this position as a foil against which to argue for his own, less fleshly understanding of the resurrected body. As Origen tells it, these Christians justify their position through overly literal interpretations of scripture. In the third chapter, I explore the ways in which this "simplistic" hermeneutical approach is, throughout Origen's corpus, associated with a distinct rhetorical category of persons: the level at which one interprets scripture often seems to correlate not only with intellectual capacity but also with socio-economic status. Origen's *Against Celsus*, for example, describes Christians incapable of allegorical readings as "country bumpkins" (*οἱ ἄγροικοι*) and those mired in poverty. I then turn to contemporaneous evidence for regular food shortages among non-elite persons in the Roman Empire. Galen's *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* provides what claim to be eyewitness accounts of the culinary habits of *οἱ ἄγροικοι* as a way of defining the limits of a civilized diet: In situations of economic vulnerability, where are the boundaries of what is acceptable to eat, and what are the somatic effects of these questionable foods? I argue that, based on evidence from Origen's larger corpus

and from contemporaneous sources, we should understand his invective against those who hope for an eating, drinking resurrected body in the context of chronic food scarcity. For at least some Christians in the second and third centuries, resurrection may have represented access to food and drink not attainable during life.

My conclusion points forward, exploring the relationship between body, afterlife, and food as it has echoed and developed in the millenia since the thinkers that are the focus of this project were active. As scientific and theological musings concerning the gut microbiome suggest, many of the crucial questions that preoccupied these thinkers still resonate today. Among these is a particular concern about the digestive process and its impact on personal continuity. It is to this question—as addressed in the work of Athenagoras and Irenaeus—that we now turn.

## Chapter 2: You are what you eat: Digestion, change, and the resurrected body in Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V

How can something become something else, and yet, simultaneously, remain absolutely and recognizably itself?

Such was the paradox that shaped nearly all early Christian resurrection discourses, deeply informed as they were by the legacy left by Paul. As Caroline Walker Bynum argues, 1 Corinthians 15—which reverberates, explicitly or implicitly, throughout an entire history of puzzling around Christian resurrection—insists upon the simultaneous continuity and transformation that define the relationship between the mortal and the resurrected:

> If *we* do not rise, Christian preaching is in vain, says Paul; something must guarantee that the subject of resurrection is "us." But "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom." Heaven is not merely a continuation of earth. Thus, when Paul says "the trumpet shall sound… and we shall be changed," he means, with all the force of our everyday assumptions, both "we" and "changed."[118]

Although this tension was at issue across the spectrum of second and third century debates around of Christian resurrection,[119] it arguably presented particular challenges for those who advocated for a resurrection involving the materiality of the body. What sort of transformation would allow the growing, shrinking, consuming, expelling, inevitably dying and decaying body to attain the perfect stasis that resurrection promised? Conversely, what parts, materials, or aspects of the mortal body would function to guarantee personal continuity in the resurrection?

Confounding as they were, these sorts of questions were neither new nor unique. Discourses around the exact mechanisms by which various kinds of physical change occurred—as well as questions of how, or whether, those changes affected the continuity of the subject upon

[118] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 6.

[119] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 117.

which they acted—had been ongoing for centuries. Particularly germane to the puzzle of material resurrection were discussions concerning the biological processes of digestion and nourishment.

Like the process of resurrection, the process of digestion was often understood to inhabit a bewildering nexus of transformation and continuity. Ancient puzzling around digestion was chronologically and geographically widespread, dealing not only with anatomical and physiological intricacies but also with high-stakes questions concerning the nature of change and the locus of personal continuity: What happens to the food that we eat? Does it *become* us, and, if so, how? What happens to us when we digest food and absorb nutrients? If processes of consumption, digestion, growth, and excretion act constantly upon our bodies, is there anything that is static or stable, any bodily substance that is permanently and quintessentially "us"?[120]

For early Christians, therefore, discourses around digestion were highly relevant to those concerned particularly with resurrection: Do the physical changes inherent to such biological processes pose a challenge to the possibility of material continuity during life, let alone into the resurrection? Does eating, in all its potential iterations—including, most controversially and importantly, cannibalism—threaten the transformation that resurrection entails, or enable it? And, crucially, what role does the process of digestion—a process so thoroughly, viscerally mortal yet with eerie parallels to resurrection—play for the resurrected body?

For two late second-century writers in particular, such questions were pivotal. Both Irenaeus of Lyons and the author of Athenagoras' *On the Resurrection* argue adamantly for physical resurrection. These two thinkers, and the projects in which they engage, are extremely different. In its efforts to convince his audience of the certainty of a resurrection involving the mortal body, Athenagoras' work involves minimal explicit engagement with the scriptural texts

[120] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 56-57.

and images that dominate most contemporaneous conversations around resurrection, including Paul's writings. Instead, he participates extensively in philosophical and medical discourses around digestion and change. Irenaeus insists upon a resurrection of the flesh in service of his larger theological goal, which is to demonstrate the arc of a singular salvation history engineered by a single God and running from creation through the end of time; he shows little knowledge of intricate technical discussions of digestion, but cites Paul with impressive frequency.[121] Nevertheless, as both Athenagoras and Irenaeus attempt to navigate the familiar tension between transformation and continuity, they locate the nexus of these opposing forces in the process of digestion and its effects on the mortal body: in both cases, digestion *as each understands it* makes material resurrection possible. Consequently, as I will argue, these two thinkers' approaches to digestion have profound implications for their respective constructions of the resurrected body.

This chapter provides an analysis of both thinkers' approaches to the biological process of digestion, situating these approaches in the context of their larger arguments and of the medical, philosophical and theological discourses in which they both participate. I suggest that the ways in which these thinkers articulate the relationship between digestion and the mortal body both enable and constrain the body as they each imagine it in the resurrection.

**Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection***

Athenagoras' *On the Resurrection* is preserved solely in the Arethas codex, copied in 913-914 by Baanes the scribe of Arethas, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and corrected extensively by Arethas himself.[122] *On the Resurrection* appears in the codex immediately

[121] Lehtipuu, *Debates,* 88.

[122] Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Athenagorae Qui Fertur: De Resurrectione Mortuorum* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 6-7.

following *Plea for the Christians*, the only other work attributed to Athenagoras. The extent of the biographical information available for Athenagoras consists of the *inscriptio* to the *Plea*, which describes him as an Athenian "philosopher Christian." The *inscriptio* of *On the Resurrection* attributes it to the same person who wrote the preceding *Plea* (τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν),[123] but scholarly consensus concerning the treatise's authorship and dating has been sharply divided. Athenagoras is generally accepted as author of the *Plea,* which is dated to the late second century;[124] some argue that *On the Resurrection* should also be assigned to Athenagoras.[125] Claiming doctrinal and stylistic differences between *On the Resurrection* and the *Plea,* however, another body of scholarship rejects Athenagoran authorship of *On the Resurrection* and dates it to the third or fourth centuries, considering it a response to Origenist or post-Origenist discussions of resurrection.[126] Still others maintain that, regardless of authorship, *On the Resurrection* fits into the conversations and debates around resurrection occurring in the late second century, and should be dated as such.[127] My comparative analysis of

[123] Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur*, 1.

[124] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts*, 52; Leslie W. Barnard, "Athenagoras: *De Resurrectione*: The Background and Theology of a Second Century Treatise on the Resurrection," *Studia Theologia* 30 (1976): 4-5; Timothy D. Barnes, "The Embassy of Athenagoras," *JTS* 26.1 (1975): 111-114. The *Plea* addresses itself to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, and contains multiple references to their dual reign; father and son were in power together between November of 176 and March of 180.

[125] Leslie W. Barnard, *Athenagoras: A Study in Second Century Apologetic* (Théologie historique 18; Paris, 1972); Barnard, "Athenagoras: De Resurrectione," 1-42; Bernard Pouderon, "L'authenticité du traité *De resurrectione* attribué à l'apologiste Athénagore," *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986): 226-244; Bernard Pouderon, *Athénagore d'Athènes, philosophe chrétien* (Théologie historique 82; Paris, 1989); Gunnar af Hällström, *Carnis Resurrectio: The Interpretation of a Credal Formula* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 86; Helsinki, 1988); Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur*, 2.

[126]Robert M. Grant, "Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras," *HTR* 47 (1954): 121-129; William R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Horacio Lona, "Die dem Apologeten Athenagoras zugeschriebene Schrift 'De Resurrectione Mortuorum' und die altchristliche Auferstehungsapologetik," *Salesianum* 52 (1990): 525-78; Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur*, 2.

[127] David Rankin, *Athenagoras: Philosopher and Theologian* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Ezio Gallicet, "Atenagora o Pseudo-Atenagora?" *Rivista di Filologia* 104 (1976): 420-435; Ezio Gallicet, "Ancora sullo Pseudo-Athenagora," *Revista di Filologia* 105 (1977): 21-42; Nicole Zeegers-Vander Vorst, "Adversaires et destataires du *De*

*On the Resurrection* and Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* supports this assessment; in keeping with convention, I refer to the author of *On the Resurrection* as "Athenagoras."

*On the Resurrection* insists upon material continuity between mortal and resurrected persons; the overarching goal of the treatise is to argue that the body must be reunited with the soul in the resurrection, forming the same composite being that existed during life.[128] The treatise consists of two distinct parts. Athenagoras first responds to what he presents as various objections to the possibility of this material link (God is not sufficiently powerful to resurrect the human body; God is not willing to resurrect the human body), then sets forth his own arguments in favor of it (humanity was created for no other reason than its own survival, and therefore must continue to exist eternally; humanity consists of both soul and body, and thus both soul and body must be present and reunited in the resurrection for the entire human to be judged and to contemplate God).[129]

These general "talking points" around which the treatise is organized are largely familiar from our discussion of pseudo-Justin's work; very similar arguments also appear in the writings of other second- and early third-century advocates for material resurrection, including Irenaeus and Tertullian. Together with these thinkers, Athenagoras clearly participates in intra-Christian disputes around the (bodily or otherwise) nature of resurrection:[130] like essentially all participants in this conversation, Athenagoras offers his own interpretation of the dual concepts of transformation and continuity as set forth in 1 Corinthians 15. "What follows," he writes, "is

---

*Resurrectione* attribué à Athénagore d' Athènes," *Salesanium* 57 (1995): 75-122; Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 28-29; Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur,* 3; Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 52.

[128] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 52.

[129] Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur*, 4-5.

[130] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 33-36.

clear to everyone: that this corruptible and dispersable body must, according to the apostle, put on incorruptibility, so that, when the dead are revivified through the resurrection and what has been separated or entirely dissolved is reunited, each may receive their just recompense for what they did in the body, whether good or evil."[131]

Unlike the vast majority of these thinkers, who defend their positions through extensive citation and interpretation of scripture, Athenagoras in *On the Resurrection* quotes very few biblical texts and none at all directly pertaining to resurrection, with the exception of this brief allusion to 1 Corinthians 15:53.[132] Similarly, the treatise contains no explicit mention of Jesus' life, death, or resurrection.[133] Scholars have observed that *On the Resurrection* also appears to respond to anti-resurrection arguments much like those of the non-Christian philosopher Celsus, who targeted the Christian doctrine of resurrection as particularly bizarre and off-putting;[134] an intended audience made up at least in part of non-Christians could explain Athenagoras' notably

---

[131] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 18.5, trans. Schoedel, *Athenagoras;* translation modified. *Εὐδηλον παντὶ τὸ λειπόμενον, ὁτι δεῖ κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο καὶ σκεδαστὸν ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν, ἵνα ζῳοποιηθέντων ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τῶν νεκρωθέντων καὶ πάλιν ἑνωθέντων τῶν κεχωρισμένων ἢ καὶ πάντῃ διαλελυμένων, ἕκαστος κομίσηται δικαίως ἃ διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὰ εἴτε κακά.* Marcovich, *Athenagorae Qui Fertur*.

[132] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 6.

[133] Athenagoras argues vehemently and often viscerally that the very body that exists during life, though it will die and decay, must exist again in the resurrection; he nevertheless declines to use distinctive terminology found in contemporaneous works, such as "resurrection of the flesh" or "fleshly resurrection." Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 57.

[134] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 9-10; Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 34; Pouderon, *Athénagore d' Athènes,* 89ff. There is ample evidence that non-Christians writing in and around the second century found the Christian doctrine of resurrection to be particularly unpalatable. Celsus, whose arguments are preserved in Origen's third-century reply, complains that the idea of resurrection is both weird and disgusting: "It is foolish of [Christians] also to suppose that, when God applies the fire (like a cook!), all the rest of humankind will be thoroughly roasted and that they alone will survive, not merely those who are alive at the time but those also long dead who will rise up from the earth possessing the same bodies as before. This is simply the hope of worms. For what sort of human soul would have any further desire for a body that has rotted? … For what sort of body after being entirely corrupted, could return to its original nature and that same condition which it had before it was dissolved? As the have nothing to say in reply, they escape to a most outrageous refuge by saying that 'anything is possible to God.' But indeed, neither can God do what is shameful nor does He desire what is contrary to nature." *Against Celsus* 5.14, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 1953).

conservative use of biblical materials.[135] A third possible audience (in addition to non-Christians and Christians who reject the idea of bodily and/or fleshly resurrection) consists of those curious about Athenagoras' form of Christianity, or those doubting or wavering in their beliefs;[136] Athenagoras attempts to demonstrate the invalidity of various anti-bodily resurrection arguments that would-be Christians might perceive as deterrents, appealing occasionally to scripturally-based arguments but more frequently to concepts related to philosophy and medicine.

**Chain consumption**

*On the Resurrection* is unique in its explicit and extensive engagement with an anti-bodily resurrection argument that scholars have labeled "chain consumption." If substance from a deceased human body is incorporated through the process of digestion and nourishment into a second human body—either because the second human ate an animal that had eaten the remains of the first human, or, even worse, because the second human ate the first human directly—to which of the two humans would that substance belong in the resurrection? Wouldn't one resurrected body end up with too much matter, and the other not enough? Athenagoras states the argument as follows:

> For there are creatures which feed on human bodies but themselves are also fit nourishment for humans. These creatures are digested by humans and so are united with the bodies of those who have eaten them. It is inevitable, then, that the parts of humans that served as food for the creatures which devoured them should pass over into other human bodies; for the creatures who in their quest for food served as intermediaries have transmitted the nourishment derived from their victims to those humans whose food they in turn became. Our disputants go on to dramatize their case with reports of children whose parents dared to devour them in times of famine or in fits of madness and with stories of others who were eaten by their progenitors through the plotting of enemies, including the famous account of the Median feast and the lamentable banquet of Thyestes; and they gather together a whole series of such horrors perpetrated among Greeks and barbarians. On this basis they think that they establish the thesis that the

[135] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 11.

[136] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 9-10; Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 34-35; Pouderon, *Athénagore d' Athènes,* 101.

> resurrection is an impossibility, for the reason that the same parts cannot rise again in both sets of individuals. Either the bodies of the first set could not be reconstituted, since the parts of which they were made up had passed over into the second set; or if these parts were restored to the first set, the bodies of the second set would be incomplete.[137]

Athenagoras' lengthy response to this rather grisly thought experiment provides significant insight into how he understands the human body to function (and not to function) both in life and in the resurrection, as well as how he understands the link between mortal and resurrected bodies to operate.

**Decay and corruption**

Within the structure of the treatise, Athenagoras' citation and refutation of chain consumption occurs as part of his argument against those who would argue that God is insufficiently powerful to resurrect the human body. According to Athenagoras, those who doubt the resurrection will be proven right only if they "can show that God either is not able, or is unwilling, to knit together again dead bodies—or even those entirely decomposed—and restore them so as to constitute the very humans they once were."[138] Here, Athenagoras suggests that the ultimate obstacle that resurrection must overcome—even more so than death itself—is decay. The ability to transcend decay is in fact the very quality that makes resurrection what it is:

---

[137] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 4.3-4. *Τῶν γὰρ τὰ σώματα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκβοσκηθέντων ζώων, ὁπόσα πρὸς τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις ἐπιτήδεια, διὰ τῆς τούτων γαστρὸς ἰόντων καὶ τοῖς τῶν μετειληφότων σώμασιν ἑνουμένων, ἀνάγκην εἶναι πᾶσαν, τὰ μέρη τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁπόσα τροφὴ γέγονε τοῖς μετειληφόσι ζώοις, πρὸς ἕτερα τῶν ἀνθρώπων μεταχωρεῖν σώματα, τῶν μεταξὺ τούτοις τραφέντων ζώων τὴν ἐξ ὧν ἐτράφησαν τροφὴν διαπορθμευόντων εἰς ἐκείνους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὧν ἐγένετο τροφή. Εἶτα τούτοις ἐπιτραγῳδοῦσι τὰς ἐν λιμοῖς καὶ μανίαις τολμηθείσας τεκνοφαγίας καὶ τοὺς κατ ἐπιβουλὴν ἐχθρῶν ὑπὸ τῶν γεννησαμένων ἐδηδεσμένους παῖδας, καὶ τὴν Μηδικὴν τράπεζαν ἐκείνην καὶ τὰ τραγικὰ δεῖπνα Θυέστου καὶ τοιαύτας δή τινας ἐπισυνείρουσι παρ ῞Ελλησι καὶ βαρβάροις καινουργηθείσας συμφοράς· ἔκ τε τούτων κατασκευάζουσιν, ὡς νομίζουσιν, ἀδύνατον τὴν ἀνάστασιν, ὡς οὐ δυναμένων τῶν αὐτῶν μερῶν ἑτέροις τε καὶ ἑτέροις συναναστῆναι σώμασιν, ἀλλ ἤτοι τὰ τῶν προτέρων συστῆναι μὴ δύνασθαι, μετεληλυθότων τῶν ταῦτα συμπληρούντων μερῶν πρὸς ἑτέρους, ἢ τούτων ἀποδοθέντων τοῖς προτέροις ἐνδεῶς ἔξειν τὰ τῶν ὑστέρων.*

[138] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 2.3, translation modified. *Τοῦτο δὲ ποιήσουσιν, ἐὰν δεῖξαι δυνηθῶσιν ἢ ἀδύνατον ὂν τῷ θεῷ ἢ ἀβούλητον τὰ νεκρωθέντα τῶν σωμάτων ἢ καὶ πάντη διαλυθέντα πάλιν ἑνῶσαι καὶ συναγαγεῖν πρὸς τὴν τῶν αὐτῶν ἀνθρώπων σύστασιν.*

> Humans were created to survive unchanged only in respect to the soul, but in respect to the body to gain incorruptibility through a transformation. That is what our teaching concerning resurrection means. Setting, then, the resurrection before our eyes, we await the dissolution of the body as a concomitant of a needy and corruptible existence, and hope for a permanent incorruptibility to follow it.[139]

Change and corruption, for Athenagoras, go hand in hand. During life, the body is constantly changing: it needs, consumes, absorbs, expels, grows, shrinks. The body's corruption through decay is simply the final—and, arguably, most profound—change in the series of changes that defines what it means to be mortal. Resurrection is a reconstitution of that body, but also an utter transformation of it—a change to incorruptibility, to stasis. The magnitude and finality of the change that is resurrection is signaled by its ability to overcome the most drastic of the body's natural shifts.[140]

Despite this conviction, Athenagoras seems to find himself hard pressed to demonstrate how it can come to pass. How can a body that has completely disintegrated be reintegrated? Athenagoras argues that God's wisdom makes this possible:

> It is impossible for God, however, to be ignorant of the nature of our bodies which are destined to arise; he knows every part and member in their entirety. Nor can he be ignorant as to where everything goes that decomposes and what part of the appropriate element receives what is decomposed and dissolved into its own kind. This is the case in spite of the fact that people are very much inclined to think that what has been intimately reunited with everything else of its kind has become indistinguishable from it. Before the particular formation of individual things, God knew the nature of the elements yet to be created from which human bodies arise, and he knew the parts of the elements from which he planned to select in order to form the human body. When all has been dissolved, it is clear that such a God will also know where everything has gone—

---

[139] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 16.2-3, translation modified. *ἅτε δὴ τῶν μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς γενομένων ἀθανάτων καὶ διαμενόντων μόνῃ τῇ γνώμῃ τοῦ ποιήσαντος ἀτελευτήτως, τῶν δὲ ἀνθρώπων κατὰ μὲν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ γενέσεως ἐχόντων τὴν ἀμετάβλητον διαμονήν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ σῶμα προσλαμβανόντων ἐκ μεταβολῆς τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν· ὅπερ ὁ τῆς ἀναστάσεως λόγος βούλεται· πρὸς ἣν ἀποβλέποντες, τήν τε διάλυσιν τοῦ σώματος, ὡς ἑπομένην τῇ μετ ἐνδείας καὶ φθορᾶς ζωῇ, περιμένομεν, καὶ μετὰ ταύτην τὴν μετ ἀφθαρσίας ἐλπίζομεν διαμονήν, οὔτε τῇ τῶν ἀλόγων τελευτῇ συνεξισοῦντες τὴν ἡμετέραν τελευτήν.*

[140] See Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 32; 56-57; Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts*, 59.

everything which he had selected that he might give substance to individual things.[141]

A God with ample foreknowledge to form every part the human body out of "elements yet to be created," Athenagoras insists, will certainly be able to track these elements as they dissolve, even if they seem according to human logic to become indistinguishable from their surroundings. Significantly, this remains true even if the particular variety of dissolution experienced is routed through consumption:

> The same God and the same wisdom and power [that created our bodies] can also separate out what has been torn apart and devoured by numerous animals of every kind which are accustomed to attack bodies like our own and satisfy our wants with them; and he can reunite the fragments with their own parts and members whether they have gone into one such animal or many, or whether they have passed in turn from them into others and after decomposition have been resolved along with their destroyers into their principal constituents and so followed the natural course of dissolution back into them.[142]

The organic processes of eating and decay are closely connected in Athenagoras' thought, as throughout the ancient world.[143] Like dissolution in the earth, digestion within an organism breaks down the matter consumed and incorporates it into the substance that surrounds it. Therein lies Athenagoras' thorniest problem: What becomes of that matter in the resurrection when both consumed and consumer are human? Athenagoras responds to the chain consumption

---

[141] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 2.5. *Ἀλλ οὔτε ἀγνοεῖν τὸν θεὸν δυνατὸν τῶν ἀναστησομένων σωμάτων τὴν φύσιν κατά τε μέρος ὅλον καὶ μόριον, οὔτε μὴν ὅποι χωρεῖ τῶν λυομένων ἕκαστον, καὶ ποῖον τῶν στοιχείων μέρος δέδεκται τὸ λυθὲν καὶ χωρῆσαν πρὸς τὸ συγγενές, κἂν πάνυ παρ ἀνθρώποις ἀδιάκριτον εἶναι δοκῇ τὸ τῷ παντὶ πάλιν προσφυῶς ἡνωμένον. Ὧι γὰρ οὐκ ἠγνόητο πρὸ τῆς οἰκείας ἑκάστου συστάσεως οὔτε τῶν γενησομένων στοιχείων ἡ φύσις ἐξ ὧν τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σώματα, οὔτε τὰ μέρη τούτων ἐξ ὧν ἤμελλεν λήψεσθαι τὸ δόξαν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου σώματος σύστασιν, εὔδηλον ὡς οὐδὲ μετὰ τὸ διαλυθῆναι τὸ πᾶν ἀγνοηθήσεται ποῦ κεχώρηκεν ἕκαστον ὧν εἴληφε πρὸς τὴν ἑκάστου συμπλήρωσιν.*

[142] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 3.3. *Τοῦ αὐτοῦ δ ἂν εἴη καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς δυνάμεως καὶ σοφίας καὶ τὸ διατεθρυμμένον πλήθει ζώων παντοδαπῶν, ὁπόσα τοῖς τοιούτοις σώμασιν ἐπιτρέχειν εἴωθε καὶ τὸν ἐκ τούτων ἀγείρειν κόρον, διακρῖναι μὲν ἐκεῖθεν, ἑνῶσαι δὲ πάλιν τοῖς οἰκείοις μέρεσι καὶ μορίοις, κἂν εἰς ἓν ἐξ ἐκείνων χωρήσῃ ζῶον, κἂν εἰς πολλά, κἂν ἐντεῦθεν εἰς ἕτερα, κἂν ἐκείνοις αὐτοῖς συνδιαλυθὲν ἐπὶ τὰς πρώτας ἀρχὰς ἐνεχθῇ κατὰ τὴν φυσικὴν εἰς ταύτας ἀνάλυσιν·*

[143] See e.g. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 53.

argument with what is essentially a physiology lecture, laying out the exact ways in which the substance that nourishes and the creature being nourished are affected at each point in the digestive process. As such, he works to define the relationships between this process, the materiality of the body, and the physical location of the link between mortality and resurrection, placing profound constraints upon the resurrected body as a consequence.

**Digestion and transformation in ancient discourse**

At issue in Athenagoras' discussion of chain consumption is the ancient understanding of, and anxiety around, digestion as change. In attempting to explain the effects of digestion on both consumer and consumed, Athenagoras participates in a discourse on change and continuity that is already well-established.[144] Written centuries earlier, Aristotle's *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away* attempts a systematization of various types of change, reflecting at length on the distinctions between "coming-to-be" and "passing-away," "growth," and "alteration."[145] Aristotle analyzes the process of digestion in this context: What sort of change does food experience when it is eaten, and what sort of change does the body experience when it consumes and digests this food?

> One might raise the question what must be the nature of that by which a thing grows. It is clear that it must be potentially that which is growing, for example, potentially flesh, if it is flesh which is growing; actually, then, it is something different. This, therefore, has passed-away and come-to-be flesh—not alone by itself (for that would have been a coming-to-be and not growth); but it is that which grows which now comes-to-be flesh owing to the food. How has the food been affected by the growing thing? Is it by admixture, as if one were to pour water into wine, and the latter were able to convert the mixture into wine? And like fire when it takes hold of inflammable material, so the principle of growth present in that which grows (*i.e.* in what is actually flesh) lays hold of

[144] See e.g. A.A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers, Volume 1: Translation of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 166-176.

[145] Walker Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body,* 57 nn 144; Josep Puig Montada, "Aristotle and Averroes on *Coming-to-be and Passing-away*," *Oriens* 35 (1996): 2-3.

the added food which is potentially flesh, and turns it into actual flesh.[146]

The change that food experiences in the process of digestion, according to Aristotle, is a passing-away and coming-to-be. Passing-away and coming-to-be, as Aristotle understands them, involve a change in subject: one subject passes out of existence and an entirely new, distinct subject comes into existence. When digestion occurs, the substance that was the food ceases to exist; it is transformed into the substance it nourishes and causes to grow.[147] The type of change that the consumer experiences is more complex. Aristotle describes the processes of growth and alteration as follows:

> For in our account we must preserve the characteristics which belong to what is growing and diminishing. These characteristics are three: (a) that every part of the growing magnitude is greater (for example, if flesh grows, every part of it grows); (b) that it grows by the accession of something; and (c) that *it grows because that which grows is preserved and persists*. For while a thing does not persist in unqualified coming-to-be or passing-away, in alteration and growth or diminution that which grows or alters persists in its identity, but, in the case of alteration the quality, and in the case of growth, the magnitude does not remain the same.[148]

Unlike passing-away and coming-to-be, both growth and alteration require continuity of subject: in the case of growth, the subject experiences a change in quantity; in the case of alteration, a

---

[146] Aristotle, *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away*, 1.5.322a, trans E.S. Forester and D. J. Furley. Loeb Classical Library 400 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955). *Ἀπορήσειε δ᾽ ἄν τις ποῖόν τι δεῖ εἶναι τὸ ᾧ αὐξάνεται. φανερὸν δὴ ὅτι δυνάμει ἐκεῖνο, οἷον εἰ σάρξ, δυνάμει σάρκα. ἐντελεχείᾳ ἄρα ἄλλο· φθαρὲν δὴ τοῦτο σὰρξ γέγονεν. οὐκοῦν οὐκ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτό (γένεσις γὰρ ἂν ἦν, οὐκ αὔξησις)· ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐξανόμενον τούτῳ. τί οὖν παθὸν ὑπὸ τούτου [ηὐξήθη]; ἢ μιχθέν, ὥσπερ οἴνῳ εἴ τις ἐπιχέοι ὕδωρ, ὁ δὲ δύναιτο οἶνον ποιεῖν τὸ μιχθέν; καὶ ὥσπερ τὸ πῦρ ἁψάμενον τοῦ καυστοῦ, οὕτως ἐν τῷ αὐξανομένῳ καὶ ὄντι ἐντελεχείᾳ σαρκὶ τὸ ἐνὸν αὐξητικὸν προσελθόντος δυνάμει σαρκὸς ἐποίησεν ἐντελεχείᾳ σάρκα.*

[147] Montada, "Aristotle," 6; H. H. Joachim, *Aristotle On Coming-to-be and Passing-away* (Oxford, 1922), 132.

[148] Aristotle, *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away*, 1.5.321a, emphasis mine. *δεῖ γὰρ σώζειν τῷ λόγῳ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα τῷ αὐξανομένῳ καὶ φθίνοντι. ταῦτα δὲ τρία εστίν, ὧν ἓν μέν ἐστι τὸ ὁτιοῦν μέρος μεῖζον γίγνεσθαι τοῦ αὐξανομένου μεγέθους, οἷον εἰ σὰρξ τῆς σαρκός, καὶ προσιόντος τινός, καὶ τρίτον σωζομένου τοῦ αὐξανομένου καὶ ὑπομένοντος· ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῷ γίνεσθαί τι ἁπλῶς ἢ φθείρεσθαι οὐχ ὑπομένει, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀλλοιοῦσθαι ἢ αὐξάνεσθαι ἢ φθίνειν ὑπομένει τὸ αὐτὸ τὸ αὐξανόμενον ἢ ἀλλοιούμενον· ἀλλ᾽ ἔνθα μὲν τὸ πάθος ἔνθα δὲ τὸ μέγεθος τὸ αὐτὸ οὐ μένει.*

change in quality.[149] For the consumer, eating and digesting can result in both growth (an increase in magnitude) and nourishment (alteration; a change in quality). Growth in particular, as Aristotle explains it, is enabled by the double nature of the subject upon which it acts:

> …Flesh and bone and every such part, like all other things which have their form in matter, are of a double nature; for the form as well as the matter is called flesh and bone. It is quite possible, then, that any part can grow in respect of *form* by the addition of something, but not in respect of *matter*, for we must regard the process as like that which happens when someone measures water with the same measure, for there is first one portion and then another in constant succession. It is in this way that the matter of the flesh grows: something flows out and something flows in, but there is not an addition made to every particle of it, but to every part of its figure and "form."[150]

H. H. Joachim's commentary offers a useful elucidation of this passage: "The growing thing, whether 'tissue' or 'organ', grows—i.e., gets larger—*as a whole* (as form-in-matter), and does so by the accession of food. But this does not mean that food accedes to every part of *the matter* of the tissue or organ. The matter is in constant flux, always flowing in and out, and no material particle endures. We can only say that food accedes to every part of the tissue or organ *qua form*: i.e. the growth of the whole is a uniform proportional expansion of its 'figure' or 'structural plan'."[151] A growing body, in other words, consists simultaneously of form and matter. When it digests food, its form grows—i.e., changes in magnitude while maintaining continuity of subject. Its matter, meanwhile, does not grow, but is continually passing-away and coming-to-be.

---

[149] Montada, "Aristotle," 3.

[150] Aristotle, *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away*, 1.5.321b. *σὰρξ καὶ ὀστοῦν καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν τοιούτων μορίων ἐστὶ διττόν, ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἐν ὕλῃ εἶδος ἐχόντων· καὶ γὰρ ἡ ὕλη λέγεται καὶ τὸ εἶδος σὰρξ ἢ ὀστοῦν. τὸ οὖν ὁτιοῦν μέρος αὐξάνεσθαι καὶ προσιόντος τινὸς κατὰ μὲν τὸ εἶδός ἐστιν ἐνδεχόμενον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ὕλην οὐκ ἔστιν. δεῖ γὰρ νοῆσαι ὥσπερ εἴ τις μετροίη τῷ αὐτῷ μέτρῳ ὕδωρ· ἀεὶ γὰρ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο τὸ γινόμενον. οὕτω δ᾽ αὐξάνεται ἡ ὕλη τῆς σαρκός, καὶ οὐχ ὁτῳοῦν παντὶ προσγίνεται, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ὑπεκρεῖ τὸ δὲ προσέρχεται, τοῦ δὲ σχήματος καὶ τοῦ εἴδους ὁτῳοῦν μορίῳ.*

[151] Joachim, *Aristotle*, 129.

Various writers in antiquity continued to discuss the paradox of growth/change and personal continuity.[152] Stoic thinkers drew heavily on Aristotle to argue for the existence of what A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley call the "first and second genera," two distinct "metaphysical aspects under which a body can be viewed."[153] According to this schema, the second genus, the *ποιότης* ("quality") of a body, grows and remains identifiable as that person, while the first genus, the *οὐσία* ("substance") of a body, does not grow, but rather is continually being constituted and reconstituted.[154] The Stoic author Posidonius writes,

> The substance neither grows nor diminishes through addition or subtraction, but simply alters, just as in the case of numbers and measures. And it follows that it is in the case of peculiarly qualified individuals… that processes of both growth and diminuition arise. Therefore each individual's quality actually remains from its generation to its destruction, in the case of destructible animals, plants, and the like. In the case of peculiarly qualified individuals they say that there are two receptive parts, the one pertaining to the presence of the substance, the other to that of the qualified individual. For it is the latter, as we have said several times, that is receptive of growth and diminution. The peculiarly qualified thing is not the same as its constituent substance. Nor on the other hand is it different from it, but is merely not the same…[155]

---

[152] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 57 nn 144.

[153] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 165.

[154] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 172-173. "For what Stoics call 'a substance', i.e. a material substrate, any alteration can constitute a change of identity. …Hence—a further consequence—a substance cannot be said to grow, since it cannot retain an identity through the process. What does endure, however, and constitutes a proper subject of growth, is the 'peculiarly qualified' individual…whose uniquely identifying characteristics must for this purpose be lifelong, despite the constant flux of their material substrate."

[155] Posidonius, fragment 96, trans. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. *Τὴν δὲ οὐσίαν οὔτ᾽ αὔξεσθαι οὔτε μειοῦσθαι κατὰ πρόσθεσιν ἢ ἀφαίρεσιν, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἀλλοιοῦσθαι, καθάπερ ἐπ᾽ ἀριθμῶν καὶ μέτρων. Καὶ συμβαίνειν ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδίως ποιῶν… καὶ αὐξήσεις καὶ μειώσεις γίνεσθαι. Διὸ καὶ παραμένειν τὴν ἑκάστου ποιότητα [τὰ] ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως μέχρι τῆς ἀναιρέσεως, ἐπὶ τῶν ἀναίρεσιν ἐπιδεχομένων ζῳων καὶ φυτῶν καὶ τῶν τούτοις παραπλησίων. ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἰδίως ποιῶν φασι δύο εἶναι τὰ δεκτικὰ μόρια, τὸ μέν τι κατὰ τὴν τῆς οὐσίας ὑπόστασιν, τὸ δε <τι> κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ποιοῦ. Τοῦτο γάρ, ὡς πολλάκις ἐλέγομεν, τὴν αὔξησιν καὶ τὴν μείωσιν ἐπιδέχεσθαι. Μὴ εἶναι δὲ ταὐτὸν τό τε ποιὸν ἰδίως καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν [ὃ] ἐξ ἧς ἐστι τοῦτο, μὴ μέντοι γε μηδ᾽ ἕτερον, ἀλλὰ μόνον οὐ ταὐτόν…*

Lively debate raged between Stoic thinkers and Academic thinkers, who insisted that growth as the Stoics understood it did not exist.[156] Plutarch's *Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions* provides insight into this debate:

> For the argument is a simple one and these people (the Stoics) grant its premises: (A) all particular substances are in flux and motion, releasing some things from themselves and receiving others which reach them from elsewhere; (B) the numbers or quantities which these are added to or subtracted from do not remain the same but become different as the aforementioned arrivals and departures cause the substance to be transformed; (C) the prevailing convention is wrong to call these processes of growth and decay: rather they should be called generation and destruction, since they transform the thing from what it is into something else, whereas growing and diminishing are affections of a body which serves as substrate and persists… But [the Stoics] alone have seen this combination, this duplicity, this ambiguity, that each of us is two substrates, the one substance, the other <a peculiarly qualified individual>; and that the one is always in flux and motion, neither growing nor diminishing nor remaining as it is at all, while the other remains and grows and diminishes and undergoes all the opposite affections to the first one—although it is its natural partner, combined and fused with it, and nowhere providing sense-perception with a grasp of the difference… Yet this difference and distinction in us no one has marked off or discriminated, nor have we perceived that we are born double, always in flux with one part of ourselves, while remaining the same people from birth to death with the other.[157]

Plutarch derisively mocks the Stoic distinction between "quality" and "substance." He insists that Stoics inaccurately label as growth and diminution (types of change which assume personal

---

[156] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* 173.

[157] Plutarch, *Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions* 1083A-E, trans. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* translation modified. *ὁ μὲν γὰρ λόγος ἁπλοῦς ἐστι καὶ τὰ λήμματα συγχωροῦσιν οὗτοι· τὰς ἐν μέρει πάσας οὐσίας ῥεῖν καὶ φέρεσθαι, τὰ μὲν ἐξ αὑτῶν μεθιείσας τὰ δέ ποθεν ἐπιόντα προσδεχομένας, οἷς δὲ πρόσεισι καὶ ἄπεισιν ἀριθμοῖς ἢ πλήθεσι ταὐτὰ μὴ διαμένειν ἀλλὰ ἕτερα γίγνεσθαι, ταῖς εἰρημέναις προσόδοις <καὶ ἀφόδοις> ἐξαλλαγὴν τῆς οὐσίας λαμβανούσης· αὐξήσεις δὲ καὶ φθίσεις οὐ κατὰ δίκην ὑπὸ συνηθείας ἐκνενικῆσθαι τὰς μεταβολὰς ταύτας λέγεσθαι, γενέσεις [δὲ] καὶ φθορὰς μᾶλλον αὐτὰς ὀνομάζεσθαι προσῆκον ὅτι τοῦ καθεστῶτος εἰς ἕτερον ἐκβιβάζουσι τὸ δ᾽ αὔξεσθαι καὶ τὸ μειοῦσθαι πάθη σώματός ἐστιν ὑποκειμένου καὶ διαμένοντος….ἀλλὰ οὗτοι μόνοι εἶδον τὴν σύνθεσιν ταύτην καὶ διπλόην καὶ ἀμφιβολίαν, ὡς δύο ἡμῶν ἕκαστός ἐστιν ὑποκείμενα, τὸ μὲν οὐσία τὸ δὲ <ποιότης>, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀεὶ ῥεῖ καὶ φέρεται, μήτ᾽ αὐξόμενον μήτε μειούμενον μήθ᾽ ὅλως οἷόν ἐστι διαμένον, τὸ δὲ διαμένει καὶ αὐξάνεται καὶ μειοῦται καὶ πάντα πάσχει τἀναντία θατέρῳ, συμπεφυκὸς καὶ συνηρμοσμένον καὶ συγκεχυμένον καὶ τῆς διαφορᾶς τῇ αἰσθήσει μηδαμοῦ παρέχον ἅψασθαι... ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἐν ἡμῖν ἑτερότητα καὶ <δια>φορὰν οὐδεὶς διεῖλεν οὐδὲ διέστησεν, οὐδὲ ἡμεῖς ᾐσθόμεθα διττοὶ γεγονότες καὶ τῷ μὲν ἀεὶ ῥέοντες μέρει τῷ δ᾽ ἀπὸ γενέσεως ἄχρι τελευτῆς οἱ αὐτοὶ διαμένοντες.* Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume XIII: Part 2: Stoic Essays,* trans. Harold Cherniss (LCL 470; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

continuity) what is really just alteration (change with no continuity). According to the Academic position, what looks like growth is in actuality the continuous re-creation of an entirely new and different body.

Also weighing in on the conversation was Galen, the Pergamene physician and prolific writer active in the mid-second century CE. Galen's treatise *On the Natural Faculties* opens with a discussion of the various types of "motion" that bodies undergo, including generation and destruction, alteration, transference (movement from one place to another), and growth and decay. There is, Galen complains, a lack of consensus around the characteristics shared by each of these processes:

> Now, common to all kinds of motion is *change from the pre-existing state,* while common to all conditions of rest is *retention of the pre-existing state*. The Sophists, however, while allowing that bread in turning into blood becomes changed as regards sight, taste, and touch, will not agree that this change occurs in reality. Thus some of them hold that all such phenomena are tricks and illusions of our senses; the senses, they say, are affected now in one way, now in another, whereas the underlying substance does not admit of any of these changes to which the names are given. Others (such as Anaxagoras)[158] will have it that the qualities do exist in it, but that they are unchangeable and immutable from eternity to eternity, and that these apparent alterations are brought about by *separation* and *combination*.[159]

How does food become the same substance as its consumer? According to Galen, some attempt to solve this problem by claiming that there is no change at all in substance but only in perception, while others claim that the substance of the food is not assimilated to but rather

---

[158] Anaxagoras claims that alteration takes place when tiny bodies, all permanently bearing the same qualities, rearrange and come together in such substantial numbers that it appears to the senses that a large-scale change in quality has occurred. A. J. Brock, *Galen: On the Natural Faculties,* 7 n. 5.

[159] Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* 1.2. *Πάσαις δὲ ταῖς κινήσεσι κοινὸν ἐξάλλαξις τοῦ προϋπάρχοντος, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ταῖς ἡσυχίαις ἡ φυλακὴ τῶν προϋπαρχόντων. ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι μὲν ἐξαλλάττεται καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν καὶ πρὸς τὴν γεῦσιν καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἁφὴν αἷμα γιγνόμενα τὰ σιτία, συγχωροῦσιν· ὅτι δὲ καὶ κατ᾽ ἀλήθειαν, οὐκέτι τοῦθ᾽ ὁμολογοῦσιν οἱ σοφισταί. οἱ μὲν γάρ τινες αὐτῶν ἅπαντα τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἡμετέρων αἰσθήσεων ἀπάτας τινὰς καὶ παραγωγὰς νομίζουσιν ἄλλοτ᾽ ἄλλως πασχουσῶν, τῆς ὑποκειμένης οὐσίας μηδὲν τούτων, οἷς ἐπονομάζεται, δεχομένης· οἱ δέ τινες εἶναι μὲν ἐν αὐτῇ βούλονται τὰς ποιότητας, ἀμεταβλήτους δὲ καὶ ἀτρέπτους ἐξ αἰῶνος εἰς αἰῶνα καὶ τὰς φαινομένας ταύτας ἀλλοιώσεις τῇ διακρίσει τε καὶ συγκρίσει γίγνεσθαί φασιν ὡς Ἀναξαγόρας.*

mixed together with that of the consumer. Responding to these erroneous assumptions would, Galen insists, be a waste of time; he claims that thinkers since the time of Aristotle and even as far back as Hippocrates have established that the digestion and assimilation of "bread into blood" involves change without continuity of substance.[160] "The whole of the bread obviously becomes blood…and this clearly disproves the view of those who consider the elements unchangeable, as also, for that matter, does the oil which is entirely used up in the flame of the lamp, or the faggots which, in a somewhat longer time, turn into fire."[161]

Having established that the process of digestion involves the profound and uncontestable assimilation of consumed into consumer, Galen goes on to argue that such a transformation can only occur under a very specific set of conditions:

> For since the action of [the nutritive] faculty is *assimilation*, and it is impossible for anything to be assimilated by and to change into anything else unless they already possess a certain *community and affinity* in their qualities, therefore, in the first place, any animal cannot naturally derive nourishment from any kind of food, and secondly, even in the case of those from which it can do so, it cannot do this at once. Therefore, by reason of this law, every animal needs several organs for *altering* the nutriment… it is quite clear that bread, and more particularly lettuce, beet, and the like, require a great deal of alteration to become blood. This, then, is one reason why there are so many organs concerned in the alteration of food. A second reason is the nature of the *superfluities*. For, as we are unable to draw any nourishment from grass, although this is possible for cattle, similarly we can derive nourishment from radishes, albeit not to the same extent as meat; for almost the whole of the latter is mastered by our natures; it is transformed and altered and constituted useful blood; but, in the radish, what is appropriate and capable of being altered (and that only with difficulty, and with much labor) is the very smallest part; almost the whole of it is surplus matter, and passes through the digestive organs, only a very little being taken up into the veins as blood—nor is this itself entirely useable blood. Nature, therefore, had need of a second process of separation for the superfluities in the veins…Thus, then, you have discovered bodily parts of a second kind, consecrated in this case to the [removal of the] superfluities of the food. There is, however, also a third kind, for carrying the pabulum in every direction; these are like a number of roads intersecting

[160] See Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* 1.2.

