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Raphael's Homeric and Biblical Metamorphosis

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ABSTRACT Why does Raphael metamorphose in his descent to Eden, and why does Milton initially disguise the metamorphosis as a simile? Though the episode is traditionally considered more Virgilian than Homeric, it is its Homeric dimension that answers these questions. Milton intervenes, I suggest, in the ancient debate on whether Hermes transforms into or merely descends like a gull. But by suggesting and then correcting the simile-reading, Milton also instructs his readers not to read the Bible's metamorphoses like Calvin, whose hermeneutics often resemble those of pagan grammarians, particularly those who read Hermes's likeness to the bird figuratively. By exploring the debates on two descents, that of Hermes and that of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels, I demonstrate how Milton employs Homeric imitation to contest Calvin's theory of accommodation and to present history as more marvelous than myth.

KEYWORDS *Paradise Lost*, Homer, classical reception, metamorphosis, Calvin, accommodation, angels

When Raphael descends from the Empyrean to Eden, he does so with all the spectacular exuberance of a Homeric god. Quite apart from its obvious parallels with Hermes's descent in book 5 of the *Odyssey*, the episode captures some of Homer's power to astonish with one marvel after another, from heaven's "self-opened" gate turning on golden hinges, to the angel's transformation into the phoenix, to the vision of the seraph's six wings and lineaments divine.[1] Yet despite even the obvious parallels, little attention has been paid to the Homeric dimension of the angel's descent, perhaps in part because critics traditionally have claimed that it owes less to Homer than Virgil. Francis Blessington, for instance, concludes that the Homeric

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scene is "only faintly echoed in Milton," and that "in style, structure, allusion, and episode, [it] comes from Mercury's visit to Aeneas." Charles Martindale argues that Milton's description of the angel's descent "is lusher and grander even than Virgil, leaving Homer still further behind him," and that here "it is proper to see Milton as a Virgilian."[2]

But the episode's relationship to Homer merits a closer look, if only because the Homeric pretext accounts for what may be the most puzzling feature of Raphael's descent—the metamorphosis, which itself seems to metamorphose from a mere simile into a real transformation:

> Down thither prone in flight
> He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky
> Sails between worlds and worlds, with steady wing
> Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan
> Winnows the buxom air; till within soar
> Of towering eagles, to all the fowls he seems
> A phoenix, gazed by all, as that sole bird
> When to enshrine his relics in the sun's
> Bright temple, to Ægyptian Thebes he flies.
> At once on the eastern cliff of Paradise
> He lights, and to his proper shape returns
> A seraph winged. (5.266–77)

The word *seems* leads one to think the fowls mistake Raphael's angelic body for a phoenix, an assumption reinforced by the comparison to the "sole bird" en route to Egypt. But just when we conclude that Milton merely has likened Raphael to the legendary creature, we behold a marvel familiar from Homeric epic but nonetheless unexpected: "He lights, and to his proper shape returns / A seraph winged." This transformation was so counterintuitive for Milton's early commentators that they rejected it altogether: Zachary Pearce asserts that "to his proper shape returns" means that Raphael resumed his natural posture, his six wings back in position after flight.[3] Richard Bentley, on the other hand, reads the likeness as a metamorphosis but attributes this infelicity to Milton's editor.[4]

The idea that Raphael has lost and then regained his angelic shape mainly hangs upon the word *proper*, meaning *own*.[5] The similar phrasing of two other metamorphic passages confirms that returning to "his proper shape" does not just involve smoothing out his wings, as Pearce suggests: preparing to meet Uriel, Satan "casts to change his proper shape" (3.634) as

he disguises himself as a cherub; a book later, he starts up "in his own shape" at the touch of Ithuriel's spear (4.819). In the latter scene, the parallels with Raphael's transformation extend beyond a turn of phrase to a sudden "turn" of the narrative, for here too Milton at first leads us to interpret the strange likeness as a simile when he depicts Satan "[s]quat like a toad" at the ear of Eve (4.800). With Raphael's metamorphosis, moreover, the turn is complete with the phrase "A seraph winged" (5.277), for, in apposition to "proper shape," it requires Raphael's previous shape to be that of something *other* than a seraph. In *The Descent from Heaven*, Thomas Greene argues for the necessity of accepting the metamorphosis: "If Raphael returns to his proper shape then he *has* assumed literally the form of a phoenix." He then notes the Miltonic deception: "Milton . . . has been less than ingenuous with his readers."[6]

Why does Milton depict an actual metamorphosis, and why does he lead his readers to mistake it for a simile? The first part of this article offers a simple answer to the first question: Raphael transforms into a phoenix because Milton is imitating Homer, whose Hermes, according to one tradition, actually assumes the shape of a gull.[7] If this answer has eluded critics, that is because Homer's Greek here is ambiguous and may be read either as a simile or as a metamorphosis.

To answer the second question, we must examine the theological debates, ancient and modern, surrounding metamorphosis in both Homer and the Bible. This article argues that Milton deceives his readers for a pedagogical reason: in this episode, Milton teaches us *not* to read the Bible's metamorphoses like Calvin, who often interprets them as rhetorical figures or products of perception, and hence espouses a hermeneutic more appropriate for Homer than the Bible. After establishing the existence of the simile- and metamorphosis-reading in ancient commentaries on Hermes's descent, the article's first part demonstrates how the philological question of whether Hermes transforms into the gull was also a theological question and surveys the various solutions ancient and early modern scholars offered to explain how a god could assume visible, even animal, form. The second section focuses on the descent of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels, which provoked a debate similar to that on Hermes's descent, not least because the Spirit's likeness to a dove presented scholars with the same crux, a potential to be read either as a simile or a metamorphosis. This section illustrates how Calvin's solutions to that crux are the very interpretations Milton offers but then retracts in Raphael's descent. The third section looks at other examples of how Milton and Calvin diverge in their interpretations of the Bible's

metamorphoses and manifestations, specifically those of angels, demons, and the resurrected body. The fourth section, finally, attempts to answer the question of why Raphael transforms specifically into a phoenix. It proposes that, if Milton uses Raphael's transformation to surprise us, it is not with our sin but with our disenchantment. Dispelling this disenchantment is an important function of Milton's imitations of classical poetry.

HERMES'S DESCENT

In book 1 of Homer's *Odyssey*, Athena intercedes with Zeus on behalf of Odysseus, who daily weeps for home on the shores of Ogygia, where the sea-nymph Calypso detains him as her lover. Zeus first sends Athena to Telemachus, whose story the epic follows until book 5, when Zeus dispatches Hermes to declare to Calypso that Odysseus must set out for home. Binding his golden sandals on his feet, and taking up his wand, Hermes begins his flight:

> Πιερίην δ᾽ ἐπιβὰς, ἐξ αἰθέρος ἔμπεσε πόντῳ.
> Σεύατ᾽ ἔπειτ᾽ ἐπὶ κῦμα, λάρῳ ὄρνιθι ἐοικὼς,
> Ὅςτε κατὰ δεινοὺς κόλπους ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο
> Ἰχθῦς ἀγρώσσων, πυκινὰ πτερὰ δεύεται ἅλμῃ·
> Τῷ ἴκελος πολέεσσιν ὀχήσατο κύμασιν Ἑρμῆς. (5.50–54)[8]

> (Flying over Pieria, he alighted on the sea: he then hastened over the waves, resembling a sea-mew, which catching fish on the fearful bosom of the barren sea, wets its dense wings with brine: resembling this, Hermes bore himself over multitudes of waves.)[9]

The question of whether Hermes metamorphoses into the sea-bird still elicits confessions of uncertainty from Homerists: "It is unclear whether Hermes . . . acts in the *manner* of or in the *form* of a bird."[10] The question hangs on ἐοικώς (perfect participle of εἴκω) and the related adjective ἴκελος. I have rendered both as *resembling*, but that word is probably too weak to capture their force. Lattimore's "In such a likeness" is nearer the mark.[11] The semantic range of ἐοικώς lies somewhere between ὡς (as), which typically introduces epic similes, and εἰδόμενος (appearing as), which refers to divine transformation. Ἐοικώς is ambiguous enough to refer to either, at times introducing similes (*Il.* 1.47, 6.389) and at times

depicting metamorphosis, as when Athena takes the form of Telemachus to gather a crew for sailing (*Od.* 2.383), or when Odysseus's men are changed to swine by Circe's spell (10.390).[12]

