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“Welcome to Heaven, Please Watch Your Step”: The “Mithras Liturgy” and the Homeric Quotations in the Paris Papyrus

MARK STOHOLSKI

I. Introduction

The “Mithras Liturgy,”¹ the most famous (or infamous) of all the material in the *Papyri graecae magicae* (hereafter, *PGM*), occupies lines 475–820² of the Paris Papyrus, an eclectic collection of charms, rites, and various recipes, which is alternatively designated *PGM* 4. Complex in content and structure, the Liturgy opens with an opening prayer, then describes the ritual in what is by far the longest portion of the text, and closes with instructions for preparing and performing the ritual. The aim of the Liturgy is to furnish a revelation for its practitioner, guiding him through a complex series of divine realms into the presence of the highest god who is affiliated with the noetic sun, referred to as Helios Mithras. This revelation is to be dictated aloud and performed either for the benefit of the practitioner himself or for a “fellow-initiate.”

Mithras, the god who sits at the top of this particular cosmology, was one of the more notable of the deities around whom a mystery cult developed, perhaps because of the sheer strangeness of his devotion. The god himself was a Roman creation, originally worshipped in Ostia and in Rome,³ though many of his trappings seem to have been drawn from Mithra, a Near Eastern deity. Despite an external similarity there seems no concrete evolutionary connection between the two gods.⁴ The central focus of the mysteries seems to have been the tauroctony, the mythical bull-slaying scene in which the god is placed in a context of generation and rebirth, a depiction of which has been found in all mithraea.⁵ While the limited nature of the archaeological evidence does not afford sure interpretation of this scene, the images of fertility accompanying it (often grain pours from the dying animal’s body) hints at the salvific character of the mysteries through the image of life arising from death.⁶

The Mithras Liturgy has posed numerous problems for its commentators. The most prominent issue, one as old as the scholarly discussion of

the text, is how a god connected with a Roman mystery cult came to play a pivotal role in a ritual found in an Egyptian library. An accompanying difficulty is the issue of “religion” versus “magic”: should the Liturgy be considered a “religious” text based on the perceived sentiment of its contents, or a “magical” one based on its context and the numerous instances of *voces magicae* it contains? Further, arguments that try to resolve either of these problems often are forced to ask how “Egyptian” the text is. The regional identity might seem a category simple enough to formulate, but this is deceptive; one must remember that at the time the *PGM* materials were produced, Egypt had been under foreign rule for centuries. Cultural interaction and amalgamation were facts of daily life even in the face of ideological separation.⁷ As such, reliance on distinct bipolar cultural models only obscures the complex social reality in which the Paris Papyrus was produced.

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on these issues through a redaction-critical examination of the Mithras Liturgy and its placement in the Paris Papyrus. Within this larger document, the Liturgy is positioned between two similar sets of Homeric quotations whose immediate purpose is unclear, for some quotations seem curiously out of place: some are divorced from their ritual context while others stand alone, with no indication offered as to why they are included in the papyrus. I shall demonstrate rather than being the result of a random scribal mistake, the redactor of the Paris Papyrus included these quotations to form a thematic unity with the Liturgy. It is by no coincidence, I argue, that the Mithras Liturgy, a ritual intended to invite divine revelation, is surrounded by a series of Homeric quotations, each of which describes the Iliadic hero Diomedes or the goddess Athena, who helps him. Equally important to this theme of human-divine interaction is the source of the quotations: Homer, by the imperial period, was himself seen as a revealer of divine knowledge that was mediated through his poetry. Thus, I propose that the Mithras Liturgy and the lines of Homer surrounding it, when read through a redaction-critical approach, should be seen as deliberately organized by the scribe not only to furnish the means for divine revelation, but also to reflect upon the ritualistic process and the problems inherent in its use.

II. The Mithras Liturgy: Features of the Text and Genre

The Mithras Liturgy is an intricate ritual designed to facilitate an apocalyptic ascent for a sole practitioner who observes the various levels of the

heavens while encountering a host of bizarre divine beings; the ultimate goal is to receive a revelation from the god Helios Mithras. The ritual practitioner ascends through a tripartite, Platonically inspired cosmos consisting of earthly, heavenly, and supraheavenly realms.⁸ The text concerns itself primarily with the second of these realms. While the god with whom the one ascending wishes to converse is within the highest realm, the practitioner never actually enters that region; instead, he ascends to the pinnacle of the heavenly realm, where the doors to the supraheavenly open, allowing him to look into that realm without actually crossing into it.⁹ Two suns play key roles in the ascent: Helios, the celestial sun, who is portrayed as the gatekeeper standing between the heavenly and noetic realms, and Helios Mithras, the supraheavenly sun, the great god who sends the revelation.¹⁰

After describing the ascent, the text provides ritual instructions for achieving it. In outlining the proper preparation for the ascent, the Liturgy, as it appears in the Paris Papyrus, shows several layers of redaction. Lines 792–98 contain new instructions revealed to the author, which are intended to contradict and supercede those found previously in the text. Also included in this section are directions for involving a second participant in the ritual, who receives the revelation while remaining ignorant of its workings.

The Iliadic quotations flanking the Mithras Liturgy are for the most part identical, differing only in the order in which they are presented. If there is a technical relationship between the Liturgy and the quotations, it is decidedly ambiguous. Scholars disagree as to how many Homeric lines should be included as part of the Liturgy. Hans Dieter Betz (2003, 225–26) takes a conservative position, arguing that the text proper ends at line 820 and thus includes no Homeric lines; however, it is possible to read some or all of the subsequent lines as the text to be written on the phylacteries that are to be worn while one performs the ritual. Marvin Meyer, in his edition of the text, advocates such a reading, although he is unsure where the Liturgy stops in the Papyrus.¹¹

Further muddling the issue is that several of the quotations surrounding the Liturgy give no indication as to what purpose they may have. *Il.* 8.424, the first of the sequence preceding the liturgy, declares itself a “charm to restrain anger,” while *Il.* 10.193 is labeled “Getting friends.” So far so good, or so it seems. Four more quotations follow, each decidedly more ambiguous and lacking any sort of label. Of these, the first three, also drawn from *Iliad* 10, are typically taken as a set, as suggested by the fact that they occur as part of a single charm found later in

the Paris Papyrus (*PGM* 4.2135–40). The quotation immediately preceding the Liturgy, *Il.* 5.385, stands alone with no reason for its inclusion given or hinted at anywhere else in the text. All these verses are repeated after the Liturgy, the set of three first, *Il.* 5.385 second, and the two charms in the same order as above. The latter set of quotations also inserts another occurrence of *Il.* 8.424, along with a historiola of Zeus between the set of three and 5.385. Following the last line, we see a fragment of what seems to be an astrological treatise unrelated to the preceding material (Betz 1992, 254).