[161] Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* 1.2. *αἷμα φαίνεται γιγνόμενος ὁ πᾶς ἄρτος…καὶ φανερῶς τοῦτο τὴν τῶν ἀμετάβλητα τὰ στοιχεῖα τιθεμένων ἐξελέγχει δόξαν, ὥσπερ οἶμαι καὶ τοὔλαιον εἰς τὴν τοῦ λύχνου φλόγα καταναλισκόμενον ἅπαν καὶ τὰ ξύλα πῦρ μικρὸν ὕστερον γιγνόμενα.*

the whole body.[162]

The process by which consumed becomes consumer, as Galen understands it, is extensive and complex.[163] Creatures can only digest foods for which they have a natural affinity: cows, for example, can digest grass, whereas humans cannot. Even among foods humans can digest, the affinity for some is greater than for others; nearly all the substance contained in some foods is able to assimilate and nourish the consumer, while other foods contain surplus material that does not assimilate, and which must be siphoned off and eventually excreted. Galen envisions a digestive system consisting of three different sets of organs: the first to process food as it is introduced, the second to transport, temporarily store, and eliminate surplus, and the third to move useable nutrients throughout the body to the various parts in need of nourishment. Upon arrival at the parts to be nourished, viable nutriment undergoes yet another threefold process of assimilation:[164]

> The definition corresponding to the name [nutrition] is: *an assimilation of that which nourishes to that which receives nourishment*. And in order that this may come about, we must assume a preliminary process of *adhesion*, and for that, again, one of *presentation*. For whenever the juice which is destined to nourish any of the parts of the animal is

---

[162] Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* 1.10. *ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἡ ἐνέργεια ταύτης τῆς δυνάμεως ἐξομοίωσίς ἐστιν, ὁμοιοῦσθαι δὲ καὶ μεταβάλλειν εἰς ἄλληλα πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἀδύνατον, εἰ μή τινα ἔχοι κοινωνίαν ἤδη καὶ συγγένειαν ἐν ταῖς ποιότησι, διὰ τοῦτο πρῶτον μὲν οὐκ ἐκ πάντων ἐδεσμάτων πᾶν ζῷον τρέφεσθαι πέφυκεν, ἔπειτα δ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἐξ ὧν οἷόν τ᾽ ἐστὶν οὐδ᾽ ἐκ τούτων παραχρῆμα, καὶ διὰ ταύτην τὴν ἀνάγκην πλειόνων ὀργάνων ἀλ῾λοιωτικῶν τῆς τροφῆς ἕκαστον τῶν ζῴων χρῄζει…ὅτι δὲ καὶ τῷ ἄρτῳ καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον θριδαllκίνῃ καὶ τεύτλῳ καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίοις παμπόλλης δεῖται τῆς ἀλλοιώσεως εἰς αἷματος γένεσιν, οὐδὲ τοῦτ᾽ ἄδηλον. ῾Εν μὲν δὴ τοῦτ᾽ αἴτιον τοῦ πολλὰ γενέσθαι τὰ περὶ τὴν τῆς τροφῆς ἀλλοίωσιν ὄργανα. δεύτερον δ᾽ ἡ τῶν περιττωμάτων φύσις. ὡς γὰρ ὑπὸ βοτανῶν οὐδ᾽ ὅλως δυνάμεθα τρέφεσθαι, καίτοι τῶν βοσκημάτων τρεφομένων, οὕτως ὑπὸ ῥαφανίδος τρεφόμεθα μέν, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὡς ὑπὸ τῶν κρεῶν. τούτων μὲν γὰρ ὀλίγου δεῖν ὅλων ἡ φύσις ἡμῶν κρατεῖ καὶ μεταβάλλει καὶ ἀλλοιοῖ καὶ χρηστὸν ἐξ αὐτῶν αἷμα συνίστησιν· ἐν δὲ τῇ ῥαφανίδι τὸ μὲν οἰκεῖόν τε καὶ μεταβληθῆναι δυνάμενον, μόγις καὶ τοῦτο καὶ σὺν πολλῇ τῇ κατεργασίᾳ, παντάπασιν ἐλάχιστον· ὅλη δ᾽ ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐστι περιττωματικὴ καὶ διεξέρχεται τὰ τῆς πέψεως ὄργανα, βραχέος ἐξ αὐτῆς εἰς τὰς φλέβας ἀναληφθέντος αἵματος καὶ οὐδὲ τούτου τελέως χρηστοῦ. δευτέρας οὖν αὖθις ἐδέησε διακρίσεως τῇ φύσει τῶν ἐν ταῖς φλεψὶ περιττωμάτων… Δεύτερον δή σοι καὶ τοῦτο τὸ γένος τῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι μορίων ἐξεύρηται τοῖς περιττώμασι τῆς τροφῆς ἀνακείμενον. ἄλλο δὲ τρίτον ὑπὲρ τοῦ πάντη φέρεσθαι, καθάπερ τινὲς ὁδοὶ πολλαὶ διὰ τοῦ σώματος ὅλου κατατετμημέναι.*

[163] Owen Powell, *Galen: On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

[164] Powell, *Galen: On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* 18.

> emitted from the vessels, it is in the first place dispersed all throughout this part, next it is presented, and next it adheres, and becomes completely assimilated.[165]

This overview of Aristotle, the Stoics, and Galen provides glimpses into a long-running discourse concerning digestion and change. While these thinkers are obviously not concerned with resurrection, their theorizing of digestion as a site of transformation and (particularly in the case of Aristotle and the Stoics) simultaneous continuity shares a discursive logic with the early Christian thinkers. These Christians understand resurrection similarly: as a site of transformation and continuity. As we will see, Athenagoras—and, later, Irenaeus as well—engage with this discourse in the sense that they understand digestion to be the locus of the simultaneous transformation and continuity that make resurrection possible.

**Digestion and transformation in *On the Resurrection***

Athenagoras' attempts to articulate precisely with what and by what means the body is nourished are deeply integrated with this ongoing conversation around digestion and change. His description of the digestive process forms a striking parallel to Galen's,[166] beginning with the argument that consumption does not always or necessarily result in digestion. Just as, for Galen, natural affinity dictates which foods are digestible for any given creature,[167] Athenagoras argues that God the creator, in infinite power and wisdom, "adapted to the nature and species of each

---

[165] Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* 1.11. *ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος ὁμοίωσις τοῦ τρέφοντος τῷ τρεφομένῳ. ἵνα δ᾽ αὕτη γένηται, προηγήσασθαι χρὴ πρόσφυσιν, ἵνα δ᾽ ἐκείνη, πρόσθεσιν. ἐπειδὰν γὰρ ἐκπέσῃ τῶν ἀγγείων ὁ μέλλων θρέψειν ὁτιοῦν τῶν τοῦ ζῴου μορίων χυμός, εἰς ἅπαν αὐτὸ διασπείρεται πρῶτον, ἔπειτα προστίθεται κἄπειτα προσφύεται καὶ τελέως ὁμοιοῦται…τὸ δεῖν πρόσθεσιν μὲν πρῶτον, ἐφεξῆς δὲ πρόσφυσιν, ἔπειτ᾽ ἐξομοίωσιν γενέσθαι τῷ μέλλοντι τρέφεσθαι.*

[166] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 8, 14-15; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 57-58; Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* 99-101, 105; Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 12, 174; Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 32.

[167] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* 99.

animal a suitable and appropriate food."[168] Living creatures cannot absorb what they eat indiscriminately, but rather are programmed to receive only specific types of nourishment. As a result,

> Not everything that [an animal] eats under the pressure of external necessity becomes suitable food for that animal. On the contrary some food, as soon as it meets the folds of the belly, is inevitably spoiled and is eliminated as vomit or excretion or in some other form since it cannot even for a short time endure the first natural digestive process, much less organic union with the recipient of such food.[169]

The creaturely body,[170] as it turns out, is extremely effective at expelling food that does not constitute "suitable and appropriate" nourishment, even if this food was consumed out of hunger.[171] Some foods are rejected and excreted the moment they come into contact with the stomach, without being in any way absorbed or incorporated into the bodies of the creatures that ate them. Even foods that make it past this first "checkpoint" of the stomach may not end up as nourishment: Athenagoras, like Galen, envisions the digestive process as involving three sets of organs,[172] with different levels of "transformation" of the substance consumed taking place first in the stomach, then in the liver, and finally in the "parts and members that are being nourished"

---

[168] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 5.1. *Ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκοῦσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι πρῶτον μὲν τὴν τοῦ δημιουργήσαντος καὶ διοικοῦντος τόδε τὸ πᾶν ἀγνοεῖν δύναμίν τε καὶ σοφίαν, ἑκάστου ζώου φύσει καὶ γένει τὴν προσφυῆ καὶ κατάλληλον συναρμόσαντος τροφήν…*

[169] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 5.2. *Ἧ γὰρ ἂν ἔγνωσαν ὅτι μὴ πᾶν ὃ προσφέρεταί τις ὑπενδόσει τῆς ἔξωθεν ἀνάγκης, τοῦτο γίνεται τῷ ζώῳ τροφὴ προσφυής· ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἅμα τῷ προσομιλῆσαι τοῖς περιπτυσσομένοις τῆς κοιλίας μέρεσι φθείρεσθαι πέφυκεν, ἐμούμενά τε καὶ διαχωρούμενα καὶ τρόπον ἕτερον διαφορούμενα, ὡς μηδὲ κατὰ βραχὺ τὴν πρώτην καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ὑπομεῖναι πέψιν, ἤ πού γε τὴν εἰς τὸ τρεφόμενον σύγκρασιν·*

[170] Athenagoras starts out talking about digestion in animals but it quickly becomes clear that he is also talking about digestion in humans. He does not indicate that he understands there to be any differences in the digestive process among living creatures.

[171] Athenagoras elaborates that creatures unable to eat a sufficient amount of the food that is actually designed to nourish them experience an "urge to stuff down the enormous bulk which serves only to fill the belly and cater to the appetite." *On the Resurrection,* 6.2.

[172] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 14; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 57; Schoedel, *Athenagoras*, 101.

(τοῖς τρεφομένοις μέρεσι καὶ μορίοις) themselves. At any point in this process, food not fit to become nourishment for the "parts and members"—much like Galen's "superfluities"— may be eliminated as waste.[173] Meanwhile, food that *is* suitable to nourish is "purified" at each level of digestion, eventually undergoing a process of assimilation in the "parts" that is reminiscent of both Galen's and Aristotle's:[174]

> The food that then remains [after transformation and elimination in the liver] undergoes transformation from time to time in the parts and members which are being nourished; this occurs when what predominates is that which causes growth or increase and whose nature it is somehow to break down or convert into itself what comes into contact with it.[175]

As is the case with Galen and Aristotle, the process of digestion as Athenagoras describes it involves the profound transformation of food that is fit for nourishment, as it quite literally becomes the same substance as the "parts and members." It is not, however, only the substance being digested that is thus affected: The entity doing the digesting experiences change as well. As Aristotle, Posidonius, and Plutarch's efforts attest, it was no simple task to explain how the body could continually incorporate nourishment and simultaneously retain continuity of subject, rather than constituting a mere moment in an ongoing digestive process. It is not difficult to see, given this context, why digestion—much like decay— could so easily and effectively stymy arguments in favor of bodily resurrection as a possibility. "Biological process," argues Bynum, "remained a threat to identity. Resurrection therefore had to replace process with stasis, to bring

---

[173] See Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 5.3.

[174] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 14; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 57; Schoedel, *Athenagoras*, 101.

[175] *On the Resurrection* 5.3. *τῆς τε καταλειφθείσης τροφῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐσθ ὅτε τοῖς τρεφομένοις μέρεσι καὶ μορίοις πρὸς ἕτερόν τι μεταβαλλούσης, κατὰ τὴν ἐπικράτειαν τοῦ πλεονάζοντος ἢ περιττεύοντος καὶ φθείρειν πως ἢ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ τρέπειν τὸ πλησιάσαν εἰωθότος.*

matter (changeable by definition) to changelessness. It had to restore body qua body, while transforming it to permanence and impassibility."[176]

**Athenagoras' multi-layered body**

How can a body that is constantly in flux be stabilized? Where in this body does the particular continuity lie that restores and guarantees "me-ness" in the resurrection? Athenagoras continues his response to the chain consumption argument with several radical assertions about digestion and its effects on the body. As he has argued, only foods that have a "natural affinity with the properties of the animal receiving nourishment"—after "pass[ing] through the appropriate channels and be[ing] subjected to a rigorous process of natural purifications"—are eventually "interwoven and intermingled with the body's parts and members."[177] He elaborates on the fate of foods not suited to serve as nourishment:

> No one can doubt that food of a different sort, contrary to nature, is quickly spoiled if it meets a force more powerful, but that it easily spoils what it overpowers and is turned into more harmful humors and poisonous qualities, since it brings nothing fitting or suitable to the body which is being nourished. The greatest proof of this is the fact that pain, illness, or death afflict many animals so nourished if in yielding to great hunger they swallow something mixed in with the food they eat which is poisonous and contrary to nature.[178]

[176] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 57.

[177] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 6.1, 3. *συμβαίνουσαν δὲ καὶ κατὰ φύσιν εἶναι τὴν τοῦ τρέφοντος σώματος δύναμιν ταῖς τοῦ τρεφομένου μένου ζώου δυνάμεσι, καὶ ταύτην ἐλθοῦσαν δι ὧν πέφυκε κριτηρίων καὶ καθαρθεῖσαν ἀκριβῶς τοῖς φυσικοῖς καθαρσίοις εἰλικρινεστάτην γενέσθαι πρόσληψιν εἰς οὐσίαν· …Ἀλλὰ ταύτην μὲν οὐκ ἄν τις ἀμφισβητήσειεν ἑνοῦσθαι τῷ τρεφομένῳ σώματι, συνδιαπλεκομένην τε καὶ περιπλαττομένην πᾶσι τοῖς τούτου μέρεσι καὶ μορίοις·*

[178] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 6.3-4. *τὴν δὲ ἑτέρως ἔχουσαν καὶ παρὰ φύσιν φθείρεσθαι μὲν ταχέως, ἢν ἐῤῥωμενεστέρᾳ συμμίξῃ δυνάμει, φθείρειν δὲ σὺν εὐμαρείᾳ τὴν κρατηθεῖσαν, εἴς τε μοχθηροὺς ἐκτρέπεσθαι χυμοὺς καὶ φαρμακώδεις ποιότητας, ὡς μηδὲν οἰκεῖον ἢ φίλον τῷ τρεφομένῳ σώματι φέρουσαν. Καὶ τούτου τεκμήριον μέγιστον τὸ πολλοῖς τῶν τρεφομένων ζώων ἐκ τούτων ἐπακολουθεῖν ἄλγος ἢ κίνδυνον ἢ θάνατον, ἢν ὑπὸ σφοδροτέρας ὀρέξεως τῇ τροφῇ καταμεμιγμένον συνεφελκύσηταί τι φαρμακῶδες καὶ παρὰ φύσιν·*

As Athenagoras has already pointed out, material that has been eaten by a creature but is not appropriate to serve as nourishment for that specific creature is often expelled nearly instantaneously as waste, neither being changed in itself nor effecting change in the consumer. Here, he acknowledges that this isn't always the case: unnatural foods that are "more powerful" than the consumer can stick around and be transformed into particular bodily humors that cause the consumer harm. The idea of a power struggle between food and consumer also finds a parallel in Galen's work:[179] Recall Galen's assertion that meat is digestible nearly in its entirety because it is almost fully "mastered by our natures," whereas we are able to assimilate only some components of radishes and we are completely unable to digest grass.

Galen, too, both espoused and fully developed the popular ancient concept of health as the result of a fragile balance between opposing forces, both qualitative (hot and cold, moist and dry) and humoral (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile). Nutrition, as Galen understands it, plays a crucial role in maintaining this balance: while foods do not in themselves contain humors, the qualities inherent to various foods result in the production of humors that share those particular qualities when those foods come into contact with and are processed by the body.[180] Athenagoras engages with this same schema in his discussion of the potential of "powerful" but unnatural foods to stick around and be converted into humors that upset, rather than contribute to, the body's delicate equilibrium of health.[181]

One might think that this idea would threaten Athenagoras' ability to counter chain consumption: to whose body—consumer or consumed—would human material-turned-unnatural

---

[179] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 14; Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 58.

[180] Powell, *Galen: On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* 13; Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 61-62; see Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* 2.8.

[181] Barnard, "Athenagoras," 15, Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 58; Schoedel, *Athenagoras*, 105.

food-turned-humor belong in the resurrection? Athenagoras attempts immediately to close this loophole, defining the contours of the mortal and resurrected bodies in the process:

> In fact, even if one admits that food from such sources—let us use the normal term 'food'—, though contrary to nature, is broken up and transformed into one of the substances which are wet or dry or hot or cold, even so our opponents can gain no advantage from such concessions. *Bodies which arise are reconstituted from their own parts*. None of the things to which we have referred is such a part, nor does it possess anything like the nature or function of a part. Moreover, it will not remain permanently in the parts of the body now being nourished nor will it arise with the parts that arise, since in that state blood, phlegm, bile, or breath will make no further contribution to life.[182]

Even if unnatural foods *are* occasionally incorporated into the body in the form of humors, Athenagoras insists, his opponents gain no ground. This possibility raises no concern around the proper eschatological distribution of human material, because bodily humors (blood, phlegm, bile, breath)[183] and the qualities that define them (wet, dry, hot, cold) will not participate in the resurrection. The resurrected body will be constituted solely of the mortal body's "parts." The humors are constantly in flux through the process of nourishment: even during life, they "do not remain permanently in the parts of the body now being nourished." In a resurrection defined by stasis, the presence of something so changeable is out of the question. For Athenagoras, it is the "parts"—which he envisions as stable and unchanging in a way that humors are not—that constitute the material continuity between mortal life and resurrection.

---

[182] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 7.1, emphasis mine. *Ὅλως δὲ κἂν συγχωρήσῃ τις τὴν ἐκ τούτων εἰσιοῦσαν τροφήν (προσειρήσθω δὲ τοῦτο συνηθέστερον), καίπερ οὖσαν παρὰ φύσιν, διακρίνεσθαι καὶ ματαβάλλειν εἰς ἕν τι τῶν ὑγραινόντων ἢ ξηραινόντων ἢ θερμαινόντων ἢ ψυχόντων, οὐδ οὕτως ἐκ τῶν συγχωρηθέντων αὐτοῖς γενήσεταί τι προὔργου, τῶν μὲν ἀνισταμένων σωμάτων ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν πάλιν συνισταμένων, οὐδενὸς δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων μέρους ὄντος, οὐδὲ τὴν ὡς μέρους ἐπέχοντος σχέσιν ἢ τάξιν, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ παραμένοντος πάντοτε τοῖς τρεφομένοις τοῦ σώματος μέρεσιν, ἢ συνανισταμένου τοῖς ἀνισταμένοις, οὐδὲν συντελοῦντος ἔτι πρὸς τὸ ζῆν οὐχ αἵματος οὐ φλέγματος οὐ χολῆς οὐ πνεύματος.*

[183] A textual variant in the critical apparatus of *On the Resurrection* lists the four humors—blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile—rathen than blood, phlegm, bile, and breath. See Schoedel, *Athenagoras*, 105.

Having settled his case with reference to humors, Athenagoras then moves—for the sake of argument—to consider an even more threatening possibility: What if foods not fit to serve as nourishment penetrate into the body even further than the humors, and are absorbed and assimilated into the substance of the flesh itself? Further complexifying his portrayal of the mortal body, Athenagoras posits a body consisting not only of fluctuating humors and static "parts," but also of two distinct and intermediate layers of "flesh."[184] Of these two types of flesh, only one—"selected by nature"—is intimately joined to and intertwined with the "parts." This flesh remains with the parts, "naturally united with them by bonds of intimacy and familiarity," for as long as the body is mortal, working together with the "parts" to "[contribute] to life according to nature and [to sustain] life's labors."[185] The second and outer of these two fleshly layers is, as it turns out, just as unstable and variable as the humors:

> Moreover, even if one were to grant that the transformation from food of that [unnatural] kind will result in its being turned into flesh, still it will not necessarily be the case that the flesh which is so recent a transformation from such food and which has attached itself to the body of another human will again form an essential part of that individual. Neither does the flesh which has received some addition always retain what it has received, nor is the assimilated flesh stable and capable of remaining with its recipient. It is susceptible of profound transformation, and in two ways: sometimes it is dissipated through exertions or preoccupations; at other times it is wasted away through suffering, fatigue, or disease, as well as through disturbances that affect us because of heatstroke or chills, since the members which receive food and remain what they were do not change along with alterations in bulk of flesh or fat. If flesh in general is subject to such things, how much more would this be found true of flesh that has been nourished with unsuitable foods. Sometimes it swells up and grows fat from what it has taken in; and then again it rejects such nourishment one way or the other, and it diminishes in bulk for one or more of the reasons mentioned above.[186]

---

[184] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts*, 58-59.

[185] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 7.3. *μόνα δὲ παραμένειν τοῖς μέρεσιν ἃ συνδεῖν ἢ στέγειν ἢ θάλπειν πέφυκεν τὴν ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ἐξειλεγμένην καὶ τούτοις προσπεφυκυῖαν οἷς τὴν κατὰ φύσιν συνεξέπλησε ζωὴν καὶ τοὺς ἐν τῇ ζωῇ πόνους.*

[186] Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 7.2-3. *Ἔπειθ' ὅτι κἂν μέχρι σαρκὸς φθάνειν τὴν ἐκ τῆς τοιαύτης τροφῆς μεταβολὴν ὑποθοῖτό τις, οὐδ οὕτως ἀνάγκη τις ἔσται τὴν νεωστὶ μεταβληθεῖσαν ἐκ τῆς τοιᾶσδε τροφῆς σάρκα, προσπελάσασαν ἑτέρου τινὸς ἀνθρώπου σώματι, πάλιν ὡς μέρος εἰς τὴν ἐκείνου τελεῖν*

Even the intermingling of unnatural foods with the substance of the consumer's flesh itself, Athenagoras insists, would not present a problem for the resurrection. Like the humors, the type of flesh which could come into contact with such undesirable substance is constantly changing. Through the activities and events that define mortal life—eating and physical exertion; exhaustion and illness—this flesh builds up and then ebbs away. This is all the more true when this flesh comes into contact with a type of food that it should not: it swells temporarily in response, but ultimately rejects and eliminates the offensive food, as nature dictates.

What seems to emerge from Athenagoras' somewhat convoluted assault on the chain consumption argument is a mortal body in four increasingly stable layers. The humors are constantly being constituted, drained, and reconstituted as the body takes in and expels various substances. The "outer flesh," or fat, is similarly contingent:[187] it is continuously increasing and decreasing, particularly in response to the consumption of foods unfit to serve as nourishment. This layer, according to Athenagoras, is the furthest into the body that such unnatural foods are able to penetrate. The "inner flesh" is intimately intertwined with and connected to the parts; it works together with the parts to sustain mortal life, according to nature. The parts are the core of the mortal body; while they do absorb suitable and appropriate nutrition, they remain the same throughout: "the members *which receive food and remain what they were* do not change along with alterations in bulk of flesh or fat." Like the philosophers discussed above, Athenagoras

---

*συμπλήρωσιν, τῷ μήτε αὐτὴν τὴν προσλαμβάνουσαν σάρκα πάντοτε φυλάττειν ἣν προσείληφε, μήτε τὴν ἑνωθεῖσαν ταύτῃ μόνιμον εἶναι καὶ παραμένειν ᾗ προσετέθη, πολλὴν δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ θάτερα δέχεσθαι μεταβολήν, ποτὲ μὲν πόνοις ἢ φροντίσι διαφορουμένην, ἄλλοτε δὲ λύπαις ἢ καμάτοις ἢ νόσοις συντηκομένην, καὶ ταῖς ἐξ ἐγκαύσεως ἢ περιψύξεως ἐπιγενομέναις δυσκρασίαις, μὴ συμμεταβαλλομένων σαρκὶ καὶ πιμελῇ τῶν δημῶν ἐν τῷ μένειν ἅπερ ἐστὶν τὴν τροφὴν δεχομένων. Τοιούτων δὲ γινομένων ἐπὶ τῆς σαρκὸς παθημάτων, πολύ γ ἔτι μᾶλλον εὕροι τις ἂν ταῦτα πάσχουσαν τὴν ἐξ ἀνοικείων τρεφομένην σάρκα, νῦν μὲν εἰς ὄγκον προϊοῦσαν καὶ πιαινομένην ἐξ ὧν προσείληφεν, εἶτα πάλιν ἀποπτύουσαν ὃν ἂν τύχῃ τρόπον καὶ μειουμένην ἢ μιᾷ τινι τῶν ἔμπροσθεν ῥηθεισῶν αἰτιῶν ἢ πλείοσι·*

[187] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts*, 58.

understands digestion to effect the constant constitution and reconstitution of the body while simultaneously allowing it to grow and maintain continuity of subject. For Athenagoras, it is the "parts"—the locus of continuity—that will be gathered and reconstituted at the resurrection, guaranteeing material continuity and the transfer of "me-ness" between the mortal and resurrected subjects just as they do in the process of digestion.

So, Athenagoras essentially argues, even if substance from a deceased human should mix with substance from another human, whether through accident or intentional cannibalism, the digestive process makes it absolutely impossible for their *parts* to be incorporated into one another. Only that food which is declared by nature to be suitable and appropriate for a particular creature can be assimilated into its parts as nourishment. Human material is not suitable and appropriate nourishment for other humans: As Athenagoras concludes,

> The Maker has destined no creature, human or other, to serve as food for its own kind, even though it may naturally become food for other creatures of different species… For humans to eat human flesh is the most hateful and defiling act. It is more sacrilegious than the eating of any other food or the doing of any other deed which is lawless and contrary to nature. What is unnatural can never become food for the parts and members which require it; what does not become food cannot be assimilated by organisms which it was not even intended to nourish. If this is so, then neither can human bodies ever become fused with bodies of a similar kind. It is contrary to nature for them to serve as food in this capacity, even though they often pass through the belly of like bodies in times of distress.[188]

---

[188] Athenagoras, ***On the Resurrection*** 8.1. *Καὶ τί δεῖ λέγειν περὶ τῶν μηδενὶ ζώῳ πρὸς τροφὴν ἀποκληρωθέντων σωμάτων, μόνην δὲ τὴν εἰς γῆν ταφὴν ἐπὶ τιμῇ τῆς φύσεως μεμοιραμένων, ὅπου γε μηδ ἄλλο τι τῶν ζώων τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἴδους εἰς τροφὴν ἀπεκλήρωσεν ὁ ποήσας, κἂν ἐν ἄλλοις τισὶ τῶν ἑτερογενῶν τροφὴ γίνηται κατὰ φύσιν; Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἔχουσι δεικνύναι σάρκας ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώποις εἰς βρῶσιν ἀποκληρωθείσας, οὐδὲν κωλύσει τὰς ἀλληλοφαγίας εἶναι κατὰ φύσιν, ὥσπερ ἄλλο τι τῶν τῇ φύσει συγκεχωρημένων, καὶ τούς γε τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγειν τολμῶντας τοῖς τῶν φιλτάτων ἐντρυφᾶν σώμασιν, ὡς οἰκειοτέροις, ἢ καὶ τοὺς εὐνουστάτους σφίσι τούτοις αὐτοῖς ἑστιᾶν. Εἰ δὲ τοῦτο μὲν οὐδ εἰπεῖν εὐαγές, τὸ δὲ σαρκῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώπους μετασχεῖν ἔχθιστόν τι καὶ παμμίαρον καὶ πάσης ἐκθέσμου καὶ παρὰ φύσιν βρώσεως ἢ πράξεως ἐναγέστερον, τὸ δὲ παρὰ φύσιν οὐκ ἄν ποτε χωρήσειεν εἰς τροφὴν τοῖς ταύτης δεομένοις μέρεσι καὶ μορίοις, τὸ δὲ μὴ χωροῦν εἰς τροφὴν οὐκ ἂν ἑνωθείη τούτοις ἃ μηδὲ τρέφειν πέφυκεν, οὐδὲ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σώματα συγκριθείη ποτ ἂν τοῖς ὁμοίοις σώμασιν, οἷς ἐστιν εἰς τροφὴν παρὰ φύσιν, κἂν πολλάκις διὰ τῆς τούτων ἴῃ γαστρὸς κατά τινα πικροτάτην συμφοράν·*

Matter belonging to the parts of one human, then, may be eaten by another, but can never be combined with the consumer's parts: it will either be rejected outright as waste at the beginning of the digestive process, or—if it is sufficiently "powerful" as to be assimilated into the consumer's humors or outer flesh—will be gradually eliminated from the consumer's body in the course of the natural shifts that these substances experience. Despite dissolution, decay, even consumption, the matter that formerly constituted a mortal body's parts therefore remains present, independent, immutable, ready for detection and reassemblage by an all-powerful and all-knowing God at the time of the resurrection.

**Implications for the resurrection**

What are the alimentary implications of this schema for the resurrected body? In his refutation of the chain consumption argument, Athenagoras constructs a digestive system that shields the to-be-resurrected "parts" entirely from the unpredictability of consumption. While the parts as they exist during life do assimilate nourishment, Athenagoras' digestive process, and the multi-layered body upon which it acts, ensures that they rise for the resurrection unmixed with any substance that could present a challenge to their identity. This schema is Athenagoras' unique response to the conundrum at issue in the work of Aristotle, Posidonius, Plutarch, and various other thinkers: how can the body engage in the continual transformation that digestion and resultant growth necessarily entail, and yet remain the same entity throughout? For Athenagoras, the wild fluctuation and transformation inherent to the act of consuming are prevented from affecting the parts; material and personal continuity in the resurrection are both enabled by and proof of their static nature.

Athenagoras is explicit. While the parts will endure and be reunited with the soul at the moment of resurrection, the material that bears the brunt of the change digestion necessarily

entails—the humors, the flesh, all of the substances that absorb and grow and expel and shrink and ebb and flow in response to the consumption of unpredictable and often unsuitable items—will be left behind. In protecting and guaranteeing the integrity of the parts for the resurrection, therefore, the human body's digestive faculty as Athenagoras constructs it essentially performs itself into irrelevance: "For then," he says, "bodies will not need the nourishment they once needed, since the usefulness of what nourished them will disappear when these organisms have no further need of nourishment and have undergone dissolution." For Athenagoras, resurrection is triumph over threatening processes of change and decay, the reassemblage of the dissolved and scattered but fundamentally pure and unmixed material of the parts.[189] With the elimination of the body's naturally fluctuating substances, which are both a result of and necessary for digestion as Athenagoras understands it, post-resurrection eating and digestion are both pointless and impossible.

**Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V**

The *a priori* of Athenagoras' *On the Resurrection* is, as we have seen, that the resurrection must include the body as well as the soul, and, by extension, that some sort of material continuity between the mortal body and the resurrected body is necessary. To refute the idea of chain consumption as a central argument against this possibility, Athenagoras engages with ongoing philosophical and medical discourses around continuity and change, locating the point of contact between these opposing forces in the process of digestion. For Athenagoras, digestion enables the body to remain static even as it is transformed, making resurrection possible. The particular way in which Athenagoras understands digestion to work thus deeply

[189] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 32.

informs his construction of the resurrected body, leading him to envision a resurrection in which consumption and digestion will not occur.

Writing around the same time, Irenaeus of Lyons approaches the conundrum of resurrection with the same *a priori* assumption concerning the involvement of the flesh. He participates in the same discourses around digestion and change, also identifying digestion as the process through which material continuity between mortal life and resurrection is achieved. The specific model of digestion Irenaeus envisions is, however, extremely different, allowing him to construct a resurrected flesh which will—unlike Athenagoras'—feast with abandon.

Irenaeus' extant discussion of resurrection is largely concentrated in the fifth and final volume of his *Against Heresies*. Likely written in the last decades of the second century, while Irenaeus was bishop at Lyons, this extensive treatise attempts to debunk various theological positions Irenaeus identifies as heretical while simultaneously constructing its own theological schema.[190]

Like Athenagoras, Irenaeus insists upon a resurrection that requires material continuity between the mortal and resurrected selves:

> For it is not one thing that dies and another that is made alive, just as it is not one thing that is lost and another that is found, but the Lord came to look for that very sheep that was lost. What was dead? Evidently the substance of the flesh, which had lost the breath of life and became without breath and dead. This is what the Lord came to make alive, so that as we all die in Adam because [we are] psychic, so we all live in Christ because [we are] spiritual, after having put off not the work shaped by God but the desires of the flesh, and put on the Holy Spirit.[191]

---

[190] *Against Heresies* is available only fragmentarily in its original Greek, but is preserved in its entirety in a Latin translation dating to the late fourth century. Three manuscripts of this Latin version have survived, the earliest of which dates to the tenth or eleventh century. A separate version of the text seems to be preserved in Erasmus' 1526 *editio princeps*, which contains a series of variant readings not attested elsewhere. See Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

[191] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.12.3, reading Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 15. Trans Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), translation modified. W. W. Harvey, ed. *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1857). *Non enim aliud est*

As this passage hints, Irenaeus' ability to argue successfully for a resurrection that encompasses the "substance of the flesh" is vital not only for its own sake, but in service of Irenaeus' ultimate desire to demonstrate beyond doubt that the God of creation and the God of salvation are one and the same.[192]

**Flesh, resurrection, and the divine economy**

For Irenaeus, a resurrection of the flesh[193] is an essential part of God's economy of salvation, the overarching direction that the single God who encompasses all of creation makes unfold from beginning to end.[194] God's ultimate goal, according to Irenaeus, is for humanity to achieve divine perfection: As Denis Minns writes, "that goal is the exaltation of the creature formed by God from the mud until it comes to share in the uncreated glory of God: it is the coming to be of humankind in the image and likeness of God."[195] The long arc that constitutes the fulfillment of human potential began with the creation of fleshly beings, and thus requires the resurrection of the same fleshly beings in order to come to its final fruition.[196]

Unlike Athenagoras' work, which, as we have seen, is deeply informed by medical and philosophical literature, *Against Heresies* engages in explicit and extensive interpretation of scripture, and particularly of the Pauline corpus; among his primary interlocutors is 1 Corinthians

---

*quod moritur, et aliud quod vivificatur: quemadmodum neque aliud quod perit, et aliud quod invenitur; sed illam ipsam quae perierat ovem venit Dominus exquirens. Quid ergo erat quod moriebatur? Utique carnis substantia, quae amiserat afflatum vitae, et sine spiramento et mortua facta. Hanc itaque Dominus venit vivificaturus, uti quemadmodum in Adam omnes morimur, quoniam animales, in Christo vivamus, quoniam spiritales: deponentes non plasma Dei, sed concupiscientias carnis, et assumentes Spiritum sanctum…*

[192] Thomas D. McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 48.

[193] Unlike Athenagoras, Irenaeus does use this term, so I follow his lead.

[194] Denis Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 69.

[195] Minns, *Irenaeus*, 70.

[196] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 71.

15.[197] Reading Genesis 1-2 together with 1 Corinthians 15:22 ("As in Adam all shall die, so in Christ all shall be made alive"), Irenaeus imagines Adam as an immature type that a mature Christ eventually fulfills, allowing humanity the opportunity to return to and subsequently to surpass the level of relationship to God that Adam enjoyed before his act of disobedience.[198] Irenaeus envisions a humanity that was created into its infancy, potentially perfect but immature, being at the beginning of a lengthy and divinely-ordained process of development.[199] In this schema, human maturation and perfection occurs gradually, facilitated by reception from God: the more humanity matures, the more it is able to receive, which in turn enables further maturation.[200] This concept of progressive maturation through reception is intimately connected to Irenaeus' anthropology, which envisions a bipartite human made up of body (*corpus*) and soul (*anima*). The body is received from the earth; the soul, which is the mental faculty, acts as a conduit for the Spirit of God. The Spirit is the source of life, and that which allows the human to live forever; the body lives when it receives the spirit through the soul.[201] "Bodies, then," as Thomas McGlothin argues, "are defined by their receptive relationship to the soul, which is in turn defined by its receptive relationship to the Spirit of God. Thus, humanity is defined through

---

[197] On Irenaeus as an interpreter of Paul, see e.g. David L. Balás, "The Use and Interpretation of Paul in Irenaeus' Five Books Adversus Haereses," *Second Century* 9 (1992): 27-40; Ben Blackwell, "Paul and Irenaeus," in *Paul and the Second Century*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson (London: T&T Clark International, 2011), 190-206; Rolf Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret: Zur Rezeption und Wirkung der paulinischen und deuteropaulinischen Briefe im Werk des Irenäus von Lyon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Richard A. Norris Jr., "Irenaeus' Use of Paul in His Polemic Against the Gnostics," in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. William S. Babcock (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 79-98; Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

[198] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 71; Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvanian Press, 2011), 99.

[199] McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation*, 55-57; Minns, *Irenaeus*, 75.

[200] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.38.1; McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation,* 55-57.

[201] Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 220.

reception from God, whether viewed in each component part or as a composite."[202] In the absence of the soul and the access to Spirit it provides, the body—which Irenaeus equates explicitly with the substance of flesh—dissolves and decomposes back into the earth from which it came:

> What therefore is left to which we may apply the term 'mortal body,' unless it be the thing that was molded, that is, the flesh, of which it is also said that God will vivify it? For this it is which dies and is decomposed, but not the soul or spirit. For to die is to lose vital power, and to become henceforth breathless, inanimate, and devoid of motion, and to melt away into those [component parts] from which it also derived the commencement of [its] substance. But this event happens neither to the soul, for it is the breath of life, nor to the spirit, for the spirit is simple and not composite, so that it cannot be decomposed, and is itself the life of those who receive it. We must therefore conclude that it is in reference to the flesh that death is mentioned, which after the soul's departure becomes breathless and inanimate, and is decomposed gradually into the earth from which it was taken. This, then, is what is mortal.[203]

Such has been the fate of human flesh since Adam, acting out of his infancy and immaturity, lost the Spirit that sustains life.[204] Decomposition and decay cannot, however, have the final say: the eventual unification with the divine that Irenaeus envisions as the inevitable *telos* of humanity must be experienced by humans *as they were created*. God made the flesh and values the flesh and thus will save the flesh;[205] a resurrection of the flesh is therefore absolutely necessary for

---

[202] McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation*, 60.

[203] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.7.1. *Quid igitur superest dicere mortale corpus, nisi plasma, id est caro, de qua et sermo est, quoniam vivificabit eam Deus? Haec enim est quae moritur et solvitur; sed non anima, neque spiritus. Mori enim est vitalem amittere habilitatem, et sine spiramine in posterum, et inanimalem, et immobilem fieri, et deperire in illa, ex quibus et initium substantiae habuit. Hoc autem neque animae evenit, flatus est enim vitae: neque spiritui, incompositus est enim et simplex spiritus, qui resolvi non potest, et ipse vita est eorum qui percipiunt illum. Superest igitur ut circa carnem mors ostendatur: quae posteaquam exierit anima, sine spiratione et inanimalis efficitur, et paulatim resolvitur in terram, ex qua sumta est.*

[204] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 71; cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.23.5.

[205] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.3.2-3.

humanity to recover fully from Adam's transgression and continue its journey toward perfection.[206]

**What is the flesh that will inherit?**

For Irenaeus, a resurrection of the flesh guarantees that creation and salvation are of a piece with one another, the impeccably executed handiwork of the same God from beginning to end. In making this argument, however, he encounters a significant stumbling block: like many other proponents of fleshly resurrection, he is forced to contend with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:50 that "flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God." This particular passage played a pivotal role in intra-Christian debates around the nature of resurrection, and Irenaeus tackles it with gusto, citing it more frequently throughout *Against Heresies* than any other scriptural excerpt.[207] If Paul's words are true, how is fleshly resurrection possible? Irenaeus' solution to this conundrum arguably engages with the same discourses around continuity and change as Athenagoras' *On the Resurrection*, with markedly similar results.

For Irenaeus, as we have seen, the complete human consists of flesh, soul, and spirit. The soul mediates between the spirit and the flesh; it can move as if on a spectrum back and forth between these poles, aligning itself with one or the other. When the soul aligns itself with the spirit, the human as a whole—flesh included—takes on a spiritual quality; when the spirit is lacking, "the soul sympathizes with the flesh, falling into carnal lusts," and the human as a whole takes on a fleshly quality.[208] Irenaeus co-opts Paul's "olive tree" metaphor as it appears in Romans 9 to illustrate this point:

---

[206] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.35.1; V.36.2-3.

[207] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 75.

[208] See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.9.1-3.