Both readings have precedent in antiquity. What is likely the earliest comment on the crux appears in the scholia of Didymus Chalcenterus, who reads the likeness as a simile, insisting that it refers to "the rushing motion, not the body."[13] Heraclitus the Grammarian, by contrast, reads the likeness as a transformation, but then allegorizes it, taking it as a figure for the "winged words" with which Odysseus persuades Calypso to release him from captivity.[14] The strongest evidence for the metamorphosis-reading in antiquity appears in the sixth essay of Proclus's *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* where the Neoplatonist devotes a section to the question of how the immutable gods can metamorphose into human and animal form. Listing examples of divine metamorphosis, he includes Hermes's transformation into a seagull, along with Athena's assumption of Mentor's form in book 2 of the *Odyssey* and Apollo's transformation into a hawk in book 15 of the *Iliad*.[15]

It was Didymus's interpretation—which reduces the transformation to a mere similitude—that prevailed in the late Renaissance. Didymus's comment is preserved in the 1541 Micyllus-Camerarius edition and rendered into Latin by Jean De Sponde in 1583: the *similitudo*, he writes, "non est intelligenda de corpore, sed de solo impetu & incessu super mare, ut rectè monet Didymus" (must not be understood of his body, but of only his rush and movement over the sea, as Didymus rightly instructs).[16] It is likely owing to De Sponde's comment that George Chapman translates the lines so: "[Hermes] checkt the waves as light / As any Sea-Mew in her fishing flight" (5.71–72), that is, as an unequivocal simile.[17]

Why did Renaissance humanists and translators prefer the simile-reading, and why did Milton choose a metamorphosis for his imitation? As Richard Buxton says of the modern debate, one's position is not always based on linguistics, but rather "on assumptions about what it is plausible or appropriate to find depicted in Homer."[18] This is the case for De Sponde, whose comments on other, less ambiguous divine metamorphoses may shed light on his preference for the simile-reading. Evidently he feels he must justify each transformation in order to preserve the gods' dignity. When Athena and Apollo transform into vultures in book 7 of the *Iliad*, he insists that "high-flying birds" are special to the gods, and then lays out a somewhat involved argument, *contra* Conrad Gesner, that

vultures are in fact a kind of eagle. He also offers a rationale for Athena's transformation into a swallow in book 22 of the *Odyssey*, based on the small bird's inconspicuousness.[19] Hermes's transformation would seem to lack such a motive. Presumably De Sponde cannot accept metamorphosis as a sheerly gratuitous act—a flourish of divine joy, maybe, as the messenger of the gods virtuosically performs a familiar task.

It is therefore understandable why Milton's early commentators found Raphael's metamorphosis too shocking to accept, for it is not just his syntax that would have misled them, but an entire literary tradition. If they had worked through the *Odyssey* with De Sponde's commentary, read Chapman's Homer, or were familiar with the epic descent from Virgil to Tasso, their education had prepared them to expect no more than a simile in Raphael's descent. By including a metamorphosis, Milton perhaps makes a philological point about how to interpret Homer's use of ἐοικώς. Yet, as we have begun to see from the history of the debate, the metamorphosis-reading of Hermes's descent had always carried philosophical and theological as well as philological implications. Some of these implications especially would have interested Milton.

De Sponde's concern for the gods' dignity most likely derives from principles of literary decorum, but it also evokes the ancient allegorical tradition, in which grammarians and philosophers attempted to demonstrate that Homer's theology is more pious and philosophically sophisticated than it seems. As Heraclitus opens his *Homeric Problems*, "It is a weighty and damaging charge that heaven brings against Homer for his disrespect for the divine. If he meant nothing allegorically, he was impious through and through, and sacrilegious fables, loaded with blasphemous folly, run riot through both epics."[20] It is this hermeneutic—which attempts to safeguard divine dignity by recourse to allegory and other rhetorical figures—that Milton fears has crept into biblical scholarship. In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton chides theologians for using the exegetical methods of grammarians to sidestep the Bible's seemingly mythological depictions of God. "Theologians," Milton writes, "have no need for anthropopathy (a term the Grammarians once thought up to justify poets' nonsense about their god Jupiter); sacred scripture has indubitably taken good care neither to write anything unseemly or unworthy of God itself, nor to represent God as speaking thus of himself" (OM 8:29).[21]

One of the grammarians Milton may have had in mind is the twelfth-century archbishop of Thessalonica, Eustathius, whose commentary was

widely read in the Renaissance, and who employs the term *anthropopathy* to account for the behavior of Homeric gods.[22] At times, Eustathius says, the poet uses the figure to create fables for our instruction: in book 1 of the *Iliad*, for instance, Homer makes Apollo strike the Greeks with a plague after Agamemnon despises Apollo's priest, for the poet wishes to teach us that a just prayer does not go unanswered.[23] The use of *anthropopathy* in Homeric scholarship dates back to the scholia, but it was also applied to the Bible by Philo and Origen, and eventually by Reformers such as Calvin.[24] The term allows Calvin to defend God's impassibility in the face of passages like Genesis 6:6: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (KJV). God, Calvin says, does not actually change his mind or experience grief, but in order to communicate how greatly God hates sin, "the Spirit accommodates himself to our capacity. . . . This figure, which represents God as transferring to himself what is peculiar to human nature, is called ἀνθρωποπάθεια."[25] Milton, in contrast, asserts that we ought to conceive of God as he presents himself in Scripture. If the Bible says that "*Jehovah regretted having made humankind* . . . let us believe that he did feel regret" (OM 8:29).[26] Calvin applies a figurative hermeneutic to the Bible's metamorphoses as well; as we will see, he and Milton differ not just on the nature of the Father but that of supernatural figures who take visible form: the Son, the Spirit, angels, and demons.

Hermes's descent, of course, belongs to any number of episodes the allegorists read figuratively. But it would have had a more specific relevance to Milton's theological differences with Calvin. In the sixth essay of *On the "Republic,"* Proclus attempts to reconcile Homer's theology with Plato in view of Socrates's critique of Homeric poetry. In the section where he adduces Hermes's metamorphosis, the Neoplatonist responds to Socrates's argument in book 2 of the *Republic* that since the gods "are the most beautiful and best possible, it seems that each always and unconditionally retains his own shape."[27] Proclus offers three explanations for how the immutable may change shape. First, the gods appear not as they are in themselves, but according to the nature of those who participate in them. Second, while their natures are simple, their powers are multiple and "full of all sorts of forms," and thus they may project various visions of themselves.[28] The first two explanations relate to human perception. The third, however, is strikingly different. When a deity takes on the form of an animal or a specific human, he says, it

> goes forth through different classes and settles itself even among the final ones, multiplying itself numerically and descending into lower orders. In this case too the myths say that what is proceeding to this form from above changes into the thing into which it has made the procession. Hence the myths say that Athena takes on the likeness of Mentor (*Od.* 2.268) and Hermes that of a seagull (*Od.* 5.51) and Apollo that of a hawk (*Il.* 15.237), thereby indicating their more daemonic orders, into which they have proceeded from the universals.[29]

Various orders proceed from each god, descending from the divine to the daemonic. At times Proclus speaks as if the gods themselves descend through these levels and manifest themselves in lower forms; at other times he speaks of the metamorphosed deity as a daemon belonging to a god's *taxis*. In any case, he distinguishes such "daemonic visitations" from divine epiphanies (wherein a god takes no shape) and angelic epiphanies (wherein a god takes the shape of a generic human). In a daemonic visitation, by contrast, "[the myths] do not think it unworthy to record transformations into individual and partial things or even into the forms of different kinds of animals."[30]

By identifying the metamorphosing Hermes as a Hermetic daemon, Proclus may account for divine transformation without recourse to allegory or any other rhetorical figure.[31] But his theories on other kinds of divine metamorphosis are as relevant to the theological problem Milton addresses in his imitation. For Proclus's idea that the immutable gods, in certain cases, only *seem* to transform in the perception of mortals closely resembles Calvin's explanation for the transformations and manifestations of supernatural figures in the Bible. Hermes's descent, therefore, would have come to Milton laden with a number of philosophical associations: on the one hand it offered an example of the hermeneutic that theologians had borrowed from grammarians, and on the other it raised important theological questions about divine metamorphosis: do divine beings change shape in reality, or only in our perception? The following sections will demonstrate how Milton contested Calvin's positions on these issues in his biblical scholarship and poetry, and how this disagreement shapes Milton's depiction of Raphael's descent.