The most influential analyst of the Mithras Liturgy to date is Albrecht Dieterich, who in *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (1903) established the text's much-contested title and laid the foundation for much of the subsequent scholarly discussion on the text. Carl Wessely had already published two editions of the Paris Papyrus (*editio princeps* in 1888, and a corrected version the following year), but Dieterich was the first to offer a detailed analysis of the Mithras Liturgy as a unit in itself. His conclusions were radical. Deeming the text vastly and essentially different from the rest of the contents of the Papyrus, he argued that the Liturgy was in fact a little piece of "religion" hidden inside a library of "magic."¹² He reasoned that the text, which he called the Mithras Liturgy, was in fact the original liturgy of the mystery cult devoted to "the great god Helios Mithras" (*PGM* 4.482). The Liturgy, he argued, was subsequently taken over by magicians who, expanding upon the original text, created the copy that survives in the Paris Papyrus. Following this argument, Dieterich offered a German translation that omitted the *voces magicae* and concluded at *PGM* 4.724. The rest of the Liturgy, which describes the revelation of the great god and the actions to accompany the performance of the ritual, was discarded as a later addition. This slimmed-down version of the Liturgy was a religious document and no longer had a place within a collection of charms and *praxeis*.

Dieterich's reconstruction of this hypothetical original form of the Mithras Liturgy drew a sharp reaction from his contemporaries, most prominently Franz Cumont, to whom Dieterich had dedicated his book. Cumont, who enjoyed a position of preeminence due to his work on the mysteries of Mithras, argued in his 1956 monograph that the Liturgy was not a product of Mithraism proper, much less the standard liturgy of the Mithraic cults. He proposed instead (1956, 260–61) that the Liturgy had been penned by an Egyptian magician who was familiar with the presentation of the god Mithras but ignorant of the larger doctrines of the cult. The teachings of a mystery cult were, after all, supposed to be secret, and

Cumont was skeptical of an Egyptian magician's ability to gain full access to them.¹³ This view, echoed in varying forms by scholars to this day, holds that Dieterich's reconstruction of an "original" form of the Liturgy was largely arbitrary and that there was no form of the text previous to that surviving in the Paris Papyrus. Dieterich's designation of the text as a liturgy was likewise contested by his critics, who cited the text's instructions that only one or two people are to perform the ritual as evidence that it was not the product of a larger cult body.

More recent scholarship has continued this debate in a more nuanced manner. Adherents of Dieterich's position speak of syncretic Mithraisms (e.g., Betz 2003, 23), while opponents (e.g., Gee 2005) cite the plethora of Egyptian features found in the text as precluding any sort of genuine Mithraic connection. Both lines of argument perhaps do disservice to the adaptability and decentralized nature of religious practices in the Greco-Roman world, as they posit an essential core to the practices of Mithraic cults that relies more on modern post-Reformation ideals of what constitutes religion rather than on what one finds in the available archaeological evidence. Extant remains of the Mithraic cults consist of votary inscriptions and iconography unearthed in mithraea; nothing resembling a theological statement of Mithraism has been uncovered. Further, the iconographical evidence varies from mithraeum to mithraeum, sometimes as a result of interaction with the local culture but elsewhere for reasons less clear.¹⁴ In light of these complications, it may be preferable, instead of trying to derive a sort of "Mithraic creed" from ambiguous evidence at best, to view the various Mithras traditions (among which we may count the Mithras Liturgy) as participants in a shared iconographical language, which was manifested in numerous dialects and in which idiosyncratic ideas could be expressed.¹⁵

The separation of the Liturgy from its immediate setting that Dieterich posited has persisted in much subsequent scholarship. Hans Dieter Betz (2003, 32) recently stated, "The Mithras Liturgy is not like any of the other texts even in the larger corpus called the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*; in fact it stands out like an intruder from a different world, which has been inserted into a section using Homeric verses." Despite their differences over the body of the text, both Dieterich and Cumont agree that the *voces magicae* and the bizarre ritual instructions at the end of the text should be dismissed as magic. Nonetheless, other scholars have compared the text to contemporary products of Hermeticism, Stoic philosophy, "gnostic" cosmologies, and, of course, the mysteries of Mithras. They would place the Liturgy on a cultural level well above that

of a theoretical underground community of Egyptian “magicians,” and would thus reinforce the isolation of the Liturgy from the rest of the Paris Papyrus.

Although one could well conjecture that the *PGM* texts were the property of musty-smelling and socially awkward gentlemen who spent their time largely divorced from the established institutions in Egypt, such does not seem to have been the case. The Paris Papyrus is but one of numerous papyri named “the Thebes Cache” by Garth Fowden, who, on the basis of a similar scribal hand, a tendency towards bilingualism, and common dating, established (1986, 168–69) that these texts were originally all part of a single library. These late third- and early fourth-century C.E. papyri are compilations of contemporary ritual manuals circulating in Egypt.¹⁶ The texts use, besides Greek, languages—Coptic and Demotic,—which would have been practically unknown to all outside the Egyptian priesthood. This evidence of a long-established genre of ritual manuals produced and used by the priesthood further serves to anchor the Thebes Cache within a temple setting.¹⁷ The identity of the owner of this library is not known, but most certainly he was affiliated with the priesthood of Egypt.

That “magical” materials are present in an Egyptian temple setting is not surprising. The imperial period saw a fascination with the oriental cultures on the part of Greco-Roman intellectuals, a phenomenon similar to the European and American orientalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁸ Egypt, as a culture of extreme antiquity, was a key component in the Roman construction of the oriental Other, a land home to ancient knowledge long forgotten by the rest of the world, although that construct was only an extension of the allure felt by classical Greek thinkers. The Egyptian priest was imagined in the Roman mind as a holy man skilled in numerous arcane practices, and so he was commonly sought out by Greek and Roman pilgrims as a teacher.¹⁹ This re-imagination of the Egyptian priest by the outsider in many ways was shaped by the priests themselves. During the early years of Ptolemaic rule, the priest Manetho sought to explain the various aspects of Egyptian culture to interested Greeks. The first native Egyptian known to have written in Greek, Manetho authored a dynastic record of the pharaohs as well as numerous treatises on Egyptian religion, writings notable for their hostility to Herodotus.²⁰ In his works, Manetho set down the practices of the Egyptian priesthood according to religious categories established in Greek thought—a construct that the priests themselves would come to internalize over subsequent centuries. Manetho was followed by another

priest, Chaeremon, whose first-century C.E. writings further served to define the native priesthood within Greek terms. Labeled “the Stoic” because of the heavy Hellenization of the priesthood and the priests’ relationship with the gods so evident in his writings, Chaeremon reflects the depth of the translation of the native traditions of Egypt into forms readily compatible with Hellenic culture.²¹

Despite this reconfiguration, the character of the Egyptian priest remained in the Greek mind unique when compared to other national priesthoods; after all, there were priests closer to home who would have been far easier to consult if a priest was all one needed. Instead, the priest of Egypt was recast in the figure of the μάγος, the archetypal oriental holy man in Greek thought. First attested in Herodotos, the term originally described the priests of Persia. As a result, the μάγοι were a suspect category, for although they were respected for their wisdom, they also served as important functionaries in an empire that was the traditional enemy of the Greeks.²² Although the term became increasingly pejorative, as the μάγος was placed into opposition with the philosopher and the doctor (two groups who were somewhat successful in establishing their arts as “proper” avenues of knowledge), it still retained an allure as describing those possessing knowledge of divination, astrology, and healing.²³ It was to the priests of Thebes that Thessalus of Tralles, a first-century C.E. physician from Alexandria, claimed to have turned when he sought a vision from the healing god Asclepius. Despite the fact that he understood his setting as that of a temple, Thessalus’s description of the invocation of this vision as “some magical operation” (τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας) is nonetheless telling.²⁴ Regardless of whether one chooses to accept his account as truthful or not, Thessalus’s appeal to the Egyptian priesthood as a source of authority on astrological botany (the subject of his treatise) similarly reflects contemporary views held among the upper echelons of Greco-Roman society. Indeed, Thessalus goes to great effort to frame his treatise with a story connecting its contents with the Egyptian priesthood, since these priests were popularly thought to be the authorities on this specialized subject.