> As the engrafted wild olive does not certainly lose the substance of its wood, but changes the quality of its fruit, and receives another name, being now not a wild olive, but a fruit-bearing olive, and is called so; so also, *when a human is grafted in by faith and receives the spirit of God, they certainly do not lose the substance of flesh, but changes the quality of fruit of their works*, and receives another name, showing that they have become changed for the better, being now not [mere] flesh and blood, but a spiritual human, and are called such.[209]

As with olive trees, so also with humans: the human that has been joined with the spirit of God remains fleshly in *substance*, but produces works that are spiritual in *quality*. An existence that is fleshly in quality, however, bears "fruit" in the form of the "works of the flesh" that Paul identifies:

> [The apostle], foreseeing the wicked speeches of unbelievers, has particularized the works which he terms carnal; and he explains himself, lest any room for doubt be left to those who do dishonestly pervert his meaning, thus saying in the Epistle to the Galatians: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are adulteries, fornications, uncleanness, luxuriousness, idolatries, witchcrafts, hatreds, contentions, jealousies, wraths, emulations, animosities, irritable speeches, dissentions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and such like; of which I warn you, as also I have warned you, that they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Thus does he point out to his hearers in a more explicit manner what it is [he means when he declares], "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God." For they who do these things, since they do indeed walk after the flesh, have not the power of living unto God.[210]

Those who partake in this list of fleshly works, Irenaeus insists, are ineligible to inherit the kingdom of God. Those who receive the spirit, however, become eligible entirely—flesh

---

[209] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.10.2, emphasis mine. *Sed quemadmodum oleaster insertus, substantiam ligni non amittit, qualitatem autem fructus immutat, et aliud percipit vocabulum, jam non oleaster, sed fructifica oliva existens, et dicitur: sic et homo per fidem insertus, et assumens Spiritum Dei, substantiam quidem carnis non amittit, qualitatem autem fructus operum immutat, et aliud accipit vocabulum, significans illam quae in melius est transmutationem, jam non caro et sanguis, sed homo spiritalis existens, et dicitur.*

[210] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.11.1. *Et ipsas autem operas manifestavit, quas dicit carnales, quae sint, praevidens calumniam infidelium; et ipse semetipsum exponens, ne relinqueretus quaestio his, qui infideliter retractant de eo, in ea epistola, quae est ad Galatas, sic dicens:* Manifesta autem sunt opera carnis, quae sunt: Adulteria, fornicationes, immunditia, luxuria, idolatria, veneficia, inimicitiae, contentions, zeli, irae, amulationes, animositates, irritations, dissensions, haereses, invidiae, ebrietates, comissationes, et his similia, quae praedico vobis, quemadmodum et praedixi, quoniam qui talia agunt, Regnum Dei non possidebunt. *Manifestus praedicans his qui audiunt, quid est,* Caro et sanguis Regnum Dei possidere non possunt. *Qui enim illa agunt, vere secundum carnem ambulantes, vivere Deo non possunt.*

included— for the transformation that resurrection entails: "In these members, therefore, in which we were going to destruction by working the works of corruption, in these very members are we made alive by working the works of the spirit."[211] 1 Corinthians 15:50 thus refers, on Irenaeus' reading, not to the *substance* of the flesh itself but to the fleshly *quality* that dominates the life and behavior of any human devoid of the spirit:

> In order that we may not lose life by losing that spirit which possesses us, the apostle, exhorting us to the communion of the spirit, has said, according to reason, in those words already quoted, "That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," just as if he were to say, "Do not err; for unless the word of God dwell with, and the spirit of the Father be in you, and if you shall live frivolously and carelessly as if you were this only, that is, mere flesh and blood, you cannot inherit the kingdom of God."[212]

This pivotal distinction between substance and quality, as Petrey argues, becomes Irenaeus' "hermeneutical key" for reading Paul, allowing him to index everything negative Paul says about flesh to the category of "mere flesh and blood"—i.e., the inherently fleshliness that dominates human nature in the absence of the spirit—while regarding the stuff of the flesh itself as an essential and non-negotiable component of humanity as it was created and as it must be resurrected.[213]

How, to return to our underlying question, is it possible for something to change and yet remain the same? Or, to put it somewhat differently, how can a resurrection that must eliminate the flesh, at least according to Paul, still and emphatically involve the flesh? In his efforts to

---

[211] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.11.2. *In quibus igitur periebamus membris, operantes ea quae sunt corruptelae, in iisdem ipsis vivificamur, operantes ea quae sunt Spiritus.*

[212] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.9.4. *Et non amittentes eum qui nos possidet Spiritum, amittamus vitam, adhortans nos Apostolus ad Spiritus communicationem, secundum rationem quae praedicta sunt dixit:* Quoniam caro et sanguis regnum Dei possidere non possunt. *Velut si dicat: Nolite errare; quoniam nisi Verbum Dei inhabitaverit, et Spiritus Patris fuerit in vobis, vanr autem et prout evenit conversati fueritis, quasi hoc tantum, caro et sanguis existentes, regnum Dei possidere non poteritis.*

[213] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 76.

navigate the paradox of transformation and continuity as it is set forth particularly in 1 Corinthians 15:50—to argue that, despite what Paul seems to say, the flesh will not be lost as a consequence of transformation but rather will in some form function to guarantee continuity—Irenaeus formulates a solution not dissimilar to that of Aristotle and of various Stoic philosophers.[214] Again, for these thinkers, bodies encompass multiple aspects or "genera," such that one is capable of growing and still maintaining personal continuity, while the other is engaged in total and continual transformation. Athenagoras, as we've seen, engages with this same concept to formulate his idea of the multilayered body—his own unique framework within which a resurrection of the dying, decaying, consumed and consuming human body is possible. Irenaeus' "polysemous" flesh[215] is in many ways similar. It is a flesh with both overwhelmingly positive and overwhelmingly negative valence, a flesh that signifies the original perfection of creation and also, simultaneously, the aspects of human behavior that foreclose any possibility of resurrection. It is, then, perhaps not surprising that Irenaeus, like Athenagoras, locates the nexus of the transformation and continuity that constitute resurrection within the process of digestion.

**Incarnation, resurrection, and Eucharist**

In arguing that the substance of the flesh will and must be included in the resurrection, Irenaeus invokes a crucial precedent: the flesh of Christ. Through his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection— all of which he experienced "not in appearance alone, but in actual reality…truly possessing flesh and blood"[216]—Christ fulfills the type that was Adam: "The

[214] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 76. Note that Irenaeus' "substance vs. quality" distinction does not map directly onto the "first and second genera" of substance and quality found in Stoic texts, despite the theoretical similarities between the two.

[215] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 75.

[216] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.1.2.

perfect human being," Irenaeus insists, "is the mingling and union of a soul receiving the Spirit of the Father and mixed with this flesh that has been formed according to the image of God."[217] Being constituted in the exact same way Adam was originally (flesh, soul, spirit) allows Christ to recapitulate, or "sum up," all of humanity in himself, reversing Adam's disobedience through his own obedience (the crucixifion) and restoring humanity's access to the spirit.[218] He also reverses—through his own fleshly resurrection—the death in which Adam's disobedience resulted. As such, he makes possible the eventual fleshly resurrection of all righteous humans into the millenarian kingdom, where the inevitable process of growth toward divine perfection can continue.[219]

How, precisely, does the resurrection of Christ's flesh facilitate the future resurrection of humanity's flesh? For Irenaeus, the two resurrections meet in the consumption and digestion of the Eucharist:

> If this flesh is not saved, the Lord did not redeem us by his blood, and the cup of the Eucharist is not communion with his blood and the bread we break is not communion with his body. For blood comes only from veins and flesh and the rest of the human substance, which the Word of God became when he redeemed us by his blood… And because we are his members and are nourished by means of the creation… he declared that the cup from the creation is his blood, out of which he makes our blood increase, and the bread from the creation is his body, out of which he makes our body grow. If then the cup of mixed wine and the bread that is made receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist of the body and blood of Christ, and from these it grows and consists of the substance of our flesh, how can they deny that the flesh is receptive of the gift of God, which is eternal life, when it has been nourished by the body and blood of the Lord and is a member of him? When the blessed Apostle said in the letter to the

---

[217] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.6.1, trans. McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation*, 69. *Perfectus autem homo commixtio et adunitio est animae assumentis spiritum Patris, et admixta ei carni, quae est plasmata secundum imaginem Dei*.

[218] See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.16.3; V.20.2. For a fuller consideration of this extremely complex concept, see Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 97-140, McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation,* 67-70; Benjamin H. Dunning, "Virgin Earth, Virgin Birth: Creation, Sexual Difference, and Recapitulation in Irenaeus of Lyons," *The Journal of Religion* 89.1 (January 2009), 57-59; *Specters of Paul,* 97-123.

[219] McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation*, 75-76.

> Ephesians "that we are members of the body, of his flesh and his bones,"[220] he was saying these things not of some spiritual and invisible human… but of the real human's constitution, consisting of flesh and sinews and bones, which is nourished from the cup, which is his blood, and grows from the bread, which is his body.[221]

The importance of the Eucharist cannot be overstated. For Irenaeus' polemical purposes, it provides uncontestable proof of the reality of both the incarnation and the (fleshly) resurrection: if God did not become flesh, or if the flesh will not be resurrected, then Eucharist is both phony and pointless. Even more crucially, it functions as the point of physical contact between the immortal, resurrected, spirit-infused flesh of Christ and the mortal flesh of a still-immature humanity, enabling humanity to be resurrected and thus to continue its inevitable progression toward perfection and divine union.[222] Significantly, it is the process of digestion that makes this contact possible.

What happens, physiologically, when a person eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ? Though his writing lacks medical detail, we can hear in Irenaeus' description of Eucharist echoes of the same discourses around digestion and change we encounter in the work of Aristotle, Galen, and even Athenagoras. Each of these thinkers contends with the complex and often confounding ways in which digestion transforms both consumer and consumed: The body

---

[220] Ephesians 5:30.

[221] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.2.2-3, trans. Grant, translation modified. *Si autem non salvetur haec videlicet, nec Dominus sanguine suo redemit nos, neque calix Eucharistiae communicatio sanguinis ejus est, neque panis quem frangimus communicatio corporis ejus est. Sanguis enim non est nisi a venis et carnibus, et a reliqua quae est secundum hominem substantia, qua vere factum Verbum Dei, sanguine suo redemit nos… Et quoniam membra ejus sumus, et per creaturam nutrimur… eum calicem qui est creatura, suum sanguinem qui effusus est, ex quo auget nostrum sanguinem; et eum panem qui est a creatura, suum corpus confirmavit, ex quo nostra auget corpora. Quando ergo et mixtus calix, et factus panis percipit Verbum Dei, et fit Eucharistia sanguinis et corporis Christi, ex quibus augetur et consistit carnis nostrae substantia; quomodo carnem negant capacem esse donationis Dei, quae est vita aeterna, quae sanguine et corpore Christi nutritur, et membrum ejus est?*

[222] Inevitable, at least, for those who accept it. Irenaeus is clear that people can "opt out" of the economy of salvation, and seems to envision a parallel resurrection of the wicked for judgement, but it doesn't seem like he thought this all the way through—the mechanisms by which he describes resurrection to occur don't seem to support it. See McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation*.

of the consumer grows and changes through the assimilation of consumed material, while nevertheless (through a variety of proposed schemas) persisting in its original identity; consumed material that is suitable to serve as nutriment loses its original identity entirely as it assimilates with and changes into the substance it nourishes. Irenaeus' discussion of the transformation that the Eucharist effects is clearly grounded in this framework, but with a significant twist. Irenaeus is explicit that Christ's flesh and blood, viscerally present in the bread and wine, are assimilated as useable nutriment by those who consume it, and that growth is the result: "his blood…makes our blood increase," and "his body…makes our body grow." The catch, however, is that—unlike other consumed substances—Christ's flesh can be digested and assimilated while maintaining its own identity. Digesting Christ, remarkably, results in mutual assimilation: Just as the substance of Christ is incorporated into the consumer's flesh, causing it to grow and shift, the consumer is in turn incorporated into Christ, becoming "members of the body, of his flesh and of his bones."

Those who participate in Eucharist become a visceral part of Christ, as the substance that is Christ's flesh "grows and consists of the substance of our flesh." Eucharist, then, involves no permanent destruction, but rather reciprocal growth, in which both consumer and consumed are incorporated into one another while each persisting in their original identities. It is this digestive anomaly that makes the future resurrection of human flesh possible:

> …just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a kernel of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of humanity, and, having received the Word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God.[223]

[223] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.2.3, translation modified. *Et quemadmodum lignum vitis depositum in terram, suo fructificat tempore, et granum tritici decidens in terram et dissolutum, multiplex surgit per Spiritum Dei, qui continent omnia; quae deinde per sapientiam in usum hominis veniunt, et percipientia verbum Dei Eucharistia fiunt,*

The co-assimilation of Christ's flesh with human flesh doesn't mean that human flesh won't die and decay. On the contrary, Irenaeus says, drawing again on 1 Corinthians 15, humans are just like the seeds that, after falling into the ground and decomposing, eventually grow to produce the fruit and grain that becomes the wine and bread of the Eucharist. Decay is inevitable, and deeply intertwined with resurrection, at all levels of the process: seeds decay in order to give rise to the elements that become Christ's flesh and blood; as the Eucharist, Christ's flesh decays as it is digested and changed, yet simultaneously survives to be eaten over and over and over again; by incorporating Christ's flesh into our own and our flesh into Christ's, we too will decay and yet, eventually, be resurrected.[224]

**Feasting in the resurrection**

For Athenagoras, as we have seen, digestion enables resurrection by insulating the body's continuity-bearing "parts" from the vagaries and dangers inherent in its own process. Because they cannot absorb anything that compromises them—specifically, material from other humans— the parts, although they decompose and are scattered, may be reassembled like so many separated puzzle pieces in the triumph that is the resurrection.[225] In other words, *digestion ensures that the parts of the body that guarantee personal continuity are protected as much as possible from transformation*. This approach to digestion shapes Athenagoras' construction of the resurrected body: In a resurrection involving only the parts, in which humors, fat, and flesh—all bodily substances that both facilitate and are constituted through digestion—have fallen away, eating is both pointless and impossible. For Irenaeus, digestion, in the form of Eucharist, also

---

*quod est corpus et sanguis Christi: sic et nostra corpora ex ea nutrita, et reposita in terram, et resoluta in ea, resurgent in suo tempore, Verbo Dei resurrectionem eis donante, in gloriam Dei Patris.*

[224] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 39; McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation,* 74.

[225] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 32.

enables resurrection: through the digestion of Christ's flesh, "a transcendent cannibalism that does not consume or destroy,"[226] human flesh too becomes able to change—even/especially through decay—and still escape destruction. In other words, *digestion ensures that the flesh is transformed so that it is able to guarantee personal continuity*. This approach to digestion also informs Irenaeus' construction of the resurrected body, with, as one might imagine, very different results:

> When the just rise from the dead and reign; when also the creation renovated and freed will abundantly produce a multitude of all foods out of the rain from heaven and the fertility of the earth: as the presbyters who had seen John the Lord's disciple remembered hearing from him how the Lord used to teach about times and say, "the days will come when vines come up each with ten thousand branches, and on each branch ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed will give twenty-five measures of wine. And when one of the saints picks a cluster, another will shout, 'I am a better cluster; pick me, bless the Lord through me!'…and the other fruits and seeds and herbs in like proportions; and all the animals, using those foods which are taken from the ground, will become peaceful and harmonious, subject to humanity with all subjection… Predicting these times, Isaiah says, "And the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall rest with the kid; the calf, the bull, and the lion shall feed together, and a little boy shall lead them. The ox and the bear shall feed together, and their young shall live together; the lion and the ox shall eat straw…"[227] …[This] will take place for these animals at the resurrection of the just, as we have said: For God is rich in all things, and when the world is reestablished in its primeval state all the animals must obey and be subject to humans and return to the first food given by God, as before the disobedience they were subject to Adam and ate the fruit of the earth.[228]

---

[226] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 39.

[227] Isaiah 11:6-9.

[228] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.33.3-4, trans. Grant. *…Quando regnabunt justi surgentes a mortuis: quando et creatura renovata, et liberate, multitudinem fructificabit universae escae, ex rore coeli, et ex fertilitate terrae: quemadmodum Presbyteri meminerunt, qui Johannem discipulum Domini viderunt, audisse se ab eo, quaemadmodum de temporibus illis docebat Dominus et dicebat: "Venient dies, in quibus vineae nascentur, singulae decem millia palmitum habentes, et in uno palmite dena millia brachiorum, et in un overo palmite dena millia flagellorum, et in unoquoque flagello dena millia botruum, et in unoquoque botro dena millia acinorum, et unumquodque acinum expressum dabit vigintiquinque metretas vini. Et cum eorum apprehenderit aliquis sanctorum botrum, alius clamabit: 'Botrus ego melior sum, me sume, per me Dominum benedic.' …et reliqua autem poma, et semina, et herbam secundum congruentiam iis consequentem: et omnia animalia iis cibis utentia quae a terra accipiuntur, pacifica et consentanea invicem fieri, subjecta hominibus cum omni subjectione." …Haec ergo tempora prophetans Esaias ait:* Et compascetur lupus cum agno, et pardus conquiescet cum haedo, et vitulus et taurus et leo simul pascentur, et puer pussilus ducet eos. Et bos et ursus simul pascentur, et simul infantes eorum erunt: et leo et bos manducabunt paleas…" *…in resurrectione justum super iis animalibus, quemadmodum dictum*

Irenaeus continues in vein of this passage for the remainder of the treatise, marshaling a variety of additional scriptural references to depict the lavish abundance of the resurrection. When Jeremiah, for example, says that "they will come to the goods of the Lord, to a land of wheat, wine, fruits, cattle, and sheep… and my people will be filled with my good things," Irenaeus argues, "such promises clearly refer to the feast in the kingdom of the just, to be provided out of the creation, which God promised to serve."[229] Likewise, in the resurrection will be located "the banquet hall in which those invited to the marriage will recline and feast"[230]; Jesus himself provided proof of the resurrection "when he promised to drink the new mixed cup with his disciples in the kingdom."[231]

The alimentary characteristics of Irenaeus' post-resurrection earth, as with so many aspects of his thought, can be fully explained by their place in his divine economy. Resurrection is not the *telos* of this economy, but rather another step in a process. From Irenaeus' millenarian perspective, this resurrection inaugurates Christ's thousand-year reign on earth, during which time the just, with immortality restored, are able to continue their inevitable progression toward divine perfection. Just as the resurrected are returned to an improved version of their original, pre-fall constitution (flesh, soul, and received Spirit, but further along in the process of maturation), the earth in the Chiliasm—Christ's thousand year reign— exists in a "renovated"

---

*est: Dives enim in omnibus Deus. Et oportet conditione revocata, obedire et subjecta esse omnia animalia homini, et ad primam a Deo datam reverti escam, (quemadmodum autem in obedientia subjecta errant Adae,) fructum terrae.*

[229] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.34.3, trans. Grant. "…Et venient ad bona, et in terram tritici et vini et fructuum, et animalium et ovium… et populus meus bonis meis adimplebitur." *Tales itaque promissiones manifestissime in regno justorum istius creaturae epulationem significant, quam Deus repromittit ministraturum se.*

[230] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.36.2, trans. Grant; cf. Matt. 22:1-14. *Et hoc est triclinium, in quo recumbent ii, qui epulanter vocati ad nuptias.*

[231] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.36.3, trans. Grant; cf. Matt. 26:29. *Haec enim et Dominus docuit, mixtionem calicis novam in regno cum discipulis habiturum se pollicitus.*

version of its original condition at creation.[232] This explains its paradisical and hyperbolically fertile qualities, as well as Irenaeus' use of Isaiah to describe animal behavior (animals will be subject to humans as they were initially to Adam).

Just as Athenagoras' perception of the process of digestion during life dictates the contours of his resurrected body, so too Irenaeus' approach to digestion is played out in these utopian scenes. For Irenaeus, as we have seen, a digestive event makes resurrection possible, but not just any digestive event: eating and absorbing Christ is a unique process that involves growth, but not destruction. Irenaeus' resurrected body feasts with abandon, and, crucially, in a manner that reflects this process. The dietary hierarchy in Irenaeus' resurrection seems to make impossible the type of dangerous and destructive digestion about which Athenagoras is so concerned: in the resurrection, animals never eat each other, but are entirely herbivorous. It is therefore impossible to deviate from a very simplified version of the food chain: the resurrected human body can eat either plants or animals that themselves have eaten only plants. The potential for destructive digestion—the absorption of substances that should not be digested or absorbed (animal and especially human matter) is off the table.

"The dead will rise," Walker Bynum writes, "to an earth of abundant food, in which animals will no longer eat animals. Thus the resurrection will bring a world in which consumption is filling and sustaining, not destructive; the problem of incorporation (how can one take in, or be taken into, without being destroyed?) is finally solved in the new heaven and new earth."[233] I argue that, for Irenaeus, this problem is solved already by the Eucharist, from which

---

[232] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 137. Irenaeus actually speaks of two resurrections. The resurrection of the just, which is the event I discuss here, will take place on earth during Christ's thousand-year reign. At the end of this period, the Son will hand the kingdom over to the Father, and there will be a general resurrection of all people for judgement, which Irenaeus fails to describe in any detail. This marks the beginning of eternity.

[233] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 39 n. 73.

resurrection proceeds, and which comes to define all eating that takes place in post-resurrection life. Just as Athenagoras' perception of digestion as both threat and protection from threat leads him to articulate a resurrected body for which it is impossible, Irenaeus' understanding of a certain type of digestion as redemptive engenders a resurrected body that will eat and digest in essentially that same way. In that sense, Eucharist is both model for and foreshadowing of the lavish and miraculously non-destructive feast that awaits the just in the resurrection.

**Conclusions**

How can something become something else, and yet, simultaneously, remain absolutely and recognizably itself? For nearly every early Christian thinker exploring the contours of resurrection, this question was relevant, and had profound implications for the ways in which the substance, form, and function of the resurrected body (or lack thereof) were imagined. For authors like Athenagoras and Irenaeus, who approached this question in significant part through the lens of ongoing conversations and debates around digestion and growth, the implications of the digestive process as they each understood it to mediate between the forces of continuity and change spilled over into their constructed landscapes of resurrection. As radically different as they may appear, Athenagoras' bare-bones resurrected "parts" and Irenaeus' millenarian feasts participate in the same discursive logics.

## Chapter 3: "Nourished on God Alone": Food, Drink, and the Resurrection Body in Tertullian's *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* the philosopher Pierre Hadot pushes against the tendency of modern scholars to expect from the works of ancient philosophers consistent, systematic thinking and the absence of contradiction. To expect total coherence, Hadot argues, would be to read these texts as divorced from the "living praxis from which they emanated." Ancient philosophical works should not be read primarily as abstract pieces of writing, but as the material byproducts of "spiritual exercises" conducted in the format of oral teachings and spoken dialogues. These exercises, Hadot argues, were not purely intellectual or theoretical, meant to be conducted in isolation from the realities and concerns of life.[234] Rather, as Hadot writes of Aristotle's work,

> Aristotle's writings are indeed neither more nor less than lecture-notes, and the error of many Aristotelian scholars has been that they have forgotten this fact, and imagined instead that they were manuals or systematic treatises, intended to propose a complete exposition of a systematic doctrine. Consequently, they have been astonished at the inconsistencies, and even contradictions, they discovered… Aristotle's various *logoi* correspond to the concrete situations created by specific academic debates. Each lesson corresponds to different conditions and a specific problematic.[235]

Hadot's framework for reading ancient philosophy proves useful as an approach to the writings of the Latin theologian Tertullian, who produced a substantial body of work that is (in)famously rife with contradiction and antithesis: "For Tertullian," writes Eric Osborn, "almost anything worth saying can be expressed through paradox."[236] Carly Daniel-Hughes, among others, draws attention to the diverse and often conflicting series of investments and

---

[234] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* ed. Arnold R. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 19-21.

[235] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 105.

[236] Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63.

conversations that inform Tertullian's work: As an apparently highly educated lay member of a Christian community in Roman-occupied second- and third-century Carthage, Tertullian is deeply concerned with conflict taking place within his community, with this community's engagement with and participation in Roman culture and power, and with intra-Christian debates concerning essential tenets of the developing Christian faith and the correct interpretation of scripture.[237] These various commitments and motivations result in contradictions and paradoxes across Tertullian's corpus, and frequently within the body of a single work. As an example, Jennifer Glancy highlights Tertullian's penchant for inconsistency specifically as it pertains to his approach to Mary's childbearing body. Through his graphic descriptions of Mary in childbirth, Tertullian insists—against Marcion and others—that Jesus, her offspring, was truly fleshly. In making this argument, Tertullian intermittently relies both on his substantial knowledge of medical literature and also on popular tropes and prejudices concerning childbirth, resulting in conflicting portrayals of childbirth—and, by extension, of human flesh—as natural and noble, but also as polluted and disgusting. The "competing corporeal discourses" in which Tertullian participates, Glancy argues, produce the inconsistency that frequently characterizes his approach to issues of flesh and embodiment—inconsistency that Tertullian shows little concern to rectify.[238]

Glancy's concept of "competing corporeal discourses" provides a useful framework within which to approach Tertullian's somewhat torturous portrayal of the relationship between food, drink, and the body in the general resurrection, as it appears in his treatise *On the*

---

[237] Carly Daniel-Hughes, *The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the Resurrection* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 1.

[238] Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117-127.

*Resurrection of the Flesh*. In this text, as in the related work *On the Soul*, food and drink are portrayed as playing an essential role in the relationship between flesh and soul—a relationship that, Tertullian insists, will and must be reconstituted in the resurrection precisely as it existed during life. Similarly, imagery of eating and drinking appears multiple times in the series of scriptural passages Tertullian marshals in defense of a resurrection involving the flesh. Within this same treatise, however, Tertullian condemns eating and drinking as among the most despicable functions performed by mortal flesh, and insists explicitly that the flesh as it exists in the resurrection will be incapable of consumption or digestion. As with much of Tertullian's work, the whiplash engendered by his convoluted approach to food, drink, and the resurrected body may be explained through the identification and disentanglement of the conflicting discourses in which he participates. Tertullian's engagement in intra-Christian debates involving the nature and value of the flesh and its relationship to the soul, his investment in scriptural interpretation, particularly of 1 and 2 Corinthians, and his concern regarding the participation of local Christians in food-related burial practices drive his arguments both for and against an eating-drinking resurrected body.

**Tertullian's abject, glorified flesh**

Written in North Africa around the turn of the third century,[239] *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* is primarily engaged in presenting and defending the same basic assumption operative in the treatises explored in previous chapters: there must exist material continuity of some sort

[239] Alternatively titled *On the Resurrection of the Dead*. Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.

between the mortal body and the resurrected body. Tertullian polemicizes against "heretical" Christian opponents who reject the idea of a general resurrection involving flesh:[240]

> Is there not [in the arguments of "heretics"], forthwith and throughout, reviling of the flesh, attacks upon its origin, its material, its fate, its whole destiny, as being from its first beginning foul from the excrement of the earth, more foul thereafter because of the slime of its own seed, paltry, unstable, reproachable, troublesome, burdensome, and (following on the whole indictment of its baseness) fated to fall back into the earth from whence it came and to be described as a corpse, and destined to perish from that description too into no description at all thenceforth, into a death of any and every designation?[241]

Portraying himself as engaged in extended dialogue with such opponents, Tertullian imagines them saying:

> 'Do you then, as a philosopher, wish to persuade us that this flesh, when it has been ravished from your sight and touch and remembrance—that it is sometime to recover itself to wholeness out of corruption, to concreteness out of vacuity, to fullness out of emptiness, in short to somethingness out of nothingness, and that even the funeral pyre or the sea or the bellies of wild beasts or the crops of birds or the intestines of fishes or the peculiar gluttony of time itself will give it back again? And is this same flesh which has disappeared to be an object of hope simply that the lame and the one-eyed and the blind and the leprous and the palsied may revert, so as to wish they had not returned, to what they were before? Or are they to be whole, so as to be apprehensive of suffering these things a second time? Then what of the appurtenances of the flesh? Will these all again be necessary to it, *and particularly food and drink*? And will it again have to breathe with lungs *and heave in its intestines* and be shameless with its private parts and have trouble with all its members? Must it again expect sores and wounds and fever and gout and death? In that case the hope of the recovery of the flesh will amount to just this—the desire to escape from it a second time.' Now [Tertullian says] I have expressed this somewhat more decently, out of respect for my pen: but how much license is given even to foulspeaking, you may find out for yourselves in these people's discussions…[242]

---

[240] I think it best to understand these "heretics" as rhetorically constructed. While the presence of their arguments in multiple second- and third-century texts suggests that a debate around the nature of the resurrection was indeed taking place, it is not possible to identify these arguments reliably with any specific person or group. See Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 20-21.

[241] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 4.2. Trans. Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection* (London: S. P. C. K., 1960). *An aliud prius vel magis audias <tam> ab haeretico quam ab 95omine, et non protenus et non ubique convicium carnis, in originem in materiam in casum, in omnem exitum eius, immundae a primordio ex faecibus terrae, immundioris deinceps ex seminis sui limo, frivolae infirmae criminosae molestee onerosae, et post totum ignobilitatis elogium caducae in originem terrae et cadaveris nomen, et de isto quoque 95ominee perituraе in nullum inde iam nomen, in omnis iam vocabuli mortem?*

[242]Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the* Flesh 4.3-7. Emphasis added. '*Hancne ergo, vir sapiens, et visui et contactui et recordatui tuo ereptam persuadere vis quod se receptura quandoque sit in integrum de corrupto, in solidum de casso, in plenum de inanito, in aliquid omnino de nihilo, et utique redhibentibus eam ignibus et undis et alvis*

In the opening argument of Tertullian's hypothetical interlocutors appear several points of contention typical of second- and third-century resurrection debate: Considering the inevitable destruction of the mortal flesh through decay and/or consumption, how can this flesh be immortal? Which aspects and functions of this disease-, disability-, and desire-prone flesh, including the faculties of consumption and digestion, are eligible for resurrection—and, crucially, why would anyone want the flesh back? While many of these anti-resurrection arguments are similar to those encountered in the work of pseudo-Justin, Athenagoras, and Irenaeus, noticeable in Tertullian's particular iteration of them is an emphasis on disgust. Tertullian seems to revel in florid descriptions of the nastiness of the flesh, which, significantly, are conveniently placed in the mouths of his opponents: flesh, they say, is "foul from the excrement of the earth" and from "the slime of its own seed." If a person were to be resurrected in the flesh, only for it to once again require food and drink, and "heave in its intestines…and have trouble with all its members," they say, surely that person would immediately desire to be rid of it once again. Tertullian is, he insists, actually downplaying the revolting ways in which his opponents speak of the flesh "out of respect for his pen"; their own words, he implies, are much less polite.

---

*ferarum et rumis alitum et lactibus piscium et ipsorum temporum propria gula? Adeone autem eadem sperabitur quae intercidit ut claudus et luscus et caecus et leprosus et paralyticus revertantur, ut redisse non libeat, ad pristinum: an integri, ut iterum talia pati timeant? Quid tum de consequentiis carnis? rursusne omnia necessaria illi, et imprimis pabula atque potacula? Et pulmonibus natandum et intestinis aestuandum et pudendis non pudendum et omnibus membris laborandum? Rursus ulcera et vulnera et febris et podagra et mors redoptanda? nimirum haec erunt vota carnis recuperandae, iterum cupere de ea evadere.' Et nos quidem haec aliquanto honestius pro stili pudore: ceterum quantum etiam spurciloquio liceat, illorum <est> in congressibus experiri…*

This emphasis on the abject nature of the flesh is common to several works in Tertullian's corpus, as Glancy points out in her analysis of Tertullian's approach to Mary in childbirth. In his treatises *Against Marcion* and *On the Flesh of Christ,* as Virginia Burrus also argues, Tertullian indulges in graphic depictions of human gestation and parturition, largely—as in the passage above—indexed to the perspective of his opponents: "Tertullian performatively invokes the abjection of the flesh," Burrus writes, "even as he skillfully displaces the defensive affect of shame onto others."[243] Drawing on more measured, clinical theories of reproduction found in the work of Soranus and others, Tertullian vociferously rejects the characterization of childbirth as shameful: "Use all your eloquence against those sacred and reverend works of nature," he challenges Marcion, "launch an attack against everything that you are: revile that in which both flesh and soul begin to be: characterize as a sewer the womb, that workshop for bringing forth the noble animal which is the human."[244] Further examination of Tertullian's rhetoric, however, makes clear the inconsistency of this "noble workshop" approach: the same association of childbirth with revulsion for which Tertullian excoriates his opponents is actually critical to his own soteriology. Arguing that Mary's birthing experience was not exceptional, but was, in fact, just as nasty and shameful as everyone else's, Tertullian insists that it is only through the disgusting humiliation of becoming flesh that Christ is able to love and save the flesh.[245] By asserting that the flesh's shame is actually intrinsic to its salvation, Tertullian, according to Burrus, "boldly plac[es] flesh at the center of his theological construction, thereby offering himself as a defiant witness to a truth that others find disgraceful. Flesh thus becomes

---

[243] Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 53.

[244] Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 3.11. See Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge,* 121.

[245] Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge,* 121; 124-125; Burrus, *Saving Shame,* 52-54.

the site of a deliberately offensive, explicitly countercultural faith articulated in the exotically alien language of scripture."[246]

This same fraught, blatantly contradictory approach to flesh—and, specifically, for our purposes, to its digestive capabilities—is evident throughout *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. Tertullian's initial response to the challenge of his hypothetical interlocutors engages with philosophical discourses around the relationship between flesh and soul, as well as with scripture, to envision a resurrection in which—by all appearances—eating and drinking should be not only possible, but necessary and even celebrated. Later in the treatise, as we will see, it becomes evident that Tertullian's opponents are not alone in their perception of the alimentary capacities of the flesh as gross and problematic.

**Tertullian's eating, drinking resurrected body?**

Tertullian's extended initial counter to his opponents' challenge emphasizes three major points: the dignity of the flesh (God made flesh intentionally, lovingly, and in God's own image, and therefore considers it worthy of salvation); the power of God (having created the flesh out of nothing, God is sufficiently capable of restoring it from a state of post-mortem decay and dispersal); and the purpose of resurrection (resurrection takes place in order to make possible God's judgement;[247] flesh must be present for judgment so that its conduct during life may be evaluated).[248] Underlying Tertullian's approach to these familiar arguments is his distinctly Stoic understanding of the flesh in relationship to the soul: "Stoic materialism," writes Daniel-Hughes, "is so deeply written into Tertullian's anthropology that it is difficult to comprehend his

[246] Burrus, *Saving Shame,* 52.

[247] McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation,* 96.

[248] See Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 5-17.

intransigent commitment to the flesh without reference to that philosophical position."[249] From this perspective, there is no fundamental divide between a corporeal flesh and an incorporeal soul, as is emphasized in competing early Christian anthropologies informed by Platonism. Rather, flesh and soul are inextricably bound together, two corporeal, material "bodies" constantly acting on one another.[250] Personhood thus resides not only in the soul, but also in the flesh, and in the interactions between these substances. For Tertullian, then, as Carly Daniel-Hughes argues, the idea of a resurrection that excluded the flesh "was scandalous: it threatened a fundamental violation of the integrity of the self."[251]

Tertullian's clearest and most extensive articulation of this anthropology appears in an earlier work, *On the Soul*, to which he refers his readers at several points over the course of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*.[252] *On the Soul* describes a soul that is inextricably intertwined with the body from the moment of conception.[253] The condition of life, Tertullian argues, is defined by

---

[249] Daniel-Hughes, *The Salvation of the Flesh,* 66.

[250] Daniel-Hughes, *The Salvation of the Flesh,* 66-67.

[251] Daniel-Hughes, *The Salvation of the Flesh,* 66.

[252] See Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 2, 17, 42, 45. While Tertullian's most extensive and explicit discussion of eating and drinking in the resurrection occurs in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, and this chapter therefore focuses mainly on close reading of that text, I bring in a few especially relevant references from elsewhere in Tertullian's corpus. Scholars are often hesitant to read Tertullian's various works in tandem with one another due to presumed differences in thought between his "Montanist" and "pre-Montanist" writings. Both *On the Soul* and *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* however, are generally dated to Tertullian's "Montanist period" (see Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5). It has been proposed, moreover, that Tertullian's affiliation with Carthage's Montanist community was not accompanied by a drastic shift in thought. As Laura Nasrallah argues, "It is clear that Tertullian considered himself to be aligned with the 'new prophets'… This does not mean…that he converted or that he understood himself to be anything other than a true Christian, attentive to God's revelation. Rather the New Prophecy was one of many forms of Christianity available in Carthage at this time." See Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, 2003), 100; Dunning, *Specters of Paul,* 97.

[253] Note here a discrepancy in Tertullian's language: *On the Soul* uses the term "body" (*corpus*), whereas *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* speaks of "flesh" (*caro*). I suspect, however, that the two terms are—at least in this context— essentially interchangeable. Tertullian himself suggests, at one point in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* that they can indeed be read as such: "But seeing that…[a] question is raised concerning the interpretation of 'body', my understanding will be that a human's body is none other than all that structure of the flesh, of whatever sort of materials it is composed and diversified, that which is seen, is handled, that which in short is slain by humans." *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 35.3, translation modified. *Sed quoniam et hic de interpretatione corporis quaestio*

this inseparability of body and soul; life begins when they are conceived together, and death occurs when they are severed from one another. The soul and body also—he insists—attain sexual maturity at the exact same time, "the former by the suggestion of the senses, and the latter by the growth of the bodily members."[254] This statement leads to a fascinating meditation on various manifestations of desire: Because of Adam and Eve's fall, all persons experience sexual desire and concomitant feelings of shame at the onset of puberty. This, however, is not "strictly natural" desire. The only desire that is truly natural is that desire which has existed from the very beginning, the desire to eat and drink:

> But the strictly natural concupiscence is simply confined to the desire of those aliments which God in the beginning conferred upon humanity. "Of every tree in the garden," he says, "you shall freely eat," and then again to the generation which followed next after the flood he enlarged the grant: "Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; behold, just as the green herb have I given you all these things."[255]

Here, the desire for food and drink is not understood to be problematic or superfluous, but rather a fundamental aspect of humanity in its ideal, pre-fall state. Significantly, this desire to eat and drink is not limited to the body. It is shared by the soul, which "is sustained by meat and drink and after a time loses its rigor when they are withheld, and on their complete removal

---

*cavillatur, ego corpus humanum non aliud intellegam quam omnem istam struem carnis, quoquo genere materiarum concinnatur atque variatur, quod videtur, quod tenetur, quod denique ab hominibus occiditur.*

[254] Tertullian, *On the Soul* 38.1. Translations of *On the Soul,* unless otherwise noted, taken from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*: *Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Vol III: Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., rev. A. Cleveland Coxe; Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885). *…pubertatem quoque animalem cum carnali dicimus conuenire pariterque et illam suggestu sensuum et istam processu membrorum exsurgere a quarto decimo fere anno…* J. H. Waszink, *Tertullianus, De anima mit Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Amsterdam, 1933).

[255]Tertullian, *On the Soul* 38.3. *Ceterum proprie naturalis concupiscentia unica est alimentorum solummodo, quam deus et in primordio contulit: ex omni ligno, inquit, edetis, et secundae post diluuium geniturae supermensus est: ecce dedi uobis omnia in escam tamquam olera faeni…`*

ultimately droops and dies."[256] This does not mean, Tertullian insists, that the soul is mortal like the body, nor does it mean that the soul and body want food and drink for the same reasons. The body desires nutrition "from the nature of its properties," but the soul wants it "because of a special necessity."[257] This "special necessity" essentially boils down to the fact that food and drink are in the soul's best interest:

> …The flesh is no doubt the house of the soul, and the soul is the temporary inhabitant of the flesh. The desire, then, of the lodger will arise from the temporary cause and the special necessity which his very designation suggests—with a view to benefit and improve the place of his temporary abode, while sojourning in it; not with the view, certainly, of being himself the foundation of the house; or himself its walls, or himself its support and roof, but simply and solely with the view of being accommodated and housed, since he could not receive such accommodation except in a sound and well-built house…If [the soul] be not provided with this accommodation, it will not be in its power to quit its dwelling-place, and for want of fit and proper resources, to depart safe and sound, in possession, too, of its own supports, and the aliments which belong to its own proper condition—namely immortality, rationality, sensibility, intelligence, and freedom of the will.[258]

As this passage carefully emphasizes, the soul does not desire food and drink for its own consumption. Nutrition is nevertheless essential for the soul's well-being while it resides in the fleshly body. The relationship of the soul and the flesh makes possible the soul's access to the things that allow it to thrive as it should, including intelligence, and eventually enables it to "quit

---

[256] Tertullian, *On the Soul* 38.3. *Auferenda est enim argumentatoris occasio, qui quod anima desiderare uideatur alimenta, hinc quoque mortalem eam intellegi cupit, quae cibis sustineatur, denique derogatis eis euigescat, postremo subtractis intercidat.*

[257] Tertullian, *On the Soul* 38.4. *Desiderabit igitur cibos anima sibi quidem ex causa necessitatis, carni uero ex natura proprietatis.*

[258] Tertullian, *On the Soul* 38.4-6. *Certe enim domus animae caro est, et inquilinus carnis anima. Desiderabit itaque inquilinus ex causa et necessitate huius nominis profutura domui toto inquilinatus sui tempore, non ut ipse substruendus nec ut ipse loricandus nec ut ipse tibicinandus, sed tantummodo continendus, quia non aliter contineri possit quam domo fulta. Alioquin licebit animae dilapsa domo ex destitutione priorum subsidiorum incolumi abire, habenti sua firmamenta et propriae condicionis alimenta, immortalitatem rationalitatem sensualitatem intellectualitatem arbitrii libertatem.*

its dwelling-place" and attain immortality. Food and drink are crucial to the maintenance of this relationship. It is, therefore, not only the body that must eat and drink to survive; the soul itself "ultimately droops and dies" without it.

Similar descriptions of the relationship between flesh and soul, and of the role of food and drink in ensuring the well-being of the soul as well as the flesh, appear in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. Tertullian's opponents, he claims, devalue the flesh. The ways in which the flesh functions in tandem with the soul, however, demonstrate both its inestimable value and its need to be present together with the soul for judgment. Discussing the creation of humanity, Tertullian argues that the flesh was designed not as a "cheap receptacle" for the soul, but rather as its partner and full co-participant in both mortal life and resurrection. Soul and flesh are, he insists, "entwine[d] and commingle[d]… in such close connection that it may be considered uncertain whether the flesh is the vehicle of the soul or the soul the vehicle of the flesh, whether the flesh is at the service of the soul or the soul at the service of the flesh."[259]

Tertullian elaborates, giving two examples of how the flesh is essential to the well-being of the soul: the flesh allows the soul to experience mortal life, and the flesh enables the soul to be in special relationship with God. The language of food and drink figures prominently throughout this discussion. While the soul serves as the "rider and master" of the flesh, it is through the flesh, by means of the senses—"sight, hearing, *taste,* smell, touch"—that the soul "feeds upon" (*depascitur*) the good things of the temporal world.[260] Here, as in *On the Soul* 38, the alimentary capacities of the flesh seem to have an epistemological function. While Tertullian refers

[259] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 7.9. *Collocavit autem, an potius inseruit et inmiscuit carni? Tanta quidem concretione ut incertum haberi possit utrumne caro animam an carnem anima circumferat, utrumne animae caroan anima adpareat carni*.