I will begin with the Holy Spirit's descent as a dove, a scene analogous to Hermes's descent, not only because it involves a divine figure descending in the form of a bird, but also because the phrasing of that transformation

contains the same crux and hence sparked a similar debate. Raphael's descent does not necessarily allude to it directly; nevertheless, Calvin's approach to it is precisely the kind of interpretation Milton disputes in his theologically polemical imitation of Homer.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

All four Gospels tell of how Jesus comes to John to be baptized. As Jesus rises out of the water, the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit descends on him "like a dove." While the image of a visible dove is traditional in Western theology and art, humanist scholars found that the passage's grammar left the orthodox reading vulnerable. It was Lorenzo Valla who first pointed out that the Vulgate makes the Spirit's likeness to a dove sound like a mere simile. In Matthew and Luke, it translates the Greek ὡσεὶ περιστεράν as *sicut columbam*; "but to descend like (*sicut*) a dove," Valla says, "is nothing else but to descend like a dove descends. . . . Now the Holy Spirit did not descend like (*sicut*) a dove because he flew as a dove, but he descended in the form of a dove."[32] Valla therefore recommends the words *velut* or *quasi* for a Latin translation.[33] Erasmus, who discovered Valla's work on the New Testament, seconds Valla's observation in his own *Annotations*. Commenting on Matthew, he writes, "The translator rendered it obscurely. He indeed seems to say that the Holy Spirit descended in the manner of a dove, though he means that He descended in the form of a dove."[34] In his *Paraphrases*, Erasmus narrates the scene thus: "And the Holy Spirit then descended, in himself indeed invisible, but then enveloped (*circundatus*) in a visible form, in order that he might be clearly visible to human eyes."[35]

Valla's and Erasmus's worries were not unfounded. The most radical reinterpretation of the passage arose among the Socinians, appearing in the *De Vera Religione* of Johannes Völkel. Völkel discusses the descent in his argument that the Holy Spirit is not a person: even if a dove were a person, he says, it is not certain the Spirit appeared in that form in the first place. Although Luke mentions a "corporalem speciem," he does not say the form was dovelike, but that it descended in this form *sicut columbam*, which he mentions "not to reveal the form, but the mode of descent."[36] Curiously, this claim precisely recalls what De Sponde says about Hermes, and seems to arise from a similar motive, that is, to safeguard divine dignity. Völkel writes, "it is fitting that that form was exceedingly majestic, and bore before itself something divine and heavenly."[37]

Völkel also says that "It is agreed by all that a dove is certainly not a person (*deinde columbam personam non esse*), since every person must be endowed with intellect."[38] It must be this argument that Milton responds to in *Christian Doctrine* when he writes, "Nor let anyone say to me here that a dove is not a person (*columbam non esse personam*), for an intelligent substance, under whatever form, is a person" (OM 8:253).[39] We know Milton was aware of Völkel, for Völkel coauthored the *Racovian Catechism*, the Socinian manifesto Milton licensed in 1652.

But by claiming that the dove is "an intelligent substance," Milton is at odds with a more orthodox figure, too. In his commentary on the Gospels, Calvin proposes an interpretation that, while accepting the dovelike form, nevertheless reads that form's relationship to the Holy Spirit as wholly figurative. Calvin argues that the Spirit does not literally descend at all, for He is omnipresent and "fills heaven and earth." Rather, it is the form alone that descends, on behalf of the Spirit. "So it is an expression in metonymy," he writes, "where the name of a spiritual being is transferred to the visible sign." After reiterating that we should not "imagine a descent of the thing signified," he considers whether the dove has a solid or spectral body. Calvin leaves the question open but says that, if we are looking at Luke, it does seem that the body lacks substance.[40]

When depicting the event in *Paradise Regained*, Milton carefully precludes Calvin's interpretation. He uses the phrase "in the likeness of a Dove," which translates Valla's and Erasmus's *in specie columbae*, which in turn translates Justin Martyr's ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς.[41] But, more important, he also invents the phrase "a perfect Dove," which appears in Satan's account of the descent. Satan saw

on his head
A *perfect dove* descend, whate'er it meant,
And out of heaven the sovran voice I heard,
This is my son beloved, in him am pleased. (1.82–85, emphasis added)[42]

The word *perfect* could simply mean *spotless*, but it is worth reading it together with a similar phrase in the speech's divine counterpart. God, addressing his angels, declares that the Son will

o'ercome Satanic strength
And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh;
That all the angels and ethereal powers,

> They now, and men hereafter may discern,
> From what consummate virtue I have chose
> This *perfect* man, by merit called my Son,
> To earn salvation for the sons of men. (1.161–67, emphasis added)

Again, *perfect* here may simply refer to the Son's "consummate vertue" and "merit." But since the Chalcedonian formula "fully God and fully man" was often rendered in early modern England as "perfect God and perfect man," it is difficult not to hear an echo of it here (even if Milton did not adhere to its first half).[43] The Son is a perfect man because he is fully human; just so, what Satan sees descending is a complete, substantial dove, as opposed to Calvin's specter. The Variorum editors confirm my reading of *perfect* here, though they blame Satan for its materialist implications: "Satan, characteristically substituting a material for a spiritual meaning, says 'a perfect,' that is a *real* dove."[44]

By insisting on the dove's substantial fullness, Milton passes over an alternative proposed by someone he admired, Hugo Grotius.[45] Acknowledging that Matthew's Greek is ambiguous, Grotius denies that the likeness is a mere simile. While he believes that the Spirit took the form of a dove, however, he speculates that it was a form of fire, as when tongues of fire descended on the apostles, and adds that both the Ebionite Gospel and Syrian liturgy mention that a great light radiated around the dove.[46] Nevertheless, before he offers this idea, he cites a number of authorities on the Spirit's dovelike form, including Tertullian, who is the most important precedent for Milton's "perfect dove." Defending the incarnation against Marcion and the Docetists, Tertullian says they are refuted by

> the Gospel of John, when it declares that the Spirit descended in the body of a dove, and sat upon the Lord. When the said Spirit was in this condition, *He was as truly a dove as He was also a spirit*; nor did He destroy His own proper substance by the assumption of an extraneous substance. . . . [T]here was solidity in [his] bodily substance, whatever may have been the force by which the body became visible. What is written cannot but have been.[47]

Tertullian is writing in the second to third centuries, long before Christian theologians fully defined the hypostatic union, so when he says the Holy Spirit was truly a dove, he does not necessarily mean that the Spirit took on a dove's mind. He *is* emphasizing that Christ and the Spirit took on

solid, material flesh rather than phantom bodies. Although Milton does not say that the Spirit takes on flesh, in one sense he goes even further than Tertullian in identifying the dove with the Spirit. While for Tertullian "an extraneous substance" is added to the Spirit, for Milton the dovelike *species* belongs to the Spirit itself, for it subsists within the Spirit's own substance. His dove is an intelligent substance *sub specie*, under a form. Rather than a corporeal substance added to the Spirit, or a cloak surrounding it, the dovelike appearance is a form inhering in the Spirit itself. In other words, the Spirit itself changes form; it metamorphoses.

This kind of transformation, which is not the assumption of an external substance or form, recalls the metamorphoses of Milton's angels. In fact, as an example of an intelligent substance under animal form, Milton adduces Ezekiel's four living creatures: "Nor let anyone say to me here that a dove is not a person, for an intelligent substance, under whatever form, is a person, as those four living creatures seen by Ezekiel [were]" (OM 8:253).[48] The comparison raises an important point: the difference between Milton and Calvin on the Spirit's descent in part derives from Milton's heterodoxy; for him, the Spirit is not one of three hypostases of the uncreated Godhead—it is *a* being rather than Being itself. Milton can therefore imagine the Spirit behaving like an angel or a Proclusian daemon without the risk of blasphemy or (worse) metaphysical incoherence. Calvin's Spirit, as Flaubert says of the ideal author, is present everywhere and visible nowhere.

But it is not *just* Calvin's orthodoxy that accounts for the difference, for his metonymic dove puts him at odds with the trinitarian Erasmus, too. Unlike Erasmus, but like a Homeric allegorist, Calvin resorts to a rhetorical figure to rescue the text from a mythological interpretation that would seem to threaten divine immutability. He applies the same hermeneutic to the Spirit's descent as De Sponde does to Hermes's. Milton at first holds out such a possibility when describing Raphael's descent; all ambiguities aside, the passage does contain an actual simile: "as that sole bird / When to enshrine his relics in the sun's / Bright temple, to Ægyptian Thebes he flies" (272–74). When Milton reveals that Raphael may be compared to the phoenix of mythology because he actually assumed its shape, he uncovers our habit of reading such marvels as the grammarians—and Calvin—have taught us to read them, that is, as instances of simile, metonymy, anthropopathy, or allegory.