Though it is unlikely that the Egyptian priests would have agreed that their rituals were μαγεία rather than “proper” religious devotion, they were nonetheless willing to play the part of the μάγος for outsiders. David Frankfurter (1998, 225–26) uses the term “stereotype appropriation” to describe the process by which the native priesthood assimilated those features the dominant Greco-Roman elite projected onto them and so became μάγοι, a process that had clear benefits for the priests individ-

ually. Prestige, as well as notoriety, could be earned in playing the part, and we find evidence of the Egyptian priests' authority accepted even in the court of the Roman emperor.²⁵ The priests' assumption of this role was not so much a changing of their established activities as it was an alteration of the way that these activities came to be described and understood in imperial culture. This process is evidenced in tracing descent through the mother, which is found in the Mithras Liturgy and throughout the *PGM*. The identification of an individual as "NN, whose mother is NN," is a peculiar feature, as patrilineal genealogies were the contemporary Hellenistic cultural norm. This reversal has roots in pharaonic Egypt, however, where both matrilineal and patrilineal genealogies appear.²⁶ Thus, the abandonment of the latter, exclusively Greek method represents a deliberate construction of Otherness on the part of the authors of the rituals in the *PGM*. The authors, in effect, were playing to the exotic expectations of the elites in order to establish a definitive niche within Greco-Roman society.

The Egyptian office of the lector-priest also formed an important component of the construction of the Egyptian μάγος. This priest, a traveling ritual specialist appointed by the temple hierarchy and who drew authority from its writings, served as one empowered to carry some of the sacred character of the temple with him.²⁷ In this role, he formed a link between the sacred world of the temple and that of the mundane, offering solutions to the crises of the latter through the power of the former.²⁸ While the lector-priest was seen within an Egyptian context as priest proper, albeit with different responsibilities as supposed to the priests at the temple, in the eyes of non-Egyptians this distinction was not so clear. Ever skeptical of rituals and prayers performed outside of a designated civic temple setting,²⁹ Greeks and Romans did not place this particular Egyptian office within their established concept of "priest" and viewed the lector-priest as a traveling magician who offered his talents for money.³⁰ Thus, in the mindset of the Hellenistic world, Egypt became home to a longstanding and socially important tradition of wandering magicians, and magic became a fixture of Egyptian culture.

The Paris Papyrus participates in a wider tradition of constructing an ideal "Egyptian" identity by conferring prestige upon those individuals and texts that embrace it. Throughout the *PGM* materials, we find rituals claiming the authority of renowned Egyptian priests, both historical and legendary, despite their clearly Hellenistic nature.³¹ This phenomenon was not limited to magical materials, however. A most striking example of a text flaunting its Egyptianness is found in book 16 of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, where the figure of Asclepius informs the reader:

My teacher, Hermes—often speaking to me in private, sometimes in the presence of Tat—used to say that those reading my books would find their organization very simple and clear when, on the contrary, it is unclear and keeps the meaning of the words concealed; furthermore, it will be entirely unclear (he said) when the Greeks eventually desire to translate our language to their own and thus produce in writing the greatest distortion and unclarity. But this discourse, expressed in our native language, keeps clear the meaning of its words. The very quality of the speech and the [sound] of Egyptian words have in themselves the energy of the objects they speak of. (Trans. Copenhagen 1992, 58)

The irony in this passage is striking, for this text was almost certainly composed in Greek.³² The Mithras Liturgy, composed in Greek but betraying considerable Egyptian influence in its *vores magicae*, likewise claims to be part of a fetishized Egyptian tradition, even as it remains a Hellenistic text authored by a Hellenized priesthood.

The Liturgy’s header identifies the text as an ἀπαθανατισμός, a ritual of immortalization. This term is not unique to the Mithras Liturgy, but seems to have been understood as a category of rituals; the philosopher Proclus uses it to refer to theurgic rituals of ascent in his commentary on the *Cratylus*.³³ Like the rituals of the Neoplatonists, the ritual described in the Liturgy aims to guide the practitioner through numerous heavenly realms, in order that he might reach the highest heaven and encounter a divine revealer. During this ascent, the practitioner encounters a host of divine beings of a rather odd sort, such as snake-headed virgins and the bull-headed “pole lords,” figures with no easily identifiable analogies either in the *PGM* materials or the wider realm of Greco-Egyptian religion.³⁴ The performer of the ritual is instructed to address each of the divinities he meets in a specific manner so that they might let him pass by without causing a problem; the gods in the first realm are noted as being particularly hostile.

The genre of the Mithras Liturgy, like that of theurgic rituals mentioned in fragments of the Chaldean Oracles, is the ascent text. Though the motif of heavenly ascent appears two centuries earlier,³⁵ the Mithras Liturgy belongs to the category of “do-it-yourself” heavenly ascent, whereby the ascension is initiated by the performer of the ritual. First attested in the first century C.E.,³⁶ this sort of ascent text differed from earlier ones, such as what is found in the so-called Book of the Watchers, in that the heavenly visions are not a gift that a god grants to a blessed individual.³⁷ While the Book of the Watchers works to establish the uniqueness of Enoch’s ascent,³⁸ by contrast the Mithras Liturgy extends

the experience to anyone who has been properly initiated and knows the correct procedure. Ritual ascent is thus of a questionable character: it is one thing to be invited up to heaven by a god, entirely another to barge in and ask for favors.³⁹ The Mithras Liturgy deliberately addresses this issue in a manner we see paralleled in theurgic rituals: it claims that the god from whom the revelation is sought instructed the practitioner how to perform the ritual.⁴⁰ While such a claim serves to demonstrate the ritual's authenticity, it also shows a certain sensitivity to the transgressive nature of the ritual in its quickness to declare a legitimate origin.