[260] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 7.10-11.

specifically to the mortal flesh, he does suggest that this mutually beneficial relationship between soul and flesh on earth provides a template for their interaction post-resurrection: "Thus the flesh, while it is reckoned the servant and handmaid of the soul, is found to be its consort and co-heir: if in things temporal, why not also in things eternal?"[261]

Even more striking is Tertullian's discussion of the ways in which the flesh "makes possible the soul's election by God."[262] Once again, food and drink—and specifically, as in Irenaeus' work, the Eucharistic elements—play a central role: "The flesh," says Tertullian, "feeds (*vescitur*) on the body and blood of Christ so that the soul also may be replete with God." The unique ability of the flesh to ingest and fill itself with the Eucharist allows the soul to be filled by association, providing crucial access to God. Food and drink factor into this access in another crucial way as well: "For those sacrifices also that are pleasing to God—I mean these conflicts of the soul, fasting, deferred and meagre food, and the squalor which accompanies this observance—the flesh initiates at its own proper inconvenience."[263] It is essential for the soul not only that the flesh can eat and drink, but also that it can choose to forego nutrition that it requires. Flesh and soul are perceived as so intimately connected that the flesh's sacrifice is the soul's as well: the practices of fasting and restrictive eating are described as "conflicts of the soul." It is therefore evident here, as throughout Tertullian's discussion of the relationship between flesh and soul, that the capacity and need of flesh to eat and drink are far from

---

[261] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 7.13. *Ita caro, dum ministra et famula animae deputatur, consors et coheres invenitur: si temporalium, cur non et aeternorum?*

[262] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 8.2.

[263] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 8.3-4 *…Caro corpore et sanguine Christi vescitur ut et anima de deo saginetur. Non possunt ergo separari in mercede quas opera coniungit. Nam et sacrificia deo grata, conflictationes dico animae, ieiunia et seras et aridas escas et adpendices huius officii sordes, caro de proprio suo incommodo instaurat.*

undesirable. The capacity to eat and drink provides a conduit for the soul to both the earthly and the heavenly. The need to eat and drink provides an opportunity for sacrifice and suffering in which God takes pleasure. Food and drink are essential aspects of the ways in which flesh and soul function in relationship both to the temporal and to the divine, and are key participants in the intimate interactions between soul and flesh that Tertullian claims characterize life on earth.

Tertullian argues that the exact same relationship that exists between flesh and soul during life must characterize the resurrection as well. The resurrection will, he insists, take place for the express purpose of making possible God's judgement of humanity:

> Therefore since it is most appropriate for one who is God and Lord and Maker to appoint for humanity judgement concerning… whether or not they have taken care to acknowledge and respect their Lord and Maker, and since the resurrection will bring that judgement into actuality, this will be the whole purpose, indeed, the necessity of the resurrection: such a provision of judgement as is most appropriate to God.[264]

In order for this judgement to take place, every person must be present in full being: God's judgement of a person's life can only be issued upon the exact same entity that was responsible for that life. Since life is defined by the intertwining of flesh and soul, then, so also is the resurrection:

> Thus the…completeness of judgement can be assured only by the production in court of the whole human—in fact that the whole human appears in court as the assemblage of both substances—and consequently they must be made present in both, as they need to be judged as a whole, as assuredly they have not lived except as a whole. *Therefore in that state in which they have lived, in that will they be judged, because they have to be judged in respect of their life as they have lived it.*[265]

---

[264]Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 14.8, translation modified. *Igitur si deo et domino et auctori congruentissimum est iudicium in hominem destinare de hoc ipso an dominum et auctorem suum agnoscere et observare curarit an non, idque iudicium resurrectio expunget, haec erit tota causa immo necessitas resurrectionis, congruentissima scilicet deo destination iudicii.*

[265]Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 14.10-11, translation modified, emphasis mine. *Itaque plenitudinem perfectionemque iudicii nonnisi de totius hominis repraesentatione constare: totum porro hominem ex utriusque substantiae congregatione parere, idcircoque in utraque exhibendum quem totum oporteat iudicari, qui nisi totus non vixerit: qualis ergo vixerit talem iudicatum iri, quia de eo quod vixerit habeat iudicari.*

The ability of the flesh to eat and drink is, as we have seen, central to the ways in which the soul and flesh live as a single entity. If the state that enables life must be replicated in the resurrection for the purpose of judgement, this allows for the possibility of a resurrection that includes food and drink.

Tertullian's initial series of arguments concerning the dignity of flesh, the power of God, and the purpose of resurrection is followed by the citation of a number of excerpts from scriptural texts that Tertullian interprets as proof that the resurrection will indeed involve flesh. At one point in this discussion, Tertullian alludes to a number of passages from the Gospels and Revelation:

> …Whence can come weeping and gnashing of teeth, if not from eyes and from teeth? In fact, even when the body has been slain in hell and thrust down into outer darkness—and this is a torture particularly attaching to eyes—anyone who at the marriage-feast is clothed in works less than worthy will be bound hand and foot, which shows that he will have risen again with a body. So again that reclining in the kingdom of God, and sitting on twelve thrones, and standing then at the right hand or the left, and eating of the tree of life, are most trustworthy evidence of attitude of body.[266]

As Tertullian argues, authoritative Christian literature contains several references to the presence of various bodily parts and functions both in hell and in the kingdom of God. Tertullian insists that, because "body" (*corpus*) should be understood to mean "flesh" (*caro*),[267] these references should be interpreted not allegorically, but literally. They constitute incontrovertible

---

[266]Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 35.12-13, translation modified. *Ceterum unde erit fletus et dentium frendor nisi ex oculis et ex dentibus, occiso scilicet etiam corpore in gehennam et detruso in tenebras exteriores, quae oculorum propria tormenta sunt?----si quis in nuptiis minus dignis operibus fuerit indutus, constringendus statim manibus et pedibus, utpote qui cum corpore resurrexerit. Sic ergo et recumbere ipsum in dei regno et sedere in thronis duodecim et adsistere ad dexteram tunc vel sinistram et edere de ligno vitae corporalis dispositionis fidelissima indicia sunt*. See Matthew 8:12, 25:30, 22:13; Revelation 2:7.

[267] Here, Tertullian explicitly equates "body" (*corpus*) with "flesh" (*caro*): "My understanding will be that a human's body is none other than all that structure of the flesh, of whatever sort of materials it is composed and diversified, that which is seen, is handled, that in short which is slain by people" (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 35.3, translation modified).

evidence for a resurrection of the flesh. In his efforts to demonstrate that Christian scripture corroborates his understanding of resurrection, Tertullian includes among these references to bodily parts and functions in the afterlife—weeping, teeth-gnashing, eyes, hands, feet—two allusions to alimentary functions ("reclining [*recumbere*] in the kingdom of God"[268] and "eating of the tree of life," likely references to Matthew 8:11 and Revelation 2:7).[269] Tertullian's willingness to deploy language of eating and drinking in support of his case for fleshly resurrection allows for the assumption that he does, in fact, envision a resurrected flesh that eats and drinks. This is not surprising, given the emphasis Tertullian places on the role of eating and drinking in facilitating the relationship between the flesh and the soul (a relationship that, he argues, must be reconstituted in the resurrection so that the whole person may be judged). As Tertullian moves into explicit discussion of the qualities and capabilities of the resurrected flesh, however, a very different characterization of food and drink begins to emerge.

**Tertullian as interpreter of Paul: What is the flesh that will not inherit?**

Tertullian's discussion and interpretation of scriptural texts culminates in an extended analysis of excerpts from the Pauline corpus: It is no wonder, he complains, "if captious arguments are drawn even from the apostle's own writings, seeing there needs must be heresies,

---

[268] The verb *recumbo* has the sense of reclining at table for a meal. S.v. *recumbo* in C.T. Lewis and C. Short, A *Latin Dictionary; Founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary; revised, enlarged, and in great part rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis, Ph.D. and Charles Short, LL.D* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), 1537.

[269] Matthew 8:11-12: *Λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἥξουσιν καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακὼβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν, οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων*. "I say to you that many will come from east and west and will recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Revelation 2:7: *Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, ὅ ἐστιν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ*. "Let the one who has ears hear what the spirit is saying to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give that person permission to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

and these could not exist unless it were also possible for the scriptures to be misunderstood."[270] Tertullian's primary concern in this section of the treatise is with three Pauline passages that are, he claims, used consistently by his opponents to argue against the possibility of fleshly resurrection.[271] The first two of these three passages, 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Ephesians 4:22, juxtapose the destruction of the "outer human" and "old human" with the renewal of the "inner human" and the "new human" respectively; these lend themselves particularly well to dualistic interpretations in which the flesh is discarded while the soul experiences resurrection.[272] Tertullian admits that these and other Pauline passages do sound anti-flesh, but only if read out of context. In a logic similar to Irenaeus', Tertullian insists that Paul is speaking not of the *substance* of the flesh, but of its *works*:

> You may find the apostle always like this, condemning the works of the flesh in such terms as to seem to condemn the flesh, yet by the provision of thoughts from elsewhere, or even from the same context, taking precaution that no one should so think… it will be this worldly living which he terms the "old human," who he says was crucified together with Christ—not a corporal constitution, but a moral character.[273]

---

[270] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* 40.1. *Nihil autem mirum si et ex ipsius instrumento argumenta captantur, cum oporteat haereses esse: quae esse non possent si non et perperam scripturae intellegi possent.*

[271] See Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection,* 285.

[272] 2 Corinthians 4:16: *Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡμέρᾳ.* "Therefore we do not lose heart, for even if our outer human is wasting away, our inner human is being renewed day by day." Ephesians 4:21-24: *εἴ γε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε, καθώς ἐστιν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης, ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.* "Indeed you heard about [Christ] and were taught in him, since truth is in Jesus, concerning your former way of life, to put away the old human, corrupt through the deceit of desire, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new human, created according to the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness of truth."

[273] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* 46-47. *Talem ubique apostolum recognoscas, ita carnis opera damnantem ut carnem damnare videatur, sed ne ita quis existimet ex aliorum vel cohaerentium sensuum suggestu procurantem… Haec enim erit vita mundialis quam veterem hominem dicit confixum esse Christo, non corporalitatem sed moralitatem.*

This familiar-sounding argument sets Tertullian up for his engagement with the last of the three particularly challenging Pauline texts, the infamous 1 Corinthians 15:50:

> But, you object, "flesh and blood cannot obtain by inheritance the kingdom of God." I am aware that this also is written, but have purposely deferred it until now, with the intention of laying flat at the final assault the obstruction the enemy built up at the very first onset, after first knocking down all the questionings with which it has been, as it were, buttressed…We have now reached "flesh and blood," in very truth [the hub] of the whole inquiry... should we not forthwith interpret these two substances as the "old human" given up to flesh and blood—that is, to eating and drinking—the "old human" to whom it pertains to say, in opposition to the faith of the resurrection, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die"? For by this interjection too the apostle has laid an injunction against flesh and blood in respect of the fruits of them, which are eating and drinking.[274]

While Tertullian obviously knew of and drew on the work of Irenaeus, the extent to which he had access to Irenaeus' full corpus—especially the latter books of *Against Heresies*—is unclear. Tertullian's particular iteration of the "polysemous flesh"[275] imagined by so many participants in resurrection debate is in many ways extremely similar to the "substance vs. quality" distinction that undergirds the arguments of *Against Heresies* V.[276] There are nevertheless some significant departures from Irenaeus' position, one of which involves Tertullian's valuation of the flesh's alimentary functions.

Tertullian here equates "flesh and blood"—that which, according to Paul, will not inherit the kingdom of God—not with the flesh itself, but with the person who, like the targets of Paul's rebuke in 1 Corinthians 15:32, indulges in food and drink, dismissing the inevitability of

---

[274] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection* 48-49. See 1 Cor 15:32. *Sed caro, inquis, et sanguis regnum dei hereditate possidere non possunt. Scimus hoc quoque scriptum, sed de industria distulimus hucusque, ut quod adversarii in prima statim acie obstruunt in ultima congressione prosterneremus, omnibus quaestionibus quasi auxiliis eius ante disiectis… Ventum est nunc ad carnem et sanguinem, <cardinem> revera totius quaestionis… nonne duas istas substantias proinde veterem hominem interpretaremur carni et sanguini deditum, id est esui et potui, cuius sit dicere adversus fidem resurrectionis, Manducemus et bibamus, cras enim moriemur? Et hoc enim infulciens apostolus carnem et sanguinem de fructibus ipsorum manducandi et bibendi suggillavit.*

[275] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 75.

[276] McGlothin, *Resurrection as Salvation,* 98-99; 111.

resurrection. This, Tertullian insists, is the "old human" to which Ephesians 4:22 refers: the one who is mired in the "fruits" of the flesh, which Tertullian explicitly identifies as eating and drinking. In this thread of argument, eating and drinking are identified as the flesh's worst tendencies, functions that are not only incompatible with the kingdom of God in themselves, but actually prevent people who indulge in them from accessing it.[277] This is, obviously, a very different approach from the one that Tertullian takes in the early part of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, in which eating and drinking are valorized as necessary and noble functions that nurture and benefit both flesh and soul. This starkly contrasting valuation of the flesh's capacity to eat and drink—what Glancy might label a "competing corporeal discourse"—is consistently present throughout the final sections of the treatise, in which Tertullian articulates his particular vision of the composition, appearance, and functionality of the resurrected flesh.

"Let us next inquire," Tertullian writes, "with what body [the Apostle] contends the dead will come."[278] Paul is, Tertullian insists, not at all the staunch advocate against the flesh that Tertullian's opponents make him out to be: on the contrary, when interpreted correctly, his writings constitute overwhelming evidence for a fleshly resurrected body. Tertullian's description of this body is steeped in Pauline language. Adapting the "seed metaphor" found in 1 Corinthians 15, Tertullian describes a resurrected body that consists of two distinct layers. Just as

[277] Note that the association between "flesh and blood" and "food and drink" is often understood in a Eucharistic context, resulting in implications for the human-divine relationship that are not only positive, but vital (recall our discussion of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 8). I suggest, however, that the association as Tertullian deploys it here has different connotations.

[278] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 52.1; see 1 Cor 15:35. *Videamus iam nunc quo corpore venturos mortuos disputet*.

"what you sow does not come to life unless it has died," "the flesh that is made alive is none other than that which will have died."[279] It is, however, simultaneously transformed:

> For does [the Apostle] not also suggest in what sense the body sown is not that which shall be, when he says, "but naked grain, it may be of wheat or something of that kind: but God gives it a body as he wishes"?—"gives," surely, to that grain which he says is sown naked. Evidently, you say. In that case that grain is conserved to which God is to give a body. But how is it conserved, if it has ceased to exist, if it does not rise again, if it does not rise again as its own self? If it does not rise again it is not conserved: and if again it is not conserved, it cannot receive a body from God. But it is obvious that it is certainly conserved. To what purpose, then, will God give it a body as he wishes, when it has all the time that naked body which is its own, except with the intention of its rising again not naked? Consequently there will be an additional body, which is built up over the body, and that over which it is built up is not abolished but increased. But a thing that is increased is conserved.[280]

Like the seed, which is planted "naked" but given its own body by God as it sprouts, the flesh as it emerges into the resurrection will be contained within an "additional body, which is built up over the body." Such is Tertullian's approach to the ubiquitous transformation/continuity paradox: "When the resurrection takes effect," he argues, "it will be possible to be changed, converted, and reformed, while the substance remains unimpaired."[281]

**Tertullian's resurrected flesh: ability, appearance, and function**

---

[279] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* 52.1-2; see 1 Corinthians 15:36. *Stulte, inquit, tu quod seminas non vivificatur nisi mortuum fuerit. Hoc ergo iam de exemplo seminis constet, non aliam vivificari carnem quam ipsam quae erit mortua, et ita sequential relucebunt.*

[280] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 52.5-8; translation modified; see 1 Corinthians 15:36-38. *Non enim et suggerit quomodo non quod futurum est corpus seminetur, dicens Sed nudum granum, si forte frumenti vel alicuius eiusmodi: deus autem dat ei corpus prout vult----certe ei grano quod nudum seminari ait? Certe, inquis. Ergo salvum est cui dare habet deus corpus. Quomodo autem salvum est si nusquam est, si non resurgit, si non idipsum resurgit? Si non resurgit salvum non est: si non est salvum accipere corpus a deo non potest. Sed enim salvum omni modo constat. Ad quid ergo dabit illi deus prout vult corpus, habenti utique proprium corpus illud nudum, nisi ut iam non nudum resurgat? Ergo additicium erit corpus quod corpori superstruitur, nec exterminatur illud cui superstruitur, sed augetur. Salvum est autem quod augetur.*

[281] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 55.12. I*ta et in resurrectionis eventu mutari converti reformari licebit cum salute substantiae.*

If the substance of the resurrected flesh will be the same as that of the mortal flesh and simultaneously transformed, what are the aesthetic and functional implications of this transition? Tertullian first addresses questions of illness, injury, and disability.[282] We recall the initial challenge of Tertullian's hypothetical interlocutors, in which the affects of shame and disgust that characterize their approach to flesh is closely linked, in part, with everything that can and inevitably does go wrong with it over the course of mortal life: "And is this same flesh which has disappeared," they ask, "to be an object of hope simply that the lame and the one-eyed and the blind and the leprous and the palsied may revert, so as to wish they had not returned, to what they were before?"

How can an improperly functioning or aesthetically displeasing body be "glorified"? Who would want such a body back?[283] The (in)compatibility of disability with resurrection was a frequent sticking point in second and third century Christian resurrection debate, representing what Moss argues was a shift in thought: Earlier Greek, Roman, and Jewish texts pertaining to afterlife do not seem to share this concern.[284] Similarly, Mark's Jesus insists that any body part that causes one to "stumble" should be removed, for "it would be better to enter eternal life impaired than to be thrown intact into Gehenna, into an unquenchable fire where the worm never

---

[282] For extensive discussion of early Christian and Jewish conceptions of disability and resurrection, see Moss, *Divine Bodies;* Moss, "Heavenly Healing"; Julia Watts Belser, "Disability".

[283] Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 67.

[284] Moss, "Heavenly Healing," 994-1000. Moss gives the example of the anthropomorphized soul, or "shade," as it appears in Greek and Roman literature. After unknowingly killing his father and marrying his mother, Sophocles' Oedipus blinds himself, in part so that he will not have to see either of them in the underworld (*Oedipus Rex,* 1220-1223). Similarly, Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* both describe tours of the underworld in which the protagonist encounters several shades still afflicted by the wounds that caused their deaths (*Odyssey* 11.51-83; *Aeneid* 6.445-446; 451; 496; 661). In 2 Maccabees, Jews about to be martyred voice their hopes that God will restore in the afterlife the body parts that their Maccabean torturers have removed or destroyed (2 Macc. 7:10-11; 23; 14:41-46). This seems, however, to be less an expression of concern about the presence of disability in the afterlife and more a statement about the inevitable triumph of God.

dies."[285] Jesus himself, as described in the Gospels of Luke and John, retains post-resurrection the injuries sustained in the crucifixion as identifying wounds or scars.[286] We recall, however, pseudo-Justin's insistence that Jesus' miraculous healings served to demonstrate the reality of the future (fleshly) resurrection;[287] the same characterization of resurrection as "eschatological healing" is also present in the work of Irenaeus.[288] Tertullian, too, takes this position,[289] arguing vehemently that "defects that accrue to bodies"[290] during life will not translate into the resurrection. Death, Tertullian writes, is the most severe form of impairment: "Who is in health, that has ceased to breathe? What body is uninjured when it is dead, cold, pallid, stiff, a corpse?" Given that the resurrection is able to overcome death, why wouldn't it be able to overcome lesser issues? On the contrary, "as life is given us by God, so also it is given again: as we were when

[285] Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 45-46; see Mark 9:47-48.

[286] Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 22-40; see discussion in the introduction of the appearance and functionality of Jesus' resurrected body.

[287] Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 4.3-5. "Truly the eyes of their hearts are blind, for they have not seen on earth "the blind seeing, the physically impaired walking" at [Jesus'] word. Everything the Savior did, [he did] firstly in order that the words [spoken] about him through the prophets might be fulfilled, that "the blind will see, the deaf will hear," et cetera, but also in service of the belief that in the resurrection the flesh will rise entire. For if on earth he healed the weaknesses of the flesh and made the body whole, how much more will he do so in the resurrection, so that the flesh will rise unharmed and complete?"

[288] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.539. "As, therefore, those who were healed [by Jesus] were made whole in those members which had in times past been afflicted; and the dead rose in the identical bodies, their limbs and bodies receiving health, and that life which was granted by the Lord, who prefigures eternal things by temporal, and shows that it is he who is himself able to extend both healing and life to his handiwork, that his words concerning its [future] resurrection may also be believed." See Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 73-74.

[289] Relevant also to this discussion are Belser's analyses of rabbinic portrayals of the resurrection: By late antiquity, Jewish writers largely agreed with their Christian counterparts in representing the body in the "world to come" as divinely healed from any sensory or physical impairments it experienced during life. One notable exception, the fifth-century CE Palestinian midrash *Genesis Rabba* 95:1, describes a resurrection in which disability is retained as an essential component of identity: people are resurrected with their impairments intact so that their families can recognize them. It is only later, after recognition has occurred, that God provides complete healing. This particular instance of the eschatological healing of the disabled body, as Belser argues, is not so much about "the remediation of individual impairment," but rather functions as "a symbol and signal of a broader eschatological social liberation." Belser, "Disability," 89-90.

[290] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 57.4.

we received it, so are we also when we receive it back. Our restoration is a gift to nature, not to injury: we live again as what we are born, not as what damage makes us."[291]

Based on this logic, one might expect Tertullian's resurrected flesh to retain all of the functionality of the mortal flesh: after all, "as life is given us by God, so it is given again." This, however, is far from the case. Like pseudo-Justin's opponents, Tertullian's opponents reject the possibility of fleshly resurrection based in part on the inseparability of the body's parts from their intended functions:

> But see: so that they may still pile up controversy for the flesh, and in particular for the flesh in its own identity, they argue also about the functions of its members, either alleging that they ought to continue forever in their activities and effects, as being appurtenances of that identical bodily constitution; or else, because it is agreed that the functions of the members will cease, they cancel the bodily constitution as well, seeing its continuance is, they say, not credible without the members, as neither are the members credible without their functions.[292]

Drawing on the Aristotelian idea that the parts of the body are pointless unless serving their various *teloi*, Tertullian's opponents offer the by-now-familiar argument that the absence of bodily functions from the resurrection necessitates the absence of the parts that perform those functions, which in turn makes the presence of the whole flesh impossible.[293] Their case, as Tertullian represents it, is as follows:

> What, they ask, will then be the use of the cavity of our mouth, and its rows of teeth, and the passage of the throat, and the crossroads of the stomach, and the gulf of the belly, and the entangled tissue of the intestines, when there will no longer be a place for eating and

---

[291] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 57.5-6. *Quomodo vita confertur a deo, ita et refertur: quales eam accipimus, tales et recipimus. Naturae non iniuriae reddimur: quod nascimur, non quod laedimur, revivescimus. Si non integros deus suscitat, non suscitat mortuos. Quis enim mortuus integer, etsi integer moritur? Quis incolumis qui exanimis? Quod corpus inlaesum cum interemptum, cum frigidum, cum expallidum, cum edurum, cum cadaver?*

[292]Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 60.1. *Ecce autem, ut adhuc controversiam exaggerent carni, maxime eidem, de officiis quoque membrorum argumentantur, aut et ipsa dicentes permanere debere cum suis operibus et fructibus, ut eidem corpulentiae adscripta, aut quia constet decessura esse official membrorum corpulentiam quoque eradunt, cuius scilicet perseverantia credenda non sit utique sine membris, quia nec membra credenda sint sine officiis.*

[293] Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 70-72.

> drinking? For what purpose do members like these take in, break up, swallow down, divert, digest, eject? For what purpose the hands and feet and all the muscles by which people work, when even thought for food is to cease? Why would we have loins, being conscious of semen, and the other genitals in both sexes, as well as the enclosures of conception, and the fountains of the breast, when sexual intercourse and pregnancy and the nurturing of infants shall cease? Ultimately, what will be the use of the entire body, when clearly the whole is free from use?[294]

This passage is, in a sense, an elaboration on the challenge presented by the opponents at the beginning of the treatise: "Then what of the appurtenances of the flesh? Will these all again be necessary to it, and particularly food and drink? And will it again have to breathe with lungs and heave in its intestines and be shameless with its private parts and have trouble with all its members?" As we have seen, Tertullian's immediate response to this initial challenge effectively rebukes the opponents for the disgust with which they speak of the flesh. He defends the flesh—including, explicitly, its alimentary functions—as created by and beloved of God; as serving a specific and noble purpose that will, by all appearances, be reconstituted in the resurrection.

Tertullian's response this time around, however, is quite different. We recall Tertullian's deployment of eating and drinking as the solution to the interpretive conundrum presented by 1 Corinthians 15:50: it is not the substance of the flesh that won't inherit the kingdom of God, but, rather, the person who indulges in its works—more specifically, its alimentary capacities. Similarly, Tertullian acknowledges at this point in the text that his opponents are, at least in part, correct: eating and drinking, along with other functions necessary for survival of the flesh during life, *won't* be included in the resurrection. "Those functions of the members do by the necessities

---

[294]Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 60.2-3, trans. Petrey; Evans. *Quo enim iam, inquiunt, spelunca haec oris et dentium statio et gulae lapsus et compitum stomachi et alvei gurges et intestinorum perplexa proceritas, cum esui et potui locus non erit? Quo huiusmodi membra admittunt subigunt devolvunt dividunt digerunt egerunt, quo manus ipsae et pedes et operarii quique artus, cum victus etiam cura cessabit? Quo renes conscii seminum, et reliqua genitalium utriusque sexus, et conceptuum stabula et uberum fontes, decessuro concubitu et fetu et educatu? Postremo quo totum corpus, totum scilicet vacaturum?*

of this life remain until, and only until, the life itself be transferred from temporality to eternity…but when life itself has been delivered from necessities the members also will be delivered from their functions."[295] Like pseudo-Justin, Tertullian insists, against his opponents, that the parts of the body can exist independently from the functions they perform during life, such that the absence of functions from the resurrection does not necessitate the absence of their corresponding parts. If eating, drinking, and sex have no place in the resurrection, the parts that perform these functions *must* be present so that the whole person can receive judgment: "God's judgment seat demands a human in full being; in full being however he cannot be without the members, for of their substances, though not their functions, he consists."[296] Significantly, however, these members will still have a *telos*: "in God's presence," says Tertullian, "nothing can be inactive."[297] Just because resurrected body parts will not perform all of the problematic functions they performed during life doesn't mean they won't do *something:*

> But, my friend, you have had given you a mouth for eating and drinking: why not for speaking, to make you different from the rest of animals? Why not rather for praising God, to make you superior even to humans? In fact, Adam pronounced names for the animals before he plucked of the tree: he was even a prophet before he was an eater. But, you say, you have had teeth given you for gnawing flesh-meat: why not rather for a crown to all your yawning and gaping? Why not rather for modifying the strokes of the tongue, for making the articulations of the voice significant by tripping them up? In fact, listen to and look at people without teeth, that you may find out the need for the adornment of the mouth and the instrumentality of the teeth. The lower parts in man and in woman are perforated—so that there, you say, the lusts may be in motion: why not rather that the excreta may be filtered?[298]

---

[295] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 60.4-5. *Et nunc superstruimus officia ista membrorum necessitatibus vitae huius eo usque consistere donec et ipsa vita transferatur a temporalitate in aeternitatem… Et ipsa autem liberata tunc vita a necessitatibus, liberabuntur et membra ab officiis.*

[296] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 60.6. *Salvum enim hominem tribunal dei exigit: salvum vero sine membris non licet, etenim ex quorum non officiis sed substantiis constat,*

[297] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 60.9. *Nihil enim apud deum vacabit.*

[298] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 61.1-3, translation modified. *Sed accepisti, homo, os ad vorandum atque potandum: cur non potius ad eloquendum, ut a ceteris animalibus distes? Cur non potius ad praedicandum deum, et etiam hominibus antistes? Denique Adam ante nomina animalibus enuntiavit quam de arbore decerpsit, ante etiam prophetavit quam voravit. Sed accepisti dentes ad macellum corrodendum: cur non potius ad omnem*

Tertullian here appeals to the primordial state of humanity after creation as a potential "ideal" state that the resurrected body will reflect, somewhat like pseudo-Justin appeals to Jesus: Adam, he says, spoke before he ate; thus the mouth in the resurrection will be for speaking, not eating.[299] Teeth, relieved of their ability to chew, will serve an aesthetic function: if you have ever seen a toothless person, Tertullian claims, you'll understand why they are necessary. Finally, and intriguingly, Tertullian seems to struggle to think of an acceptable post-resurrection function for the genitalia.[300] Instead of outlets for lust, he says, they'll be useful for "filtering excreta"; one could ask, given the absence of eating and drinking, what sort of excreta these might be. Moss proposes an explanation for this apparent inconsistency by reading it in the context of ancient medical discourses concerning women's bodies, including the idea of the womb as a space in which feces and parasites had the potential to accumulate.[301] Here again, if Moss' reading is accurate, is evidence of Tertullian's fraught and contradictory relationship to the flesh: his own arguments rely on the same characterization of the filthy, disgusting flesh for which he so frequently criticizes his opponents.

Much like pseudo-Justin, Tertullian bolsters his argument for the absence of digestive and sexual functions from the resurrection by highlighting the capacities of mortal flesh to fast and to practice abstinence:

---

*hiatum et rictum tuum coronandum, cur non potius ad pulsus linguae temperandos, ad vocis articulos offensione signandos? Denique et edentulos et audi et vide, ut honorem oris et organum dentium quaeras. Forata sunt inferna in viro et in femina, nimirum qua libidines fluitent: cur non magis qua potuum defluxus colentur?*

[299] Note the difference between the paradisical body in *On the Soul* (to which eating is integral) and the paradisical body described here.

[300] Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 92.

[301] "According to the Hippocratic *On Diseases,* tapeworms, which are associated with fecal matter, are formed on the fetus in utero. Although the association is complicated, there is some medical precedent for seeing the womb as a repository for fecal matter." Moss, *Divine Bodies,* 79.

> Moreover, even today it will be possible for the intestines and genitals to be inoperative. Moses and Elijah, fasting for forty days, were nourished on God alone: for even as early as that was authorization given to 'not in bread shall a person live, but in the word of God.' There you have the outline-sketch of virtue to be. We also, as we are able, give the mouth release from food, and even withdraw sex from copulation… For if even here and now it is possible for both the functions and the emoluments of the members to be inactive with a temporal inactivity, as in a temporal dispensation, while for all that the person is none the less in full being, it follows that when the person is in full being, and the more so then, as in an eternal dispensation, the more shall we not feel the need for things which here and now we have accustomed ourselves not to feel the need of.[302]

According to this passage, fasting and abstinence function in two ways. The ability of the mortal flesh to refrain from eating and sex—along with Biblical examples of those who have done so—serves as evidence that these actions will have no place in the resurrection. Additionally, by fasting and practicing abstinence, people can actually begin to model the resurrected flesh now, transforming the mortal flesh into something that more closely resembles its ideal form. This is reminiscent of the treatise's earlier discussion of fasting and restrictive eating, in which Tertullian argues that the ability of the flesh to forego the nutrition it requires facilitates the relationship between the soul and God. That discussion, however, seems to have a different rhetorical function: Tertullian's larger goal is to demonstrate that the relationship between the (eating, drinking) flesh and the soul is so foundational to the self that it must be reconstituted in the resurrection. Here, the implication seems to be that the capacity of the

[302] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 61.5-7, translation modified. *Ceterum et hodie vacare intestinis et pudendis licebit: quadraginta diebus Moyses et Helias ieiunio functi solo deo alebantur: iam tunc enim dedicabatur, Non in pane vivet homo sed in dei verbo. ecce virtutis futurae liniamenta. Nos quoque, ut possumus, os <a> cibo excusamus, etiam sexum a congressione subducimus. Quot spadones voluntarii, quot virgins Christi maritae, quot steriles utriusque naturae infructuosis genitalibus structi! Nam si et hic iam vacare est et officia et emolumenta membrorum temporali vacatione, ut in temporali dispositione, nec homo tamen minus salvus est, proinde homine salvo, et quidem magis tunc ut in aeterna dispositione, magis non desiderabimus quae iam hic non desiderare consuevimus.*

(eating, drinking) flesh to fast during life proves that this version of the flesh will not participate in the resurrection.[303]

*On the Resurrection* concludes with a final argument for the ability of the flesh to exist in the resurrection without needing to eat and drink. Engaging with yet another "hot-button" passage for early Christian resurrection debate—Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees concerning resurrection and Levirate marriage, as found in the Synoptic Gospels—Tertullian writes:

> But the Lord's pronouncement shall conclude this discussion: 'They will be,' he says, 'like angels.'[304] If not in marrying, because also not dying, evidently also in submitting to no similar necessity of their corporal constitution: because angels also have at times been as humans, eating and drinking and holding out their feet to be washed: for they had clothed themselves with a human exterior, while preserving within their proper substance.[305]

---

[303] A similar discussion of the benefits of fasting is present in another of Tertullian's writings, *On fasting, in opposition to the psychics*. In this work, Tertullian defends the fasting habits of the New Prophecy against purported charges of heresy, insisting that fasting and restrictive eating are incredibly effective and even essential methods of being in relationship with God. Humanity's original sin was, Tertullian argues, one of gluttony, since Adam, upon "tasting of the tree of recognition of good and evil… yielded more readily to his belly than to God, heeded the meat rather than the mandate, and sold salvation for his gullet." The penalty for this sin—and the sole method of its reversal—is hunger. Humanity's ability to fast is the means by which it can attain salvation (*On fasting* 3. Translation from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*: *Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Vol IV: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second* (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., rev. A. Cleveland Coxe; Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885).). Fasting also enables humanity to know God: when "the saliva is in a virgin state," the heart and mind are much better able to contemplate the divine. Perhaps most profoundly, fasting makes humans God's peers: since God does not experience hunger or the need to eat, "this will be the time for a person to be made equal with God, when he or she lives without food" (*On fasting* 6). Tertullian's approach to fasting in *De ieiunio* is, however, somewhat more nuanced than what appears at this point in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. *De ieiunio* insists that the extensive fasts and restrictive eating practiced by the New Prophecy do not involve the wholesale rejection of food—an activity that would "destroy and despise the works of the creator"—but rather the periodic avoidance of specific types of food, undertaken "to the honor, not the insult, of the creator" (*On fasting* 15). It is not food itself that is problematic; food is, after all, both a part of God's creation and a necessary factor in the maintenance of that creation. Rather, Tertullian condemns a diet that is rich and heavy in meat and wine (a "dry diet" is fine; the Lord himself commanded people to request daily bread) as well as a love of food (gluttony) and the feeling of fullness (*On fasting* 15and 6).

[304] Recall Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees: Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35-36.

[305] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 62.1, translation modified. *Sed huic disceptationi finem dominica pronuntiatio imponet: Erunt, inquit, tanquam angeli: si non nubendo quia nec moriendo, utique nec ulli simili necessitati succidendo corporalis condicionis, quia et angeli aliquando tanquam homines fuerunt edendo et bibendo et pedes lavacro porrigendo: humanam enim induerant superficiem salva intus substantia propria.*

We recall from our discussion of pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection* the ways in which this passage was frequently leveraged in arguments against the possibility of fleshly resurrection. Referencing the well-established tradition that Abraham's angelic visitors in Genesis 18 appeared to eat but could not actually do so, pseudo-Justin's opponents insist that the parallel Jesus draws between resurrected people and angels suggests the corresponding inability of resurrected people to eat (and thus, given the inseparability of parts and functions, to exist at all in fleshly form).[306] In an attempt to cast Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees as a pro-fleshly resurrection argument, Tertullian also seems to reference Genesis 18:4-8, but either to ignore or to be unaware of the popular corresponding tradition in which the angels ate only in appearance: If—Tertullian goes on to say—angels can eat and drink like humans while remaining in substance angels, then resurrected humans—being made, as Jesus says, "like angels"—can certainly forego eating and drinking while remaining in substance fleshly.

Tertullian's discussion of the substance, appearance, and functionality of the resurrected body grapples considerably, as we have seen, with the fraught topics of disability and sexual activity. It is arguably the case, however, that his primary concern in this section of the treatise is to portray a resurrected body that, while indubitably fleshly, will absolutely not eat or drink. In addition to his efforts to articulate alternative functions for each part of the body involved in the preparation, consumption, and digestion of food, Tertullian's interpretation of two of the most hotly contested scriptural references in early Christian resurrection debate—1 Corinthians 15:50 and the pericope of Jesus and the Sadducees—center eating and drinking. This emphasis seems particularly worthy of note given his valuation in the first part of the treatise of the body's

[306] See introduction; pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 2.5-12.

alimentary functions as necessary and commendable. Why, in the concluding arguments of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* does Tertullian relate to consumption and digestion with the same disgust and disdain for which he initially criticizes his opponents? As Jennifer Glancy might ask, what lies behind this competing corporeal discourse?

**Feeding the dead in Roman North Africa: The first through third centuries CE**

Tertullian's contradictory discourse can be explained in part, I suggest, as a response to Christian participation in local food-related burial practices. Widespread and plentiful architectural and iconographic evidence from Roman North Africa, dating largely to the first and second centuries CE, strongly suggests that the dead received food and drink offerings and were understood to participate in meals. The *cupula* tomb, especially popular in second- and third-century North African *necropoleis*, consisted of a long half-cylinder-shaped dome, frequently set atop a rectangular base.[307] *Cupula* tombs, used both for cremations and inhumations, often incorporated a variety of additional decorative and architectural elements. These included inscriptions, carved and painted decorations, and stucco moldings, along with libation holes and *mensae*. The libation holes led most frequently into ceramic tubes that emptied into the compartment containing the deceased.[308] The *mensae*, table-like platforms attached to the sides of the *cupula* tombs, were particularly common. Excavations at the necropolis at Pupput revealed

[307] Lea M. Stirling, "The Koine of the Cupula of Roman North Africa and the Transition from Cremation to Inhumation," in *Mortuary Landscapes of North Africa*, eds. D. L. Stone and L. M. Stirling (Phoenix: Supplementary Volume, 43); Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007, eBook version, accessed February 19, 2017.

[308] Stirling, "The Koine of the Cupula of Roman North Africa," eBook version, accessed February 19, 2017.

156 *mensae*, the significant majority of which were associated with *cupula* tombs dating to the first half of the second century CE.[309]

The *mensae* found at Pupput are 50-60 cm long, approximately 40 cm wide, and 15-20 cm tall.[310] They generally extend from one of the short sides of the *cupula* tomb to which they are attached, most frequently the side proximate to the head of the deceased. The surfaces of these platforms are concave and very frequently charred. They were often found surrounded by ashes, charcoal, and broken libation dishes;[311] similarly, *mensae* at a necropolis at Tipasa were found surrounded by olive pits, pine nuts, and horse and pig bones.[312] In several instances, food remains and broken vessels have also been discovered with the human remains themselves; a first-century CE tomb at Tipasa, for example, contained a whole fish on a plate. Other findings within tombs include bird and animal bones, wheat grains, eggshells, nuts, and fruits.[313] Decorations on some *cupula* tombs involve references to meals shared by the dead. *Cupulae* at Timgad and Chetou, for example, depict the deceased reclining, holding up cups and/or bread.[314]

Who, in first- and second-century North Africa, cared to ensure that the deceased were fed and watered in this way? Widespread literary evidence from this period suggests that offering

---

[309] Eric Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa: Continuity and Change from the Second to the Fifth Century CE," in *Death and Changing Rituals: Function and meaning in ancient funerary practices,* eds. J. Rasmus Brandt, Håkon Roland, and Marina Prusac (Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2015), 278.

[310] A. Ben Abed and M. Griesheimer, "Fouilles de la nécropole romaine de Pupput (Tunisie)," *Comptes rendus de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettre,* 2001, 584.

[311] Ben Abed and Griesheimer, "Fouilles de la nécropole romaine de Pupput (Tunisie)," 585; Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 278.

[312] Stirling, "The Koine of the Cupula of Roman North Africa," eBook version, accessed February 19, 2017.

[313] Lea M. Stirling, "Archaeological Evidence for Food Offerings in the Graves of Roman North Africa," in *Daimonopylai: Essays in Classics and the Classical Tradition presented to Edmund G. Berry,* eds. R. B. Egan and M. A. Joyal (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Centre for Hellenic Civilization, 2004), 436-438.

[314] Stirling, "Archaeological Evidence for Food Offerings," 433; Stirling, "The Koine of the Cupula in Roman North Africa," eBook version, accessed February 19, 2017.

food and drink to the dead was common practice not only in Roman North Africa, but throughout the Empire. According to Cicero, tomb-side sacrifices for the dead were among those funerary rituals so routine that they required no elaboration.[315] Meat from these sacrifices was understood to be shared between the living and the dead: the deceased's share was burnt, while the mourners participated in a tomb-side banquet. Narrating the resuscitation of a dead man by the doctor Asclepiades, Apuleius provides indirect evidence for these practices: "He immediately shouted out that the man was alive and that they should therefore do away with the torches, that the fire should be scattered far and wide, that the pyre should be demolished, and that they should take the funeral banquet from the tomb back to the table."[316] A second round of sacrifices and banqueting took place on the *novemdialis*, eight days after the funeral. A passage from Petronius' *Satyricon* suggests that these events also occurred at the graveside: "Scissa was having a funeral feast on the ninth day for her poor dear slave, whom she set free on his deathbed… anyhow it was a pleasant affair, even if we did have to pour half our drinks over his lamented bones."[317] Additional literary evidence indicates that the *novemdialis* involved not only a whole burnt offering to the *Manes* of the dead, but also libations of unmixed wine, water, milk, and blood, along with a feast of eggs, vegetables, beans, lentils, salt, bread, and poultry.[318]

---

[315]"It is unnecessary for me to explain when the period of family mourning is ended, what sort of a sacrifice of wethers is offered to the Lar, in what manner the severed bone is buried in the earth, what are the rules in regard to the obligation to sacrifice a sow, or when the grave first takes on the character of a grave and comes under the protection of religion." Cicero, *De legibus* 2.55, trans. Clinton W. Keyes (LCL 213; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928). See Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 270; Stirling, "Archaeological Evidence for Food Offerings," 430.

[316] Apuleius, *Florida* 19.6, trans. J. Hilton (Apuleius, *Rhetorical Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), cited by Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 270.

[317] Petronius, *Satyricon* 65, trans. M. Heseltine and E. H. Warmington (*LCL* 15, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), cited by Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 270.

[318] Hugh Lindsay, "Eating with the Dead: The Roman Funerary Banquet," in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World,* eds. Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigmund Nielsen (Aarhus:

Annual rituals commemorating the dead were similar to those that took place during the funeral. According to the Pisan decree for Lucius Caesar, the anniversary of an individual's death was marked by the celebration of the *parentatio,* during which a graveside offering to the *Manes* took place. In addition, a series of festivals over a ten-day period in February of each year—known as the *Parentalia, Feralia* and *Caristia*— honored the all of the dead collectively. Descriptions of these festivals in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Fasti* suggest that they involved a sacrifice to the *Manes*, as well as a banquet, at the tomb.[319]

If the available evidence strongly suggests that Romans in first- and second-century North Africa (as well as elsewhere) participated in sacrifices to and banquets for the dead, both material and textual evidence for Christian involvement with these rituals during this period is elusive. Literary evidence from third-, fourth-, and fifth-century North Africa, however, suggests that some Christians may indeed have taken part in food-related funerary practices, possibly to the disapproval of other Christians. Cyprian of Carthage's Letter 67 denounces the bishop Martial, who, Cyprian claims, has obtained a certificate of sacrifice. Cyprian accuses Martial of a laundry list of other misdeeds, including participation in a Roman *collegium:*

> Martial also, besides frequenting the shameful and vile banquets of the pagans for a long time in the *collegium* and placing his sons in the same *collegium* according to the custom of the foreign pagans and burying them with foreigners in a profane sepulcher, has also attested publicly in acts in the presence of the ducenarian procurator that he yielded to idolatry and that he denied Christ.[320]

---

Aarhus University Press, 1998), 73; Rebillard, "Dining with the Dead," 270; Stirling, "Archaeological Evidence for Food Offerings," 430.