Before the simile, Milton offers still another interpretive possibility: "to all the fowls he seems / A phoenix, gazed by all" (5.271–72), that is, Raphael appears as such only in the birds' perception. This possibility likewise recalls

an ancient solution to the problem of divine metamorphosis: Proclus, as we have seen, explains some divine metamorphoses as occurring only in the perceiver; unchanged in itself, the divine "appears different at different times to those participating in it due to their own weakness" and "extends various visions to those who gaze towards it."[49] Just so, Calvin accounts for the Spirit's assumption of a dovelike form by positing the presence of a specter that represents the Spirit. Although Calvin does so in view of the Spirit's omnipresence, this explanation is in fact representative of the way he accounts for the manifestations and metamorphoses of figures who are not omnipresent, such as angels, demons, and the resurrected Christ.[50]

CALVIN AND MILTON ON SUPERNATURAL BODIES

Angels

Raphael's angelic nature becomes important here, for Milton is especially targeting Calvin's angelology. Ezekiel's cherubim offer a good case in point for how Calvin and Milton approach supernatural manifestations in fundamentally different ways. Traditionally, the strangeness of the vision that the Book of Ezekiel opens with—including cherubim of four faces each, wheels within wheels rimmed with eyes, and an edible scroll—gave ample warrant to interpret the vision allegorically. Beginning with Irenaeus, the four creatures were taken as an allegory for the four Gospels.[51] At the same time, though, ancient and medieval Christians certainly believed in cherubim as a class in the angelic hierarchy.[52] Elsewhere, after all, the Bible does not depict them in such bizarre form: it is cherubim who, after the Fall, guard the gates of Eden with flaming sword, and cherubim of gold who spread their wings over the Ark of the Covenant.

Calvin, as we would expect, takes the animal forms as an accommodated image. They appear as beasts, he says, because the Jews had fallen into a heavy stupor (*crassus stupor*): "And hence we gather, how humanely, how indulgently, God deals with us. For, as on his part, he sees how small is our comprehension, so he descends to us: hence the faces of the living creatures [and] the stature of their body."[53] When Ezekiel says that the creatures' appearance began to resemble burning coals, "[t]he Prophet would of necessity be moved when he saw that the living creatures were not really such, that is, when he saw in the form of the animals something celestial, and exceeding the standard of nature, and even the senses

of man."[54] For Calvin, however, this happens not just because these angelic beings are not in their true form, but because they are not cherubim at all. Calvin takes any reference to angels as cherubim in the Bible as accommodated language. Demystifying the sword-bearing cherubim of Genesis 3, Calvin writes, "By cherubim, no doubt, Moses means angels and in this accommodates himself to the capacity of his own people," and argues that Moses calls them cherubim "for the same reason that the name of the body of Christ is transferred to the sacred bread of the Lord's Supper."[55] Calvin seems to associate cherubim with a particular visible form: God has the cherubim on the ark "depicted in this form . . . as an indulgence to the rudeness of that ancient people."[56] To believe in cherubim, then, is to return to the mythology of primitive people, which Calvin subtly likens to the superstition of unreformed Christians, who venerate images and adore the eucharistic bread as the body of Christ, taking the sign for the thing signified.

There is one place in *Christian Doctrine* where Milton seems *not* to interpret the form of Ezekiel's cherubim literally. Citing Ezekiel 1:6, he writes, "They are of supreme swiftness, as if (*quasi*) endowed with wings" (OM 8:299), the word *quasi* suggesting that cherubim, and angels in general, do not in fact have wings.[57] And yet, as we have seen, he defends the dove's personhood by offering Ezekiel's cherubim as a precedent for intelligential substance under animal form. Even if he takes their wings as a figure for swiftness, then, he evidently believes not just in cherubim as a class of angel, the kind we see in Genesis, but also in the literal existence of Ezekiel's four-faced, beastly cherubim. If the creatures' form were merely an accommodated image without substance, it would lack explanatory power as a precedent for the intelligent and substantial dove that descended upon Christ at his baptism. This acceptance of their animal form accords with Milton's imitation of Ezekiel's vision in *Paradise Lost*:

forth rushed with whirlwind sound
The chariot of paternal deity,
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,
Itself instinct with spirit, but convoyed
By four cherubic shapes, four faces each
Had wondrous, as with stars their bodies all
And wings were set with eyes, with eyes the wheels
Of beryl, and careering fires between. (6.749–56)

The chariot is "convoyed / By four cherubic shapes." The wondrous, four-faced forms, evidently, are the angels' *cherubic* shapes, that is, what cherubim themselves look like—or *may* look like, at least. In book 3, when Satan "casts to change his proper shape" and "now a stripling cherub he appears, / Not of the prime" (634, 636–37), Milton bases his depiction (perhaps with tongue in cheek) on a conjectured etymology for *cherub*, meaning "like a boy."[58] But most of the time, while preserving the association with youth, he models his cherubim on those who guard Eden's gate in Genesis 3. Hence the word occurs mainly in military contexts, often with specific reference to angelic guards (e.g., "cherubic watch" [9.68]; cf. 11.120), who sometimes wield flames ("placed in guard their watches round, / Cherubic waving fires" [6.412–13]; cf. 6.102). It refers to imposing, dreadful figures like Beelzebub (1.157), and like Zephon:

> So spake the cherub, and his grave rebuke
> Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
> Invincible: abashed the devil stood,
> And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
> Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pined
> His loss. (4.844–49)

But Milton writes his most magnificent depiction of cherubim at the poem's end, when he rewrites the originary scene itself. The episode contains his most surprising innovation on the Bible's cherubim, for he conflates Genesis's swordsmen with the marvelous creatures of Ezekiel's vision:

> He ceased; and the archangelic power prepared
> For swift descent, with him the cohort bright
> Of watchful cherubim; four faces each
> Had, like a double Janus, all their shape
> Spangled with eyes more numerous than those
> Of Argus, and more wakeful than to drowse,
> Charmed with Arcadian pipe, the pastoral reed
> Of Hermes, or his opiate rod. (11.126–33)

In the world of *Paradise Lost*, at least, the fourfold faces exist not only in vision, and not only in Raphael's accommodated narrative of the War in Heaven, but literally, at the beginning of history, when Eve and Adam

are banished from the garden. This is poetry, of course, and by itself does not reveal what Milton believed about angels. Yet it is nonetheless significant that Milton takes up biblical images that Calvin considered concessions to an uncivilized and spiritually torpid people. By embracing them, he affirms their value even for an audience fit and few. It is one thing to place sword-bearing cherubim in a retelling of the Fall, but quite another to give them the strange features of Ezekiel's prophetic vision. Milton makes the scene more marvelous than Genesis itself calls for, and hence shows that he, unlike Calvin, does not wish to diminish what is potentially mythological in the biblical scene.[59] The comparisons to classical myth that crowd the following lines only underscore this fact.

To return to Raphael's descent: as we have seen, Milton allows the reader, for a moment, to interpret the likeness to a phoenix in a way consistent with Calvin's angelology. Just as Ezekiel's cherubim appear as they do only in *his* vision, so Raphael "seems" a phoenix to the fowls' gaze. But the word *seems* proves ambiguous: Raphael can *seem* a phoenix to the fowls either because he looks like a bird only to them, or because he does in fact look like a bird, while remaining an angel. We may call the first a false seeming, and the second a true likeness. When Milton corrects our assumption that this *seems* indicates a false seeming, he makes the descent of a piece with the discussion of angelic eating that follows, where he more explicitly critiques Calvin's angelology:

So down they sat,
And to their viands fell, nor seemingly
The angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
Of theologians, but with keen despatch
Of real hunger. (5.433–37)

In the same passage, Raphael tells Adam about "[i]ntelligential substances" (408), a phrase that happens to translate *substantia intelligens*, what Milton calls the dove and Ezekiel's creatures in *Christian Doctrine*. Intelligential substances, Raphael explains, require food; they not only can see, smell, and taste it, but digest and draw nourishment from it. It is precisely this ability to digest earthly food that Calvin denies to his angels. He does say that the angels who visited Abraham were "endowed with real bodies," and "truly ate and drank in this way," but he does "not admit from this that they were filled with food and drink for any infirmity of the flesh." Their

eating, Calvin explains, was for Abraham's sake.[60] These observations occur in Calvin's commentary on the Gospels: here Calvin dismisses as idle the question of whether Christ digested the fish he ate with the disciples after the resurrection; like the angels, Christ does not need nourishment, and only eats for the sake of the disciples, to further persuade them of his resurrection.[61] Beyond the lack of need for nourishment, though, the main comparison here is not so much between Christ's and the angels' bodies, as between the angels' bodies and the food, which can be unmade in a moment: "If we admit that the bodies that they temporarily assumed were reduced to nothing after they had fulfilled their mission, who will deny the same took place with what they had eaten?"[62]