Related to this awareness is the importance of secrecy that is stressed in the ascent rituals. The opening lines of the Mithras Liturgy contain a prayer unrelated to the working of ritual, wherein the author begs forgiveness for the act of writing down the god's teaching (*PGM* 4.475–76). The author maintains that although the ritual has been set down, it will remain secret and is solely for the benefit of an “only child” (μόνος τέκνος). Further, the instructions specify that if a second person is to be involved in performing the Liturgy, the practitioner is to speak quietly, so that the initiate might not hear the various prayers involved (*PGM* 4.745–48). In this way, the ritual establishes itself as sensitive stuff, not meant to be disseminated beyond a small circle of priests. To carry the notion of secrecy even more: the written copy of the Liturgy does not even furnish the reader with everything needed to perform the ritual. Scholars have suggested that the phrase “symbol of the living incorruptible god” (σύμβολον θεοῦ ζῶντος ἀφθάρτου), mentioned in line 559, should be read as an allusion to an actual symbol used in conjunction with the spoken words and is not part of the speech itself.⁴¹ If so, the practitioner would need some outside source as well. Such omissions of necessary details also appear in the theurgic rituals in the Chaldean Oracles, where the theurgist is told to hold an unidentified password in his mind as he prepares for ascension; “gnostic” Christian and Jewish texts likewise specify knowledge of certain phrases as critical elements of heavenly ascent.⁴² In this context, then, σύμβολον may here be significant, being part of the terminology of the mystery cults and denoting a password through which an initiate demonstrated his worthiness.⁴³

Other borrowings of terminology from the mysteries can be found in the Mithras Liturgy. The invocation refers to the contents of the ritual as “the mysteries [μυστήρια] that the great god Helios Mithras handed down.” Further, the second participant in the ritual and the beneficiary of the writing are both called “μύστης.” This sort of borrowing, however, is not peculiar to the Mithras Liturgy, as these terms appear not only in

the Chaldean Oracles (e.g., frag. 132) but elsewhere in the *PGM* as well.⁴⁴ Scholars arguing against Dieterich’s reading of the Liturgy brushed this language aside as a pretension on the part of the author; they supposed that the Mithras Liturgy was “magic” and thus could not be a product of the mysteries, which were “religion.”⁴⁵ But there is no reason to believe that the authors of ascent texts did not think of themselves as participants in a mystery cult.⁴⁶ Further confounding any neat division of terminology is that the rituals performed in mystery cults might easily be construed as magic, according to the standards held by Greco-Roman culture⁴⁷ and even in the minds of some moderns.⁴⁸ In choosing to cast their rites in the language of the mystery cults, the authors of the ascent texts imposed a certain understanding of how the written material is to be addressed: it implicitly exhorts extreme secrecy and establishes the text as an ascent text; and as with the mysteries, it, like the texts akin to it, offers an intimate relationship with the gods which is reserved for a select few.

The secrecy we find in the text has parallels in a wide range of Egyptian material, extending from the Greco-Roman period back to the pharaonic age. Secrecy was used to prove the importance of a ritual even if it was demonstrably public; earlier inscriptions often display prominently encrypted text, and standard priestly texts command absolute secrecy on the part of the reader.⁴⁹ Both the passage from *Corpus Hermeticum* 16 quoted above, and the injunctions to secrecy found in the Mithras Liturgy, play into this paradigm. The texts talk about secrecy not to secure it but to include the reader in a prestigious tradition and to boast of how valuable the text is.

In these texts, the performer of the ritual is accorded a favored status by the highest god, but this does not necessarily mean that the ascent process is a simple process. At numerous points in the Mithras Liturgy the practitioner finds himself threatened by the denizens of the divine realms, for reasons that are not clear. Early in the process of his ascent, the practitioner is instructed to ward off the unhappy celestial gods:

And you will see the gods staring intently at you and rushing at you. So at once put your right finger on your mouth and say: Silence! Silence! Silence! Symbol of the living, incorruptible god, Guard me, Silence! NECHTHEIR THANMELOU! . . . Then you will see the gods looking graciously upon you and no longer rushing at you, but rather going about in their own order of affairs. Thus when you see that the world above is clear and circling, and that none of the gods or angels is

threatening you, expect to hear a great crash of thunder, so as to shock you. Then say again: Silence! Silence! (the prayer) I am a star, wandering about with you, and shining forth out of the deep, the XY, the XERTHEUTH. (*PGM* 4.556–76; trans. Meyer)

The defense against these gods is twofold. First, a prayer containing the reference to the *σύμβολον* mentioned above (however one wishes to take it) is used to calm the rushing gods, and the clap of thunder is dismissed through a repetition of the same prayer and then the practitioner's claim to be a star. This claim is striking; in essence, he declares himself to be one of the celestial gods whose realm he currently occupies. The extent of this transformation is unclear, but it seems that in the version of the text presented in the Paris Papyrus, any ontological change for the practitioner is, at best, temporary.⁵⁰ Even if this assumption of the status of a star is ephemeral, it is, nonetheless, a key component of the ascent process. The hostile reaction of the divine beings, and their subsequent ambivalence at the recitation of the formula, demonstrate an awareness within the text of boundaries of proper behavior between mortals and the gods. The blunt message: a mortal is not a welcome visitor in the heavens, even when the highest god grants him the means to ascend, and he will find a less than hospitable reaction to his presence. Thus, in order to achieve a proper completion of the ascent, the ritual practitioner must himself become as a god, since motion through the heavens is appropriate only for deities.

III. Kicking Ass and Taking (Sacred) Names: The Role of Diomedes in the *Iliad*

Turning to the Homeric quotations flanking the Mithras Liturgy, it is striking that each line, when placed in its own proper context, involves the hero Diomedes or his divine protector, Athena. Diomedes is one of the most important figures in the first half of the *Iliad*, serving as the most celebrated fighter among the Achaeans during Achilles' withdrawal.⁵¹ When he first appears, Diomedes is berated by Agamemnon for his reluctance to fight, but he quickly emerges from relative obscurity thanks to Athena. The goddess's aid is not as useful as he might wish, however, for after allowing her champion to do great things under her auspices, Athena is curiously absent when Paris lames Diomedes in book 11.

Maureen Alden, in her analysis (2000) of secondary narratives in the *Iliad*, argues that Diomedes figures prominently in a discussion centered

on the role and desirability of divine favor. Diomedes' interactions with Athena are overshadowed by those of his father, Tydeus, who likewise was championed by the goddess. Tydeus is reported as having perished at Thebes, abandoned by Athena (*Il.* 14.110–14), and so even from the beginning her aid assumes an ambiguous character with respect to Diomedes. It is perhaps for this reason that Diomedes initially is unenthused by the prospect of receiving divine aid in book 5; although he eventually does accept it, he, like his father, is eventually abandoned and ends up the worse for it.

Even before his encounter with Athena, Diomedes becomes central to a debate over divine favor during a dialogue between Agamemnon and Sthenelus in book 4. Agamemnon chides Diomedes for remaining back in the battle, comparing him unfavorably to Tydeus. Tydeus, Agamemnon claims, was courageous, mindful of the gods, and favored by Athena; it was through those traits that he acquired great fame at Thebes. Diomedes, by contrast, Agamemnon calls the lesser man, because he does not have comparable courage or fighting skills. Sthenelus, Diomedes' retainer, objects to this characterization, arguing that Agamemnon's comparison is not only unfair but outright wrong. As he argues, the current generation is the greater, for it successfully captured cities whereas the previous one failed, despite having a greater fighting force. This generation too is mindful of the gods, but it does not possess the recklessness that ultimately slew its fathers. While Diomedes and his men may not be favored by Athena to the extent that Tydeus was, their discretion, Sthenelus implies, is ultimately more useful than Athena's help (*Il.* 14.118–20). In arguing this, Sthenelus, in fact, privileges unaided human agency; divine favor can bring about great things, but one should not rely on it too much. Diomedes does silence Sthenelus, but he offers no judgment on the debate, leaving the question essentially open.