[319] Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 270-271; Lindsay, "Eating with the Dead," 74-75.

[320] *Letters* 67.6. Trans. Sister Rose Bernard Donna, C.S.J, *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyprian, Letters 1-81* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964).

Considering Cyprian's claim that Martial took part in the funerary customs of the *collegium*, some of the "shameful and vile banquets" to which he refers may have been funerary banquets.[321]

Augustine's *Confessions* offers further evidence. Augustine claims that, when his mother, Monica, was in Milan, "on one occasion she brought stew and bread and wine to the chapels of the saints, as she used to do in Africa, and the gatekeeper stopped her." Augustine is quick to assure his readers that Monica ate and drank at the martyrs' tombs "because she was looking for devotion, not sensual enjoyment." Nevertheless, upon learning from the bishop Ambrose that "these observances were a virtual *parentalia*, very like a Gentile superstition, she was very glad to give them up." "In place of her basket filled with offerings of fruits of the earth," then, Monica thenceforth brought to the tombs only prayers.[322] While this passage seems apologetic, designed to persuade the reader of Monica's obedience and restraint, it also suggests that the custom of offering and consuming food and wine at tombs—of martyrs and, possibly, of others—found some degree of acceptance among North African Christians in Augustine's time.[323]

**Tertullian complains about burial practices**

Significantly, one of the very few earlier references to the custom of feeding the dead by a Christian author appears in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. As we have seen, this treatise purports to engage primarily "heretical" Christian opponents who reject the idea of a general resurrection involving flesh. Yet the opening lines of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* offer criticism not of these opponents, but of the "multitude":

> The resurrection of the dead is Christians' confidence. By believing it we are what we claim to be. This belief the truth exacts: the truth is what God reveals. But the multitude

[321] Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 272.

[322] *Confessions* 6.2, translation modified. Trans. Carolyn J.-B. Hammond, *Augustine: Confessions, Volume 1: Books 1-8* (LCL 26; Cambrige, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[323] Rebillard, "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa," 272-273.

> (*vulgus*) mocks, believing that nothing remains over after death. Yet they offer sacrifices to the deceased, and that with most lavish devotion in accordance with their customs and the seasonableness of victuals, so as to create the supposition that those whom they deny to have any sensation are even conscious of being in need. I however shall with better reason mock at the multitude, especially on occasions when they savagely burn up those very deceased whom they presently supply with gluttonous meals, with the same fires both currying favor and provoking hostility. Thus does piety toy with cruelty. Is it sacrifice, or insult, to make burnt offerings to the cremated?[324]

Those who participate in funereal sacrifices are, Tertullian claims, guilty of inconsistency in their approach to death and afterlife: They cremate their dead, purporting to believe that "nothing remains over after death." They nevertheless make burnt offerings of "gluttonous meals" to their deceased. What is the point, Tertullian grouses, of providing food and drink for consumption by a body that has been burned, in an afterlife that supposedly does not exist?

After opening *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* with a discussion of "the multitude's" approach to death and afterlife, Tertullian moves quickly to associate this approach with the "heretical" Christian idea of a resurrection that excludes the flesh.

> Now it is possible even on the basis of popular ideas to be knowledgeable in the things of God. …For some things are known even by nature, as is the immortality of the soul among many people and as is our God among all. …But when they say, "What is dead is dead," and "Live whilst thou livest," and "After death all things come to an end, even death itself," then I shall remember that the heart of the multitude is reckoned by God as ashes, and that the very wisdom of the world is declared foolishness: then, if the heretic take shelter under the vices of the multitude or the devices of the world, I shall say, "Depart from the gentile, O heretic…give him back his own ideas, for neither does he equip himself with yours…Rather let that person learn from you to confess the resurrection of the flesh than you from him to repudiate it: for even though there were cause for Christians to deny it, it were better for them to be equipped of their own knowledge, not of the multitude's ignorance."[325]

---

[324] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 1.1-3, translation modified. *Fiducia Christianorum resurrection mortuorum: illam credentes hoc sumus. Hoc credere veritas cogit: veritatem deus aperit. Sed vulgus inridet, existimans nihil superesse post mortem: et tamen defunctis parentat, et quidem impensissimo officio pro moribus eorum, pro temporibus esculentorum, ut quos negant sentire quidquam etiam desiderare praesumant. At ego magis ridebo vulgus tunc quoque cum ipsos defunctos atrocissime exurit, quos postmodum gulosissime nutrit, isdem ignibus et promerens et offendens. O pietatem de crudelitate ludentem! sacrificat an insultat cum crematis cremat?*

[325] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 3.1-4, translation modified. *Est quidem et de communibus sensibus sapere in dei rebus…. Quaedam enim et naturaliter nota sunt, ut immortalitas animae penes plures, ut deus noster penes omnes… At cum aiunt 'Mortuum quod mortuum' et 'Vive dum vivis' et 'Post mortem omnia finiuntur, etiam*

Tertullian suggests that "heretics" who reject the idea of fleshly resurrection are inspired by the "gentile" attitudes toward death he has already discussed, particularly the idea that there is no afterlife. He claims that his opponents draw support from this and similar "popular ideas," from which they argue that the flesh is fundamentally gross, polluted, and destined for death and decay. The topic of food sacrifices for the dead appears nowhere else in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*. Yet this brief reference is a key part of one of the treatise's distinct (and often contradictory) rhetorical goals: to cultivate in its audience a particular attitude toward the issue of eating and drinking in the afterlife.

In *The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the Resurrection,* Carly Daniel-Hughes argues that Tertullian's discussions of women's dress should be understood not as a "detour on his long journey to shore up his soteriology," but rather as entirely integrated with it.[326] Tertullian's proscription of women's adornment is entwined with the conception of sexual difference that is inherent in his anthropology and soteriology: the intrinsic inferiority of female flesh to male flesh—a discrepancy that will persist even in the resurrection—requires that women perform modesty in a way that is not necessary for men. Daniel-Hughes suggests that this argument—and the vehemence with which it is presented—must be understood in Tertullian's cultural context, providing material and literary evidence for the existence of wealthy Christian matrons in Carthage (and elsewhere) who likely took part in Roman practices of donning lavish clothing and jewelry as markers of socio-economic status. Tertullian's

---

*ipsa', tunc meminero et cor vulgi cinerem a deo deputatum et ipsam sapientiam saeculi stultitiam pronuntiatam, tunc si haereticus ad vulgi vitia vel saeculi ingenia confugerit, 'Discede dicam ab ethnico, haeretice… redde illi suos sensus, quia nec ille de tuis instruitur… Ille a te potius discat carnis resurrectionem confiteri quam tu ab illo diffiteri: quia si et a Christianis negari eam oporteret sufficeret illis de sua scientia non de vulgi ignorantia instrui.'*

[326] Daniel-Hughes, *The Salvation of the Flesh*, 63.

denunciation of these practices hints at a power struggle within his community: "his vitriol," writes Daniel-Hughes, "likely reflects his frustration and inability to secure the gender performance he seeks."[327]

Like his condemnation of women's adornment, Tertullian's acerbic criticism of funereal sacrifices and banquets at the beginning of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* is not tangential to his larger attempt to articulate his soteriology. Rather, it is closely intertwined with his insistence toward the end of the treatise that the resurrected body will neither eat nor drink. Tertullian moves to ridicule and discredit food-related funereal practices to his presumably Christian audience as the very first thing he does in this treatise, in part by claiming that these practices contradict the attendant idea that there is no afterlife, and by associating this idea with his opponents. Despite the distinctly positive valuation of food and drink that appears in much of the work, Tertullian eventually concludes by advocating extensively for a mirror or polar opposite approach from the one he ridicules at the beginning—not only is there certainly an afterlife involving the flesh, but it's an afterlife in which there will be no food and drink. Through this rhetorical structure, Tertullian makes a statement: "true" Christians know what sort of afterlife will be theirs, and conduct themselves accordingly.

Like his condemnation of women's adornment, this statement concerning food and its relationship to afterlife is, I suggest, best understood in the context of a power struggle between Tertullian and others in his community. In his treatise *On Spectacles,* Tertullian rails against the "crowning sin" of idolatry, which, for him, is tantamount to demon-worship: Tertullian insists

[327] Daniel-Hughes, *The Salvation of the Flesh*, 64.

that demons set up shop in the empty figures and images consecrated to the gods.[328] Because Roman games and spectacles are conducted to honor the gods, he argues, any Christian who attends these events is guilty of idolatry. While the main objective of this treatise appears to be to persuade Christians to steer clear of the arena, Tertullian highlights another form of idolatry as well: participation in funeral sacrifices and banquets. The games and the funereal sacrifices, he argues, share a common origin: the *munera*, or gladiatorial contests, were originally intended to appease the dead through blood sacrifice, which the ancients thought the dead required. At first, this was accomplished through immolation of slaves and captives at the graveside on the day of the funeral; eventually, the people took more pleasure in watching the captives be killed by wild beasts, and different sorts of funereal sacrifices were introduced to propitiate the dead. Nevertheless, these new funereal sacrifices—just like the games—are a form of idolatry, and the otherwise empty images of the dead are occupied by devils and evil spirits. To feed the dead is to share a meal with demons.[329] For this reason, says Tertullian, Christians have absolutely nothing to do with these practices:

> "Not that an idol is anything," says the apostle, "but what they do, they do in honor of demons," who plant themselves in the consecrated images of—whatever they are, dead people, or, as *they* think, gods. So on that account, since both kinds of idol stand on the same footing (dead people and gods are one and the same thing), we abstain from both kinds of idolatry. Temples or tombs, we abominate both equally; we know neither sort of altar; we adore neither sort of image; we pay no sacrifice; we pay no funeral rite. No, and we do not eat of what is offered in sacrificial or funeral rite, because "we cannot eat of the Lord's supper and the supper of demons." If, then, we try to keep our gullet and belly free from defilement, how much more our nobler parts, our ears and eyes, do we guard from the pleasures of idol sacrifice and sacrifice to the dead…[330]

---

[328] See Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 2. Tertullian, Minucius Felix, *Apology. De Spectaculis. Minucius Felix: Octavius,* trans. T. R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall, LCL 250 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931).

[329] See Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 12.

[330] Tertullian, *On Spectacles* 13. *Non quod idolum sit aliquid, ut apostolus ait, sed quoniam quae faciunt daemoniis faciunt consistentibus scilicet in consecrationibus idolorum, sive mortuorum sive, ut putant, deorum. Propterea igitur, quoniam utraque species idolorum condicionis unius est, dum mortui et dei unum sunt, utraque idololatria abstinemus. Nec minus templa quam monumenta despuimus, neutram aram novimus, neutram effigiem adoramus, non*

Deploying language from 1 Corinthians 10, Tertullian insists that Christians do not defile even their digestive systems with food from temple and funereal sacrifices. Thus, they would certainly never dream of corrupting superior body parts— their eyes and ears—with the sights and sounds of the arena.

The literary and archaeological evidence presented at the beginning of this chapter strongly suggests that sacrifices of food and drink were routinely offered to the dead in Roman North Africa during Tertullian's lifetime, and that some North African Christians participated in these sacrifices as early as the third and fourth centuries CE, apparently to the chagrin of other Christians. Given this evidence, I suggest that Tertullian doth protest too much: despite the lack of explicitly Christian material evidence from this period, it seems likely that North African Christians in Tertullian's time were also taking part in food-related funerary practices.[331] The controversy around this issue, I argue, profoundly shapes and informs Tertullian's articulation of the resurrection body and its relationship to food and drink.

**Conclusions**

In the first sections of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* Tertullian employs language of eating and drinking to argue in favor of a fleshly resurrection, presenting an anthropology to which nutrition is integral. This is consistent with discussions of food and drink that appear elsewhere in Tertullian's corpus: a very similar anthropology is presented in *On the Soul*, and

---

*sacrificamus, non parentamus. Sed neque de sacrificio et parentato edimus, quia non possumus cenam dei edere et cenam daemo-niorum. Si ergo gulam et ventrem ab inquinamentis liberamus, quanto magis augustiora nostra, et aures et oculos, ab idolothytis et necrothytis voluptatibus abstinemus…*

[331] See also Eric Rebillard, *Commemorating the Dead in North Africa,* 272: "Tertullian makes several allusions to the pagan commemorative rites and always exhorts Christians not to perform them. However, we cannot assume that Christians followed his recommendations and more often than not the confidence of his tone betrays the fact that at least some Christians were taking part in these rituals whether in remembrance of their own dead or in remembrance of the dead of their neighbors and friends."

even Tertullian's treatise *On Fasting* maintains that certain types of food are both beneficial and necessary. The disproportionate focus towards the end of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* on eating and drinking as the flesh's worst capacities, capacities that will absolutely not be preserved in the resurrection, seems remarkably contradictory. When considered in tandem with Tertullian's seemingly tangential introductory comments concerning food-related funereal practices, as well as with local literary and material evidence for these practices, its purpose becomes clear. The primary goal of *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* is, of course, to argue for a general resurrection that will include the flesh. This resurrected flesh, is, however, useful to think with, and functions here as a template onto which Tertullian projects what he understands to be an appropriate relationship between food and afterlife. This was, likely, one among many conflicting discourses taking place in a Christian community debating how best to relate to common practices of feeding, and eating with, the dead.

## Chapter 4: Hungering and thirsting for resurrection: Origen's *On First Principles* and the realities of food scarcity in antiquity

"We do not need to dream of Paradise, because we have no personal experience of the meaning of hunger."[332]

"There's my husband, a pauper; and me, an old woman; and my daughter and my young son; and this fine girl. Five in all. Three of us are having dinner, and the other two of us are sharing a little barley-cake with them. We raise our voices in lyreless lament whenever we have nothing; and because of our lack of food, our complexions are pale. Our portion and our mode of life is: fava beans, lupine, vegetables, turnips, birds' pease, grass-peas, Valonia acorns, hyacinth bulbs, cicadas, chickpeas, wild pears, and the divinely-planted, maternal object of my care, a dried fig, invention of a Phrygian fig tree."[333]

As we have seen in the work of pseudo-Justin, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, the resurrected body and its relationship to food and drink are useful to think with in a number of ways. Unrestrained by the realities and requirements of mortal life, this perfect body is constructed and deployed in discourses around necessary and natural desires, the formation of the self, Christ's resurrected body, millenarianism, and Christian participation in Roman burial practices, among others. One topic, however, is conspicuously absent: nowhere in our existing sources is the question of nutrition in the resurrection used explicitly to think about hunger.

---

[332] Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

[333] Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters,* 55 a-b. *ἔστιν ἀνήρ μοι πτωχὸς κἀγὼ γραῦς καὶ θυγάτηρ καὶ παῖς υἱὸςχἄδ᾽ ἡ χρηστή, πένθ᾽ οἱ πάντες τούτων οἱ <μὲν> τρεῖς δειπνοῦμεν,δύο δ᾽ αὐτοῖς συγκοινωνοῦμενμάζης μικρᾶς. φθόγγους δ᾽ ἀλύρουςθρηνοῦμεν, ἐπὰν μηδὲν ἔχωμεν·χρῶμα δ᾽ ἀσίτων ἡμῶν ὄντωνγίγνεται ὠχρόν. τὰ μέρη δ᾽ ἡμῶνχὴ σύνταξις τοῦ βίου ἐστὶνκύαμος, θέρμος, λάχανον, < . . . >γογγυλίς, ὦχρος, λάθυρος, φηγός,βολβός, τέττιξ, ἐρέβινθος, ἀχράς,τό τε θειοπαγὲς μητρῷον ἐμοὶμελέδημ᾽ ἰσχάς, Φρυγίας εὑρήματα συκῆς.* Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters, Volume I: Books 1-3.106e,* ed. and trans. S. Douglas Olson, LCL 204 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

This lacuna is, I suggest, related to the elite nature of our sources: as with the vast majority of ancient literature, the words that remain regarding resurrection are those that people in positions of privilege and authority considered worthy of copying and preserving. Moreover, the ability to write such words in the first place requires a level of education and literacy that implies that one's basic needs are likely met.

Is it possible to access a greater diversity of constructions of the resurrected body than those that are explicitly highlighted in the extant literature? In this chapter, I argue that, for at least some number of Christians in the second and third centuries, the resurrection may have been imagined as access to sufficient and even extravagant food and drink that were not attainable during life. I draw upon Origen of Alexandria's discussion of resurrection in *On First Principles*, read in the context of his larger corpus, together with literary and material evidence for food scarcity and malnutrition both in the Roman world at large and in Origen's more immediate context.

I begin the chapter with a brief overview of osteological, statistical, and textual evidence for widespread undernourishment and malnutrition and sporadic food crises in the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries CE, arguing that these issues disproportionately affected poor persons. Where possible, I focus on evidence from Alexandria and Palestine, the areas in which Origen lived and wrote.

I then examine the ways in which the dietary habits of non-elite persons are portrayed in literature roughly contemporaneous with Origen's work. Analyzing the writings of the second-century physician Galen, I highlight a tendency to associate the laboring and/or rural poor both with insufficient food and with foods that would be considered strange and/or unappealing to those of greater means. I show how Origen, in *Against Celsus*, relies upon a similar discourse of

socioeconomically-determined dietary hierarchy: those who teach the Christian scriptures are compared to cooks who prepare food that is appealing to "the poor and the uncultured and the common folk," while instructors in philosophy offer a "flavor profile" suited exclusively to the tastes of the elite.

I place Origen's "chef" metaphor in the context of his larger corpus, noting the ways in which an association between the consumption and digestion of food and the interpretation of scripture—as well as a tendency to categorize people hierarchically relative to their exegetical ability, sometimes with explicit ties to socioeconomic status—pervades his work. Origen's anthropology is deeply integrated with his exegetical method, such that a person's position on the spectrum of spiritual transformation both results from and is indicative of that person's capacity to interpret scripture. For Origen, the process of spiritual transformation through the interpretation of scripture is one of nourishment: The mind consumes and digests scripture, converting it to the nutrients most suited to a person's needs. Drawing on food categories borrowed from the letters of Paul, Origen frequently compares those who receive scripture at its highest, "spiritual" level to those capable of eating and digesting solid food, while the "simple readers" who receive it on a literal level can process only milk.[334]

"Simple readers" function throughout Origen's corpus in a largely polemical context, as foils over against whom Origen asserts his own theological position. Significantly, they feature heavily in the exposition on the nature of resurrection found in *On First Principles*. In an effort to promote his own conception of the resurrected body—a "Goldilocks-style" body that is neither too fleshly nor totally incorporeal, but "just right"—Origen rails against those who

[334] John David Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk: Food and the Formation of the Soul in Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 109-137.

anticipate an eating-drinking resurrected body, ostensibly because they are foolish and/or uneducated enough to take at face value scriptural promises of eschatological feasting.

Origen's rhetoric here evokes multiple possibilities, and these opponents might easily be identified with several different groups. I suggest, however, that one way this rhetoric can be read—and one way it would have been heard—is as associating those who eagerly anticipate a resurrection involving food and drink with Christians of low socio-economic status, as Origen himself does explicitly with "simple readers" in *Against Celsus*. Origen's work was generated and circulated in an environment in which the vast majority of non-elite persons suffered from or were vulnerable to chronic malnutrition and sporadic food crises. While I am not arguing that Origen wrote his defense of a non-fleshly resurrection body with a specific contingent of food-insecure opponents in mind, I do suggest that his polemical portrayal of the characteristics and beliefs of "simple readers," considered in context, provides evidence for the existence of discourses around food and resurrection beyond those explicitly taken up in our surviving sources. Origen's rhetoric cannot be divorced from the historical realities of food insecurity in antiquity.

**Food Insecurity in Origen's Roman Empire**

In contemporary conversations around food and nutrition, the "Mediterranean Diet" is frequently synonymous with health. The emphasis of Mediterranean cultures throughout history on cereals, plant-based fats, and produce—at the relative expense of animal products—has been associated with a vast array of benefits, including, recently, the deceleration of the aging process.[335] In *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, Peter Garnsey argues that modern perceptions of the foods cultivated and consumed in ancient Mediterranean societies, as well as

[335] "Can a Mediterranean diet pattern slow aging?" www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180330145322.htm

of the productivity and complexity of many of these societies, contribute to an assumption that people in the Ancient Mediterranean were generally healthy and ate an adequate diet.[336] As Garnsey's groundbreaking work—and a robust body of more recent scholarship—demonstrates, this was emphatically not the case. It is likely that the ancient Mediterranean world experienced relatively few full-fledged famines.[337] It was nevertheless plagued by periodic food shortages, as well as by chronic undernourishment (insufficiency of calories) and malnutrition (insufficiency of nutrients). While the uppermost socio-economic segments of society were generally not vulnerable to episodic food crises or long-term concerns around obtaining adequate nutrition, "malnutrition was the normal condition of large numbers of people in antiquity." [338]

Jinyu Liu describes a tripartite approach to the study of poverty in the Roman Empire: "Developments along three main directions—that is, critical approaches to the textualized poverty in ancient literature, a nuanced understanding of economic stratification in the Roman Empire, and bioarchaeological research on living conditions in the Roman world—can be clearly identified."[339] I employ a similar three-pronged approach to explore the intersection of poverty and food insecurity in the Roman Empire, both more broadly and in the times and places in which Origen lived and wrote.

---

[336] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 12-13.

[337] Based on Garnsey's analysis of modern data relating to the likelihood of repeated crop failure in the Mediterranean, as well as of ancient inscriptional and literary evidence for food crises. Garnsey defines "famine" as "a critical shortage of essential foodstuffs leading through hunger to starvation and a substantially increased mortality rate in a community or region." It should, he notes, be distinguished from "shortage," "a short-term reduction in the amount of available foodstuffs, as indicated by rising prices, popular discontent, hunger, in the worst cases bordering on starvation." Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6.

[338] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply,* 6; *Food and Society*, 2.

[339] Jinyu Liu, "Urban Poverty in the Roman Empire: Material Conditions," in *Paul and Economics: A Handbook,* ed. Raymond Pickett and Thomas R. Blanton IV (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 24.

**Osteological evidence and economic modeling**

Archaeometry, although a complex and imperfect field of study, suggests that malnutrition in the Roman Empire was both widespread and likely correlated with issues of social inequality. Large samples of skeletal remains provide tentative evidence for the average height of a particular population; comparatively short stature is indicative of poor physical well-being, influenced by malnutrition (among other, often related factors, including disease and hard labor).[340] Multiple recent studies of skeletal remains from various locations throughout the Roman Empire suggest that its inhabitants were unusually short in comparison to inhabitants of the same regions both before and after the Imperial period. These studies also exhibit significant geographical variation, demonstrating that inhabitants of northern and western Europe in the Imperial period were generally taller than Mediterranean populations in this same period.[341] While a relationship between body height and socioeconomic differentiation in the Roman Empire would be challenging to demonstrate for a number of reasons (including the difficulty of discerning socioeconomic status from funerary contexts), studies of skeletal evidence from other periods of history have shown a significant correlation between short average stature and widespread economic inequality. As Walter Scheidel points out, "class differences in body height can sometimes be considerable."[342]

[340] Note that body height, as well as underlying causes of short stature, are very difficult to determine with precision. See Liu, "Urban Poverty," 28; Michael MacKinnon, "Osteological Research in Classical Archaeology," *AJA* Vol. 111 No. 3 (2007): 480-81.

[341] Walter Scheidel, "Physical Well-Being," in Walter Scheidel, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 324-6.

[342] Scheidel, "Physical Well-Being," 327.

Skeletal remains also frequently provide evidence of "stressors" that may be interpreted as evidence of nutritional deficiency at various points during life.[343] Enamel hypoplasia (irregularities in the dental enamel), *cribra orbitalia* (lesions of the eye socket, caused by chronic iron deficiency) and *cribra cranii* (lesions of the cranial vault) are common indicators of developmental stress.[344] It should be acknowledged that the majority of skeletal stressors occur in childhood, a life stage at which malnutrition was a common problem at essentially all levels of society.[345] As Michael MacKinnon notes, however, there is significant variability in the nature and frequency of these markers among populations "temporally, spatially, and culturally across the world of antiquity."[346] A study of skeletal remains from twenty-three burial sites on the Italian peninsula demonstrates a higher number of skeletal lesions during the Roman period than during the Middle Ages, and data from a number of Roman period sites reflects a greater incidence of *cribra orbitalia* and enamel hypoplasia on the Italian peninsula and in Egypt than in Britain (findings roughly parallel to the studies of body height referenced above).[347] As with studies of body height, a decisive and comprehensive assessment of the relationship between skeletal markers and socioeconomic status in the Roman period would pose significant difficulties. MacKinnon nevertheless argues that a small sample of studies has indicated a greater

[343] MacKinnon, "Osteological Research," 481-2.

[344] MacKinnon, "Osteological Research," 481; Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 57; Scheidel, "Physical Well-Being," 327.

[345] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 59.

[346] MacKinnon, "Osteological Research," 482.

[347] Scheidel, "Physical Well-Being," 327-329.

incidence of skeletal stressors among more vulnerable populations, including children, women, slaves, and laborers.[348]

Classical osteology is fraught with interpretive difficulty. Scientific analysis of osteological evidence from antiquity nevertheless reveals significant chronological and geographical variation, and skeletal remains from the regions around the Mediterranean in the Roman period exhibit comparatively short stature and a comparatively high incidence of stressors, likely as a result of widespread malnutrition (among other factors). Although a large-scale correlation in the Roman period is challenging to demonstrate, the prevalence of short stature and skeletal stressors among a population is often concurrent with marked social inequality. The osteological evidence tentatively suggests that malnutrition was all but ubiquitous around the Mediterranean in the imperial period, and that a majority of those suffering from malnutrition were members of economically disadvantaged populations.

Efforts to model the stratification of Roman society, while complex in their own right, suggest a similar scenario. Written in response to the use of the vague and difficult-to-quantify category of "social status" to describe members of Paul's assemblies,[349] as well as to the scholarly tendency to map all inhabitants of the Roman Empire onto a binary of "rich" (a very few) or "poor" (the vast majority),[350] Steven Friesen's 2004 article, "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus," represents the first of a number of such efforts.[351]

---

[348] MacKinnon, "Osteological Research," 482.

[349] See Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, ed. and trans. John H. Schuetz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

[350] Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

[351] Steven J. Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus," *JSNT* 23.6 (2004): 323-361.

Drawing on data for comparable urban economies from pre-industrial Europe,[352] Friesen's "poverty scale" divides the population into seven categories of economic well-being in relation to subsistence level, which he defines as "the resources needed to procure enough calories in food to maintain the human body… rang[ing] from 1,500-3,000 calories per day, depending on gender, age, physical energy required for occupation, pregnancy, lactation, and so on."[353] Friesen's categories are as follows:

Table 1. Friesen's Poverty Scale for the Roman Empire.[354]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| PS1 | Imperial elites | Imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freedpersons |
| PS2 | Regional or provincial elites | Equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers |
| PS3 | Municipal elites | Most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants |
| PS4 | Moderate surplus resources | Some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, some artisans (especially those who employ others), military veterans |
| PS5 | Stable near subsistence level (with reasonable hope of remaining above the minimum level to sustain life) | Many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freedpersons, some farm families |
| PS6 | At subsistence level (and often below minimum level to sustain life) | Small farm families, laborers (skilled and unskilled), artisans (especially those employed by others), wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners |
| PS7 | Below subsistence level | Some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day laborers, prisoners |

[352] Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 343-344.

[353] Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 343.

[354] Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 341.

Friesen estimates that slightly less than 3% of the population of a sizeable urban area in the Roman Empire would have consisted of persons from the categories PS1-PS3, approximately 7% from PS4, approximately 22% from PS5, 40% from PS6, and 28% from PS7.[355] According to this model, then, an overwhelming 90% of inhabitants of Roman cities lived around or below subsistence level. Friesen acknowledges that this number would likely have been somewhat lower in rural areas, where people would have been able to grow and/or gather (rather than purchase) at least some of their food.

By placing such a substantial percentage of the population towards the bottom of the scale, Friesen in some ways reproduces the binary he endeavors to overturn.[356] Based on Walter Scheidel's use of late Republican census data to estimate a "middling percentage" of 20-25%, Bruce Longenecker's 2009 article calls for an expansion of Friesen's PS4 and PS5 from 7% and 22% to 17% and 25% respectively. Longenecker, who adopts the label "Economic Scale" (ES) rather than what he characterizes as the less neutral "Poverty Scale" (PS), also pushes for a more detailed gradation of the intermediate group, subdividing Friesen's PS4 into a more elite group (ES4a) and a group that is stable, but closer to subsistence level (ES4b).[357]

Also in 2009, Friesen collaborated with Walter Scheidel to create a scale that would estimate with as much precision as possible the distribution of income in the Roman Empire in the mid-second century CE. Intending this scale as a revision of Friesen's 2004 scale,[358] Scheidel

---

[355] Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 347.

[356] Timothy A. Brookins, "Economic Profiling of Early Christian Communities," in *Paul and Economics: A Handbook,* ed. Raymond Pickett and Thomas R. Blanton IV (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 68.

[357] Bruce Longenecker, "Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Christianity," *JSNT* 31, no. 3 (2009): 243-78; Brookins, "Economic Profiling," 69.

[358] Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, "The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire," *JRS* 99 (2009): 82; Carol B. Wilson, *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Pragmatics of Food Access in the Gospel of Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 7.

and Friesen begin by using a variety of methods to estimate the size of the entire Roman economy during this period. Based on multiple potential scenarios (both "pessimistic" and "optimistic"), they then use this information to gauge the *per capita* income of people in various echelons of Roman society. This results in a more precise and detailed representation of the gradation that existed among non-elite members of society (Friesen's categories PS2-PS7).[359] According to this model, the top 1.5% of the population controlled 15-25% of the *Roman* Empire's total income, while an "intermediate" group—6-12% of the population, existing at between 2.4 and 10 times subsistence level—controlled an additional 15-25%. The remaining 50-70% of the Empire's income was distributed among the approximately 70-75% of inhabitants who lived near subsistence level and the 10-22% who lived below it.[360]

Longenecker's 2010 monograph, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World,* slightly adjusts his earlier Economy Scale based on the work of Friesen and Scheidel, shifting a small fraction of the population from ES4 down to ES5. The table below, compiled by Timothy Brookins, summarizes the findings of Friesen's "Poverty and Pauline Studies," Longenecker's "Exposing the Economic Middle," and Longenecker's *Remember the Poor*:

[359] Liu, "Urban Poverty in the Roman Empire," 26.

[360] Scheidel and Friesen, "The Size of the Economy," 84-85; Brookins, "Economic Profiling," 70.

Table 2. Brookins' Summary of Poverty/Economy Scales.[361]

| | Friesen 2004 | Longenecker 2009 | Longenecker 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ES1-ES3 | 3 (percent) | 3 | 3 |
| ES4 | 7 | 17 | 15 |
| ES5 | 22 | 25 | 27 |
| ES6 | 40 | 30 | 30 |
| ES7 | 28 | 25 | 25 |

These efforts at economic modeling are not without flaws. They inevitably involve a significant amount of conjecture (although, especially in the case of Scheidel and Friesen, it is "tightly controlled conjecture").[362] Although Scheidel and Friesen consider data from both urban and rural areas throughout the Roman Empire, Friesen's earlier work and Longenecker's work aim explicitly to address the socioeconomic profiles of urban Christian groups, so their scales fail to take account of data from rural areas. This collection of studies is nevertheless a useful corrective to the perception (as perpetuated in much of ancient literature, and as assumed by a number of scholars of antiquity) of the non-elite population of the Roman Empire as an undifferentiated mass, providing evidence for "a more finely gradated continuum from wealth to indigence."[363] They also, as Brookins argues, provide more precise language with which to speak about economic diversity in antiquity (as opposed to the dichotomous labels of "rich" and "poor").

[361] Brookins, "Economic Profiling," 71. Numbers represent percentages of the total population estimated to belong to each category.

[362] Brookins, "Economic Profiling," 72.

[363] Scheidel and Friesen, "The Size of the Economy," 62.

For our purposes, these scales provide consistent quantitative evidence that—while a spectrum between extreme wealth and abject poverty did exist—the vast majority of points on this spectrum were clustered near subsistence level.[364] While those at or slightly above subsistence level (ES5-6) were, unlike their ES7 counterparts, generally able to obtain the caloric energy necessary to avoid starvation,[365] they would have been vulnerable to differing degrees to the localized food crises that occurred with relative regularity throughout the empire, needing to resort to various survival strategies to avoid falling further down the scale.[366] It is reasonable to suppose that, with the exception of the relatively few Romans with a substantial or moderate surplus of resources (ES1-4), the constant reality or possibility of food insecurity would rarely have been far from people's minds.

**Textual evidence from Alexandria and Palestine**

As is the case for osteoarchaeological and statistical evidence, there is no shortage of literary and documentary evidence for long-term food insecurity and intermittent food crisis in the Roman Empire. I focus here on materials from Alexandria and Palestine, where Origen lived and wrote.

Roman Alexandria, and the Nile Delta in which it was situated, were known for their exceptional fertility; the grain surplus this area produced was crucial for the food supply of cities throughout the Empire.[367] Nevertheless, Alexandria seems not to have escaped the travails of food shortage. As the Empire's second most populous city—and with a population that was,

[364] Liu, "Urban Poverty in the Roman Empire," 27.

[365] A subsistence level existence would not necessarily protect a person from malnutrition. Note again the distinction between undernourishment (lack of sufficient calories) and malnutrition (lack of adequate nutrition).

[366] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 2.

[367] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 251; 255-257.

apparently, predisposed to rioting—Alexandria was an imperial priority,[368] and there is sporadic evidence from the first and second centuries CE of imperial intervention to ensure that Alexandrians had enough to eat. In 19 CE, Germanicus, adopted son of the Emperor Tiberius, apparently traveled to Alexandria on the occasion of a famine and released grain from the granaries.[369] In 99 CE, in response to severe food crisis, Trajan sent Egypt back its own grain from Rome—an act of redistribution that, according to Garnsey, has no parallel in the history of the Empire.[370] The emperor's magnanimity, however, would likely not have been of significant benefit to much of Egypt's non-elite population: the requisitioned wheat was sold for double its usual price.[371]

Around the same time (98 CE), Trajan also sent Alexandria a new prefect, accompanied by a letter of introduction assuring the population of the prefect's responsibility, among other things, to keep them fed:

> Having a personal feeling of benevolence toward you, I have commended you first of all to myself, then in addition to my friend and prefect, Pompeius Planta, so that he can take every care in providing for your undisturbed tranquility and your food supply and your communal and individual rights.[372]

---

[368] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 254.

[369] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply,* 251-253; 252 nn 13. Germanicus' actions are attested in Tacitus, *Ann*. 2.59; Suetonius, *Tib*. 52.2; Josephus, *Ap*. II. 5. Each of these texts complains that Germanicus—who was not an emperor, but was acting like one— was overstepping his bounds.

[370] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 252 nn 13. For literary evidence of Trajan's redistribution, see Pliny, *Pan*. 30-2.

[371] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply,* 252 nn 13, citing R.P. Duncan-Jones, "The price of wheat in Egypt under the Principate," *Chiron* 6 (1976): 241-62.

[372] *P.Oxy*. 3022.

*[π]ρ̣ [ὸ]ς ἡμ̣ ᾶς διάθεσιν ἰδίαν, παρεθέμην*
*ὑμᾶς πρῶτον μὲν ἐμαυτῷ, εἶτα καὶ τῷ*
*φίλῳ μου καὶ ἐπάρχῳ Πομπείῳ Πλάντᾳ,*
*ἵνα μετὰ πάσης φροντίδος προνοῇ*
*ὑμῶν τῆς εὐσταθοῦς εἰρήνης καὶ τῆς*

From this point forward, Alexandria seems to have had an organized bread dole, or *annona,* through which imperial authorities supplied the populace with regular rations of grain.[373] Indeed, shortly after Trajan's letter, Dio Chrysostom grumbles about the supposedly frivolous lifestyle of the Alexandrian people, insinuating that they do not provide their own bread:

> Yet in all else you do appear to me to be quite comparable to nymphs and satyrs. For you are always in merry mood, fond of laughter, fond of dancing; only in your case when you are thirsty wine does not bubble up of its own accord from some chance rock or glen, nor can you so readily get milk and honey by scratching the ground with the tips of your fingers; on the contrary, not even water comes to you in Alexandria of its own accord, nor is bread yours to command, I fancy, but that too you receive from the hand of those who are above you; and so perhaps it is high time for you to cease your Bacchic revels and turn your attention to yourselves.[374]

The majority of additional evidence for the *annona* in Alexandria appears beginning in the fourth century—after Origen's time.[375] This evidence nevertheless suggests that the Alexandrian grain dole exhibited characteristics typical of other *annonae* in locations throughout the empire, including Rome and nearby Oxyrhynchus. According to the sixth-century historian Procopius, the dole was reorganized in the third century by Emperor Diocletian, who intended it to provide for "the common people lacking the necessities of life."[376] Various ecclesiastical

---

*εὐθη ̣ν ̣ί ̣ας καὶ τῶν κοινῶν καὶ καθ' ἕκασ-*
*[τον δι]καίων.*

Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 254.

[373] Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 77 n. 68.

[374] *Orationes* 32.58. *τὰ δὲ ἄλλα καὶ πάνυ μοι δοκεῖτε ἐοικέναι Νύμφαις καὶ Σατύροις. ἱλαροί τε γὰρ ἀεὶ καὶ φιλογέλωτες καὶ φιλορχησταί· πλὴν οὐκ αὐτόματος ὑμῖν ἀναβλύει διψήσασιν ὁ οἶνος ἐκ πέτρας ποθέν τινος ἢ νάπης, οὐδὲ γάλα καὶ μέλι δύνασθε εὐχερῶς οὕτως ἔχειν ἄκροις δακτύλοις διαμῶντες χθόνα· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὸ ὕδωρ ὑμῖν ἀφικνεῖται δεῦρο αὐτόματον οὐδὲ τὴν μᾶζαν ἔχετε ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ δήπουθεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτην ἐκ τῆς τῶν κρειττόνων χειρὸς λαμβάνετε· ὥστε ἴσως καιρὸς ἦν ὑμᾶς παύσασθαι βακχειῶν καὶ προσέχειν μᾶλλον αὑτοῖς*. Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 31-36,* trans. J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby, *LCL* 358 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940).

[375] Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 254.

[376] Procopius, *Historia arcana* 26.43; see Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 78, n. 70.

literary sources also portray the dole as designed to support those on the margins of society: Athanasius, for example, refers to the "loaves" of "widows and orphans."[377] Indeed, the state seems to have earmarked at least some grain for distribution as alms by the church.[378] The Alexandrian populace evidently relied on the *annona* as a valuable source of food, as the state withdrew and reinstated grain distributions as a coercive tactic in times of turbulence.[379]

There is also, however, evidence that the dole benefited a different demographic.[380] In his fifth-century *Ecclesiastical History,* Zacharias of Mytilene describes the distribution of "little cakes or biscuits" by the Monophysite patriarch to the "great men and rulers" of Alexandria.[381] Papyrological evidence, though limited, also suggests that the dole may have been more accessible to those of higher socio-economic status. One wealthy man is said to have possessed "a house and bread in Alexandria"; a Roman officer who rented out his Alexandrian home collected rent in grain as well as money. As Christopher Haas points out, "the close association between residence and the bread dole has led some commentators to suggest that grain was distributed in Alexandria, not per capita, but on the basis of home ownership." Similarly, surviving wills indicate that shares in the bread dole could be passed down to, and even divided

[377] Athanasius, *Apol. de fuga* 6 col. 651a; see Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity,* 78 n. 70.

[378] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 79.

[379] Hass, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 76-77, n. 68; 79, n. 75. In 339, for example, the state "took away [the] bread" from followers of Athanasius "for no other reason but that they might be induced to join the Arians and receive Gregory, who had been sent by the emperor" (Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 10 col. 705b). A series of riots in 451 stopped abruptly when the prefect, Florus, cut off the dole; the pleadings of the populace led him to reinstate it (Evagrius, *H.E.* 2.5).

[380] The same was true in the case of the grain dole instituted in late Republican Rome. See Robert J. Rowland Jr., "The 'Very Poor' and the Grain Dole at Rome and Oxyrhynchus," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 21 (1976): 69-73.

[381] Zacharias of Mytilene, *H.E.* 5.4, trans. Hamilton and Brooks. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 78 n. 71.

up among, one's heirs.[382] More substantial papyrological evidence from Oxyrhynchus suggests that the recipients of its grain dole were certainly not among the city's poorest residents, but rather were often quite wealthy.[383] Regardless of the purpose for which it may have been intended initially, it seems likely that the Alexandrian grain dole functioned only in part to facilitate the survival of those living at or near subsistence level. It was also, and at times likely primarily, a "largely honorific social institution."[384]

What might the balance of this evidence tell us about persons of low socio-economic status in Origen's Alexandria? Despite its role as "breadbasket," the city seems to have dealt with chronic issues of distribution-related food scarcity, punctuated by occasional crises. The most vulnerable Alexandrians were likely dependent on the grain dole—an institution that, at least in theory, was designed to aid them—to remain above subsistence level. The (slightly late) available evidence indicates that the dole didn't necessarily operate in a way that maximized resources for those on the margins of society. Grain distributions could also be disrupted arbitrarily and without warning, even when they came in the form of alms from the church.

Origen's mid-third century relocation to Caesarea Maritima would have exposed him to a significantly different landscape than the bustling metropolis of Alexandria.[385] Nevertheless, both episodic food crises and chronic malnutrition were conspicuously present in his new home, as well: As Yohanan Aharoni writes, "Years of drought and famine run like a scarlet thread through

---

[382] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 78, n. 71. P.Mich. 723 inv. 902, line 2; *P.Abinn*. 22.

[383] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 78.

[384] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 78 n. 71.