In this case, too, Milton is nearer Tertullian, who compares the bodies in which angels visited men in the Old Testament to the natural body of the pre-resurrected Christ. Just before he discusses the Holy Spirit's descent as a dove, Tertullian writes,

> You have sometimes read and believed that the Creator's angels have been changed into human form, and have even borne about so veritable a body, that Abraham even washed their feet, and Lot was rescued from the Sodomites by their hands; an angel, moreover, wrestled with a man so strenuously with his body, that the latter desired to be let loose, so tightly was he held. Has it, then, been permitted to angels, which are inferior to God, after they have been changed into human bodily form, nevertheless to remain angels? and will you deprive God, their superior, of this faculty, as if Christ could not continue to be God, after His real assumption of the nature of man? Or else, did those angels appear as phantoms of flesh?[63]

Milton's Raphael is not incarnate; he can digest not because he has assumed a human body but by virtue of his own angelic nature. All the same, Tertullian establishes an important precedent for Milton's materially substantial angels who authentically interact with humans, without recourse to illusion. Later, after the Fall, such encounters may involve metamorphosis: Michael appears "Not in his shape celestial, but as man / Clad to meet man" (11.239–40). Yet what Raphael's speech on digestion teaches us is that, when it comes time for angels to dim their glory to eat or wrestle with fallen humans, that metamorphosis will not be a ruse to make things appear otherwise than they are.

Demons

Raphael's transformation is not the first time Milton disguises a metamorphosis as a simile. Ithuriel and Zephon find Satan "[s]quat like a Toad" by the sleeping Eve, a phrase that, as we have seen, seems like a simile until Ithuriel's spear returns Satan to "his proper shape":

> Him thus intent Ithuriel with his spear
> Touched lightly; for no falsehood can endure
> Touch of celestial temper, but returns
> Of force to its own likeness: up he starts
> Discovered and surprised. (4.810–14)

Here too Milton diverges from Calvin, this time from his demonology. Calvin handles demonic manifestations as he does the Spirit's descent as a dove, by attributing them to phantom proxies, or "projections," to use Proclus's term. Commenting on Isaiah's reference to a place inhabited by satyrs and other mythological creatures, Calvin explains that such creatures are deceits (*praestigiae*) of the devil, and that for this reason their names are translated to him.[64] Whether the prophet refers to fauns, satyrs, lamias, or goblins, it is clear they bear a human shape; all the same, he says, we must keep in mind these are *praestigiae* consisting merely of specters (*spectra*) and noises (*strepitus*).[65] Elsewhere Calvin considers whether Satan really "invests any substances with new forms through enchantment" and concludes that "whatever miracles he appears to work are mere delusions (*praestigias*)." Pharaoh's magicians, for instance, performed miracles (such as transforming scepters into snakes), but in these cases God allowed Satan to place *phantasmata* before the eyes of the reprobate.[66] At first Milton has Satan do exactly what Calvin would expect: use his "devilish art" to create "Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams" (801, 803). Yet we eventually learn he also has done something Calvin says he cannot: invest his substance with a new form. His toad-body is not phantasmal—it can be *touched*, and touched *lightly*, bearing a particular degree of pressure from Ithuriel's spear.

One reason that our discovery that Satan has changed shape does not completely prepare us for Raphael's metamorphosis, and hence why we may be fooled twice, is that, at least in the first four books of the epic, metamorphosis has been associated with devils. There is another precedent for the metamorphosis that seems a simile, when Satan "[s]at like a

cormorant" (4.196) on the Tree of Life. In this instance Milton already has taught us how to read the likeness in the book's argument, which states that Satan in fact "sits in the shape of a cormorant." Alighting from the tree, he transforms into various beasts, "as their shape served best his end / Nearer to view his prey" (398–99), a detail that ensures we do not read the tiger-metamorphosis as a mere simile: "Then as a tiger, who by chance hath spied / In some purlieu two gentle fawns at play, / [Satan] Straight couches close" (403–5). Before Satan shape-shifts on the sun, or the lesser devils dwarf themselves to enter Pandæmonium (1.777–92), Milton explains that "spirits when they please / Can either sex assume, or both; so soft / And uncompounded is their essence pure" (423–25) and

> in what shape they choose
> Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure,
> Can execute their airy purposes,
> And works of love or enmity fulfil. (428–31)

The passage speaks of spirits in general, and must apply to angels as well as devils, but one naturally associates it with its infernal context. The phrase "works of love" may even slip into an erotic meaning given that Milton here accounts for the genders of a god and goddess of fertility; shortly thereafter he mentions the Canaanite Aphrodite and Adonis, and "that uxorious king" (444).[67] It is not until book 6 that Milton writes an equally explicit description of the unfallen angels' power to change shape:

> All heart they live, all head, all eye, all ear,
> All intellect, all sense, and as they please,
> They limb themselves, and colour, shape or size
> Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare. (6.350–53)

Not until book 8 do we hear of them taking advantage of their uncompounded essence in order to fulfill "works of love." Raphael is therefore the first unfallen angel to change shape in the epic. Milton places his disguised metamorphosis so soon after Satan's, I suggest, so that we understand that such behavior is not exclusively diabolical. Satan's ability to assume the shape of a toad, cormorant, or cherub is a vestige of his unfallen nature, a power originally meant for other purposes.

For Calvin, metamorphosis can only take place if God imposes it on a created being as an act of judgment. One metamorphosis he does *not* read

figuratively, for instance, is the transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt. Refuting those who would dismiss it as a fable such as Ovid would tell, Calvin writes, "I rather suppose it to have happened through the artifice of Satan, that Ovid, by fabulously trifling, has indirectly thrown discredit on this most signal proof of Divine vengeance."[68] Calvin argues that, if God creates things out of nothing and dissolves them back into nothing, he can transform a body of flesh to one of stone, and carefully points out that the woman's spirit remained immaterial and eternal.[69] Calvin hence accepts metamorphosis in principle, but only when it involves God manipulating his material creation. Therefore, while he would have objected to the notion of Satan spontaneously assuming the form of a toad, Calvin most likely could have accepted *Paradise Lost*'s most spectacular metamorphosis, that of the devils into serpents in book 10.[70] As a manifestation of God's power in the created order, this episode, however Ovidian or Dantesque, nonetheless could occur in a Calvinist world. Calvin's devils must resort to illusions because manipulating the material world would be tantamount to creation, an exclusively divine power.

The Resurrected Body

And yet Calvin avoids metamorphosis even when explaining the apparent transformations of Christ's resurrected body. The Gospel of Luke tells how the risen Jesus joins two disciples traveling to Emmaus, who fail to recognize him until he reveals himself in the act of breaking bread and then suddenly disappears. In John's Gospel, likewise, Mary Magdalene at first mistakes Jesus for a gardener. In these cases Calvin insists that "there was no metamorphosis in Christ," for he is not "like Proteus of the poets' imagination," "repeatedly assuming new forms."[71] Rather, God has veiled the disciples' eyes, temporarily depriving them of the power of perception. Calvin offers the same explanation when, in John 20, Christ comes to his disciples "when the doors were shut" (KJV). For Christ's body does not resemble a spirit, as the Papists believe.[72]

Milton believes the resurrected body is a spiritual body: "Nor is it less credible that a corporeal power can issue from a spiritual substance than that anything spiritual can be made out of a body, which is what we hope will also happen to our own bodies at last, at the Resurrection" (OM 8:295).[73] In this he agrees with Erasmus, who does not object to the risen Christ walking through closed doors, becoming invisible, or even changing form before

his disciples.[74] It is important here that Milton speaks of one substance issuing out of another, for Calvin interprets the proof text for a spiritual resurrected body ("It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" [1 Cor. 15:44 KJV]) to mean that, where the natural body (*corpus animale*) was animated by a soul, the glorified body will be inspired by the Spirit. He dismisses out of hand the interpretation that the body will undergo a change in substance.[75] Milton naturally quotes this proof text in his discussion of the resurrection in *Christian Doctrine*; alongside it, he quotes from Jesus's answer to the Sadducees' tricky question about marriage: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30 KJV). Curiously, though, Milton only quotes the final clause, and surrounds the quotation with others about heavenly glorification (OM 8:895).[76] His point is evident enough: we will be like the angels in more ways than one—not just in our singleness, but also in the nature of our bodies. We therefore can read a note of eschatological hope in Raphael's description of how unfallen human bodies may "up to spirit work" (5.478) and even in his speech on angelic sexuality (8.618–29).