Diomedes' encounter with Athena at *Il.* 5.800–24 seems to bolster Sthenelus's position. The goddess criticizes Diomedes much in the same way as Agamemnon does, comparing him unfavorably with his father. Athena remarks that Tydeus fought even when she told him not to, and she still aided him anyway; Diomedes, by contrast, will not fight even when she offers him her help. There is a certain strangeness to this episode, however, as Diomedes points out in rejoinder that he is holding back not from fear, but in compliance with the goddess's own instructions: Athena had earlier ordered him to fight with no gods save Aphrodite, and upon spotting Ares he had fallen back. Diomedes, it seems, is more aware of events on the battlefield than is his patroness; as

was the case at Thebes, Diomedes' discretion saves him from what otherwise would have been disastrous.

Dione's speech to Aphrodite, earlier in book 5, is particularly significant in that its opening line is directly quoted in the Paris Papyrus. Consoling her daughter, who was wounded by Diomedes in her rescue of Aeneas, Dione tells of the fates of numerous θεομάχοι of the past. Though these mortals all succeeded in harming the gods, the gods had the last laugh every time, by slaying those who fought them.⁵² Dione concludes by launching a threat against Diomedes:

Owl-faced Athena stirred up this one against you, the thoughtless one, the son of Tydeus, who knows nothing in his mind, since those who would fight with the immortals are not very long-lived. But those who go to most fearsome and destructive war are not called father by their children, grasping them about the knees. Therefore, the son of Tydeus, if he is extremely mighty, should guard himself lest with one of those better than himself he should fight, and wise Aegialeia, daughter of Adrestinus, should, groaning, wake from sleep those of her house, longing for her wedded husband, noble among the Achaeans, the stalwart wife of Diomedes the tamer of horses. (*Il.* 5.405–15)

While Dione here acknowledges that Diomedes harmed her daughter thanks to Athena's help, it is striking that this in no way mitigates the blame that Dione assigns to his actions. In other words, the fact that a hero receives divine aid does not at all protect him from subsequent divine reprisal for an action that a god ordered him to undertake.⁵³ This notion is borne out by the narrative: it is Paris, Aphrodite's favorite, who cripples Diomedes in *Il.* 11.369–95.

The final questioning of divine favor is found at *Il.* 6.145–206, when Diomedes encounters Glaucus and demands to know his lineage. In response, Glaucus tells of his grandfather Bellerophon, who, like Diomedes and Tydeus, was said to be a favorite of the gods. Glaucus tells of Bellerophon's many great deeds, such as killing the chimera and his fierce fights with the Solymi and the Amazons, and of how he was later rewarded with a kingdom for his struggles. His children were similarly blessed. Without any transition or indication as to why, however, Bellerophon is then said to have become "hated by all the immortals." His children are killed, and he is left to wander alone in his sorrow. Hesiod tells us that Bellerophon angered Zeus by attempting to ride Pegasus to heaven, but the *Iliad* makes no mention of this episode. Both

the blessings of the gods, and the drawing down of their wrath, seem, according to Glaucus's account, entirely arbitrary. The story of Bellerophon resonates with Dione's accounts of the θεομῶχοι: the favor of the gods is a tricky thing, neither permanent nor all encompassing.⁵⁴

So too with Diomedes. He is twice aided by Athena during the course of the *Iliad*, first in book 5, then again in the night raid on the Trojan camp in book 10; but he is later conspicuously abandoned by his patroness in book 11. Moreover, even when she does offer help, Athena acts out of self-interest: in book 5 she heals Diomedes' wound and grants him the power to see the various deities on the battlefield, but this is only to allow him to strike at her enemies among her fellow gods. Athena is not always motivated by her own agenda, however, for in the Doloneia (book 10) she saves Diomedes from Apollo (10.509–25) after she had the Thracians remain asleep as he slaughters them. But in a sudden shift, she does nothing when Diomedes faces Hector in book 11 (though, of course, it would spoil the plot if she were to intervene), and abandons him, wounded and forced to retire from the battlefield.

The narrative does not take particular note of Athena's absence when Diomedes falls, and yet it is implied that divine favor cannot be counted on; although such favor enables one to do great deeds, it does not absolve one of the consequences of one's actions.⁵⁵ In the end, Diomedes, like his father Tydeus, wins fame and glory through Athena's patronage, but both men are forsaken by her and meet an ugly fate on the battlefield. Granted, Diomedes fared better than his father in that he survived the consequences of the goddess's absence, but he still did not enjoy a good fate: tradition portrayed his homecoming as quite unhappy.⁵⁶ Like Bellerophon, Diomedes is exposed to divinities who are fickle with their favor; in the *Iliad*, both men turn from blessed to cursed with very little transition and with no warning at all. Diomedes, then, is the vehicle by which Homer is able to display conflicting notions about interaction with the gods and the favors they grant; divine aid, in the *Iliad*, is of a decidedly questionable character, carrying both positive and negative overtones, with neither seeming to dominate the other.

IV. Rehabilitation and Revelation: Homer's Ancient Commentators

That one should find quotations from Homer connected with a ritual that aims to furnish divine revelation is not surprising. When the Paris Papyrus was compiled, literal readings of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had

long since been supplanted by allegory in the intellectual circles of the Hellenized world. At the hands of Alexandrian scholars, Homer transcended his already exalted status as a preeminent Greek poet who offered insight into the workings of the gods,⁵⁷ and became a prophetic figure who revealed divine truth through his verse. This view of Homer as an inspired poet was not a sudden development, but rather had deep roots going back to the classical world. It became so widespread in the Roman Empire that it can be found in the writings not only of pagan authors, but of Jews and Christians as well.⁵⁸

The beginnings of Homer's elevation are found, perhaps ironically, in the blasphemy charges leveled against him by authors of the classical period, on the grounds that his portrayal of the gods ran counter to philosophical notions of the divine. Not only are the gods depicted anthropomorphically, but their behavior is atrocious—they play favorites, squabble among themselves, have numerous sexual affairs, and generally act like a group of petty mortals. Even pre- and postclassical authors leveled such complaints about Homer: the Ionian poet Xenophanes criticized his depictions (although he likewise faulted Hesiod), while Plato was concerned over the use of Homer in educating youth.⁵⁹

Despite such criticisms, the Homeric works were seminal in the Greek world, and attacks upon them could be read as attacks on the integrity of the greater Greek tradition. Homer, therefore, did not lack defenders. Allegorical readings of his poems began as early as the sixth century B.C.E., but it was only well into the Hellenistic period, under the influence of the Stoic philosophers and the school of Pergamum, that the method came into its own.⁶⁰ An intimate connection was constructed between philosophy and poetry, based on the notion that hidden truth lay behind the form of the poetic text. This insight, which could be teased out by careful reading and interpretation, then proved of great value to philosophy as confirmation of its principles. Poetry—and Homer in particular, thanks to the prestige his poems enjoyed—was beneficial in philosophical debate, as the truth hidden in the verses was established and contested.