[385] John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 13-14. See Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.26.

the ancient history of Palestine."[386] Daniel Sperber marshals considerable textual evidence to suggest that second- and particularly third-century Palestine experienced severe drought, which, in combination with various biological and economic factors, exacerbated in this particular location what appears to have been widespread food shortage throughout the third- and fourth-century Roman Empire.[387]

Beginning in the mid-second century, rabbinic literature from Palestine indicates a growing concern over lack of rainfall, which was associated with the destruction of the Temple:[388]

> Said R. Eleazar b. Perata (floruit circa 110-135): From the day the Temple was destroyed the rains have become irregular in the world. There is a year which has abundant rains, and there is a year with but little rain. There is a year in which the rains come down in their [proper] season and year in which they come out of season…(*Bavli Ta'anit* 19b). In the period of the Second Temple the rains came on time and as a result the crops were of far better a quality…[389]
>
> Know that the dews have been adversely affected [from the day the Temple was destroyed (cf. Mishna Sota 9.12)]. Once upon a time, when the dew would come down on the straw and on the chaff it would become white; now it blackens [it]. Once upon a time, each city which had more dew than its neighbors had more fruits [than its neighbors] and now its fruits are less. Said R. Simeon b. Gamliel in the name of R. Joshua (=Mishna Sota 9.12): From the day the Temple was destroyed there is not day that has not in it a curse, and the dew does not descend beneficially, and the [fragrant] taste has been taken away from fruits… R. Jose. Adds: So also has the fat been taken from the fruits…[390]

---

[386] Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible,* trans. A. F. Rainey; 2nd. Ed (London: Burns & Oates, 1979), 14.

[387] Daniel Sperber, "Drought, Famine, and Pestilence in Amoraic Palestine," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17(1974): 272-298.

[388] For a discussion of rabbinic rhetoric of drought (and the alleviation thereof) as the result of human behavior, see Jonathan Wyn Schofer, *Confronting Vulnerability: The Body and the Divine in Rabbinic Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 109-140.

[389] Sperber, "Drought," 273.

[390] *Tosefta Sota* 15.2 = *Yerushalmi Sota* 9.14. Sperber, "Drought," 274.

By the third century, textual evidence suggests that landowners had begun "trading in water," dedicating land for the storage and sale of water, rather than crops. This, as Sperber argues, is a strategy that makes sense only in times of severe drought.[391] Likewise, the Talmud mandated the institution of communal fasts in the absence of rain; public records indicating the frequency of these fasts provide evidence for the severity of a drought. Abundant rabbinic literature from third- and fourth-century Palestine suggests that mandatory communal fasts occurred with increasing regularity.[392] Sometime between 220 and 240 CE, for example, Rabbi Hanina b. Hama of Sepphoris summoned to Sepphoris Rabbi Joshua b. Levi, who had ostensibly insititued a successful fast in his native Judea:

> One time [the Sepphoreans] had to make a fast, and the rain did not come down. R. Joshua [b. Levi] had made a fast in the South, and rain came down. And the Sepphoreans [grumblingly] said: R. Joshua B. Levi brought down rain for the Southerners, and R. Hanina prevented the rain from [coming to] the Sepphoreans. They had to make [a fast yet] a second time. [So] he (R. Hanina) sent and brought R. Joshua b. Levi. He said to him: See, Sir, that you come out with us to fast. They both went out to the fast, but rain did not come down. He (R. Hanina) went out and said before them: [It is] not R. Joshua b. Levi who brings down rain for the Southerners, nor [is it] R. Hanina who prevents rain from [coming to] the Sepphoreans, but that the Southerners, their hearts are soft and they hearken to words of the Torah and are humbled, [while] the Sepphoreans, their hearts are hard and they hear the words of the Torah and are not humbled.[393]

This particular text depicts a drought that was both widespread and acute. R. Hanina appears to have been relatively desperate to summon R. Levi to Sepphoris from Judea, and the drought ostensibly lasted through the time it would have taken this travel to occur. The text's claim that

---

[391] Sperber, "Drought," 274. "Said R. Levi (floruit circa 255-300): It so happened that once a certain person…had one single field, and the Holy One Blessed be He put it in his heart to sow half of it and make the other half a water reservoir. There came a year of drought, and he sold a *se'ah* of wheat for a *sela* and a *se'ah* of water for three *selahs*…" *Tanhuma Buber, Deuteronomy, Re'e 9*, p. 23.

[392] Sperber, "Drought," 274-282.

[393] *Yerushalmi Ta'anit* 3.4. Sperber, "Drought," 276-277.

R. Levi had also instituted a fast in the South suggests that the drought was not localized, but afflicted a large section of the Levant.

As Kyle Harper points out, rabbinic literature is not a reliable source for unbiased climatological data. Nevertheless, "the memories of drought surrounding the sages of the AD 230s-240s are insistent."[394] Moreover, the cultural memory of drought that pervades texts from this period is corroborated by evidence from radiocarbon-dated sediments taken from the Dead Sea. This evidence indicates water levels that remained consistently high from ca. 200 BCE until 200 CE, then rapidly declined and bottomed out around 300 CE.[395]

This prolonged period of severe and recurrent drought likely resulted in significant food shortages. From R. Johanan, active in the Galilee in the mid-third century, comes this rather terrifying exegesis on the "seven-year famine" mentioned briefly in 2 Kings 8, possibly informed by the rabbi's own context:

> In the first year they ate what was in [their] houses; in the second that which was in the fields; in the third the flesh of clean beasts; in the fourth the flesh of unclean beasts; in the fifth the flesh of vermin; in the sixth the flesh of their sons and daughters; in the seventh the flesh of their own arms, to fulfill that which is stated (in Isaiah 9:19), "[And one snatches on the right hand, and is hungry; and he eats on the left hand, and is not satisfied;] every person eats the flesh of his own arm."[396]

To make matters worse, the mid-third century also brought with it the pandemic known as the Plague of Cyprian. Literary, documentary, inscriptional, and archaeological evidence all suggest the acute and widespread nature of this plague, which, Kyle Harper writes, is attested

---

[394] Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 131-132.

[395] Harper, *The Fate of Rome,* 50-51.

[396] *Bavli Ta'anit* 5a, translation modified. Sperber, "Drought," 290. Obviously, allegations of cannibalism should not be taken at face value, but such rhetoric may be indicative of the severity of a particular situation. See Nathan MacDonald, *What did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 60.

"everywhere we have sources"—including Palestine— around 249-260 CE.[397] Based on evidence from Cyprian of Carthage and others,[398] "the pestilence manifested itself as an acute-onset disease with burning fever and severe gastrointestinal disorder, and its symptoms included conjunctival bleeding, bloody stool, esophageal lesions, and tissue death in the extremeties"—symptoms consistent, Harper argues, with a viral hemorrhagic fever.[399] Throughout the Roman Empire, the plague caused significant labor shortages;[400] in Palestine, this would likely have exacerbated the food crises already caused by lack of rainfall. Evidence from mid-third-century Palestine suggests a struggle to contend with plague concomitantly with chronic food shortage:

> In the days of R. Samuel b. Nahamani there was [both] famine and pestilence. They said: How are we to act? One cannot pray [at once] for [the occasion of] two [afflictions]; rather let us pray for [the staying of] the pestilence and we will suffer the famine. [But] he said to them: Let us pray for [the cessation of] the famine, for when the Merciful One gives plenty, he gives it to the living…[401]

While this unfortunate combination of events would have affected the entire population, those of low socioeconomic status—as in Alexandria—would have been most vulnerable. A mid-third-century text from Tiberias depicts a situation in which even small landowners who produced their own crops were plagued by hunger:

> Said Resh Lakish… It is written, "And if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, and he went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." (Amos 5:19)—When a man goes to his field and he meets a bailiff, it is as though a lion had come upon him. He goes into the city and a tax-collector meets him, [then] it is as

---

[397] Sperber, "Drought," 278; Harper, *The Fate of Rome,* 138-139 (see map 12).

[398] Harper, *The Fate of Rome,* 138. See especially Cyprian's *De mortalitate*.

[399] Harper, *The Fate of Rome,* 142.

[400] Craig Benjamin, *Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era, 100 BCE-250 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 273.

[401] *Bavli Ta'anit* 8b. Sperber, "Drought," 277.

> though a bear had come upon him. He comes [back] into [his] house and finds his sons and daughters stretched out in hunger, [then] it is as though a snake had bitten him.[402]

As Sperber argues, the recurrent nature of insufficient rainfall throughout the second and into the third centuries would have made it very difficult for farmers at or near subsistence level to stockpile grain, as large percentages of their increasingly meager harvests would have been collected as taxes.[403] As the drought worsened, this segment of the population would have had few remaining survival strategies to which to turn:

> Said R. Isaac: [The verse] "Thou shalt eat the grass of the field" (Genesis 3:18) refers to present-day generations, when a man plucks from his field and eats it while it is still green and unripe.[404]

The urban poor would have found themselves in an equally difficult situation. Those of greater means often purchased and hoarded grain, inflating prices so as to make it inaccessible to many of a city's poorer residents.[405] Even in areas in which grain was available and somewhat affordable, lack of circulation of currency likely kept it out of reach of those living at or near subsistence level. R. Johanan writes, "I remember when four *se'ahs* stood at a *sela* and [yet] many people in Tiberias were bloated with starvation for lack of an *issar* (small coin)."[406]

Such would have been the conditions that surrounded Origen as he lived and wrote in Palestine in the second half of the third century. As in Alexandria, food scarcity—and its disproportionate effects on those of low socioeconomic status—would have been an ever-present reality.

---

[402] *Bavli Sanhedrin* 98b. Sperber, "Drought," 284.

[403] Sperber, "Drought," 285; 289.

[404] *Genesis Rabba* 20.10. Sperber, "Drought," 287.

[405] Sperber, "Dought," 288-289.

[406] *Bavli Ta'anit* 19b= *Bavli Bava Batra* 91b. Sperber, "Drought," 284.

**Literary Evidence for Non-Elite Diets and Survival Strategies**

As Liu argues, ancient texts often cast "the poor" as a miserable, homogenous mass, employing poverty as a "heuristic, rhetorical, or philosophical construct" useful to think with about a variety of societal and moral issues. While this "textualized poverty" bears little resemblance to the lived experience of the poor, comparative approaches—which consider the rhetoric of these literary sources together with the osteological, statistical, and textual evidence discussed above—can provide valuable and poignant insight into the diets and survival strategies of those who lived at or near subsistence level, as well as the ways in which they function in the arguments and agendas of the writers who examine them.[407]

What did people in antiquity eat? While this was, to a significant degree, a topic of literary interest, the majority of relevant textual evidence focuses on the dietary preferences of the elite. There are a few significant exceptions; I will focus here on the work of the Pergamene physician Galen. Active in the late second century CE (contemporaneously with Origen), Galen writes extensively concerning dietary habits and the medical properties of various foods.[408] Two of Galen's many treatises, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* and (to a lesser extent) *On the Wholesome and Unwholesome Properties of Foodstuffs*, demonstrate a unique interest in the diets and survival strategies of non-elite Romans, particularly those who lived in rural areas.

In *On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* Galen presents a sort of practical guide to a range of foods that a physician might reasonably expect to encounter in the course of treating patients, or

[407] Liu, "Urban Poverty," 24-25.

[408] Oswyn Murray, "Athenaeus the Encyclopedist," in *A Companion to Food in the Ancient World,* ed. John Wilkins and Robin Nadeau (Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 33.

of which a person who takes a particular interest in his or her own diet might wish to be aware.[409] The work is divided into three sections, presented in order of perceived dietary importance: the first on cereals and legumes, the second on other plants, and the third on animals (including fish) and animal products.[410] Galen's collection and classification of foods isn't intended to be comprehensive; in fact, he shows minimal interest in the luxurious foods that seem to fascinate many of his contemporaries. He focuses instead on "the food of half-starved peasants."[411]

Much of the information presented in *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* has ostensibly been gathered ethnographically. Galen seems to engage in a sort of "poverty tourism," providing numerous anecdotes concerning his extensive travels and the dietary habits of the populations he encounters along the way.[412] Galen is, according to John Wilkins, attempting to replace the "outdated" works of his forerunners (Hippocrates and others) on food and diet: "when placed beside his predecessors, he has gone to places they had not included, and he has spoken to classes of people not normally considered."[413] Galen's rhetorical focus on travel and autopsy, as well as on the dietary habits of the non-elite, thus constitutes the basis for his treatise's claim to authority. The majority of his "poverty tourism" reportedly takes place in Asia Minor, and particularly in the countryside around his home city of Pergamon; he offers a few eyewitness accounts from Italy (particularly Rome), but seems to have very little interest in the Greek

---

[409] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs (De alimentorum facultatibus),* with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Owen Powell and a Foreword by John Wilkins (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xx.

[410] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* ix.

[411] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* xi.

[412] With thanks to the members of the Spring 2018 iteration of Graeca for brainstorming with me about this.

[413] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, xxi.

mainland and islands.[414] He also, however, draws on firsthand evidence from further-flung parts of the Empire, and particularly from Egypt. The excerpts discussed below claim to offer firsthand observations from Galen's travels both in rural Asia Minor and in Egypt, specifically Alexandria.

In his section on cereals and legumes, Galen describes his personal experience with eating wheat that has been boiled in water. Because Galen's full narrative of this episode is significant for our purposes, I quote at length:

> If I had not once eaten wheat boiled in this way, I should not have expected food from it to be of use to anyone. Not even in famine would anybody come to this sort of use, for if wheat is in good supply one can make bread from it. At dinner people eat boiled and roasted chickpeas and other seeds for want of so-called desserts, preparing them in the same fashion, but nobody eats boiled wheat in this way. This is why I should not have expected anyone to eat boiled wheat. But once when walking in the country not far from the city, with two lads of my own age, I myself actually came upon some rustics (*τοὺς ἀγροίκους*) who had had their meal and whose womenfolk were about to make bread (for they were short of it). One of them put the wheat into the pot all at once and boiled it. Then they seasoned it with a moderate amount of salt and asked us to eat it. Reasonably enough, since we had been walking and were famished, we set to with a will. We ate it with gusto, and felt a heaviness in the stomach, as though clay seemed to be pressing upon it. Throughout the next day we had no appetite because of indigestion, so that we could eat nothing, were full of wind and suffered from headaches and blurred vision. For there was not even any bowel action, which is the only remedy for indigestion. I therefore asked the rustics whether they themselves also ever ate boiled wheat, and how they were affected. They said that they had often eaten it under the same necessity that we had experienced, and that wheat prepared in this way was a heavy food, difficult to digest. It was obvious that this could be worked out even by someone who had not tried it. For as I said earlier, where its flour, when eaten, is not easy to digest unless it has been thoroughly worked up with salt and leaven, and mixing and kneading, and baking in an oven, how could one not realize that wheat which is not well worked up is very indigestible? Certainly wheat eaten this way has great potential if it has been digested, nourishing the body very much and imparting notable strength to those taking it.[415]

---

[414] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* xx.

[415] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, 1.7. Trans. Powell (translation modified). K. VI.453-748, ed. G. Helmreich, *CMG* V.4.2 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1923). *Εἰ μὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ἔφαγον ποτε πυροὺς οὕτως ἡψημένους, οὐκ ἄν ἤλπισά τινι χρείαν γενέσθαι τῆς ἐδωδῆς αὐτῶν. Οὔτε γὰρ ἐν λιμῷ τις ἐπὶ τὴν τοιαύτην ἂν ἀφίκιοτο χρῆσιν, ἐνόν, εἴπερ εὐπορεῖ πυρῶν, ἄρτους ἐξ αὐτῶν ποιήσασθαι, παρὰ δεῖπνόν τε καθάπερ ἐρεβίνους ἑφθούς τε και φρυκτοὺς ἐσθίουσιν ἐν χρείᾳ τῶν καλουμένων τραγημάτων ἄλλα τέ τινα σπέρματα τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον σκευάζοντες, οὕτως οὐδεὶς προσφέρεται πυροὺς ἑφθούς. Διὰ ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὐδ' ἂν ἤλπισά*

According to Galen, he and his compatriots eat boiled wheat presented to them by peasants, *οἱ ἄγροικοι,* because physical activity has made them extremely hungry, and because boiling wheat is the fastest and easiest way to satisfy their hunger (as opposed to making bread, which requires time and effort). When questioned, the peasants acknowledge that while they, too, are familiar with the undesirable ramifications of this meal, they eat it often "out of the same necessity": presumably, because they are hungry from exertion and aren't at leisure to prepare bread. And, after all—as Galen acknowledges—boiled wheat actually is nutritious, once one has managed to digest it. Galen here presents a picture of people who, while they have access to food, still regularly experience hunger, and, as a result, are not always at leisure to consume their food in a manner that is enjoyable or comfortable.

---

*τινα πυρῶν ἐφθῶν ἐδηδοκέναι. ἐπει δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγώ, πορευθείς ποτ'εἰς ἀγρὸν οὐκ ἐγγὺς τῆς πόλεως ὄντα μετὰ δυοῖν μειρακίων τὴν αὐτὴν ἡλικίαν ἀγόντων ἐμοί, κατέλαβον ἤδη δεδειπνηκότας τοὺς ἀγροίκους καὶ μελλούσας ἀρτοποιεῖσθαι τὰς γυναῖκας (ἠπόρουν γὰρ ἄρτου), παραχρῆμά τις αὐτῶν ἐμβαλὼν εἰς χύτραν πυροὺς ἥψησεν, εἶθ' ἡδύνας ἁλσὶ μετρίοις ἐσθίειν ἡμᾶς ἠξίωσεν. ἐμέλλομεν δ', ὡς τὸ εἰκός, ἑτοίμως αὐτὸ ποιήσειν ὠδοιπορηκότες τε καὶ πεινῶντες. ἐφάγομέν τ'οὖν αὐτῶν δαψιλῶς ᾐσθανόμεθά τε κατὰ τὴν γαστέρα βάρους, ὡς δοκεῖν ἐγκεῖσθαι πηλὸν αὐτῇ. Καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὑστεραίαν ἠπεπτηκότος ἀνόρεκτοι δι'ὅλης ἡμέρας ἦμεν, ὡς μηδὲν δύνασθαι προσενέγκασθαι, καὶ πνεύματος φυσώδους μεστοὶ κεφαλαλγεῖς τε καὶ βλέποντες ἀχλυῶδες. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπεχώρει τι κάτω, ὅ μόνον ἐστὶν ἄκος ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀπεψίαις. ἠρώτων οὖν τοὺς ἀγροίκους, εἰ καὶ αὐτοί ποτε πυρῶν ἐφθῶν ἔφαγον ὅπως τε διετέθησαν. Οἱ δὲ καὶ πολλάκις ἐδηδοκέναι κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀνάγκην ἔφασαν, ᾗ καὶ τόθ' ἡμεῖς συνηνέχθημεν, εἶναί τε βαρὺ καὶ δύσπεπτον ἔδεσμα τοὺς οὕτς σκευασθέντας. ἦν δέ γε τοῦτο καὶ μὴ πειραθέντι λογίσασθαι πρόδηλον. ὅπου γὰρ οὐδὲ τὸ ἄλευρον αὐτῶν ἐσθιόμενον, ὡς εἶπον ἔμπροσθεν, εὔπεπτόν ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ κατεργασθείη δι'ἀλῶν καὶ ζύμης καὶ φυράσεως καὶ τρίψεως καὶ κριβάνου, πῶς οὐκ ἄν τις ἐννοήσειε τοὺς ἀκατεργάστους ἰσχυροτάτους εἶναι; Δύναμίν γε μὴν ἔχουσι μεγάλην, εἰ πεφθεῖεν, οἱ οὕτω βρωθέντες πυροὶ καὶ τρέφοντες ἰσχυρῶς τὸ σῶμα καὶ ῥώμην ἐπίσημον παρεχόμενοι τοῖς προσενεγκαμένοις αὐτούς.*

[416] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* 2.38. *Τὰ μὲν οὖν κράνια καὶ τὰ βάτινα καὶ τὰς βαλάνους καὶ τὰ μμαίκυλα (καλεῖται δ'οὕτως ὁ τοῦ κομάρου καρπός) ἐσθίουσι συνήθως οἱ κατὰ τοὺς ἀγρούς, τοὺς δὲ τῶν ἄλλων δένδρων τε καὶ θάμνων οὐ πάνυ τι. Λιμοῦ γε μὴν κατασχόντος ποτὲ τὴν ἡμετέραν χώραν εὐφορίας τε γενομένης τῶν τε βαλάνων καὶ τῶν μεσπίλων, ἐν σιροῖς αὐτὰς οἱ ἄγροικοι θησαυρίσαντες ἀντὶ τῶν σιτηρῶν ἐδεσμάτων εἶχον ἔν τε τῷ χειμῶνι παντὶ καὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τοῦ ἦρος. ἔμπροσθεν δὲ βορὰ σθῶν ἦσαν αἱ τοιαῦται βάλανοι, ἀλλὰ τότε γε ἀποτρεπόμενοι τοῦ διαθρέψαι τούτους ἐν τῷ χειμῶνι, καθάπερ ἔμπροσθεν εἰώθεσαν, ἐν ἀρχῇ μὲν αὐτοὺς σφάξαντες ἐχρήσαντο τούτοις πρώτοις εἰς ἐδωδήν, ὕστερον δὲ τοὺς σιροὺς ἀνοίξαντες ἤσθιον τὰς βαλάνους παρασκευάζοντες ἐπιτηδείους εἰς βρῶσιν ἄλλοτ' ἄλλως. ἐν ὕδατί τε γὰρ ἥψον ἐνίοτε καὶ κατὰ θερμὴν σποδιὰν ἐγκρύπτοντες ὤπτων συμμέτρως. Αὖθις δ' ἄν ποτε καὶ καταθλάσαντές τε καὶ λειώσαντες ἔτνος ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐποίουν, ἐνίοτε μὲν ὕδατι μόνῳ δεύοντες ἐπεμβάλλοντές τέ τι τῶν ἡδυσμάτων, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ μέλιτος ἐπιχέοντες ἤ μετὰ γάλακτος ἕψοντες. ἡ δ'ἀπ' αὐτῶν τροφὴ δαψιλής ἐστιν... ἐστι δὲ βραδυπόρος ἡ ἀπ' αὐτῶν τροφὴ καὶ παχύχυμος, οἷς ἀκόλουθόν ἐστι καὶ δύσπεπτον ὑπάρχειν αὐτήν.*

Galen is also clear that, for this segment of the population, adequate food is not always available. *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* contains several references to survival strategies employed by the rural poor in times of food crisis. A description of fruit from wild plants, for example, includes a discussion of which fruits are eaten on a regular basis as opposed to only in dire straits:

> People in the country regularly eat wild pears, blackberries, acorns, and *mimaikyla* (as the fruit of the strawberry tree is called), but the fruit of the other trees and shrubs is not eaten very much. However, once when famine took hold of our land and there was an abundance of acorns and medlars, the country folk (*οἱ ἄγροικοι),* who had stored them in pits, had them in place of cereals for the whole winter and into early spring. Before that, mast like this was pig food, but on this occasion they gave up keeping the pigs through winter as they had been accustomed to doing previously. At the start of the winter they slaughtered the pigs and ate them; after that they opened the pits and, having suitably prepared the mast in various ways, they ate it. Sometimes, after boiling it in water, they covered it with hot ash and baked it moderately. Again, on occasion they would make a soup from it, after crushing and pounding it smooth, sometimes pouring in honey, or boiling it with milk. The nutriment from it is abundant…but the food from it is slow to pass and has a thick juice, from which it follows that it is also difficult to digest.[416]

This passage envisions the ways in which *οἱ ἄγροικοι* living near subsistence level moved downwards through a hierarchy of foods in times of crisis, eventually eating the mast, or acorns, that they had stockpiled to give to their pigs. As with the previous example, Galen acknowledges that acorn soup and baked acorn mush—while nutritious—are not enjoyable to eat, but "slow to

---

[416] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* 2.38. *Τὰ μὲν οὖν κράνια καὶ τὰ βάτινα καὶ τὰς βαλάνους καὶ τὰ μιμαίκυλα (καλεῖται δ'οὕτως ὁ τοῦ κομάρου καρπός) ἐσθίουσι συνήθως οἱ κατὰ τοὺς ἀγρούς, τοὺς δὲ τῶν ἄλλων δένδρων τε καὶ θάμνων οὐ πάνυ τι. Λιμοῦ γε μὴν κατασχόντος ποτὲ τὴν ἡμετέραν χώραν εὐφορίας τε γενομένης τῶν τε βαλάνων καὶ τῶν μεσπίλων, ἐν σιροῖς αὐτὰς οἱ ἄγροικοι θησαυρίσαντες ἀντὶ τῶν σιτηρῶν ἐδεσμάτων εἶχον ἔν τε τῷ χειμῶνι παντὶ καὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τοῦ ἦρος. ἔμπροσθεν δὲ βορὰ σθῶν ἦσαν αἱ τοιαῦται βάλανοι, ἀλλὰ τότε γε ἀποτρεπόμενοι τοῦ διαθρέψαι τούτους ἐν τῷ χειμῶνι, καθάπερ ἔμπροσθεν εἰώθεσαν, ἐν ἀρχῇ μὲν αὐτοὺς σφάξαντες ἐχρήσαντο τούτοις πρώτοις εἰς ἐδωδήν, ὕστερον δὲ τοὺς σιροὺς ἀνοίξαντες ἤσθιον τὰς βαλάνους παρασκευάζοντες ἐπιτηδείους εἰς βρῶσιν ἄλλοτ' ἄλλως. ἐν ὕδατί τε γὰρ ἥψον ἐνίοτε καὶ κατὰ θερμὴν σποδιὰν ἐγκρύπτοντες ὤπτων συμμέτρως. Αὖθις δ' ἄν ποτε καὶ καταθλάσαντές τε καὶ λειώσαντες ἔτνος ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐποίουν, ἐνίοτε μὲν ὕδατι μόνῳ δεύοντες ἐπεμβάλλοντές τέ τι τῶν ἡδυσμάτων, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ μέλιτος ἐπιχέοντες ἢ μετὰ γάλακτος ἕψοντες. ἡ δ'ἀπ' αὐτῶν τροφὴ δαψιλής ἐστιν... ἐστι δὲ βραδυπόρος ἡ ἀπ' αὐτῶν τροφὴ καὶ παχύχυμος, οἷς ἀκόλουθόν ἐστι καὶ δύσπεπτον ὑπάρχειν αὐτήν.*

pass" and difficult to digest. Galen's shorter treatise, *On the Wholesome and Unwholesome Properties of Foodstuffs*, contains a similar discussion of "famine foods." In periods of shortage, he says, people from the country use up all of their stored legumes during the winter, and, lacking their usual stockpile of grains, must resort to "unhealthy foods" in the spring: "They ate twigs and shoots of trees and bushes, and bulbs and roots of indigestible plants; they filled themselves with wild herbs, and cooked fresh grass."[417] In this passage, the "emergency foods" are non-food plant matter—even lower in the hierarchy of foods than foods stored for livestock.[418]

By contrast, Galen seems to consider some items consumed by Egyptian populations so foreign and/or undigestible as to be outside this hierarchy of foods altogether:

> On the snail: It is quite clear that we should count this animal among neither the winged nor the aquatic creatures. But if we do not include it among terrestrial animals either, we shall be saying absolutely nothing about the food from it. Nor again is it sensible to ignore it as we ignore woodworms, vipers and other reptiles that they eat in Egypt and some other countries. For none of those people will read this, and *we ourselves would never eat any of what to them are foods*. But all Greeks eat snails on a daily basis…[419]

"We," Galen insists, do not eat worms or reptiles—there is thus no reason to include them in his treatise, since the Egyptians who do eat these things will never read it anyway. Similarly,

> In Alexandria they eat donkey meat as well, and there are also some people who eat camel. For while custom contributes to their digestion, of no less importance is the small amount taken and the depletion of the body as a whole that necessarily accompanies those who toil throughout the day at their proper activities. For the depleted flesh snatches up from the stomach not only half-digested, but even, when they work after a

---

[417] Galen 749ff, trans. Garnsey.

[418] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 39-40.

[419] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs,* 3.2, emphasis added. *Περὶ κοχλίου. Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτ᾽ἐν τοῖς πτηνοῖς οὔτ᾽ἐν τοῖς ἐνύδροις ἀριθμεῖσθαι χρὴ τοῦτο τὸ ζῷον, ἄντικρυς δῆλον. Εἰ δὲ μηδ᾽ἐν τοῖς πεζοῖς αὐτοῦ μνημονεύσαιμεν, οὐδ᾽ὅλως ἐροῦμέν τι περὶ τῆς ἐκ κοχλίου τροφῆς. Οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ παραλιπεῖν εὔλογον, ὥσπερ τοὺς ἐκ τῶν ξύλων σκώληκας ἐχίδνας τε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ὄφεις ὅσα τε κατ᾽Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἄλλα τινὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐσθίουσιν. Οὔτε γὰρ ἐκείνων τις ἀναγνώσεται ταῦτα, καὶ ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἄν ποτε φάγοιμέν τι τῶν ἐκείνοις ἐδωδίμων. Κοχλίας δ᾽ὁσημέραι πάντες Ἕλληνες ἐσθίουσιν…*

> meal, sometimes absolutely undigested chyme. This is why these people later suffer very troublesome illnesses and die before they reach old age. Ignorant of this, most people who see them eating and digesting what none of us can tackle and digest congratulate them on their bodily strength. Also, since very deep sleep occurs in those who undertake much hard labor, and this helps them with digestion to a greater degree, they are consequently less injured by harmful foods. But if you were to force them to stay awake for more nights in succession they would immediately become ill. So these people have but this one advantage in the digestion of harmful foods.[420]

Since those with a particularly strong constitution are able to eat what others cannot, most people think it a sign of bodily strength that laborers in Alexandria eat donkeys and camels, which "none of us can tackle and digest." Galen assures his readers that such dietary habits are not a source of pride, but rather are dangerous. Alexandrian laborers get away with eating these beasts of burden because they are accustomed to doing so, because they eat only a tiny bit at a time, and because they are extremely hungry and exhausted from hard work. Due to this depletion, their bodies are able to absorb partially digested and even undigested stomach contents, and they sleep deeply enough to help them digest the barely digestible. What people don't realize, however, is that the continued absorption of such foods results in inevitable illness and untimely death.

Galen's focus on the dietary realities and crisis management tactics of the Roman peasantry sets his treatises apart from others of their ilk, and thus constitutes their claim to authority. It does other work as well. As John Wilkins argues, Galen attempts in *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* not to provide an exhaustive overview of everything that is technically

---

[420] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, 1.2, translation modified. *…ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν ὄνων ἐσυίοθσιν, εἰσι δ᾽οἵ καὶ τὰ τῶν καμήλων. Εἰς γὰρ τὴν πέψιν αὐτῶν συντελεῖ μὲν καὶ τὸ ἔθος, οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ καὶ ἡ βραχύτης τῶν προσφερομένων καὶ ἡ τοῦ σώματος ὅλου κένωσις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἑπομένη τοῖς δι᾽ὅλης ἡμέρας ταλαιπωροῦσι κατὰ τὰς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας. ἀναρπάζουσι γὰρ αἱ κεναὶ σάρκες ἐκ τῆς γαστρὸς οὐ μόνον ἡμίπεπτον, ἀλλὰ καὶ παντάπασιν ἄπεπτον ἐνίοτε χυμόν, ὅταν ἐπὶ σιτίοις πονῶσι. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο νόσους χαλεπωτάτας ὕστερον οὗτοι νοσοῦσι καὶ πρὸ γήρως ἀποθνῄσκουσι. Καὶ ταῦτ᾽ἀγνοοῦντες οἱ πολλοὶ μακαρίζουσιν αὐτῶν τὴν ἰσχὺν τοῦ σώματος ὁρῶντες ἐσθίοντάς τε καὶ πέττοντας, ἃ μηδεὶς ἡμῶν δύναται προσενέγκασθαι καὶ πέψαι. ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τοῖς πολλὰ ταλαιπωροῦσιν ὕπνοι βαθύτατοι γίγνονται καὶ τοῦτ᾽αὐτοῖς μειζόνως πρὸς τὰς πέψεις συντελεῖ, διὰ τοῦθ᾽ἧττον ὑπὸ τῶν μοχθηρῶν ἐδεσμάτων βλάπτονται. Εἰ δ᾽ἀναγκάσαις αὐτοὺς ἀγρυπνῆσαι πλείοσιν ἐφεξῆς νυξίν, αὐτίκα νοσοῦσιν. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν οὖν ἕν τοῦτο μόνον ἀγαθὸν ἔχουσιν εἰς πέψιν τῶν μοχθηρῶν ἐδεσμάτων.*

edible, but to offer a "terminology and classification" of foods that people in the "modern imperial world" can reasonably be expected to eat.[421] Galen's approach to food is as much ethnographical as it is medical/scientific; the question of which foods are acceptable for consumption functions to differentiate those who are part of "civilization" from those who are not. Foods eaten by *οἱ ἄγροικοι*—particularly in times of crisis—define the boundaries of a normative diet, and, by extension, the limits of the civilized world.[422] They have recourse to food, but often not to food that would allow them the optimal health, comfort, or pleasure available to a more normative representative of civilization. Food shortages leave them extremely vulnerable; their limited safety net involves items generally considered unfit for human consumption.

For Galen, as Wilkins argues, "extremes of poverty and foreignness…define the foods of a 'civilized' diet, which human beings can expect to eat without ill effect if they are in good health."[423] As we have seen, the dietary habits of the rural inhabitants of Galen's homeland, particularly in times of hunger or food crisis, demarcate the limits of what is acceptable to eat. The dietary habits of Egyptians—and particularly of those in Alexandria who must undertake hard labor on a regular basis—stand decidedly outside of these limits. Galen offers what are supposedly eyewitness accounts of foods eaten by non-elite inhabitants of Asia Minor and Alexandria as a way of articulating the boundaries of civilization as he understands it.

The balance of this osteological, statistical, documentary and literary evidence gives us glimpses of a Roman Empire in which malnutrition was widespread, likely disproportionately so among persons of low socioeconomic status. A significant majority of the population lived at or

---

[421] *Galen, On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, xx.

[422] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, x-xii, xx.

[423] Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, xx.

near subsistence level, such that the existence or threat of hunger and undernourishment would have been omnipresent. The realities of subsistence-level living and the frequency of food shortages profoundly shaped the diets and survival strategies of non-elite populations—diets and survival strategies that are given particular cultural, social and moral valence at the hands of authors like Galen. Localized evidence for second- and third-century Alexandria and Palestine strongly suggests that these areas were no exception. It is therefore unsurprising that Origen engages in rhetoric with marked similarities to Galen's.

**Food, Poverty, and Scriptural Interpretation in Origen's *Against Celsus***

Although Origen was an enormously prolific writer, very few of his works are extant in their entirety. *Against Celsus* is a rare exception.[424] The only substantial external evidence for its dating comes from Eusebius, who claims that it was written when Origen was more than sixty years old, in the same period as his commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew and the twelve minor prophets.[425] By this time Origen had relocated from Alexandria to Caesarea Maritima, on the coast of Palestine;[426] his patron, Ambrosius, had apparently requested that Origen write a rebuttal to *The True Account*, an anti-Christian work written by a Platonist philosopher Celsus around 175 CE.[427] Internal evidence suggests that the treatise was written during a time of peace

[424] Michael Frede, "Origen's Treatise Against Celsus," in Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price, and Chris Rowland, eds., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 131.

[425] See *H.E.* 5.36.2. Frede, 131; Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Against Celsus, translated with introduction and notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), xiv.

[426] Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18.

[427] Frede, "Origen's Treatise Against Celsus," 132; 135.

for Christians, and a majority of scholars date it to the mid-third century, shortly before the onset of the Decian persecution.[428]

One of the treatise's frequently-cited arguments centers around Celsus' derisive claim that both the Christian scriptures and those to whom they appeal are simple, common, and unsophisticated. Several variations on this theme, and Origen's responses to them, appear over the course of the treatise. Christianity, argues Celsus, emphasizes the importance of blind faith over against that of rational thought, and thus caters to and is accepted by the uneducated and gullible;[429] Christian teachers actively discourage participation from the educated and intelligent, recognizing that they are able to convince "only the foolish, dishonorable, and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children" (*μόνους τοὺς ἠλιθίους καὶ ἀγεννεῖς καὶ ἀναισθήτους καὶ ἀνδράποδα καὶ γύναια καὶ παιδάρια*);[430] the tenets of Christian scripture are neither new nor innovative, but were expressed earlier and in a much more sophisticated manner by Plato and various other Greek philosophers.[431] According to Origen, Celsus' accusations reveal not a shortcoming of Christianity, but a strength: Origen argues throughout the treatise that the superiority of Christian teaching lies in its ability to instruct everyone— the "ignorant, stupid, uneducated, and childish" *as well as* the "educated, wise and sensible."[432] In attempting to argue that Christianity transcends socioeconomic differences, however, Origen ironically articulates a

---

[428] Frede, "Origen's Treatise Against Celsus," 131; see *Against Celsus* 3.15: "That not even the fear of outsiders maintains our unity is clear from the fact that, by the will of God, this has ceased for a long time now." Unless otherwise noted, translations of *Against Celsus* are taken from Chadwick, *Origen: Against Celsus*.

[429] See *Against Celsus* 1.9.

[430] *Against Celsus* 3.44. M. Marcovich, ed., *Origenes: Against Celsus, libri VIII* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[431] See *Against Celsus* 7.58.

[432] *Against Celsus* 3.48. *Ἀλλὰ προσίτω μὲν πεπαιδευμένος καὶ σοφὸς καὶ φρόνιμος ὁ βουλόμενος· οὐδὲν δ' ἧττον προσίτω καὶ εἴ τις ἀμαθὴς καὶ ἀνόητος καὶ ἀπαίδευτος καὶ νήπιος.*

hierarchy within the Christian community that is predicated upon socioeconomic status—expressed, in part, through language of diet.[433]

In the seventh book of *Against Celsus,* Origen marshals an extended, nourishment-related metaphor:

> Let it be granted that there is a solid food that is good for one's health, that implants strength within those who consume it, and that after being prepared in a certain way and seasoned with certain spices it is received not by those who have not learned to eat such things—that is, the uneducated yokels who were brought up in the sticks and in poverty (*ἄγροικοι καὶ ἐν ἐπαύλεσιν ἀνατεθραμμένοι καὶ πένητες)*—but rather is only consumed by wealthy and luxurious people. And suppose that there are countless people who eat the same food, not prepared in the manner in which refined people eat it, but in the manner that the poor and the uncultured and the common folk (*οἱ πένητες καὶ οἱ ἀγροικότεροι καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων*) have learned to eat it. Let us grant, then, that only those people called "refined" are strengthened by the first kind of food preparation, since none of the common folk are inclined toward such solid food, whereas the second kind of food will feed and strengthen the greater number of people. Which kind of food-preparer should we approve of more on account of the strength of the food shared in common? The one who prepares food only for the learned, or the one who prepares it for the greater number of people? For while the same strength and health is imparted by the food whether it is prepared in this way or that, it is obvious that the one who is a lover of humanity and whose service is of greatest common benefit is the doctor who provides health for the masses rather than the one who provides it only for a few people.[434]

Origen argues here that the ability of Christian teachers to present instruction in a manner that is accessible to the poor and uneducated renders these teachers both more skilled and more morally

---

[433] Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk,* 133.

[434] *Against Celsus* 7.59. Trans. Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 132; translation modified. *Ἔστω τι ὑγιεινὸν βρῶμα καὶ ἰσχύος τοῖς ἐσθίουσιν ἐμποιητικόν, τοῦτο δὲ οὕτως μὲν σκευασθὲν καὶ τοιοῖσδε ἡδύσμασιν ἀρτυθὲν λαμβανέτωσαν οὐχ οἱ μὴ μαθόντες ἄγροικοι καὶ ἐν ἐπαύλεσιν ἀνατεθραμμένοι καὶ πένητες τὰ τοιάδε ἐσθίειν ἀλλ' οἱ πλούσιοι καὶ ἁβροδίαιτοι μόνοι· οὐκ ἐκείνως δὲ καὶ ὡς δοκεῖ τοῖς νομιζομένοις καθαριωτέροις σκευασθέν, ἀλλ' ὡς μεμαθήκασιν ἐσθίειν οἱ πένητες καὶ οἱ ἀγροικότεροι καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐσθιέτωσαν μυριάδες ὅλαι. Εἰ οὖν καὶ διδοῖτο ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς τοιασδὶ σκευασίας τοὺς νομιζομένους καθαριωτέρους μόνους ὑγιάζεσθαι, οὐδενὸς τῶν πολλῶν προσβάλλοντος τοῖς τοιοῖσδε βρώμασιν, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς τοιασδὶ τὰ πλήθη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑγιεινότερον διάγειν· τίνας μᾶλλον τοῦ κοινωνικοῦ ἕνεκεν ἀποδεξόμεθα τῶν ὑγιεινῶν βρωμάτων χάριν; Ἆρά γε τοὺς τοῖς λογίοις χρησίμως αὐτὰ σκευάζοντας ἢ τοὺς τοῖς πλήθεσι; Τῆς ἴσης – δεδόσθω γάρ – ὑγιείας καὶ εὐεξίας ἐγγινομένης ἀπὸ τῶν οὑτωσὶ σκευασθέντων ἢ οὑτωσί, ἀλλὰ φανερὸν ὅτι αὐτὸ τὸ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ τὸ κοινωνικὸν ὑποβάλλει κοινωφελέστερον εἶναι ἰατρὸν τὸν τῆς τῶν πολλῶν ὑγιείας προνοησάμενον ἢπερ τὸν τῆς ὀλίγων μόνων.*

sound than instructors in philosophy, whose teachings are comprehensible only within the uppermost echelons of society. Significantly, the "chef" metaphor through which he makes this point functions based on the underlying assumption that the poor and uneducated— *οἱ πένητες καὶ οἱ ἀγροικότεροι καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων*—have dietary habits and preferences that differ drastically from those of the wealthy and educated.

In this sense, Origen's rhetoric bears striking similarities to Galen's. As we've seen, Galen envisions a hierarchy of foods that is socioeconomically determined, with foods and food preparations enjoyed by the elite occupying the central/normative position and foods and food preparations eaten by the poor—and, specifically (in both cases), *οἱ ἄγροικοι*—occupying positions defined by varying degrees of liminality. People living at or near subsistence level move down through this hierarchy in times of crisis; the hierarchy has a defined lower limit (recall the foods allegedly eaten by the laboring poor in Egypt, which Galen doesn't consider to be edible). Even when *οἱ ἄγροικοι* eat foods that are, according to Galen, both nutritious and ubiquitous across class lines, these can deviate from the norm through differences in preparation (recall the distinction between baked bread and boiled wheat). Origen relies on essentially the same hierarchy to make his point about the superiority of Christianity over against Greek philosophy. Both systems of thought provide teachings that are nourishing for and suited to the palates of the wealthy and educated: this is a given, the norm. What makes Christianity unique is its ability *also* to provide nutrition suitable for and appealing to *οἱ ἄγροικοι*. The fact that Christian teachings are accessible to the "liminal" sectors of society (from the perspective of a "reasonably well-educated, reasonably well-to-do" person) is, according to Origen, not Christianity's greatest shame, but rather its greatest strength.

While Origen's reliance on a framework involving a socioeconomically determined hierarchy of foods is perhaps most evident in this passage, I want to argue that it is in play not only throughout *Against Celsus,* but indeed at several points throughout his corpus. For Origen, this hierarchy is part of a cluster of concepts—including scriptural interpretation, spiritual transformation, nutrition, and socioeconomic status—that are inextricably related. While these concepts do not always appear in tandem, I suggest that, where one or more appears, resonances of the others are present.