MYTH AND HISTORY

Raphael, the archangel who journeys with Tobias and his dog and helps him find a wife, is an angel of accommodation, and hence the right figure to show how Calvin errs. When narrating the War in Heaven, Raphael begins inoffensively, "*likening* spiritual to corporal forms" (5.573, emphasis added) but then surprises us with his sudden question, in which the *likening* of metaphor transforms into the *like* of real resemblance: "what if earth / Be but the shadow of heav'n, and things therein / Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?" (574–76). For Calvin accommodation takes place in human perception, and always involves *seeming*. God *seems* to repent; angels *seem* to digest; the Spirit *seems* to descend; Christ *seems* to appear from nowhere. Milton's God and his creatures know not *seems*, at least not in this sense of the word.[77] Raphael seems like a phoenix for the same reason he seems like a pagan god—because of a true likeness, which in both cases we suddenly discover is even more faithful than we thought. As soon as we realize Raphael has assumed the form of a phoenix, we have to accept that he resembles a Homeric god more closely than we expected, and that it is not just the fallen angels who behave like the metamorphic gods whose names they will adopt in times to come. This idea points back

to the question Raphael poses to Adam, which introduces a narrative that draws upon biblical and epic sources alike. It is a question, perhaps, posed to Calvin as well: What if the things of this earth—the cherubim and gods of ancient imagination—offer not figures but true semblances of the spiritual world?

In Hermes's descent, in other words, Milton makes a point of not rationalizing the potentially mythological as Calvin would. Quite the opposite: where Calvin would diminish the likeness to a mythological being by resorting to a rhetorical figure, Milton moves in the opposite direction. Just as he makes Genesis's cherubim more fantastic than necessary by depicting them like Ezekiel's creatures, he chooses the more marvelous reading of Hermes's descent, the metamorphosis, when he could have settled for a simile. If anything, in fact, the passage in Homer is not marvelous enough as an analogue for Raphael's descent. This is why, I suggest, Raphael transforms specifically into a *phoenix*. Some scholars have offered Christological interpretations; Milton, we have seen, would have found precedent for a parallel between the incarnation and angelic epiphanies in Tertullian.[78] But another answer arises not so much from the phoenix's particular mythological associations as the fact that it is mythological in the first place, and even *more* mythological than the Homeric text, where the bird is a mere seagull. "But why that Shape, good Master Editor?" Bentley complains; "among so many real Birds of grand Magnitude and fine Feather, could none content you but a *Phoenix*, a fictitious Nothing, that has no Being but in Tale and Fable?"[79] The transformation beggars belief, and that is the point. It all but ensures that we miss the literal metamorphosis at first, and allow the actual simile to assimilate it. And then comes *anagnorisis*: we realize our faith was too small, and that we had forgotten Milton's most beautiful idea about Eden: that here fables are true, "If true, here only," that no imagined field or grove "might with this Paradise / Of Eden strive" (4.251, 274–75), that to compare history to myth is always to compare great things with small.

If Milton's approach to classical sources is revisionist, it is not just for the sake of correcting the record or claiming poetic priority. He is also demonstrating that history exceeds myth in its marvelousness. Homer errs when relating Hephaestus's fall because "he with this rebellious rout / Fell long before" (1.747–78), and he fell not just "from morn / To noon . . . from noon to dewy eve, / A summer's day" (742–44) but for nine days (6.871), to a place "As far removed from God and light of heaven / As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole" (1.73–74)—in a universe sublimely larger than Homer's, and in a narrative that begins before the creation of our world.[80]

Just so, the cherubim are "like a *double* Janus," their "eyes *more numerous* than those / Of Argus" (11.129, 130–31, emphasis added). Eden's arborets are "more delicious than those gardens feigned / Or of revived Adonis, or renowned / Alcinous, host of old Laertes' son" (9.439–41). In these passages, Milton says something more than that his poem is better than Homer's or that his argument is of greater moment, as he does in the proem of book 9. In short, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our *mythology*, and if this is so, then we should take the Bible at its word, even when it sounds like Homer. For what is written cannot but have been.

NOTES

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1. John Milon, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2007), 5.246–77. All subsequent references are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically by book and line.

2. Francis Blessington, *Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic* (Boston, 1979), 108; and Charles Martindale, *John Milton and the Transformation of Ancient Epic*, 2nd ed. (London, 2002), 138–40. Thomas Greene, in *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity* (New Haven, 1975), a study exclusively devoted to this epic topos, sees no special connection between Hermes's and Raphael's descents (375–404). Since Manoocher Aryanpur, "*Paradise Lost* and *The Odyssey*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1967), pointed out the general similarities between Hermes and Raphael (164–65), studies on Milton and Homer have passed over Raphael's descent: Sarah Van der Laan, "Milton's Odyssean Ethics: Homeric Allusions and Arminian Thought in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 49 (2008): 49–76, finds parallels between Hermes's descent and that of divine grace, "The speediest of thy wingèd messengers." Gregory Machacek, *Milton and Homer: "Written to Aftertimes"* (Pittsburgh, 2011), omits any reference to Hermes's descent. Jessica Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes* (Toronto, 2015), acknowledges that Raphael "play[s] Hermes to Adam's Odysseus," but does not discuss the descent (354).

3. Zachary Pearce, *A Review of the Text of the Twelve Books of Milton's "Paradise Lost"* (London, 1733), 168.

4. Richard Bentley, ed., *Milton's "Paradise Lost." A New Edition* (London, 1732), sig. X3r.

5. See *OED*, "proper," II.

6. Greene, *Descent from Heaven*, 386. For other discussions and acknowledgments of Raphael's metamorphosis, see John Leonard, *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of "Paradise Lost," 1667–1970*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2013), 69; Stephen Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), 146; Joad Raymond, "Milton's Angels," in *Cambridge Companion to "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Louis Schwartz (Cambridge, 2014), 146; Karen Edwards, "Raphael, Diodati," in *Of Paradise and Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum*, ed. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson (Newark, Del., 2004), 123–41.

7. Edwards, "Raphael," has posed the same question; her answer is that the metamorphosis alludes to the phoenix passage in *Epitaphium Damonis*, and that the conversation of Adam and Raphael resurrects the relationship of Milton and Charles Diodati (123–41).

8. The text cited here is from Jean de Sponde, *Homeri Quæ Extant Omnia* . . . (Basil, 1583), sig. ff3v. For ease of reference, book and line numbers of the *Odyssey* are cited from Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. A. T. Murray, rev. by George E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

9. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

10. Alfred Heubeck, Stephanie West, and J. B. Hainsworth, eds., vol. 1 of *A Commentary on Homer's "Odyssey": Introduction and Books I–VIII* (Oxford, 1990), 259.

11. Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York, 1977), 5.54.

12. Jenny Brian, *Likeness and Likelihood in the Presocratics and Plato* (Cambridge, 2012), contrasts ἐοικώς with ὁμοῖος in Homer, and argues that the latter refers to objective similarities and the former to partial, subjective, and at times deceptive similarities (28–36).

13. "λάρῳ ὄρνιθι ἔοικώς.) τὴν ὁρμὴν οὐ τὸ σῶμα." Didymus Chalcenterus, *Homeri Ulyssea Una Cum Didymi Autoris Antiquii* . . . (Basel, 1535), sig. e5r.

14. "This is why Hermes has come from Olympus in the likeness of a bird (ὄρνιθι προσωμοιωμένος)." Heraclitus uses virtually the same participle to refer to Athena's assumption of Mentor's form: "She comes in the likeness of an old man (Ὁμοιωθεῖσα . . . γέροντι)." See *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems*, ed. and trans. Donald. A. Russell and David Konstan (Atlanta, 2005), 98–99, 108–9.

15. Proclus, *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* ed. and trans. Dirk Baltzly, John F. Finamore, and Graeme Miles (Cambridge, 2018), 227. For Milton's knowledge of Proclus, see D. C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1970), 296.