It is no coincidence that this interest in the revelatory character of Homer's poetry emerged alongside an interest in what Homer had actually said. Alexandrian scholars, led by Zenodotus, became the first textual critics of the Homeric poems, combing over manuscripts from all over the Greek world and noting variants in their attempt to restore the original text. Ideas as to what that text was or should be, varied significantly among the scholiasts, as did their heuristic methods. Procedure was

nonetheless standardized. Critical symbols, developed by Zenodotus, were used to disseminate the commentator's opinion and invited the reader's own critical judgment.⁶¹ Questionable lines were stricken when deemed wholly spurious, but room was still left by commentators for less sweeping judgment. Lines that were doubtful or were otherwise corrupt were "athetized"; in so doing, the scholiast marked them as containing non-Homeric material, even while allowing for the possibility of it containing something of the original text.

Zenodotus, though he was much challenged by his successors, began the process of the critical analysis of Homer through his efforts to create a "clean," both grammatically and philosophically, text of the poems. He strongly objected to anthropomorphic portrayals of the gods. Aristarchus remarked that Zenodotos athetized *Il.* 3.423–26 where Aphrodite fetches a chair for Helen, on the grounds that such behavior was inappropriate for a goddess. In Zenodotus's proposed revision to the text, the chair is already present in the bedchamber.⁶² Later critics were not so stringent in this area, but they were nonetheless careful to maintain the separation between the mortals and the gods in the Homeric poems, and to reinforce boundaries of behavior when they seemed uncomfortably porous. Aristarchus himself athetized *Il.* 5.838–39, calling the lines "forced and laughable" since they attribute weight to the goddess Athena (Erbse 1969, 2: 111). The scholiasts were willing to entertain some crossover between the human and the divine for the sake of narrative, but there were lines not to be transgressed.

What then of the hero who fought gods and won? Commentators on the *Iliad* were divided in their opinion. The hero's closeness to the divine was to be envied, even as his actions were to be deplored. The *T*scholion makes this quite explicit, stating in response to Dione's condemnation of the θεομάχος at *Il.* 5.407: "Through this she exhorts us to piety" (Erbse 1969, 2: 111). Diomedes, despite the fact that he received aid from a goddess, is here held up by the scholiast as a model of the impious man. However, this instance of transgressive behavior does not taint the hero entirely. As Robert Lamberton (1986, 178, 276) notes, allusions to the unveiling of Diomedes' eyes appear in Proclus and in Boethius in positive terms, as the divine aid that Diomedes receives is deemed separable from his actions; in essence, the issue is not the divine favor itself, but the ends to which it is put.⁶³

The product of a highly literate and thoroughly Hellenized Egyptian priesthood that is presented to a Greek audience, the Paris Papyrus should be taken as a participant in the same cultural world in which

Homeric scholarship had become an important fixture. The use of Homer in the various charms, each time without any interpolation, as a means to ritual power betrays an understanding, derived from the development of the allegorical tradition, that quotations possess a sacred character unto themselves. The ritual to procure divine assistance through the quotations from book 10 of the *Iliad*, while boasting that it can do nearly anything for the one performing it, can produce three specific results: make a dying person prophesy, reveal if one is under a spell, and coerce information from the spirit of a dead criminal (*PGM* 4.2145–78). This ritual, standing in contrast to the charms to restrain anger and get friends, alone describes ritual trappings and prayers that must accompany the quotation if the desired effect is to be realized.

V. The Homeric Quotations in the Paris Papyrus: Diomedes Meets Mithras

Previous scholars have shown that the various rituals and charms gathered in the Paris Papyrus were not simply compiled haphazardly by the redactor; the collection is organized according to both thematic and functional schemes. The Papyrus is divided roughly into solar and lunar sections, on the basis of the invocations found within the rituals, with the former (containing the Mithras Liturgy and the surrounding quotations) of greater length than the latter.⁶⁴ The cosmological elements of the rituals also serve to order the rituals according to their purposes: the solar section contains numerous recipes for divination and special knowledge, while the moon is connected with rituals involving such general topics as sex and death.⁶⁵ The Mithras Liturgy, though it is prominent among the surrounding rituals due to its apocalyptic character, nonetheless fits in nicely, insofar as it too is a divinatory ritual involving the sun.⁶⁶ And while the demarcation between the solar and lunar sections is not distinct—the ritual directly preceding the Homeric quotations is a love charm that involves invocations of both the chthonic gods and Helios—the verses from the *Iliad* should nonetheless be read as part of the greater framework of divine revelation in which they are placed.

Despite modern tendencies to classify Homer as “literature” and thus on a level different from the textual contents of the Papyrus, moreover, such an easy division, in the light of Homer as revealer of truth as discussed above, cannot be maintained. The majority of the Homeric quotations in *PMG* 4 are indicated as being efficacious in their own right (*Il.* 8.424, 10.193), or are central to a longer ritual (*Il.* 10.564, 521, 572). As

such, these quotations should not be dismissed as mere poetry or read as bizarre interpolations; rather, they should be viewed as charms imbued with a sacred character not unlike the rituals accompanying them. The Mithras Liturgy assures its reader that it is useful and authentic because it was given by an archangel of the solar deity; the Homeric charms, for their part, can claim a similar revealed nature because of Homer's elevated status.

The Homeric quotations all fit into the solar section's theme of divine revelation through their contextual involvement with Diomedes and Athena, as well as into the greater theme of human-divine interaction. These quotations appear in the chart on the next page.

These quotes are not intended to stand alone; two of them, in fact, are not even complete thoughts. Rather, all these lines are referential to episodes in the *Iliad* that are intended to recall for the reader a passage related to the greater theme of the section in which they appear. The passages reflect episodes in which humans interact with the divine, and thus contextually demonstrate a thematic connection with one another and with the section of the text in which they appear. Through the Iliadic quotations, the redactor of the Paris Papyrus is able to offer a sort of commentary on the rituals that he has compiled. Like the epic, the Papyrus puts forth cosmological views that do not posit a unified divine front; aside from the hostile planetary deities, the moon, as it is presented, assumes a generally negative character.⁶⁷ Though the Mithras Liturgy does not express this view in an explicit manner, the ritual's instructions for the ascent instruct the practitioner to avoid the moon as much as possible, twice specifying that the preparations are to be undertaken during the new moon.⁶⁸ This awareness of transgression during ascent is hardly unique to the Mithras Liturgy; divine beings attempting to hinder people ascending are a common feature of ascent texts throughout the Hellenistic world: Jewish hekhalot writings,⁶⁹ the Chaldean Oracles,⁷⁰ and Christian texts,⁷¹ including those of a gnostic nature.⁷²

In light of these cosmological views, Diomedes becomes the archetype in the Paris Papyrus for the mortal and his interactions with the gods: he is able to achieve remarkable things through their aid, and, simultaneously, is more liable to be harmed by them. Moreover, while communion with one of the gods is certainly quite useful, one cannot count on it in all situations—after all, the gods can be a temperamental bunch. The fact that this way of thinking is derived from Homer lends it an aura of veracity; according to allegorical interpretations of Homer circulating in