Just as Origen's "chef metaphor" presents a direct correlation between social location and food, Origen also makes explicit the connection he draws between food and scripture. His metaphor continues:

> Consider whether Plato and the wise men of the Greeks do not resemble in their fine utterances the physicians who have cared only for those supposed to be the better classes, while they have despised the multitude. But the prophets among the Jews and the disciples of Jesus…would be comparable to those who have taken pains to cook and to prepare the very same wholesome quality of food by means of a literary style which gets across to the multitude... the divine nature, which cares not only for those supposed to have been educated in Greek learning but also for all of humanity, came down to the level of the ignorant multitude of hearers, that by using the style familiar to them it might encourage the mass of the common people to listen.[435]

The "prophets among the Jews and the disciples of Jesus"—those in whose words Christian scripture is written—are cooks and food preparers; by using a "literary style which gets across to the multitude," they have crafted a meal—scripture—that is accessible to all. This relationship

[435] *Against Celsus* 7.60, translation modified. *Καὶ ὅρα εἰ μὴ Πλάτων μὲν καὶ οἱ Ἑλλήνων σοφοὶ ἐν οἷς λέγουσι καλῶς παραπλήσιοί εἰσι τοῖς προνοησαμένοις ἰατροῖς τῶν καθαριωτέρων εἶναι νομιζομένων μόνων, τοῦ πλήθους δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καταφρονήσασιν· οἱ δ' ἐν Ἰουδαίοις προφῆται καὶ οἱ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαθηταί… ὁμοιωθεῖεν ἂν τοῖς τὴν αὐτὴν τῶν βρωμάτων ποιότητα ὑγιεινοτάτην προνοησαμένοις συνθέσει λέξεων σκευάσαι καὶ εὐτρεπίσαι φθανούσῃ ἐπὶ τὰ πλήθη τῶν ἀνθρώπων… ἡ προνοουμένη θεία φύσις οὐ τῶν πεπαιδεῦσθαι νομιζομένων μόνον τὰ Ἑλλήνων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συγκατέβη τῇ ἰδιωτείᾳ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ἀκροωμένων, ἵνα ταῖς συνήθεσιν αὐτοῖς χρησαμένη λέξεσι προκαλέσηται ἐπὶ ἀκρόασιν τὸ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν πλῆθος.*

between scripture and nutrition is, as it happens, central to Origen's deeply intertwined notions of hermeneutics and anthropology.

### *On First Principles*: Anthropology, Hermeneutics, Nutrition

To understand how the concepts of social location, food, and scripture function together, we turn first to Origen's *On First Principles*. Dated to 220-230 CE, when Origen was a rising-star theologian and teacher in Alexandria, this work attempts systematically to "lay down a definite line and unmistakable rule" with regard to a variety of issues of theological significance, including his doctrine of spiritual transformation.[436]

In the third book of *On First Principles,* Origen describes the person as composed of two natures, both of which are engaged in an ongoing process of transformation:

> The whole argument, then, comes down to this, that God has created two universal natures, a visible, that is, a bodily one, and an invisible one, which is incorporeal. These two natures each undergo their own different changes. The invisible, which is also the rational nature, is changed through the action of the mind and will… The bodily nature, however, admits of a change in substance.[437]

While the visible and the rational natures change in different ways, this process of transformation is understood to culminate in the eventual synthesis of both natures into a single spiritual nature.[438] Spiritual transformation takes place on different timelines for different people, and will

---

[436] *On First Principles,* preface, 2. *Propter hoc neccessarium videtur prius de his singulis certam lineam manifestamque regulam ponere*. Henri Crouzel and M. Simonetti, eds., *Traité des Principes,* SC 253, 268, 269, 312 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978-84). Unless otherwise noted, translations of *On First Principles* are taken from *Origen's On First Principles*, trans. G.W. Butterworth, with introduction by Henri de Lubac, and foreword by John Cavadini (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2013). Translations given are those of the Greek, where extant, since this is the language in which Origen wrote; I have, however, been attentive to the readings offered by Rufinus' Latin translation throughout, since this is frequently the only version of the text that is available.

[437] *On First Principles* 3.6.7. *Omnis igitur haec ratio hoc continet, quod duas generales naturas condiderit Deus: naturam visibilem, id est corpoream, et naturam invisibilem, quae est incorporea. Istae vero duae naturae diversas sui recipiunt permutationes. Illa quidem invisibilis quae rationabilis est, animo propositoque mutatur… Haec vero natura corporea substantialem recipit permutationem.*

[438] Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk,* 110. The exact mechanism by which this process occurs, particularly during life, is difficult to articulate. While Origen emphasizes that the rational nature does not change in the same way as does the visible, he also makes clear that the rational is dependent upon the visible for growth: "Mind certainly

not be complete for every person until "the consummation and restitution of all things" (*consummatio ac restitutio omnium*), at which point "God shall be all in all" (*Deus omnia in omnibus*).[439]

A substantial body of scholarship has noted the extent to which Origen understands this anthropology as integrated with his tripartite exegetical method, famously articulated in the fourth book of *On First Principles*.[440] Indeed, Origen employs the Pauline categories of flesh, soul and spirit to describe the three levels at which scripture may be read;[441] a person's position on the spectrum of spiritual transformation both results from and is indicative of that person's capacity to interpret scripture. In *Raised on Christian Milk: Food and the Formation of the Soul in Early Christianity*, John Penniman demonstrates that Origen thinks about spiritual transformation through the interpretation of scripture fundamentally as a process of nourishment.

---

needs intellectual magnitude, because it grows in an intellectual and not a physical sense. For mind does not increase by physical additions at the same time as the body does until the twentieth or thirtieth year of its age, but by the employment of instructions and exercises a sharpening of the natural faculties is effected and the powers implanted within are roused to intelligence. Thus the capacity of the intellect is enlarged not by being increased with physical additions, but by being cultivated through exercises in learning. These it cannot receive immediately from birth or childhood because the structure of the bodily parts which the mind uses as instruments for its own exercise is as yet weak and feeble, being neither able to endure the force of the mind's working nor sufficiently developed to display a capacity for receiving instruction" (*On First Principles* 1.1.6, translation modified; Cf. Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 115). The mind is transformed through the intellectual contemplation of the divine, but this transformation is dependent upon and enabled by the physical structures within which it is embedded and with which it is integrated. As the rational sense moves toward the spiritual, therefore, it takes the visible, bodily sense with it. See Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 116-117.

[439] *On First Principles* 3.6.8-9.

[440] Origen's method for the interpretation of scripture distinguishes between three "senses," or levels of meaning, it contains: "One must therefore portray the meaning of the sacred writings in a threefold way upon one's own soul, so that the simple person may be edified by what we may call the flesh of the scripture, this name being given to the obvious interpretation; while the person who has made some progress may be edified by its soul, as it were; and the person who is perfect and like those mentioned by the apostle: 'We speak wisdom among the perfect' (1 Cor 2:6) …may be edified by the spiritual law…for just as a person consists of body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture, which has been prepared by God to be given for humanity's salvation." *On First Principles* 4.2.4; see Karen Jo Torjeson, "'Body,' 'Soul,' and 'Spirit' in Origen's Theory of Exegesis," *ATR* 61.1(1985):17-30.

[441] See e.g. Henri Crouzel, *Origène* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1985); Jean Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948); Henri De Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit: L'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène,* Théologie 16 (Paris: Aubier, 1950); Torjeson, "'Body,' 'Soul,' and 'Spirit.'"

In the second book of *On First Principles,* as Penniman points out, Origen understands food to be a catalyst for the transformation of bodily nature: "Whatever it is that we take as food, it turns into the substance of our bodies."[442] Food is digested and incorporated into the body, which is itself changed in the process.[443] Borrowing Blossom Stefaniw's concept of "noetic exegesis," a "type of interpretation particularly concerned with applying and developing the *nous,*" Penniman argues that, for Origen, spiritual transformation takes place when the mind, or *nous,* eats and digests scripture.[444] Operating in conjunction with the body, whose sensory functions enable it to glean information from the material world, the *nous* ingests and processes the food that is the text, "convert[ing] it to the nutrients appropriate to [the soul's] capacity."[445]

That Origen employs a dietary framework to think about spiritual transformation is illustrated most clearly and extensively through his use of Pauline food categories to describe distinct points along the spectrum. In *On First Principles* 4.2.4, Origen draws on the anthropological classifications of flesh, soul and spirit to describe the three levels at which scripture may be read; in the fragmentary *Commentary on 1 Corinthians,* he attempts to associate these classifications with types of food appropriate to each:

> Among Paul's addressees some are mature (*τέλειοι*), the spiritual people *(πνευματικοί)* we spoke about earlier. The others, whom the apostle describes as believers in Christ but not spiritual, are babes *(νήπιοι)* in Christ and fleshly people *(σάρκικοι)* in Christ...Those, then, who are less mature and have not yet been trained in the holy scriptures require elementary lessons. Paul calls these lessons milk. For he says, "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it, and even yet you are not

[442] *On First Principles* 2.1.4. *Nam quodcunque illud est quod per cibum sumpserimus, in corporis nostri substantiam vertitur.*

[443] Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 113-114.

[444] Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), 28.

[445] Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk,* 112.

> ready." Now among spiritual foods, I think there is an ascending progression: milk, solid food, true food, substantial food, flesh of the Word—and also spiritual vegetables.[446]

For Origen, Paul's dietary metaphors can be organized to constitute a framework with which to classify Christians based on their capacity to interpret scripture. The dichotomy that Paul sets up between milk and solid food in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3—considered together with Romans 14:2, which references weak people who eat only vegetables[447]—gives Origen language to describe different degrees of spiritual transformation. This language is not limited to Origen's commentary on 1 Corinthians, but has traction elsewhere in his corpus. Consider this passage from *On Prayer*:

> And moreover, just as the person being nourished receives that power in different ways according to the quality of the food—some nourishment being solid and suitable for athletes while other forms of food are milky or like vegetables—so also it follows that the Word of God can be as milk suitable for children or as vegetables useful for the weak or as flesh given to those contending for a prize. And each person, of those that are being nourished in proportion to their capacity to share the power of the Word, is able to do different things and to become different things.[448]

People of varying developmental stages, abilities, and activity levels require different types of food to nourish them. So too scripture, as spiritual food, takes a form appropriate to the needs of each person along the spectrum of spiritual transformation: Is a person able to consume the Word

---

[446] *Commentarius in I. Epistolam ad Corinthios,* fragment 12, translation modified. Claude Jenkins, "Origen on 1 Corinthians" (*JTS* Vol. os-IX, Issue 34, 1 January 1908): 241. Trans. Judith L. Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's, 2005), 49.

[447] 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. "And I, brothers and sisters, was not able to speak to you as spiritual people, but as fleshly people—as infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food—for you were not yet able (to consume it). And neither even now are you able, for you are still fleshly people. For when there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and behaving in human ways?" *Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ. γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα· οὔπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε, ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε;* Romans 14:2. "One person's faith allows them to eat everything, while another eats ony vegetables." *ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει.* See parallel discussion in 1 Corinthians 8, 1 Corinthians 10. For an extensive analysis of the ways in which these passages were deployed in early Christian discourses around social identity and human formation, see Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*.

[448] *On prayer* 27.9. Trans. Rowen A. Greer, *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, and Selected Works* (CWS; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), 141-142; Cf. Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk,* 126.

as one of several types of solid food, processing scripture at the pneumatic level as she moves ever closer to a state of spiritual perfection? Is she receiving a diet of vegetables, able to comprehend the intermediate psychic sense of scripture but not (yet) the pneumatic sense? Or is she at the level of the fleshly, capable only of digesting scripture's literal/bodily sense as an infant digests milk?

Origen's use of Paul's writings to articulate a rubric by which to categorize Christians' ability to process scripture raises the question of how, or if, he understands movement along the path to spiritual perfection to occur. There has been considerable scholarly debate around the question of whether these Pauline categories are intended to be progressive or static: Are milk, vegetables, and solid food attainable and inevitable markers along the path of spiritual transformation? Or can people be destined for and defined by a permanent diet of milk, unable to advance in their ability to receive and interpret the Word?[449] It is arguably the case that, for Origen, both possibilities are valid: these categories are simultaneously representative of progressive stages and distinct classes of people. While Origen's concept of spiritual progress is apparent throughout his corpus, he does not indicate that progress is possible for everyone (or, at least, not during life on earth). Origen, arguably, conceives of two groups of Christians: those who have the ability to progress through the levels of scriptural interpretation toward spiritual perfection, and those "milk-drinkers" who, while mortal, are only ever capable of processing scripture's literal sense.[450]

**"Milk Drinkers" and "Simple Readers"**

[449] For a useful summary of scholarship, see Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 121-122.

[450] Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk,* 122; R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond, VA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1959), 213-214; Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum According to Origen of Alexandria* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 76; Helsinki: Societas Scientarum Fennica, 1984), 94-95.

The most persuasive evidence that Origen envisions a static, reified class of "milk-drinking" Christians appears in *Against Celsus*, as Origen responds to Celsus' derisive claims concerning the socioeconomic profile of those whom Christianity attracts. As we have seen, Origen argues that the adaptability of the Word makes it accessible to a wide range of people: it is a versatile food, and must be prepared and presented in various ways to suit various palates. Just as, in the gospels, "the crowds of believers hear the parables outside, as they were worthy only of exoteric teaching, but the disciples privately learnt the explanation of the parables,"[451] instructors in the Word thus "conceal and pass over the more profound truths whenever [they] see that the meeting consists of simple-minded folk *(*ἁπλούστεροι*)* who are in need of teaching which is figuratively called milk."[452] While audiences would, ideally, consist of intelligent persons,[453] Origen claims that the teachings scripture contains have the potential to benefit everyone:

> We confess that we do want to educate all people with the Word of God, even if Celsus does not wish to believe it, so that we may impart even to adolescent boys the encouragement appropriate to them and may teach the enslaved how they may obtain a free mind and receive noble birth from the Logos.[454] Those among us who give a competent account of Christianity…do not deny that they ought to cure the souls even of

[451] *Against Celsus* 3.46. *Ἐὰν δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ μετὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν γεγραμμένα ἔλθῃς βιβλία, εὕροις ἂν τοὺς μὲν ὄχλους τῶν πιστευόντων τῶν παραβολῶν ἀκούοντας ὡς ἔξω τυγχάνοντας καὶ ἀξίους μόνον τῶν ἐξωτερικῶν λόγων, τοὺς δὲ μαθητὰς κατ' ἰδίαν τῶν παραβολῶν μανθάνοντας τὰς διηγήσεις·*

[452] *Against Celsus* 3.52. *ἀποκρύπτομεν δὲ καὶ παρασιωπῶμεν τὰ βαθύτερα, ἐπὰν ἁπλουστέρους θεωρῶμεν τοὺς συνερχομένους καὶ δεομένους λόγων τροπικῶς ὀνομαζομένων «γάλα».*

[453] *Against Celsus* 3.52.

[454] Note that in the ancient world enslaved persons, children, and women were frequently understood to lack the capacity for reason and virtue possessed by free adult men. See e.g. Aristotle's *Politics* 1260a7-14, as quoted in Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 109: "Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority; while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form."

> the unwise, that *as far as possible* they may put away ignorance and earnestly seek more understanding.[455]

As these chapters of *Against Celsus* indicate, "milky" teachings seem to be appropriate for two related—but nevertheless crucially distinct—groups of Christians. Some people, including, presumably, the "adolescent boys" mentioned above (who will grow to adulthood), receive scripture's literal, obvious teachings as a jumping-off point from which to attain to more complex and advanced truths: As Origen indicates, "truths given to beginners are comparable to the milk of babes."[456] For other "simpleminded" people, however, higher levels of divine wisdom will arguably never be accessible: while they may attempt to grow in their understanding "as far as possible," they will remain, during life, like the masses described in the gospels, hearing the parables outside the house.[457]

What factors determine whether a person's status as milk-drinker is inevitable for the duration of their mortal life, or whether they have the potential to progress through the nutritional regimen of spiritual transformation? While *Against Celsus* doesn't provide clear or consistent answers, it does offer some clues. Shortly after the conclusion of the "chef metaphor," Origen asserts yet again the superiority of God's Word to other available teachings. If Plato, he argues,

---

[455] *Against Celsus* 3.54. Emphasis added, translation modified. *Ὁμολογοῦμεν δὲ πάντας ἐθέλειν παιδεῦσαι τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, κἂν μὴ βούληται Κέλσος, λόγῳ, ὥστε καὶ μειρακίοις μεταδιδόναι τῆς ἁρμοζούσης αὐτοῖς προτροπῆς καὶ οἰκότριψιν ὑποδεικνύναι, πῶς ἐλεύθερον ἀναλαβόντες φρόνημα ἐξευγενισθεῖεν ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου. Οἱ δὲ παρ' ἡμῖν πρεσβεύοντες τὸν χριστιανισμὸν ἱκανῶς φασιν ὀφειλέται εἶναι «Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς καὶ ἀνοήτοις»· οὐ γὰρ ἀρνοῦνται τὸ καὶ ἀνοήτων δεῖν τὰς ψυχὰς θεραπεύειν, ἵν' ὅση δύναμις ἀποτιθέμενοι τὴν ἄγνοιαν ἐπὶ τὸ συνετώτερον σπεύδωσιν…*

[456] *Against Celsus* 3.53. *Ὁ δ' αὐτὸς οὗτος ἐπιστάμενος τὰ μέν τινα τροφὴν εἶναι τελειοτέρας ψυχῆς, τὰ δὲ τῶν εἰσαγομένων παραβάλλεσθαι γάλακτι νηπίων, φησί·…*

[457] As Penniman argues, "[Milk] is a saving food, but not a perfect or perfecting food… It is not clear, then, that the milk given to these simpleminded people produces a spiritual transformation at all. It seems more like subsistence. That is, the milk appears mostly as a food that sustains the soul in its creaturely state—not necessarily a food that will enable the *ratio* buried deep within the flesh to ascend toward the spirit." Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 130.

had ever really wished to educate anyone besides the Greek elite, he would have needed to write and teach in the languages used by "barbarians." By contrast,

> The divine nature, which cares not only for those supposed to have been educated in Greek learning but also for the rest of humankind, came down to the level of the ignorant multitude of hearers, that by using the style familiar to them it might encourage the mass of the common people to listen. After they have once been introduced to Christianity they are easily able to aspire to grasp even deeper truths which are concealed within the Bible. For it is obvious even to an ungifted person who reads them that many passages can possess a meaning deeper than that which appears at first sight, which becomes clear to those who devote themselves to Bible study, and which is clear *in proportion to the time they spend on the Bible* and to their zeal in putting its teaching into practice.[458]

The adaptability of Christian scripture, Origen insists, technically makes it possible not only for the "ignorant masses" to apprehend Christian teachings on a basic level, but also to advance toward deeper ways of understanding, contingent upon their ability to invest time and effort into their study. The approach this passage takes toward progress along the spectrum of spiritual transformation is somewhat reminiscent of the ideal of the "American Dream": Spiritual perfection is attainable for anyone, provided they possess the necessary enthusiasm and invest the necessary time. Therein lies the strength and superiority of the scriptures. An earlier section of *Against Celsus,* however, qualifies this approach somewhat.

The first book of the treatise includes Celsus' derisive description of what he perceives as Christianity's emphasis on belief at the expense of education and knowledge: "[Celsus] says that some do not even want to give or to receive a reason for what they believe, and use such

---

[458] *Against Celsus* 7.60, translation modified. *ἡ προνοουμένη θεία φύσις οὐ τῶν πεπαιδεῦσθαι νομιζομένων μόνον τὰ Ἑλλήνων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συγκατέβη τῇ ἰδιωτείᾳ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ἀκροωμένων, ἵνα ταῖς συνήθεσιν αὐτοῖς χρησαμένη λέξεσι προκαλέσηται ἐπὶ ἀκρόασιν τὸ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν πλῆθος, δυνάμενον ἐξ εὐχεροῦς μετὰ τὴν ἅπαξ γενομένην εἰσαγωγὴν φιλοτιμήσασθαι πρὸς τὸ καὶ <τὰ> βαθύτερα τῶν κεκρυμμένων νοημάτων ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς καταλαβεῖν. Καὶ τῷ τυχόντι γὰρ δῆλον, ταύτας ἀναγινώσκοντι, ὅτι πολλὰ βαθύτερον τοῦ αὐτόθεν ἐμφαινομένου ἔχειν δύναται νοῦν, τοῖς ἀνατιθεῖσιν αὑτοὺς τῇ ἐξετάσει τοῦ λόγου φανερούμενον, καὶ φανερούμενον κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς εἰς τὸν λόγον σχολῆς καὶ εἰς τὴν ἄσκησιν αὐτοῦ προθυμίας.*

expressions as 'Do not ask questions; just believe', and 'Your faith will save you.'"[459] Origen's rebuttal is as follows:

> My answer to this is that if every person could abandon the business of life and devote their time to philosophy, no other course ought to be followed but this alone. For in Christianity, if I make no vulgar boasting, there will be found to be no less profound study of the writings that are believed; we explain the obscure utterances of the prophets, and the parables in the gospels, and innumerable other events or laws which have a symbolic meaning. However, if this is impossible, since, partly owing to the necessities of life and partly owing to human weakness, very few people are enthusiastic about rational thought, what better way of helping the multitude could be found other than that given to the nations by Jesus? …As this matter of faith is so much talked of, I have to reply that we accept it as useful for the multitude, and that we admittedly teach those who cannot abandon everything and pursue a study of rational argument to believe without thinking out their reasons.[460]

Origen's argument in this passage functions based on a clear correlation between socioeconomic status and leisure for pursuit of scriptural study. The scriptures do indeed signify on deep, challenging, symbolic levels. It is not, however, practical to think that the "multitude" has time available for the sort of study that would allow them to apprehend those more complex levels. Advanced knowledge is obviously preferable, but simple faith—the option realistically available to the multitude—is better than nothing.

The overwhelming impression given by *Against Celsus* is that one's position on the spectrum of spiritual transformation is, at least in part, determined by socioeconomic status:

---

[459] *Against Celsus* 1.9, translation modified. Φησὶ δέ *τινας μηδὲ βουλομένους διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν λόγον περὶ ὧν πιστεύουσι χρῆσθαι τῷ* [*«Μὴ ἐξέταζε ἀλλὰ πίστευσον» καὶ «Ἡ πίστις σου σώσει σε.»*

[460] *Against Celsus* 1.9-10, translation modified. *Λεκτέον δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο ὅτι [εἰ μὲν οἷόν τε πάντας καταλιπόντας τὰ τοῦ βίου πράγματα σχολάζειν τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν], ἄλλην ὁδὸν οὐ μεταδιωκτέον οὐδενὶ ἢ ταύτην μόνην. Εὑρεθήσεται γὰρ ἐν τῷ χριστιανισμῷ οὐκ ἐλάττων, ἵνα μὴ φορτικόν τι εἴπω, ἐξέτασις τῶν πεπιστευμένων καὶ διήγησις τῶν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις αἰνιγμάτων καὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις παραβολῶν καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων συμβολικῶς γεγενημένων ἢ νενομοθετημένων. [Εἰ δὲ τοῦτ' ἀμήχανον] πῇ μὲν διὰ τὰς τοῦ βίου ἀνάγκας πῇ δὲ καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσθένειαν, σφόδρα ὀλίγων ἐπὶ τὸν λόγον ᾰ̓ττόντων, [ποία ἂν ἄλλη βελτίων μέθοδος πρὸς τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς βοηθῆσαι εὑρεθείη] τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς ἔθνεσι παραδοθείσης; … Εἶτ' ἐπεὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς πίστεως θρυλοῦσι, λεκτέον ὅτι ἡμεῖς μὲν παραλαμβάνοντες αὐτὴν ὡς χρήσιμον τοῖς πολλοῖς ὁμολογοῦμεν διδάσκειν πιστεύειν καὶ ἀλόγως τοὺς μὴ δυναμένους πάντα καταλιπεῖν καὶ ἀκολουθεῖν ἐξετάσει λόγου.*

Scripture's versatility allows it to function as milk/simple food in order to nourish the multitude, the common people, the poor, the country bumpkins, those without time or resources to pursue it on a deeper level. While it is possible for those who begin with milk to progress toward an increasingly solid diet, it seems clear that at least some cannot; the language Origen uses in this treatise to speak of long-term milk drinkers/simple readers is consistently socioeconomically coded.

It is important to note that only in *Against Celsus* are issues of socioeconomic status so explicitly intertwined with the clustered concepts of nutrition, scripture, and spiritual transformation that appear throughout Origen's corpus; they likely feature so prominently here as part of Origen's response to Celsus' already socioeconomically loaded rhetoric. It is nevertheless the case that the "simple readers"—those capable of apprehending scripture only at surface level—are a consistent presence in many of Origen's writings, often serving as a foil over against which Origen articulates his own, "better informed" theological positions. Even as Origen does not identify them with any particular group of people, I argue that his rhetoric around "simple readers" in works other than *Against Celsus* activates discourses of socioeconomically-based hierarchy together with those of nutrition, hermeneutics, and spiritual transformation. This is, I suggest, particularly true of Origen's complaints concerning "simple" approaches to resurrection belief in *On First Principles*.

### "The Food of Truth and Wisdom": Scripture, Nutrition and Resurrection in Origen's *On First Principles*

Scholars have suggested that the intended audience for *On First Principles* consists of church leaders, educated instructors who Origen hopes will employ the exegetical method the

treatise presents to interpret scripture for those who are not capable of doing so independently.[461] Indeed, Origen perceives no shortage of people who have no business interpreting scripture on their own, identifying three categories of persons whose hermeneutical strategy renders them dangerously ignorant of the divine wisdom that scripture contains. The Jews, he says, decline to believe in Jesus because he failed to fulfill, in a literal sense, the prophecies contained in their scriptures. Members of heretical sects interpret select verses from the Jewish scriptures as referring to a Creator, a separate entity from the God of the Savior. "The simpler of those who claim to belong to the church," though they attest, correctly, to the surpassing greatness of God, "believe such things about him as would not be believed of the most savage and unjust of humans."[462] These groups, though they arrive at drastically different conclusions, share the same faulty method of reading: "scripture is not understood in its spiritual sense, but is interpreted according to the bare letter."[463] This is problematic, as it is not the literal words of scripture that are divine, but its teachings: "the treasure of divine wisdom is concealed in vessels of poor and humble words."[464]

As Origen's articulation of his exegetical method makes clear, "obvious interpretation" of scripture is not without its merits:[465] Origen argues that "[the fact] that it is possible to derive

---

[461] Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture Within Origen's Exegesis* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 40; Torjesen, "'Body,' 'Soul,' and 'Spirit,'" 20; 22.

[462] *On First Principles* 4.2.1. *Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ οἱ ἀκεραιότεροι τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας αὐχούντων τυγχάνειν, τοῦ μὲν δημιουργοῦ μείζονα οὐδένα ὑπειλήφασιν, ὑγιῶς τοῦτο ποιοῦντες. τοιαῦτα δὲ ὑπολαμβάνουσι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὁποῖα οὐδὲ περὶ τοῦ ὠμοτάτου καὶ ἀδικωτάτου ἀνθρώπου.*

[463] *On First Principles* 4.2.2. *Αἰτία δὲ πᾶσι τοῖς προειρημένοις ψευδοδοξιῶν καὶ ἀσεβειῶν ἢ ἰδιωτικῶν περὶ θεοῦ λόγων, οὐκ ἄλλη τις εἶναι δοκεῖ ἢ Γραφὴ κατὰ τὰ πνευματικὰ μὴ νενοημένη, ἀλλ᾽ὡς πρὸς τὸ ψιλὸν γράμμα ἐξειλημμένη.*

[464] *On First Principles* 4.1.7. *…dum in vilioribus et incomptis verborum vasculis divinae sapientiae thesaurus absconditur…*

[465] See again *On First Principles* 4.2.4: "One must therefore portray the meaning of the sacred writings in a threefold way upon one's own soul, so that the simple person may be edified by what we may call the flesh of the scripture,

benefit from the first and to this extent helpful meaning is witnessed by the multitude of sincere and simple believers."[466] Through the wisdom of God, even the "outer covering of the spiritual truths" was carefully designed to be "capable of improving the multitude insofar as they receive it."[467]

There are, however, critical exceptions to this rule. The literal words of scripture are not consistently and reliably edifying: some passages have no bodily sense at all, but must be interpreted only with reference to their "soul" and "spirit."[468] In fact, the "bare letter" is sometimes intentionally misleading, even dangerous. If it were always valuable and illuminating, Origen argues, there would be no way to detect the presence of the hidden truths that scripture contains. The Word of God has therefore placed deliberate "stumbling blocks"—narratives of events that did not actually happen, along with laws and commandments that do not "entirely declare what is reasonable"—not only in the Hebrew Bible, but also in the gospels and the writings of the apostles.[469] It is not the case, then, that reading scripture according to the letter is always problematic; on the contrary, it has the potential to be beneficial for many. Reading the *wrong* scripture according to the letter, however, is extremely problematic: Passages that have no

---

this name being given to the obvious interpretation; while the person who has made some progress may be edified by its soul, as it were; and the person who is perfect and like those mentioned by the apostle: "We speak wisdom among the perfect" …may be edified by the spiritual law…for just as a person consists of body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture, which has been prepared by God to be given for humanity's salvation."

[466] *On First Principles* 4.2.6. *Ἀπὸ μὲν οὖν τῆς πρώτης ἐκδοχῆς καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὠφελούσης, ὅτι ἔστιν ὄνασθαι, μαρτυρεῖ τὰ πλήθη τῶν γνησίως καὶ ἁπλούστερον πεπιστευκότων.*

[467] *On First Principles* 4.2.8. *Προέκειτο γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα τῶν πνευματικῶν, λέγω δὲ τὸ σωματικὸν τῶν Γραφῶν, ἐν πολλοῖς ποιῆσαι οὐκ ἀνωφελὲς, δυνάμενόν τε τοὺς πολλοὺς, ὡς χωροῦσι; βελτιοῦν.*

[468] *On First Principles* 4.2.5. Some scholars have read Origen's exegetical theory to imply that every passage contained within scripture contains three distinct levels of meaning; this seems not to be the case. See Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procesure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis,* Patristische Texte und Studien 28 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986), 41.

[469] *On First Principles* 4.2.9.

legitimate bodily sense, that describe events, laws, prophecies, or teachings that are not reasonable or reliable, should never be taken at face value.

This brief overview of the promises and pitfalls of reading scripture literally provides crucial context for Origen's engagement with differing opinions concerning the nature of resurrection, which appears toward the end of the second book of *On First Principles*. This is, he says, not his most thorough treatment of this topic—a possible reference to an earlier treatise on resurrection, which unfortunately is not extant[470]—but it is one of the more extensive in the extant corpus of Origen's work. Origen addresses those who, he claims, reject his understanding of a resurrected body as "altogether foolish and silly" (*stulte et penitus insipienter*).[471] He first identifies the "chief objectors" as those who deny that the resurrection will involve a body of any kind. These "heretics" have failed to take into account the nuances of Paul's discussion of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15: "It is sown a soulish body, it will rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15.44). Given that the same body is said to rise that has fallen, albeit transformed, "these people cannot deny that a body rises or that in the resurrection we are to possess bodies." In fact, Origen says, Paul provides evidence not only for the existence of a resurrected body, but for the existence of a wide variety of resurrected bodies: When the apostle speaks of differing glories among heavenly bodies and differing fleshes among earthly creatures,[472] he describes a hierarchy of saints and sinners that will exist "among those who rise."[473]

---

[470] Eusebius claims that Origen wrote a treatise on resurrection in two volumes, but even he does not seem familiar with its contents. *H.E.* 6.24.2; Lehtipuu, *Debates Over the Resurrection,* 114.

[471] *On First Principles* 2.10.1.

[472] Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:39-42.

[473] *On First Principles* 2.10.2.

Turning from the "chief objectors," Origen spills considerably more ink in addressing another group of people with, it seems, similarly undesirable views on resurrection:

> We now direct the discussion to some of our own people, who either from scarcity of intellect or from lack of instruction introduce an exceedingly low and mean idea of the resurrection of the body. We ask these people in what manner they think the "soulish body" will, by the grace of the resurrection, be changed and become spiritual, and in what manner they believe that what is "sown in weakness" will be "raised in power," and what is sown "in dishonor" is to "rise in glory," and what is sown "in corruption" is to be transformed into "incorruption"? Certainly if they believe the apostle, who says that the body, when it rises in glory and in power and in incorruptibility, has already become spiritual, it seems absurd and contrary to his meaning to say that it is still entangled in the passions of flesh and blood, seeing that he says plainly, "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God, neither shall corruption inherit incorruption."[474]

Paul's conception of the resurrected body, as Origen understands it, is characterized by the same crucial paradox with which pseudo-Justin, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, and Tertullian also grappled: It is continuous with the body that exists during life, but is simultaneously profoundly transformed. The opponents Origen purports to address at the beginning of his discussion ignore the aspect of continuity; these people—not "heretics," significantly, but "some of our own"—ignore the aspect of transformation.

Origen elaborates: Living creatures, he says, are constantly in motion, and each person must "always be engaged in some movement or activity." Not everyone, however, devotes their time to the same variety of pursuits:

> If a person forgets himself and is unaware of what befits him, his whole purpose centers around bodily experiences and in all his movements he is occupied with the pleasures and lusts of the body. If, however, he is one who strives to care or provide for the common

---

[474] *On First Principles* 2.10.3, reading 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 50; translation modified. *Nunc uero sermonem conuertimus ad nonnullos nostrorum, qui uel pro intellectus exiguitate uel explanationis inopia ualde uilem et abiectum sensum de resurrectione corporis introductunt. Quos interrogamus, quomodo intellegunt animale corpus gratia resurrectionis immutandum et spiritale futurum, et quomodo quod in infirmitate seminatur, resurrecturum sentiant in uirtute, et quod in ignobilitate, quomodo resurget in Gloria, et quod in corruption, quomodo ad incorruptionem transferatur. Quod utique si credunt apostolo quia corpus in Gloria et in uirtute et in incorruptibilitate resurgens, spiritale iam effectum sit, absurdum uidetur et contra apostoli sensum dicere, id rursum carnis et sanguinis passionibus implicari, cum manifeste dicat apostolus:* Quoniam caro et sanguis regnum dei non possidebunt, neque corruptio incorruptionem possidebit.

> good, he applies himself either to serving the Senate or obeying the magistrates or to whatever else may seem clearly to be of benefit to people generally. But if there be a person who can discern something better than these activities, which appear to be connected to the body, and can give diligent attention to wisdom and knowledge, he will undoubtedly direct all his efforts towards studies of this sort, with the object of learning, through inquiry into truth, what are the causes and reason of things. As therefore in this life one person decides that the highest good is the pleasure of the body, another the service of the State, and another devotion to studies and learning, so we seek to know whether…in the eternal life, there will be for us any such order or condition of existence.[475]

Origen's commentary in this passage is marked by moralistic rhetoric: People choose how to spend their time; devotion to matters of the body at the expense of knowledge and education is a conscious decision. We nevertheless notice a familiar underlying theme: Different people spend time in different ways. Some people devote themselves to study and the pursuit of knowledge; others do not. This is reminiscent of *Against Celsus's* discourse on the potential of the "masses" for spiritual growth, in which Origen argues that it is not realistic to expect everyone to be able to spend time learning to understand the scriptures on a deeper-than-surface level. Origen seeks in *Against Celsus* to defend the "simplistic" perspective of less privileged members of his own community, those who put belief over knowledge; as we'll see momentarily, he seeks here to condemn a similarly "simplistic" perspective. While this passage doesn't explicitly employ rhetoric of socioeconomic status, as does *Against Celsus*, its resonances can arguably be detected in the firm connection Origen makes here between "simple" reading and the expenditure of time on bodily rather than spiritual concerns.

---

[475] *On First Principles* 2.11.1. *Et si quidem immemor sui sit, et quid se deceat ignoret, circa usus corporales omnis sua movetur intentio, et per omnes motus suos erga voluptates suas ac libidines corporis occupatur; si vero talis sit qui in commune aliquid curare vel providere studeat, aut reipublicae consulens, aut magistratibus parens, aut quidquid illud est quod in commune certe prodesse videatur, exercet. Iam vero si quis talis sit ut aliquid melius quam haec quae corporea videntur, intelligat, et sapientiae et scientiae operam habeat, sine dubio erga huiuscemodi studia omnem declinabit industriam, quo possit inquisita veritate rerum causas rationemque cognoscere. Sicut ergo in hac vita alius quidem summum bonum corporis judicate voluptatem alius vero in commune consulere, alius studiis et intelligentiae operam dare; ita requiramus in…illa aeterna vita, si aliquis talis erit nobis vivendi ordo vel status.*

Origen next moves directly to correlate the misallocation of one's time and the misapprehension of the resurrected body, arguing that those who are preoccupied with bodily desires in this life fail to understand the rewards that scripture promises in the next:

> Now some people, who reject the labor of thinking and seek after the outward and literal meaning of the law, or rather give way to their own desires and lusts, disciples of the mere letter, consider that the promises of the future are to be looked for in the form of pleasure and bodily luxury. And chiefly on this account they desire after the resurrection to have flesh of such a sort that they will never lack the power to eat and drink and to do all the things that pertain to flesh and blood, not following the teaching of the apostle Paul about the resurrection of a "spiritual body."[476]

Not only do these people claim that they will eat and drink, Origen complains, but they "go on to say" that in the resurrection they will marry, procreate, and be supplied with slaves and riches beyond imagining. "All this," he says,

> …they try to prove on prophetic authority from those passages of scripture which describe the promises made to Jerusalem; where it is also said that "they who serve God shall eat and drink, but sinners shall hunger and thirst," and that "the righteous shall enjoy gladness, but confusion shall possess the wicked."[477] From the New Testament, too, they quote the Savior's saying, in which he makes a promise to his disciples of the gladness that wine brings, "I will not drink of this cup until the day that I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."[478] They add also the following, that the Savior calls those blessed who now hunger and thirst, and promises them that they shall be filled,[479] and they quote from the scriptures many other illustrations, the force of which they do not perceive must be figurative and spiritual… such are the thoughts of those who believe

[476] *On First Principles* 2.11.2, translation modified. *Quidam ergo laboram quodammodo intellegentiae recusantes et superficiem quandam legis litterae consectantes et magis delectationi suae quodammodo ac libidini indulgentes, solius litterae discipuli, arbitrantur repromissiones futuras in uoluptate et luxuria corporis exspectandas; et propter hoc praecipue carnes iterum desiderant post resurrectionem talis, quibus manducandi et bibendi et omnia, quae carnis et sanguinis sunt, agendi nusquam desit facultas, apostoli Pauli de resurrectione spiritalis corporis sententiam non sequentes.*

[477] cf. Isaiah 65:13-14.

[478] Matthew 26:29.

[479] cf. Matthew 5:6; Luke 6:21.

> indeed in Christ, but because they understand the divine scriptures in a Judaistic sense,[480] extract from them nothing that is worthy of the divine promises.[481]

We see here described in practice the dangers of reading scripture in a simple or literal way, as set forth during Origen's exposition of his exegetical method. Prophetic and gospel texts that appear to contain eschatological promises of food and drink, Origen might argue, lack an edifying bodily sense, and certain persons—led astray by fleshly desires, and/or lack of education or knowledge—therefore derive from them a false understanding of the resurrected body. Their "simple" hermeneutic exemplifies the pitfalls of reading literally and demonstrates the need for the interpretive framework that Origen goes on to provide.[482]

Who are these people, who anticipate so fervently a resurrected body with the capacity to eat and drink? Origen's rhetoric can be understood in a number of ways, but I argue that one way it would have been heard was as targeting Christians of lower socioeconomic status. We have seen the thematic connection this section of *On First Principles* shares with *Against Celsus* involving leisure time, education, and, arguably, class. In the passages of *On First Principles* that follow, Origen explores the eschatological fate of the "simple readers," framing his thoughts on

---

[480] This statement is indicative of the strong and pervasive anti-Judaism that characterizes much of Origen's work, particularly as pertains to Jewish biblical interpretation, which he frequently portrays as overly literal/carnal. See e.g. Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 38-58.

[481] *On First Principles* 2.11.2. *Et hoc conantur ex auctoritate prophetica confirmare ex his, quae de Hierusalem repromissionibus scripta sunt; ubi etiam dicitur quia qui seruiunt deo manducabunt et bibent, peccatores autem esurient et sitient, et quod laetitiam agent iusti, impios uero confusio possidebit. Et de nouo quoque testamento uocem proferunt saluatoris, qua discipulis repromittit de uini laetitia dicens quia* non bibam ex hoc iam usquequo bibam illud uobiscum nouum in regno patris mei. *Addunt quoque et illud, quod saluator beatos dicit eos, qui nunc esuriunt et sitiunt, pollicens eis quia saturabuntur; et multa alia ex scripturis exempla proferunt, quorum uim figuraliter uel spiritaliter intellegi debere non sentiunt… Haec ita sentiunt qui Christo quidem credunt, Iudaico autem quodam sensu scripturas diuinas intellegentes, nihil ex his dignum diuinis pollicitationibus praesumpserunt.*

[482] Recall *On First Principles* 4.2.1, in which Origen claims that his framework is necessary to address misguided literal interpretations of scripture by Jews (who take the prophetic texts at face value) and "simpler" Christians (who derive from the scriptures ideas worthy of "savage and unjust" people). This is yet another example of Origen's anti-Jewish rhetoric.

this issue in direct response to those who long for a resurrected body that eats and drinks. In doing so, he evokes the same cluster of concepts—nutrition, hermeneutics, spiritual transformation—with which we are by now familiar. In the post-resurrection hierarchy he articulates, I suggest, issues of class and status are attendant as well.