16. *Opus Utrumque Homeri* . . . (Basel, 1541), sig. ee5r; *Homeri Quae Extant Omnia* . . . (Basel, 1583), sig. ff4r, hereafter cited as De Sponde 1583.

17. George Chapman, *Chapman's Homer: "The Odyssey,"* ed. Allardyce Nicoll, Bollingen Series 41 (Princeton, 1956), vol. 2.

18. Richard Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment: Greek Myths of Metamorphosis* (Oxford, 2009), 34.

19. De Sponde 1583, sig. k6r, sig. DD2r.

20. Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems*, 3; for Heraclitus's wide availability in the late Renaissance, see Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife*, 21. Milton owned Conrad Gesner's 1544 edition of Heraclitus, acquiring it in 1637. See Kenneth Borris, *Allegory and Epic in English Renaissance Literature: Heroic Form in Sidney, Spenser, and Milton* (Cambridge, 2000), 20.

21. "Hîc igitur *ἀνθρωποπάθεια* (quam figuram Grammatici ad excusandas poetarum de suo Iove nugas olim excogitarunt) Theologis, opinor, non est opus; scriptura sacra sine dubio, hoc satis cavit, nequid vel ipsa indecorum aut indignum Deo scriberet, vel Deum de semetipso loquentem induceret." Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington, *The Complete Works of John Milton*, vol. 8 (Oxford, 2012), 28, hereafter cited as OM.

22. Harris Fletcher, in "Milton's Homer," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 38, no. 2 (1939): 229–32, offered evidence that Milton used Eustathius's Homer commentary based on marginalia in a copy of Pindar, but Maurice Kelley and Samuel Atkins have disputed that the marginalia are in Milton's hand. See "Milton and the Harvard Pindar," *Studies in Bibliography* 17 (1964): 77–82; and Machacek, *Milton and Homer*, 165. For Eustathius's reception in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife*, 15–16, 47, 128, 142, 178, 267, 424 n. 54.

23. Eustathius, *In Homeri Iliadis et Odysseae libros* παρεκβολαὶ (Basel, 1560), sig. γ2v–γ3r. Richard Hunter, "Eustathian Moments" in *Reading Eustathios of Thessalonike*, ed. Filippomaria Pontani, Vassilis Katsaros and Vassilis Sarris (Berlin, 2017), remarks on Eustathius's use of the term (52 n. 98, 53 n. 99).

24. Hunter, "Eustathian Moments," 53 n. 99. For the term's use by Philo, Calvin, and Ames, see Michael Lieb, *Theological Milton: Deity, Discourse, and Heresy in the Miltonic Canon* (Pittsburgh, 2006), 130–31, 140–43. For Origen's use of the word, see *Contra Celsum* 4.71, vol. 11 of *Patrologiae Graeca*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857–86).

25. "se Spiritus ad captu*m* nostrum format. . . . Figuram hanc ἀνθρωποπάθειαν vocarunt, quoties in se transfert Deus quod humanæ naturæ proprium est" (Calvin, *In Primum Mosis Libru*m*, qui Genesis vulgo dicitur* . . . [Geneva, 1554], sig. d4r). The English translation is taken from vol. 1 of Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, 1948), 248–49.

26. "Si *paenituit Iehovam quòd hominem fecisset* . . . paenituisse credamus" (OM 8:29). Milton's theory of accommodation is nuanced and difficult to summarize. The best treatments of it are Neil Graves, "Milton and the Theory of Accommodation," *Studies in Philology* 98, no. 2 (2001): 251–72; and Lieb, *Theological Milton*, 127–62. Lieb demonstrates how Milton receives his theory of accommodation from Tertullian, who argued that if God seems to have human passions, this is because those passions are in fact divine, and we possess them (albeit imperfectly) because we are made in God's image (133). Graves argues that Milton's theory of accommodation is synecdochic, inasmuch as the Bible's images reveal the truth about God, though not in its fullness. Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford, 2010), discusses anthropopathy in the context of the history of accommodation as well; Raymond can say that "Milton's argument [in *Christian Doctrine*] winds through a familiar logic, until he endorses, beyond

all doubt, the anthropopathy he originally rejected" (186–88) only because Raymond collapses the distance between Milton's theory of accommodation and that of Reformed theologians. Both Milton and Calvin, it is true, believe that the Bible's references to God's passions accommodate incomprehensible truths to human understanding. The difference is that, where Calvin (like virtually every theologian in the orthodox mainstream) believes such passages reveal truths about an impassible God, Milton believes they reveal God as passible, and that they are accommodated because divine passions transcend human understanding. Milton is therefore consistent in his rejection of anthropopathy.

27. Plato, *Republic*, 381c, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, 1997), 1020.

28. Proclus, *Commentary*, 223–26.

29. Ibid., 227. See the editors' introduction to Essay 6 (160–78).

30. Ibid., 227, 260–61.

31. Ibid., 175.

32. "At descendere sicut columbam, nihil est aliud q*uam* descendere sicut columba descendit. . . . Nunc spiritus sanctus non descendit sicut columba, quia uolauit ut columba, sed descendit in specie columbæ." Valla, . . . *in Novum Testamentum Annotationes* (Basel, 1541), sig. c2v. Valla is commenting on the passage in Matthew here.

33. Ibid., sig. c2v; sig. l1r–v.

34. "Oscitanter reddidit interpres. Videtur enim dicere, more columbæ descendisse spiritu*m* sanctum, cu*m* sentiat, eum specie columbæ descendisse." Erasmus, . . . *in Nouum Testamentum . . . Annotationes* (Basel, 1519), sig. b3v–b4r. Erasmus credits Valla with the idea in his annotations on Luke (sig. l4r).

35. "Atq*ue* inde descendit spiritus sanctus, per se quidem inuisibilis, sed tum circundatus uisibili specie, quo conspicuus esset oculis hominum." Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis* (Basel, 1523), sig. f5v.

36. "deinde columbam personam non esse omnibus constat: cum persona omnis intellectu esse debeat prædita." Johannes Völkel, . . . *De Vera Religione Libri Quinque* . . . (Racow, 1630), sig. II4r.

37. "præsertim . . .consentaneum [est], formam istam valde fuisse augustam, & divinum ac cœleste quippiam præ se tulisse" (ibid., sig. II4v).

38. Ibid., sig. II4r.

39. "Nec dixerit mihi hîc quispiam, columbam non esse personam; substantia enim intelligens, quâvis sub specie, persona est" (OM 8:252).

40. "cælúmque & terram impleat. . . . Ergo metonymica est loquutio, qua rei spiritualis nomen ad signu*m* visibile transfertur . . . no*n* esse finge*n*dum rei signatæ desce*n*sum" (Calvin, *Harmonia Ex tribus Euangelistis composita* . . . [Geneva, 1555], sig. c1v). The English translation is taken from Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. A. W. Morrison and T. H. L. Parker, vols. 1–3 of *Calvin's Commentaries*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, 1972), 1:132.

41. Qtd. in Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in libros Euangeliorum* (Amsterdam, 1641), sig. E1v.

42. Milton, *Paradise Regained,* in *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2007). All subsequent references are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically by book and line.

43. E.g., "Perfect God and perfect man: of a reasonable soul, and humane flesh subsisting" (Richard Baxter, *The Christian Religion Expressed* [London, 1660], sig. A3r).

44. Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., vol. 4 of *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton* (New York, 1975), 62.

45. For the visit Milton paid to Grotius in Paris, and the admiration he expressed for him in his works, see Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton: Life, Works, and Thought* (Oxford, 2008), 106–7.

46. Grotius, *Annotationes*, sig. E1v.

47. Emphasis added. The English translation is taken from Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, trans. Peter Holmes, in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, vol. 3 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325,* 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, 1989), 523. The Latin is quoted from Tertullian, *Opera* (Basel, 1539), "euangeliu*m* Ioannis, prædicans spiritu*m* columbæ corpore lapsum desedisse super dominum. Qui spiritus cum hoc esset, tam uere erat & columba, quàm & spiritus: nec interfecerat substa*n*tiam propriam, adsumpta substa*n*tia extranea. . . . Tamen corporis soliditas erat, quo momento corpus uidebatur. Non potest non fuisse quod scriptum est" (sig. b3v–b4r). The last two sentences, strictly speaking, refer to angels, but Tertullian offers them to explain how the dove disappeared.

48. "Nec dixerit mihi hîc quispiam, columbam non esse personam; substantia enim intelligens, quâvis sub specie, persona est; quemadmodum visa illa ab Ezechiele quatuor animalia" (OM 8:252).