A Summary of the Homeric Quotations in the Paris Papyrus

Line Number	PGM Line Number	Greek Text	English Translation	Listed Response	Context
842A	467-8, 82A, 831-32	τοιοῦτος αὐτὸς ἔστιν ἢ κατακτείνῃ ἔργον ἄλλου	Will you like to take my job? Just a year ago you were against Zeus!	For restraining anger	Diomedes at Athens, this is part of his speech, during the go-home and Helen, after thinking of killing the Trojans in battle while Zeus is away. Athens holds her tongue, but Helen cannot check an angry response.
10193	460- 70, 833-34	οὐ γὰρ ἐπιπέσει κατακτείνῃ ἔργον ἄλλου	Let . . . rise, but will become a job to me as well.	Getting serious	In the previous line, the sentence begins, "Let not sleep seize my man!" This line is part of Helen's allusion to those pulling the parts of the Achilles at night. The Achaeans give one another, unlike their Trojan counterparts, sleep. Diomedes and Odysseus will not sleep.
10564		ἄρα τοῦ κατακτείνῃ ἔργον ἄλλου Ζεῦος	Thus speaking, he took the horse with a chariot and drove through the field.	Now listed with appears in the index it is of the Odyssey lines 11 12	Having killed the Trojans, Dio- medes returns to the Achaeans with the horse he has stolen. The Achaeans rejoice at his coming.
10523	471- 73, 820-23, 2145-50	ἄρα τοῦ κατακτείνῃ ἔργον ἄλλου ἔργον ἄλλου	But a chariot and a splendid man came from the Trojans.	These lines appear later in the Paris Papyrus as part of a ritual for Zeus	Odysseus discovers the horse of the Trojans after Diomedes has returned them in their sleep. The Trojans are violent and bloody. Diomedes has sought through the aid of Athena, even though Apollo attempted to help the Trojans.
10572		οὐδὲν ἔ κατακτείνῃ ἔργον ἄλλου ἔργον ἄλλου	They swayed from themselves much a man in the war.	Odysseus resistance through Zeus Homeric Verse 11	Odysseus and Diomedes seek their value after the night raid. Odysseus tries to oblige to Athena, Homer likely speaking, and the two do so together afterwards as well.
5385	474 830	οὐ γὰρ κατακτείνῃ ἔργον ἄλλου ἔργον ἄλλου	How not sway, when Odysseus speaks . . . him.	Now	Diomedes, counseling Agamemnon after Diomedes has returned his horse, has speech about the horse and match the quarrel. The speech ends with threats made against Diomedes.

the Hellenized world, the sort of lines reproduced in the Paris Papyrus represent truths about the cosmos. As such, the quotations do not merely offer speculation on the (good and bad) consequences of closely consorting with the divine, it actually offers the reality of the matter. Even as the Mithras Liturgy boasts of the effectiveness of its ritual (*PGM* 4.765–76), the redactor of the Paris Papyrus embeds that ritual within materials so as to make that boast problematic.

Dione’s recollection of the binding of Ares at the hands of Otus and Ephialtes is of particular interest. Though this particular story is otherwise unattested, the two brothers are again mentioned in the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus encounters their mother in the Underworld. The mortal sons of Poseidon, they are described as “truly the tallest the grain-giving earth nurtured and the most beautiful after famed Orion” (*Od.* 11.309–10). The two giants are said to have piled up mountains with the aim of ascending the heavens. The gods were angered, and Apollo slew the pair at the behest of Zeus. This account provides an example of an improper heavenly ascent, and thus serves as a foil to the “proper” heavenly ascent furnished by the Mithras Liturgy and as a demonstration of the boundaries between the human and divine realms. Although the Liturgy’s ascent is enabled by the great god, it is, nonetheless, transgressive behavior. Like the ascent of the giants Otus and Ephialtes, the ascent in the Mithras Liturgy is initiated by a mortal and thus is something with which the practitioner needs to be careful. And while the practitioner is not a θεομάχος per se, his behavior can still be construed as offensive by the moon and the planetary gods. As such, there is an implied warning in the quotation of the Iliadic passage: the Mithras Liturgy is serious stuff, and one must be careful with what one does with it.

That the author is well aware of the difficult messages proffered in the Liturgy through the Homeric lines also explains his frequent and strict exhortations to secrecy. The text, the product of an Egyptian priesthood, insists to the reader/practitioner that he keep it within that venue. The priests of Egypt traditionally served as the intermediaries between the human and the divine realms,⁷³ and the ascent enabled by the Mithras Liturgy reflects the extreme spectrum of their power. The ascent outlined in the Liturgy, qualified by the surrounding Homeric quotations, thus represents a particular ritual technique reserved for the priesthood, or perhaps a particular segment therein, on the ground that the knowledge is dangerous and thus must be treated by those sensitive to its nuances.

Cosmological speculations aside, there are social consequences to the Liturgy as well, for it stands as a powerful ritual that is reserved in its

power for only a few. Those privy to the methods of ascent thus form a certain elite, particularly when the benefits of the ritual can be rendered for another (*PGM* 4.732–36). The problems involved with the invocation of divine aid, as expressed in the Homeric quotations, only serve to reinforce the mystique of the ritual practitioner: he is able to do what others cannot, and what others might not want to do themselves even if they were able. The priest, then, operates from a lofty position, able to demand more for what he can provide, especially in the case of pilgrims coming from beyond Egypt for consultation. Thessalus, in his description of his visit to Thebes, notes the reticence of the priests after he told them that he was seeking a revelation from Asclepius, a reaction on their part that has remained the subject of scholarly debate.⁷⁴ I would argue that this behavior should be read as a bit of calculated theatrics: by initially withholding their knowledge, the priests make it all the more desirable. Although the motifs of secrecy and mystique in the Paris Papyrus are certainly not so simple, they not only establish the notion that the knowledge it contains is powerful and worthwhile, but also contribute to the social prestige of those privy to such knowledge.

The Homeric quotations in the Paris Papyrus are, therefore, not a random incursion of literature into a magical collection, but were inserted by the redactor in a manner that both complements and interacts with the Mithras Liturgy. The quotations, underscored by the understanding of the importance of Homer as a window to the divine, betray the Hellenization of what was certainly an Egyptian document, and describe ambivalent feelings toward the sort of human-divine relationship that is enabled by the Mithras Liturgy. Far from endorsing such a relationship wholeheartedly, the quotations show a guarded enthusiasm by focusing on the figure of Diomedes, who benefited substantially from the aid of Athena but was abandoned by her and who was victimized by the gods whom he angered while under his patroness's guidance. Through these quotations and the episode of the giants Otus and Ephialtes, who were punished for their attempt to ascend heaven with the wrong intentions in mind, the redactor of the Paris Papyrus demonstrates an awareness of the transgressive nature of the ritual. It is this ambiguous character that, in a way, serves to make the Liturgy so appealing, even as its secret and dangerous ritual brings great benefit to the practitioner and/or his "fellow-initiate." The cautious reflection on divine revelation contained within the text is, at the same time, speculative and functional, offering the reader a certain privilege through its information. For all that it promises, the quotations surrounding the

Mithras Liturgy also serve as an emphatic warning: the more power one gains through divine aid, the more opportunity one has to offend the gods and bring harsh judgment on one's self.⁷⁵

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Notes

¹ I place here the title of the text in quotation marks, in acknowledgment of the fact that the title is problematic and a matter of dispute. Henceforth, however, I will omit such quotes, as this is the text's traditional title.