In contrast to the overly literal approach to scripture upon which his opponents' hope is based,

> Those…who accept a view of the scriptures which accords with the meaning of the apostles do indeed hope that the saints will eat, but they will eat the bread of life, which is to nourish the soul and enlighten the mind with the food of truth and wisdom and to cause it to drink from the cup of divine wisdom… The mind, when nourished by this food of wisdom to a whole and perfect state, as humanity was made in the beginning, will be restored to the image and likeness of God, so that, even though a person may have departed out of this life insufficiently instructed, but with a record of acceptable works, he can be instructed in that Jerusalem, the city of the saints…There too, he will come to a truer and clearer knowledge of the saying that "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Christ."[483]

Ironically, the resurrection will indeed be characterized by eating and drinking. The menu will be radically different from the one that Origen's opponents so eagerly anticipate, but it will, Origen argues, provide them with exactly what they need to recognize the error of their ways. Deploying the same symbolic association between food and spiritual transformation that he uses to articulate intellectual and social distinctions that exist during life, Origen argues that, through continued instruction after death, these distinctions will (very) eventually be erased. Just as the food on offer in the resurrection is nourishment for the spirit and intellect rather than for the

---

[483] *On First Principles* 2.11.3, translation modified. *Hi vero qui secundum apostolorum sensum theoriam Scripturarum recipiunt, sperant manducaturos quidem esse sanctos, sed panem vitae qui veritatis et sapientiae cibis nutria animam, et illuminet mentem, et potet eam divinae sapientiae poculis… Quibus sapientiae escis nutrita mens ad integrum et perfectum, sicut ex initio factus est homo, ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei reparetur; ut etiamsi quis ex hac vita minus eruditus abierit, probabilia tamen opera detulerit, instrui poterit in illa Jerusalem sanctorum civitate… ibique hoc quod iam hic praedictum est, verius manifestiusque cognoscet, <quod non in pane solo vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei.>*

stomach, the new Jerusalem is not a place of material opulence, but rather a classroom for continuing education:

> I think that the saints as they depart from this life will remain in some place situated on the earth, which the divine scripture calls "paradise." This will be a place of instruction and, so to speak, a lecture room or school for souls, in which they may be taught about all that they had seen on earth and may also receive some indications of what is to follow in the future… if anyone is pure in heart and of unpolluted mind and well-trained understanding, he will make swifter progress and quickly ascend to the region of the air, until he reaches the kingdom of the heavens.[484]

As Origen indicated in his earlier arguments concerning the nature of the resurrection body, life in the resurrection, like mortal life, is characterized by hierarchy.[485] The same process of spiritual transformation that began on earth continues after the resurrection, as every soul works to be restored to the "image and likeness of God." Unsurprisingly, those who advanced further in this process during life get a head start: People who were capable of processing divine wisdom then—who are "pure of heart and of unpolluted mind and well-trained understanding"—can, to the degree that they have already achieved spiritual transformation, bypass the remedial instruction on offer in paradise/the New Jerusalem and progress more rapidly toward union with the divine. Although this same union with the divine awaits those who "have departed out of this life insufficiently instructed," it will take them much longer to attain. These "saints" will remain on earth, learning what they didn't or couldn't learn while living, while their more intellectually advanced fellow saints "quickly ascend to the region of the air."[486]

---

[484] *On First Principles* 2.11.6. *Puto enim quod sancti quique discedentes de hac vita permanebunt in loco aliquo in terra posito, quem paradisum dicit Scriptura divina, velut in quodam eruditionis loco, et, ut ita dixerim, auditorio vel schola animarum in quo de omnibus his quae in terries viderant, doceantur, indicia quoque quaedam accipient etiam de consequentibus et futuris…Si quis sane mundus corde, et purior mente, et exercitatior sensu fuerit, velocius proficiens, cito ad aeris locum ascendet, et ad coelorum regna perveniet…*

[485] This hierarchy is, ironically, crystallized through Origen's attempts to articulate the process by which it will eventually be eliminated.

[486] By "saints," Origen seems to mean everyone who will "rise in glory" at the resurrection (*On First Principles* 2.10.2). Origen believes that everyone will rise at the resurrection, either in glory or for punishment; even the

By drawing upon language of nourishment to describe the transformative instruction available in the resurrection, Origen frames this vision of post-resurrection existence as an explicit rebuke to those who envision an afterlife involving literal food and drink. Not only is true eschatological fare far superior to what their limited imaginations can dream up, he implies, but they also happen to be among the people who are most desperately in need of it.

The activation of a telltale cluster of concepts—the correct interpretation of scripture, the hierarchical spectrum of spiritual transformation, and, crucially, nutrition—signals that Origen's opponents in this section of *On First Principles,* those who eagerly anticipate an eating-drinking resurrected body, may be identified with the "simple readers" that appear consistently throughout Origen's corpus, and perhaps most vividly in *Against Celsus*. Origen's rhetorical positionality vis-à-vis this group is markedly different in *On First Principles* than it is in *Against Celsus,* and his language in both instances is inflammatory: in *On First Principles* they are uneducated, stupid, and lustful, devoting their time to concerns of the body rather than the mind and spirit; in *Against Celsus* they are the ignorant multitude, country bumpkins raised in the sticks, people whose simple faith is better than nothing, as they cannot realistically spend their time studying the scriptures. Despite this varying and overblown rhetoric, it is evident that this group in both cases relates to scripture in a manner that is not conducive to progressing along the spectrum of spiritual transformation during life. While they can anticipate remedial instruction in an eschatological future, scripture is, for now, mere milk, or a simply prepared meal; it seems, as Penniman argues, not like a source of growth but "more like subsistence."[487]

---

wicked will eventually achieve reunification with God through the purification that punishment provides. Those Christians who have failed to achieve spiritual transformation during life are nonetheless saved; they have believed in Christ and will rise in glory.

[487] Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk*, 130.

**Conclusions**

I contend that, in reading Origen in this way, we see him as embedded in the environment in which he lived and worked. His writing, like his contemporary Galen's, engages with and relies on a discourse of socioeconomically-determined dietary hierarchy. Because rhetoric and reality are mutually implicated, we can locate this discourse in a context in which to be less than elite was, in the vast majority of cases, to deal with the threat or reality of malnutrition and vulnerability to food crisis.

There are, of course, multiple potential ways that Origen's condemnation of those anticipating a post-resurrection feast can be and would have been heard. Read "against the grain" in this way, however, it may be understood as a way of accessing an imaginary of the resurrected body for which the extant literature largely fails to account. "You are what you eat," Origen essentially argues. For at least some of his "simple readers," we might imagine, scripture wasn't the only resource limited to subsistence. As we've seen, the resurrected body served as a laboratory for human functioning—an opportunity to envision what is possible for the body and its relationship with food in an ideal scenario, in light of particular constraints and concerns that exist during life. We should imagine that this was the case not only for the very few thinkers whose work remains to some extent accessible to us, but for a diverse spectrum of early Christians whose imaginaries of the resurrected body were shaped not only by the theological and the philosophical but by the material realities of life.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the centuries following the rhetoric explored in this project, Christian thinking around the nexus of food, afterlife, and bodily perfection has proliferated. With the fourth century came the rise of both the monasticism movement and the so-called Origenist controversy, bringing the contested relationship between diet and resurrection into increased prominence. For a number of ascetic writers and practitioners active in late antiquity, as Teresa Shaw writes, "the ideal ascetic body is a visible sign or representation of both the original, pure human body of paradise and the incorruptible condition of the paradise to come… by fasting, as by chastity and renunciation of 'the world,' the ascetic aligns herself or himself with ideal humanity—the perfect, trouble-free humanity created 'in the image of God,' and the future humanity restored to that image."[488] The fourth-century thinker Gregory of Nyssa, for example, insisted that one of the purposes of fasting was to begin to transform the flesh, while still mortal, into the perfect condition it had assumed in the Garden of Eden and would assume again in the resurrection—a resurrection completely devoid of eating and drinking, in which the digestive organs would cease to exist.[489]

For other proponents of an ascetic lifestyle, the resurrected flesh as they imagined it served as reward and motivation for a lifetime of fasting. This argument appears in the late fourth- or early fifth-century *Apocalypse of Paul,* which purports to be a firsthand account of Paul's experiences when "taken up to paradise" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).[490] On his tour of heaven, Paul is granted a vision of the "land of promise," where the righteous will dwell in fleshly form

---

[488] Teresa Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 163.

[489] See Gregory of Nyssa, *Treatise on the Dead,* PG 44, cols. 5531-534*; On the Soul and the Resurrection,* PG 46, cols. 105-160; *On the Making of Humanity* 17-19. Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body,* 83; Shaw, *Burden of the Flesh,* 187-196.

[490] Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse: A Brief History* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 100-103.

during Christ's millenarian reign on earth. Paul's angelic guide portrays this thousand-year period—for those lucky enough to experience it—as one long feast; in particular, he says, four rivers flowing with milk, honey, oil, and wine are specifically intended as a reward for those who went hungry for the Lord's sake during life.[491] In contrast, as Paul discovers during his subsequent tour of hell, those who fasted insufficiently or incorrectly will have a very different experience of the afterlife: as Paul looks on, a group of unfortunate people who "broke their fast too early" writhes suspended in midair, suffering from excruciating hunger and thirst, while water and fruit are forever just out of reach.[492]

Writing around the same time, the Latin author Jerome similarly insists that the flesh must exist in the resurrection so that ascetics may receive the reward they deserve for their victory over its desires:[493] if the organs they had deprived through fasting during life wouldn't stick around to put on their full glory in heaven, what had been the point of their efforts? Citing scripture to point out that Jairus' daughter, Lazarus, and Jesus himself all ate post-resurrection, Jerome describes a resurrected body that will necessarily be able to eat and drink.[494]

Jerome's construction of the resurrected body is motivated not only by his ascetic commitments, but also by his involvement in the so-called Origenist controversy: Jerome was one in a series of late antique thinkers who lashed out against what they perceived as Origen's heretical construction of a resurrected body that did not include flesh.[495] Jerome excoriates

---

[491] See *The Apocalypse of Paul,* 23.

[492] See *The Apocalypse of Paul,* 39.

[493] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 91; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 381.

[494] See Jerome, *Letter 108*, 24. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 91-92.

[495] *The Apocalypse of Paul* shares these doctrinal concerns. Even worse off than the failed fasters, if possible, are those who, during life, denied that the resurrection would involve the flesh: they spend eternity lying naked in snow and ice, being continuously eaten by giant two-headed worms that never sleep. See *The Apocalypse of Paul,* 42. On

Origen for his characterization of those who defend fleshly resurrection as "simple-minded and flesh-loving." He offers a caricature of the resurrected flesh as he claims that Origen imagines it would be, were it to exist—a hungry, digesting, pooping mess.[496] On the contrary, Jerome insists, fleshly resurrection is simply the natural and inevitable continuation of the unique body each person cultivates, and earns, during life.[497] Objecting vehemently to Origen's emphasis on transformation, which he associates with decay, Jerome instead envisions a resurrection characterized by material continuity and the preservation of bodily difference. Like a broken pot, he argues, the flesh at the resurrection will be reassembled just as it was during life—digestive organs, genitals, and all—then "hardened by God to the immutability that is eternal glory."[498]

Jerome's contemporary, Augustine of Hippo, also envisions the resurrected flesh as an entity made of reassembled parts, with the added bonus of incorruption and stasis.[499] Augustine, like Jerome, is extremely wary of change, which he associates primarily with corruption. In Augustine's thought, this is particularly true of eating: Before Adam and Eve's act of disobedience, eating (specifically of the Tree of Life) led to immortality; since they ate of the forbidden fruit, however, eating became tainted with sin and since has led inevitably to death and decay.[500] Our mortal bodies' constant need for food is like a lamp's need for oil: food is necessary for us to continue to function, but eventually—like the lamp—we will all wear out and

---

the complexities of Jerome regarding Origen, see e.g. Young Richard Kim, "Jerome and Paulinian, Brothers," *Vigliae Christianae* 67.5 (2013): 517-530.

[496] See Jerome, *Against John of Jerusalem* 25; Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 87-88.

[497] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 91.

[498] See Jerome, *Letter 124,* 4; *Letter 84,* 9. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 89-94.

[499] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 95.

[500] See e.g. Augustine, *The City of God,* 13.20-23; *Sermon 362*. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 96.

die regardless. In the resurrection, this *need* for eating—as for all such organic processes— will be obliterated, but the *ability* to eat will remain.[501] Augustine muses, in remarkable detail, about precisely what form the resurrected flesh will assume, wondering even about the fate of nail and hair clippings.[502] While Augustine's detailed constructions of the resurrected body are not entirely consistent from text to text,[503] he is insistent that it will contain all of its internal organs, including, explicitly, its digestive system.[504] No matter what happens to a person's flesh—even cannibalization by another person—this flesh will not be subject to change or assimilation, but will rather remain independent and able to be reconstituted, with no part left behind, in the resurrection.[505]

In the Middle Ages, Augustine's construction of the resurrected body—alimentary capacities included—remained extremely influential.[506] Peter Lombard's twelfth-century *Sentences,* the medieval "*locus classicus* for discussion of the resurrection,"[507] draws heavily on Augustine, sharing in particular his emphasis on the problem of reassemblage as it relates to nutrition. What are the implications of digestion for resurrection? If food is assimilated, will everything we have ever eaten be incorporated into our resurrected bodies—and if so, what prevents us from becoming what we eat, and being resurrected as food rather than as human? If, on the contrary, food is not assimilated, how does growth occur? Somewhat paradoxically,

---

[501] See Augustine, *Sermon 362*.

[502] See Augustine, *The City of God,* 22.19.

[503] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 98.

[504] See Augustine, *Sermon 362*.

[505] See Augustine, *The City of God,* 22.20.

[506] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 94-95; 121.

[507] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 121.

Lombard maintains that the mortal body does grow, but that only a "perfect and material core of human nature"—which remains static throughout life—will participate in the resurrection. This resurrected "core" will not eat or grow. Like Augustine, Lombard distinguishes between the *ability* to eat, which, at least during mortal life, is natural and necessary, and the *need* for food—that is, the feeling of hunger—which is evidence of human defectiveness and corruption.[508]

As in the early asceticism movement, this idea of hunger as problematic—a feeling to be resisted and mastered—has resonated throughout the history of Christianity. In *Holy Anorexia,* Rudolph Bell analyzes written accounts of 261 "holy women" from the thirteenth through the twentieth centuries who practiced self-starvation in an effort to curb bodily urges and desires.[509] Raymond of Capua—confessor to Catherine of Siena, perhaps the best known of these women—claims that divine grace allowed Catherine to transcend both the need and the ability to digest: "Not only did she not need food, but she could not even eat without pain. If she forced herself to eat, her body suffered greatly, she could not digest and she had to vomit."[510] Against Bell and others, Caroline Walker Bynum argues that such practices should not be understood as motivated by dualism—by a desire to subdue or annihilate the flesh in an effort to liberate the soul. They are rather "an effort to plumb and to realize all the possibilities of the flesh,"[511] an opportunity to identify with and imitate, in the most visceral way possible, the perfect flesh of Christ who similarly suffered and was thereby victorious.[512]

---

[508] See Peter Lombard, *Sentences,* bk. 4 d. 44.1-3; bk. 2. d. 30.14-15. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* 122-125.

[509] Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 215-237.

[510] Bell, *Holy Anorexia,* 25.

[511] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1987), 294.

[512] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* 208-212.

A related effort to shape the flesh toward a particular constructed ideal through cultivating particular ethics and practices around eating exists even in modern American Protestantism. Christian fitness culture, as R. Marie Griffith writes, has capitalized on the association between food and gluttony/sin to "[make] a religious duty out of diet," perpetuating the idea that God desires—or requires—that Christians follow particular dietary regimens and/or attain particular ideals of body type and physical fitness.[513] The rise in the 1970s in evangelical focus on the end times brought with it new motivation and urgency around the question of "correct" eating: "If you're not satisfied with the face or the body you now have," writes Hal Lindsey in *The Late Great Planet Earth,* "you will have a glorious new body. However, you will be recognizable, just as you will recognize others. We won't have to eat to be sustained, but the Scripture says we can eat if we want to—and enjoy it. For those who have a weight problem, that sounds rather heavenly in itself."[514] Similarly, as Roger F. Campbell insists, "The coming resurrection reveals divine regard for our bodies. Christ was resurrected bodily from the grave, just as we shall be at His coming. When that day arrives our bodies will be perfect without the aid of diets or doctors. Till then, count calories."[515]

In some contemporary Christian circles, the association between diet and afterlife continues to loom large. To give two disparate and alarming examples: A student in a 2016 course for which I served as a teaching fellow shared with me childhood memories of her grandmother's dire warnings against food waste. Anything she left on her plate now, her

---

[513] R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-2.

[514] Hal Lindsey, with C. C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 141. See Griffith, *Born Again Bodies,* 183.

[515] Roger F. Campbell, *Weight! A Better Way to Lose: Winning the Battle through Spiritual Motivation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 14. See Griffith, *Born Again Bodies,* 183 n. 44.

grandmother insisted, would greet her in the resurrection, waiting to be finished. In the summer of 2019, right-wing pastor Rick Wiles railed against the growing popularity of meat substitues such as Beyond Meat and the Impossible Burger, insisting that the creation of such foods amounts to a satanic conspiracy to alter human DNA in order to make consumers techinically non-human, and therefore ineligible for salvation.[516]

For others—including many practicing North American Christians—the hypothetical resurrected body retains minimal explicit influence in the cultivation of an ideal self.[517] According to the Pew Research Center's 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study, approximately 70% of the U.S. population identifies as Christian, but only about 30% of the study's 35,071 surveyees said they believed in a future resurrection of the body.[518] Echoes of the millenia of debates and practices concerning food, digestion, and resurrection nevertheless remain conspicuously present in contemporary American discourse, including in the increasingly mainstream phenomenon of "wellness culture,"[519] in the often somewhat sinister intertwining of

---

[516] https://deadstate.org/christian-tv-host-vegetarian-hamburgers-are-lucifarian-plot-to-change-human-dnafbrefreshforce/?fbclid=IwAR0kk0qaL7X4wTwv7TFegnRbrCpnazq7-6G72OqBpb7mTMg950Hkh36oTxY Accessed December 2, 2019.

[517] See Griffith, *Born Again Bodies,* 250: "Outside the explicitly religious diet and exercise groups, there remains very little that is demonstrably Christian about contemporary fitness culture, but this lack hardly renders it 'secular' in any clear sense. However little they may realize their participation in a time-honored tradition of religious observance, more people than ever today are actively pursuing a born-again body."

[518]Michelle Mary Lelwica, *Shameful Bodies: Religion and the Culture of Physical Improvement* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 190; Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape" (May 12, 2015), accessed December 2, 2019, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/. Similarly, as Levenson argues, most modern Jews prefer the doctrine of immortality of the soul to that of resurrection of the body. Levenson, *Resurrection,* 1-23.

[519] As Lelwica writes, "The health aesthetics that permeate the visual landscape of popular culture find support in conventional medical definitions of wellness as the absence of pain and illness. This understanding evolved during the modern period, as medical science replaced theology as the authoritative rubric for interpreting human physiology… at the same time, however, doctors began to pay more attention to behavioral/lifestyle choices and psychological traits in the etiology of chronic conditions… Some [mainstream medical views] imply, however unwittingly, that chronic health problems are the punitive consequences of unwholesome choices or psychic weaknesses. This is evident in self-help rhetoric that promotes the pursuit of wellness as a personal responsibility

conceptions of bodily and dietary perfection with issues of gender, race, socioeconomic status, and ability,[520] and even in the ubiquitous presence of zombies—decaying corpses who feed on living human flesh— in twenty-first century popular culture.[521]

Of the thinkers, ideas, and phenomena discussed in this brief and episodic exploration of food, body and afterlife in the history of Christian thought, many—if not all—have received more extensive scholarly attention than the nexus of these concepts as it appears in and second and third century resurrection discourse. Nevertheless, the role of this discourse in shaping millenia of Christian puzzling around diet, resurrection, growth/transformation, and personal continuity is undeniable. Just as generations of fasters and ascetics worked to cultivate a "perfect body" patterned after Christ's, so also did pseudo-Justin hold up Jesus' mortal and resurrected body as the "faith and proof of all things," the ultimate standard upon which the substance, abilities, and functions of the resurrected flesh will be modeled. Pushing back against his opponents' insistence that the flesh's procreative function disqualifies it from being resurrected, pseudo-Justin insists that the parts of the flesh can exist without performing all the functions of which they are capable; only the functions necessary for Jesus to survive in mortal form—including eating and drinking—will transfer into the resurrection. Likewise, the resurrected Jesus' actions and capabilities, which also include eating and drinking, serve as proof not only of

---

rooted in self-control… whether couched in religious or scientific terms, the belief that you get what you deserve implies that people who are well merit their place in the higher kingdom." Lelwica, *Shameful Bodies,* 151; 157.

[520] See Griffith, *Born Again Bodies,* 225-238.

[521] Shannon Lee Dawdy, "Zombies and a Decaying American Ontology," *J. Hist. Sociol.* 32.1(2019): 17-25. Dawdy argues that the modern preoccupation with zombies is indicative of changing American attitudes towards death and decomposition. Pivoting from the denial of and horror at biological decay that led to the overwhelming popularity of embalmment in 20th century funereal practices, Americans are increasingly embracing—and even poking fun at—the inevitability of putrefaction. This may—Dawdy suggests—represent a shift in the understanding of the physical body as the locus of personal continuity.

the resurrection of his own flesh, but of the resurrection of all flesh. While pseudo-Justin never directly argues that the resurrected flesh will eat and drink, his deployment of Christ's eating-drinking flesh as the benchmark for bodily perfection nevertheless brings the contested relationship between food, drink, and resurrection front and center.

Athenagoras and Irenaeus, by contrast, both deal explicitly with concerns around the implications of consumption and digestion for fleshly resurrection. Athenagoras engages extensively with the paradox of simultaneous transformation and continuity set forth in 1 Corinthians 15, as well as with philosophical and medical discourses around the relationship between digestion, growth, and personal continuity. Like Jerome, Augustine, Lombard, and others after him, he pushes back against the disgust and horror inspired by consumption, putrefaction, and decay, arguing that not even digestion by another human can prevent the complete and independent resurrection of human flesh. The resurrected flesh will consist of a static "core" from which the constantly fluctuating substances constituted and affected by digestion have been eliminated; the mixing of this "core" flesh with that of another human is therefore impossible—and so, by extension, are eating and digesting in the resurrection. Irenaeus, on the other hand, is deeply invested in fleshly resurrection as a crucial moment in the long arc of salvation history that eventually brings fallen humanity, in its full being, back into perfect communion with and contemplation of God. For Irenaeus, this resurrection is made possible through the incarnation, and subsequent consumption, of Christ: by digesting the Eucharist, believers assimilate Christ's flesh into theirs, and their flesh is in turn assimilated into Christ's. The integration of the flesh of believers with flesh that has been resurrected makes their flesh capable of resurrection as well; digestion is therefore not a stumbling block to fleshly resurrection, but rather makes it possible. Irenaeus, accordingly, envisions a resurrection in

which eating and drinking are not impossible but vibrantly present; Irenaeus' millenarian kingdom, like that of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, features utopian feasting as a reward for the righteous who inhabit it.

Tertullian's approach to the eating-drinking resurrected body is contradictory and complex. Rebuking his hypothetical opponents for their treatment of the flesh, including its alimentary capacities, as disgusting and disposable, Tertullian describes a flesh that is, both on earth and in the resurrection, in intimate relationship with the soul—a relationship facilitated, in part, by the flesh's ability to eat and drink. In an effort to reframe Pauline passages used to argue against the possibility of resurrection—and, arguably, to weigh in on local Christian participation in food-related burial practices—Tertullian offers in his construction of the resurrected flesh a very different valuation of food and drink. Like pseudo-Justin as well as Jerome, Augustine, and Peter Lombard, he insists that the flesh in the resurrection will retain all of its parts, including its digestive organs. For Tertullian, however, these organs will no longer function—at least, not in the same ways they did on earth. In an early iteration of the argument that would appear in millenia of ensuing discussions around asceticism and bodily perfection, Tertullian, like pseudo-Justin, insists that the ability of the digestive organs to exist in the resurrection without performing their digestive functions is foreshadowed by the ability of the flesh to fast during life. In a stance reminiscent of a core tenet of modern Christian fitness culture, Tertullian argues that cultivating particular ethics and practices around food during life can move the flesh towards the perfect form it will assume in the resurrection. As Tertullian famously muses in his treatise *On Fasting,* it may be easier to enter the gate of salvation with "slenderer flesh," since "more

speedily will lighter flesh rise; longer in the sephulcre will drier flesh retain its firmness." "An overfed Christian," in contrast, "will be more necessary to bears and lions… than to God."[522]

Like contemporary wellness culture, which frequently ignores the cultural and structural factors fundamental to issues of diet and fitness, the second- and third-century written debate around the resurrected body and its relationship to food and drink was overwhelmingly produced by and for the elite. Considered in the context of statistical, bioarchaeological, and literary evidence for widespread and recurring food scarcity among the non-elite, however, we can hear Origen's socioeconomically-loaded critique of "simple readers"—and their hope for an eating-drinking resurrected flesh—as evidence for the existence of alternative discourses around food and resurrection. For those for whom (nonelective) hunger was a frequent or constant companion, the "perfect" body as they imagined it may have represented access to sufficient nutrition and an existence free from the relentless stresses of food insecurity.

For each of the early Christian thinkers explored in this project, for those who inherited and developed their ideas in the millenia since they wrote, and for countless others whose voices have not been preserved, the resurrected body was laden with meaning. As a site around which innumerable ideas, agendas, concerns, desires, fears, and griefs clustered and coalesced, it served as a laboratory for human functioning—an opportunity to think through the dangers and potentials of mortality in relation to the ideal existence to follow. As we have seen, this was particularly true for the intersection of thinking around resurrection and food. The writers discussed here were each engaged with intra-Christian doctrinal debate and concerns around the interpretation of scripture, but also with a wide variety of philosophical and medical discourses and social and material realities. As a result, the constructions of the eating-drinking resurrected

[522] Tertullian, *On Fasting* 17.7-9, as quoted in Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts,* 93.

body they generated were diverse and complex. They were, nevertheless, all proposed solutions to questions that have resonance today: If we are constantly transformed by what we eat, what aspects of who we are remain static and stable, and, conversely, what dietary ethics and practices would make us the best possible versions of ourselves? How do the innumerable joys, revulsions, memories, anxieties, and desires that food and drink inspire shape our understanding of who we are, and of who we want to be?

**Bibliography**


"Christian TV host: Vegetarian hamburgers are a 'Luciferian' plot to change human DNA." https://deadstate.org/christian-tv-host-vegetarian-hamburgers-are-lucifarian-plot-to-change-human-dnafbrefreshforce/?fbclid=IwAR0kk0qaL7X4wTwv7TFegnRbrCpnazq7-6G72OqBpb7mTMg950Hkh36oTxY

Pew Research Center: "America's Changing Religious Landscape." https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/

"Can a Mediterranean diet pattern slow aging?" www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180330145322.htm

Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Land of the Bible*. Translated by A. F. Rainey. Second edition. London: Burns & Oates, 1979.

Apuleius. *Rhetorical Works*. Translated by J. Hilton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Aristotle. *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away*. Translated by E. S. Forester and D. J. Furley. Loeb Classical Library 400. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955.

Athenaeus. *The Learned Banqueters, Volume I: Books 1-3.106e*. Edited and Translated by S. Douglas Olson. Loeb Classical Library 204. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Augustine. *Confessions, Volume 1: Books 1-8*. Translated by Carolyn J.-B. Hammond. Loeb Classical Library 26. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Bailey, Cyril. *Epicurus: The Extant Remains*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1926.

Balás, David L. "The Use and Interpretation of Paul in Irenaeus' Five Books Adversus Haereses." *Second Century* 9 (1992): 27-40.

Barnard, Leslie W. "Athenagoras: *De Resurrectione:* The Background and Theology of a Second Century Treatise on the Resurrection." *Studia Theologica* 30 (1976): 1-42.

Barnard, Leslie W. *Athenagoras: A Study in Second Century Apologetic*. Théologie historique 18. Paris, 1972.

Barnes, Timothy D. "The Embassy of Athenagoras." *JTS* 26.1 (1975): 111-114.

Barth, Karl. *The Resurrection of the Dead*. Translated by H. J. Stenning. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1933.

Bell, Rudolph. *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Belser, Julia Watts. “Disability, Animality, and Enslavement in Rabbinic Narratives of Bodily Restoration and Resurrection.” *JLA* 8.2 (2015): 288-305.

Ben Abed, A., and M. Griesheimer. “Fouilles de la nécropole romaine de Pupput (Tunisie).” *Comptes rendus de l’Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettre,* 2001: 553-592.

Benjamin, Craig. *Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era, 100 BCE- 250 CE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Berzon, Todd. “The Problem with Identity in Late Antiquity. On Aaron P. Johnson’s *Religion and Identity in Porphry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*.” *Marginalia,* November 11, 2014.

Blackwell, Ben. “Paul and Irenaeus.” In *Paul and the Second Century,* 190-206. Edited by Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson. London: T&T Clark International, 2011.

Bowersock, G. W. *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. *Physiologie du Goût, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante; ouvrage théorique, historique et à l'ordre du jour, dédié aux Gastronomes parisiens, par un Professeur, membre de plusieurs sociétés littéraires et savants*. 1825.

Brookins, Timothy A. “Economic Profiling of Early Christian Communities.” In *Paul and Economics: A Handbook,* 57-88. Edited by Raymond Pickett and Thomas R. Blanton IV. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.

Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. “Beyond Identity.” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47.

Bultmann, Rudolf. *Theology of the New Testament*. Volume 1. Translated by Kendrick Grobel. New York: Scribner, 1951.

Burrus, Virginia. *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1987.

Campbell, Roger F. *Weight! A Better Way to Lose: Winning the Battle through Spiritual Motivation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976.

Carlson, Clayton D. "I am plural: Trillions of foreign creatures in and on our bodies shape our health, desires, and behavior. Should we love them?" *Christianity Today* 60.9 (November 2016): 60-62.

Cicero. *De legibus*. Translated by Clinton W. Keyes. Loeb Classical Library 213. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928.

Collins, Adela Yarbro. *Mark: A Commentary*. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Crouzel, Henri. *Origène*. Paris: Lethielleux, 1985.

Cyprian. *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyprian, Letters 1-81*. Translated by Sister Rose Bernard Donna, C.S.J. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964.

D'Anna, Alberto. *Pseudo-Giustino: Sulla Resurrezione: Discurso Cristiano del II Secolo*. Brescia: Morcelliana, 2001.

Daniel-Hughes, Carly. *The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the Resurrection*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Daniélou, Jean. *Origène*. Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948.

Dawdy, Shannon Lee. "Zombies and a Decaying American Ontology." *J. Hist. Sociol*. 32.1 (2019): 17-25.

Dio Chrysostom. *Discourses 31-36*. Translated by J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby. Loeb Classical Library 358. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940.

Dively Lauro, Elizabeth Ann. *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture Within Origen's Exegesis*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

Drake, Susanna. *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Duncan-Jones, R. P. "The price of wheat in Egypt under the Principate." *Chiron* 6 (1976): 241-262.

Dunn, Geoffrey D. *Tertullian. The Early Church Fathers*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Dunning, Benjamin H. *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Dunning, Benjamin H. "Virgin Earth, Virgin Birth: Creation, Sexual Difference, and Recapitulation in Irenaeus of Lyons." *The Journal of Religion* 89.1 (January 2009): 57-88.

Edwards, M. J. Book review of A. D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino: Sulla Resurrezione: Discurso Cristiano del II Secolo;* M. Heimgartner, *Pseudo-Justin: Über der Auferstehung*. *Journal of Theological Studies* 55.1 (2004): 333-336.

Elledge, C. D. *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism, 200 BCE-CE 200*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Evans, Ernest. *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection: The text edited with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. London: S.P.C.K., 1960.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*. The Anchor Yale Bible Vol 28A. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Fletcher-Louis, Crispin H. T. *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, Soteriology*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Frede, Michael. "Origen's Treatise Against Celsus." In *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians,* 131-156. Edited by Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price, and Chris Rowland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Friesen, Steven J. "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus." *JSNT* 23.6 (2004): 323-361.

Gaca, Kathy. *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity*. Berkely: The University of California Press, 2003.

Gager, John. "Body Symbols and Social Reality: Resurrection, Incarnation, and Asceticism in Early Christianity. *Religion* 12 (1982): 345-64.

Galen. *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Owen Powell; Foreword by John Wilkins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Galen. *De alimentorum facultatibus*. Edited by Georg Heimrich. CMG V.4.2. Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1923.

Galen. *On the Natural Faculties*. Translated by A. J. Brock. London: Heinemann, 1916.

Gallicet, Ezio. "Atenagora o Pseudo-Atenagora?" *Rivista di Filologia* 104 (1976): 420-435.

Gallicet, Ezio. "Ancora sullo Pseudo-Athenagora." *Revista di Filologia* 105 (1977): 21-42.

Garnsey, Peter. *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Garnsey, Peter. *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Garnsey, Peter. *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Gill, Christopher. *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

Glancy, Jennifer. *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Goodman, David. "Do angels eat?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986): 160-175.

Grant, Robert M. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Grant, Robert M. "Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras." *HTR* 47 (1954):121-129.

Greer, Rowen A. *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, and Selected Works*. CWS; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979.

Griffith, R. Marie. *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Haas, Christopher. *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Edited by Arnold R. Davidson. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995.

af Hällström, Gunnar. *Carnis Resurrectio: The Interpretation of a Credal Formula*. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 86. Helsinki, 1988.

af Hällström, Gunnar. *Fides Simpliciorum According to Origen of Alexandria*. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 76. Helsinki: Societas Scientarum Fennica, 1984.

Hanson, R. P. C. *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*. Richmond, VA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1959.

Harper, Kyle. *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease and the End of an Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Heimgartner, Martin. *Pseudo-Justin: Über der Auferstehung: Text und Studie*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001.

Himmelfarb, Martha. *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Hitchcock, F. R. Montgomery. "Loofs' Asiatic Source (Iqa) and the Ps-Justin *De Resurrectione*." *ZNW* 37 (1936): 35-60.

Holleman, Joost. *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

Hoogerwerf, Cornelius. "Proving the Resurrection of the Flesh: The Use of Natural Philosophy and Galenic Epistemology in Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione*." In *"If Christ has not been raised…": Studies on the Reception of the Resurrection Stories and the Belief in the Resurrection in the Early Church,* 135-147. Edited by Joseph Verheyden, Andreas Merkt, and Tobias Nicklas. Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus/Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 115. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016.

Irenaeus. *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses*. Edited by W.W. Harvey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1857.

Jenkins, Claude. "Origen on 1 Corinthians." *JTS* 9.34 (1908): 231-247.

Joachim, H. H. *Aristotle On Coming-to-be and Passing-away*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922.

Kim, Young Richard. "Jerome and Paulinian, Brothers." *Vigliae Christianae* 67.5 (2013): 517-530.

Kovacs, Judith L. *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

Larsen, Matthew. *Gospels Before the Book*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Lehtipuu, Outi. *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Lelwica, Michelle Mary. *Shameful Bodies: Religion and the Culture of Physical Improvement*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Levenson, Jon D. *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Lewis, C.T., and C. Short. A *Latin Dictionary; Founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary; revised, enlarged, and in great part rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis, Ph.D. and Charles Short, LL.D*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879.

Lindsay, Hugh. "Eating with the Dead: The Roman Funerary Banquet." In *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World,* 67-80. Edited by Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigmund Nielsen. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998.

Lindsey, Hal, with C. C. Carlson. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.

Liu, Jinyu. "Urban Poverty in the Roman Empire: Material Conditions." In *Paul and Economics: A Handbook,* 23-56. Edited by Raymond Pickett and Thomas R. Blanton IV. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.

Lona, Horatio. “Die dem Apologeten Athenagoras zugeschriebene Schrift ‘De Resurrectione Mortuorum’ und die altchristliche Auferstehungsapologetik.” *Salesianum* 52 (1990): 525-78.

Long, A. A., and D. N. Sedley. *The Hellenistic Philosophers, Volume 1: Translation of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Longenecker, Bruce. “Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Christianity.” *JSNT* 31.3 (2009): 243-278.

Loofs, Friedrich. *Theophilus von Antiochien adversus Marcionem und die anderen teologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus*. Leipzig: J. C. Heinrichs, 1930.

De Lubac, Henri. *Histoire et Esprit: L’intelligence de l’Écriture d’après Origène*. Théologie 16. Paris: Aubier, 1950.

MacDonald, Nathan. *What did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

MacKinnon, Michael. “Osteological Research in Classical Archaeology.” *AJA* 11.3 (2007): 473-504.

Madigan, Kevin J., and Jon D. Levenson. *Resurrection: The Power of God for Christians and Jews*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Matthews, Shelly. “Fleshly Resurrection, Authority Claims, and the Scriptural Practices of Lukan Christianity.” *JBL* 136.1 (2017): 163-183.

Marcovich, Miroslav. *Athenagorae Qui Fertur: De Resurrectione Mortuorum*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Martens, Peter W. *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Martin, Dale. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

McGlothin, Thomas D. *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Meggitt, Justin. *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.

Minns, Denis. *Irenaeus: An Introduction*. London: T&T Clark, 2010.

Montada, Josep Puig. "Aristotle and Averroes on *Coming-to-be and Passing-away*." *Oriens* 35 (1996): 1-34.

Moss, Candida. *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Moss, Candida. "Heavenly Healing: Eschatological Cleansing and the Resurrection of the Dead in the Early Church." *JAAR* 79.4 (2011): 991-1017.

Murray, Oswyn. "Athenaeus the Encyclopedist." In *A Companion to Food in the Ancient World,* 30-42. Edited by John Wilkins and Robin Nadeau. Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons, 2015.

Nasrallah, Laura. *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, 2003.

Noormann, Rolf. *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret: Zur Rezeption und Wirkung der paulinischen und deuteropaulinischen Briefe im Werk des Irenäus von Lyon*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994.

Norris Jr., Richard A. "Irenaeus' Use of Paul in His Polemic Against the Gnostics." In *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, 79-98. Edited by William S. Babcock. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990.

O'Collins, Gerald. "Did Jesus Eat the Fish (Luke 24:42-43)?" *Gregorianum* 69.1 (1988): 65-76.

Origen. *On First Principles*. Translated by G. W. Butterworth, with introduction by Henri de Lubac and foreword by John Cavadini. Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2013.

Origen. *Against Celsus, libri VIII*. Edited by M. Marcovich. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Origen. *Traité des Principes*. Edited by Henri Crouzel and M. Simonetti. SC 253, 268, 269, 312. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978-84.

Origen. *Against Celsus*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Osborn, Eric. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Osborn, Eric. *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Penniman, John David. *Raised on Christian Milk: Food and the Formation of the Soul in Early Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Pervo, Richard I. *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Petrey, Taylor. *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Petronius. *Satyricon*. Translated by M. Heseltine and E. H. Warmington. Loeb Classical Library 15. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.

Philostratus. *Heroicus*. *Gymnasticus*. *Discourses 1 and 2*. Edited and translated by Jeffrey Rusten and Jason König. Loeb Classical Library 521. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Plato. *Republic, Volume II: Books 6-10*. Edited and translated by Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Loeb Classical Library 276. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume XII: Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*. *On the Principle of Cold*. *Whether Fire or Water Is More Useful*. *Whether Land or Sea Animals Are Cleverer*. *Beasts Are Rational*. *On the Eating of Flesh*. Translated by Harold Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold. Loeb Classical Library 406. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume XIII: Part 2: Stoic Essays*. Translated by Harold Cherniss. Loeb Classical Library 470. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Pouderon, Bernard. *Athénagore d' Athènes, philosophe chrétien*. Théologie historique 82; Paris, 1989.

Pouderon, Bernard. "L'authenticité du traité De resurrection attribué à l' apologiste Athénagore." *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986): 226-244.

Rankin, David. *Athenagoras: Philosopher and Theologian*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

Rebillard, Eric. "Commemorating the Dead in North Africa: Continuity and Change from the Second to the Fifth Century CE." In *Death and Changing Rituals: Function and meaning in ancient funerary practices*, 269-286. Edited by J. Rasmus Brandt, Håkon Roland, and Marina Prusac. Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2015.

Roberts, Alexander and James Donaldson, editors, revised by Arthur Cleveland Coxe. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. *Volume III: Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*. Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885.

Roberts, Alexander and James Donaldson, editors, revised by Arthur Cleveland Coxe. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. *Volume IV: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second*. Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885.

Rothschild, Clare K. Review of Marcus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014). *RBL* March 2016.

Rowland Jr., Robert J. "The 'Very Poor' and the Grain Dole at Rome and Oxyrhynchus." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 21 (1976): 69-73.

Scheidel, Walter. "Physical Well-Being." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy,* 321-333. Edited by Walter Scheidel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Scheidel, Walter, and Steven J. Friesen. "The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire." *JRS* 99 (2009): 61-91.

Schneemelcher, Wilhelm. *New Testament Apocrypha: Writings Related to the Apostles, Apocalypses, and Related Subjects*. Volume 2. Translated by Robert M. Wilson. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992.

Schoedel, William R. *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Schofer, Jonathan Wyn. *Confronting Vulnerability: The Body and the Divine in Rabbinic Ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Segal, Alan. *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.

Seim, Turid Karlsen. "The Resurrected Body in Luke-Acts: The Significance of Space." In *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, 19-40. Edited by Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Øklund. Ekstasis 1. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009.

Seim, Turid Karlsen. "Children of the Resurrection: Perspectives on Angelic Asceticism in Luke-Acts." In *Asceticism and the New Testament,* 115-126. Edited by Leif E. Vaage and Vincent L. Wimbush. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Sender R, Fuchs S, Milo R (2016) Revised Estimates for the Number of Human and Bacteria Cells in the Body. PLoS Biol 14(8): e1002533. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1002533

Setzer, Claudia. *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004.

Setzer, Claudia. "Resurrection of the Dead as Symbol and Strategy." *JAAR* 69.1 (2001), 65-101.

Shaw, Teresa. *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Sorjabi, Richard. *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights About Individuality, Life, and Death*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Sperber, Daniel. "Drought, Famine, and Pestilence in Amoraic Palestine." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17 (1974): 272-298.

Spittler, Janet E. *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Stefaniw, Blossom. *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010.

Stirling, Lea M. "The Koine of the Cupula of Roman North Africa and the Transition from Cremation to Inhumation." In *Mortuary Landscapes of North Africa*, eds. D. L. Stone and L. M. Stirling. Phoenix: Supplementary Volume, 43. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. eBook version, accessed February 19, 2017.

Stirling, Lea M. "Archaeological Evidence for Food Offerings in the Graves of Roman North Africa." In *Daimonopylai: Essays in Classics and the Classical Tradition presented to Edmund G. Berry,* 427-451. Edited by R. B. Egan and M. A. Joyal. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Centre for Hellenic Civilization, 2004.

Sullivan, Kevin P. *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Tertullian, Minucius Felix. *Apology*. *De Spectaculis*. *Minucius Felix: Octavius*. Translated by T.R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall. Loeb Classical Library 250. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.

Theissen, Gerd. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*. Edited and translated by John H. Schuetz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

Torjesen, Karen Jo. *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis*. Patristische Texte und Studien 28. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986.

Torjesen, Karen Jo. "'Body,' 'Soul,' and 'Spirit' in Origen's Theory of Exegesis." *ATR* 61.1 (1985): 17-30.

Tuckett, Christopher M. "The Corinthians who say 'There is no resurrection of the dead' (1 Cor. 15,12).'" In *The Corinthian Correspondance,* 247-275. Edited by R. Bieringer. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996.

Vinzent, Marcus. *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*. Leuven: Peeters, 2014.

Waszink, J. H. *Tertullianus, De anima mit Übersetzung und Kommentar*. Amsterdam, 1933.

Waszink, J. H., and W. J. Verdenius. *Aristotle on Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away: Some Comments*. Leiden: Brill, 1946.

Whealey, Alice. "Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione:* Athenagoras or Hippolytus?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 420-430.

Wilson, Carol B. *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Pragmatics of Food Access in the Gospel of Matthew*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014.

Wire, Antionette Clark. *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul's Rhetoric*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Wright, N. T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Zeegers-Vander Vorst, Nicole. "Adversaires et destataires du *De Resurrectione* attribué à Athénagore d' Athènes." *Salesanium* 57 (1995): 75-122.