49. Proclus, *Commentary*, 224–25.

50. While Luther believed the resurrected Christ is ubiquitous, Calvin did not. See David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2010), 171–74.

51. Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Glerup, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, *Old Testament XIII: Ezekiel*, *Daniel* (Downers Grove, IL, 2008), 4–6.

52. Feisal Mohamed, *In the Anteroom of Divinity: The Reformation of the Angels from Colet to Milton* (Toronto, 2008), 4.

53. Calvin, . . . *Viginti Prima Ezechielis Prophetæ Prælectiones* . . . (Geneva, 1565), sig. b1r; and "Et inde etiam colligimus quàm humaniter, imò indulgenter nobiscum agat Deus. Nam ab una parte videt quàm exiguus sit noster modulus, ideo ad nos descendit" (sig. c1r). The English translation is taken from vol. 1 of Calvin, *Commentaries on First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids, 1948), 79.

54. Necesse igitur fuit Prophetam moueri cùm videret animalia non esse animalia, hoc est cùm videret in forma animalium esse aliquid cæleste, & quod excederet naturæ modum, & superaret etiam humanos sensus" (sig. c1r).

55. "Per Cherubim non dubiu*m* est quin Angelos Moses designet: atque in eo se ad populi sui captum accommodat"; and "eadem ratione . . . qua corporis Christi nomen ad sacru*m* Cœnæ panem tra*n*sfertur." Calvin, *In Primum Mosis Libru*m, *qui Genesis vulgo dicitur*, sig. c1v, sig. c2r.

56. "Quòd hac forma pingi voluit Angelos, non dubium est quin per indulgentiam id veteris populi ruditati fuerit datum" (ibid., sig. c1v).

57. "Sunt velocitate summa quasi alis induti Ezech. 1. 6" (OM 8:298).

58. Calvin, *In Primum Mosis Libru*m, *qui Genesis vulgo dicitur*, sig. c2r.

59. This claim qualifies Feisal Mohamed's argument that Milton is especially Reformist in his reversal of the angelic hierarchy, placing cherubim and seraphim at the lowest level except in the case of fallen angels, and specifically Calvinist in how he emphasizes angelic serviceability over contemplation. See Mohamed, *In the Anteroom of Divinity*, 87–114.

60. "Sic Angelos in mensa Abrahæ, sicuti veris corporibus induti erant, verè comedisse & bibisse non dubito: neque tamen propterea concedo, pro carnis infirmitate cibo & potu fuisse refectos. sed quum in gratiam Abrahæ humana forma induti essent, hoc etiam dedit seruo suo Dominus, vt ante eius tugurium cælestes illi hospites vescerentur." Calvin, *Harmonia Ex tribus Euangelistis composita* . . ., sig. EE4r. The English translation is taken from Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 3:244.

61. Calvin, *Harmonia Ex tribus Euangelistis composita* . . ., sig. EE4r.

62. "Porrò si fatemur corpora quæ ad tempus sumpserant, postquam legatione sua defuncti sunt, in nihilum redacta esse, quis idem dealimentis [*sic*] factum esse negabit?" (ibid., sig. EE4r)

63. "Angelos creatoris conuersos in effigiem humanam aliquando legisti, & credidisti, & tantam corporis gestasse ueritatem, ut & pedes eis lauerit Abraham, & manibus ipsorum ereptus sit Sodomitis Loth: conluctatus quoq*ue* homini angelus toto corporis pondere dimitti desiderauerit, adeo detinebatur. Quod ergo angelis inferioribus deo licuit, uti conuersi in corpulentiam humanam, angeli nihilominus permanerent, hoc tu potentiori deo aufers, quasi non ualuerit Christus uere hominem indutus, deus perseuerare? Aut nunquid & angeli illi phantasma carnis apparuerunt?" (Tertullian, *Opera*, sig. b3v). The English translation is taken from Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, 523.

64. "ea ratione eorum nomen ad ipsum translatum est" (Calvin, . . . *Commentarii In Isaiam Prophetam* . . . [Geneva, 1570], sig. l4v).

65. Ibid., sig. A6v.

66. "De operum effectu, siue mortuos excitet, siue fascinet homines & bruta animalia, siue incantationibus nouas facies rebus induat, sic habendum est quæcunque videtur edere miracula, meras esse præstigias" (Calvin, *Commentarii Ioannis Calvini In Quinque Libros Mosis...* [Geneva, 1573], sig. 003r). The English translation is taken from Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, trans. Charles William Bringham, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, 1950), 430–31.

67. For Baälim and Ashtaroth as Canaanite fertility gods, see William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, eds., *Paradise Lost* (New York, 2007), n. 1.422.

68. "Egovero Satanæ artificio factu*m* esse potius arbitror, vt Ouidius fabulose nuga*n*do, huic tam insigni Diuinæ vindictæ documento fide*m* obliquè derogauerit." (Calvin, *In Primum Mosis Librum, qui Genesis vulgo dicitur*, sig. i7v). The English translation is taken from Calvin, *Commentaries on The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 1:513.

69. Calvin, *In Primum Mosis Libru*m, *qui Genesis vulgo dicitur* . . ., sig. i7v.

70. For Satan's metamorphoses as part of a process of ontological descent, see Stephen Dobranski, *Milton's Visual Imagination: Imagery in "Paradise Lost"* (New York, 2015), 104–5, 125.

71. "His verbis docemur nulla*m* fuisse in Christo metamorphosin . . . sicuti Protheum suum fingunt Poetæ" (Calvin, *Harmonia Ex tribus Euangelistis composita* . . ., sig. EE2v); "Non ergo dicemus Christum nouas subinde facies, instar Prothei cuiusdam, induisse" (sig. Oo8r). The English translation is taken from Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 3:238; Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John Part 2*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, vol. 5 of *Calvin's Commentaries*, 197.

72. Calvin, *Harmonia Ex tribus Euangelistis composita* . . ., sig. Pp1r–v.

73. "Nec minus credibile est posse vim corpoream ex spirituali substantia emitti, quàm spirituale quicquam posse ex corpore fieri; id quod et nostris corporibus in Resurrectione tandem futurum speramus" (OM 8:294).

74. As Erasmus says in his Paraphrase of John, when Jesus was mistaken by Mary Magdalene for a gardener, "Apparebat enim humili specie, ne subitò sua specie conspectus, mulierem expauefaceret" (He then appeared in a lowly form, lest, suddenly seen in his own form, he terrify the woman). Erasmus, *Paraphrasis . . . In Evangelium Ioannis* (Lyon, 1544), sig. Vu4v. See also his paraphrase of Luke 24: "Quod ingressus sum foribus clausis, q*uod* qu*u*m uolo co*n*spicior, quu*m* uolo sum inco*n*spicuus, non est præstigiu*m*, sed dos corporis iam immortalis facti. Talia erunt & uestra corpora post resurrectione*m*" (That I passed through closed doors, that when I wish I am visible, and when I wish I am invisible, is not a trick, but the gift of a body now made immortal. So will be even your bodies after the resurrection). Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis . . .*, sig. k6r.

75. Calvin, *In Omnes Pauli Apostoli Epistolas* (Geneva, 1556), sig. s3r.

76. "[Matt.] 22.30; *sunt ut angeli Dei in coelo*" (OM 8:894).

77. For Milton's various uses of *seem* and the proper way to interpret them, see Stephen Fallon, "The Uses of 'Seems' and the Spectre of Predestination," *Milton Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1987): 99–101. The exception to the rule occurs when God "seemed" (8.376) to order Adam to fellowship with the animals, but, as Fallon points out, God is testing Adam and will shortly reveal his plan to provide a human partner.

78. For Christological readings, see Timothy Windsor, "The Passional Dynamism of Milton's Phoenix Simile," *Milton Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2016): 14–20; and Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, 114, 293.

79. Bentley, ed., *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* sig. X3r.

80. See Machacek, *Milton and Homer*, 126–31, esp. 128, 130. "Just as the cosmological scale of Milton's universe dwarfs that of Homer and Virgil, so too does its historical scale. . . . Milton, in short, uses Homeric and Virgilian passages to establish a standard of sublimity which his own adaptations then thoroughly eclipse" (130). Machacek argues that Milton aims to depict the pagan poets as "imaginatively stunted" (130) in his pursuit of the Longinian sublime. I am suggesting, however, that the purpose of these passages is not simply to surpass the classics but to make a claim about reality.