² As mentioned above, this is the most conservative estimate as to where the form of the Liturgy in the Paris Papyrus ends; some of the subsequent lines may also be part of the text. Betz (2003, 225–26) cites the colon found after line 820 as a sign of an intended break in support of excluding these lines.

³ Clauss 2000, 21–22.

⁴ The arguments for an Iranian origin of the god, first advanced by Cumont (1956) and popular until relatively recently, were reliant on a circular logic; that is, the Iranian evidence was believed relevant in all cases because the god was of Iranian origin. See Ulansey 1989, 4–14.

⁵ Clauss 2000, 79.

⁶ Ibid. 2000, 79–84.

⁷ Bagnall 1993, 230–35.

⁸ Edmonds 2004, 276–78.

⁹ Ibid. 2004, 278.

¹⁰ Edmonds 2001, 19–20.

¹¹ See Betz 1992, 54.

¹² Ibid. 2003, 1–2.

¹³ Ibid. 2003, 2.

¹⁴ Clauss 2000, 16–17.

¹⁵ Beck (2004, 4–7) has suggested that the principal criterion for determining whether a given item is “Mithraic” should not be whether it fits within a closed concept of a “Mithraism,” but rather based on its coherence within the context of other Mithraic materials.

¹⁶ Fowden 1986, 170.

¹⁷ Frankfurter 1997, 116.

¹⁸ Ibid. 1995, 217–21.

¹⁹ Ibid. 1995, 231.

²⁰ Fowden 1986, 53–54.

²¹ Ibid. 1986, 53–55.

²² Graf 1997, 29.

²³ Ibid. 1997, 34–35.

²⁴ Moyer 2003, 227.

²⁵ Frankfurter 1998, 227–28.

²⁶ Curbera 1999, 199–200.

²⁷ Frankfurter 1998, 211.

²⁸ Ibid. 1998, 211–13.

²⁹ Graf 1997, 82–84.

³⁰ Frankfurter 1997, 120–21.

³¹ Ibid. 1998, 228. See also *PGM* 3.439 for a “magical” ritual specifically ascribed to Manetho.

³² Dieleman 2005, 4.

³³ Johnston 1997, 170.

³⁴ For a discussion of these figures and the numerous suggestions as to their origins, see Betz 2003, 175–80.

³⁵ Reed 2005, 58–61.

³⁶ Janowitz 2001, 71.

³⁷ This type of ascent is thus particularly liable to be labeled “magic” through the lens of modern bias, as the practitioner operates outside what is perceived to be proper religious channels of submission and modesty before the divine. For the modern construction of these ideals, see Styers 2004, 96–115.

³⁸ Reed 2005, 49.

³⁹ Which is not to say that even the ascents that occur by invitation are always well received by everyone in the heavenly realm. See Himmelfarb 1993, 66–69.

⁴⁰ Johnston 1997, 170.

⁴¹ The speech in which this line occurs (4.558–60) is meant to calm the angry gods who threaten the one ascending. If Johnston’s reading is correct, this would be a particularly unfortunate place for a careless practitioner to be caught without a necessary

piece of information.

⁴² Johnston 1997, 185–86.

⁴³ Ibid. 1997, 186.

⁴⁴ Betz 1991, 249.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 2003, 20.

⁴⁶ Graf 1997, 98.

⁴⁷ One of the charges brought against the North African philosopher Apuleius, on trial for supposedly practicing *magica maleficia*, was that he possessed *instrumenta magia*. Rather than deny the charge, Apuleius instead argued that they were objects used for rituals in the mystery cults in which he had been initiated and thus he would naturally keep them hidden away. While it seems that the charge was rather weak, it nonetheless shows that the boundary between magic and mystery cults was open to some debate. See Graf 1997, 85–93.

⁴⁸ Betz 1991, 252.

⁴⁹ Dieleman 2005, 82–87.

⁵⁰ Line 748 indicates that the immortalization is to be performed three times a year. Janowitz (2001, 81) argues that this is a later interpolation into what formerly was a one-and-done affair.

⁵¹ Alden 2000, 111.

⁵² While the fate of Otus and Ephialtes is not listed in Dione's account, Odysseus, during his trip to the Underworld, recalls that the pair was killed by Apollo: *Od.* 11.305–20.

⁵³ Alden 2000, 125–28.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 2000, 137–42.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 2000, 125–28.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 2000, 154.

⁵⁷ Lamberton 1986, 11–12.

⁵⁸ Philo, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen all acknowledge the inspired character of Homer's poetry to a certain degree, though none of them does so without reservation. For their readings of Homer, see Lamberton 1986, 44–82.

⁵⁹ Leshner 1992, 81–82.

⁶⁰ Pfeiffer 1968, 237–38.

⁶¹ Ibid. 1968, 115.

⁶² Aristarchus argues against this reading, holding that since Aphrodite was in the form of an old woman at the time, she would have acted accordingly, and so fetching the chair is not wholly inappropriate. See Erbse 1969, 1:432.

⁶³ Though as the *T* Scholion points out, divine favor, even when not used in an offensive way, is no guarantee of one's well-being. See its discussion on *Il.* 5.53 in Erbse 1969, 1:10.

⁶⁴ Edmonds 2003, 235.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 2003, 235.

⁶⁶ See Betz 1992, xi–xii for an overview of the various rituals compiled in the papyrus.

⁶⁷ Edmonds (2004, 279–84) has shown that just as the celestial sun serves as the gatekeeper between the heavenly and noetic realms within the cosmology of the Liturgy, the moon stands between the earthly and heavenly realms. Since the Paris Papyrus in general takes a negative view toward the descent of souls, the moon is seen

as a hostile presence, keeping human souls bound in the mortal world.

⁶⁸ Edmonds 2003, 232–34. It should be noted, however, that the revised ritual instructions found at *PGM* 4.794–98 amend the ritual so that it is performed at the full moon. Betz (2003, 214–23) argues that this change in instructions corresponds to a switch from a seasonal calendar to an astrological one. The amendment specifies that the ritual is now to be performed once a month rather than three times a year, as the previous instructions would have it. Setting the ritual in such a schedule obviously allows for less flexibility in its preparation and performance.

⁶⁹ Himmelfarb 1993, 68.

⁷⁰ Johnston 1990, 134–35.

⁷¹ Both the Apocalypse of Zephaniah and The Ascension of Isaiah mention angels who attempt to interfere with the ascent of the protagonist. See Himmelfarb 1993, 53–56.

⁷² Origen (*C. Cel.* 6.31) mentions opposition to ascent in those rituals that he attributes to the Ophites.

⁷³ Gordon 1997, 82.

⁷⁴ Moyer, 2003, 227.

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