

PROCLUS: COMMENTARY ON THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES (*fragments*)

1-THE INVISIBLE ORDERS

1. The ETERNAL orders consist of the temples and habitations of the Gods.

The PATERNAL order is the universally receptive Temple of the Father, which receives and unites all ascending souls.

The ANGELIC order's special purpose is to lead souls upward to the celestial regions. The Oracle calls this "appearing about the soul;" (enhaloing it); thoroughly illuminating it, filling it with intelligible fire, imparting to it tranquil and immutable order and poorer,, withdrawing it from material disorder, and transfiguring it with the light of divine things. This light further operates to retain it with its native divine sphere, purging it from admixture in matter, by fervor elevating the spirit, and raising it by means of the progressive (or *anagogic*) life. For the "heating" of the spirit imparts life to it. So the soul is elevated by hastening into the celestial region, while by gravitating downward it is carried into matter, which is the region of generation. The goal of the soul's ascent is to participate in the divine fruits, and to fill the soul with divine fire, which, placing it in the presence of the Father, produces contemplation of God,

2-HYMNS AS ELEVATORS

According to the Oracle, the soul is perfected by celebrating divine things. This results in carrying to the Father, and placing before him the Father's own ineffable symbols, which in the original progression of essences the Father himself had implanted in the soul.

3- SOUL'S TRIPLE POWERS & EYES

(Oracle: *The immortal depth of the soul should be the leader, but vehemently extend all your eyes upward.*)

II. This Oracle that the depth of the soul consists of its triple "gnostic" powers, which are intelligible, intellectual, and of the senses; but its threefold gnostic energies constitute all its eyes.

For as desire is the symbol of life, so is the eye the symbol of knowledge. Now each of these is three-fold. The earth, from which the heart must be raised, signifies all material and mutable things in generation: namely, the terrestrial life, and every corporeal form. To this, adds the Oracle, follows the contemplation of the Paternal Monad, which contemplation produces a pure joy; which intelligible survey produces a steady tranquility.

4 - VISION'S JOY PRODUCES HYMNS

This explains how contemplation's good is produced from the mingling of its natural accompaniment, apprehension and joy. For to every life whose energy is naturally liberated easily and quickly is allotted a concomitant pleasure.

(For we must not misunderstand the nature of hymns to) the Father. As He is alone incorruptible, his hymns (such as reach Him) must not be corruptible, consisting of compound discourses, or in preparations for sacred rites.

Therefore let us not imagine that the Master of true discourses could be persuaded by strange hurricanes of words, nor by ornamental parades parades in artificial rites: for God loves the simple, unadorned beauty of form. A hymn properly consecrated to God would therefore consist of assimilation to Him, becoming like Him. As the earthly sphere is of a transient nature, we must leave it, and come to the true goal: of *knowing* the Master, of *loving* the Father, obeying the one only calling; flying from frigidity, hastening to fervor.

Becoming fire, traveling through fire, we shall find an easy and quick way of ascending to the Father. He, on his side, will point out the ways of fire, and guide us therein, saving us from flowing along the downward stream of Lethe, the river of Oblivion.

5- REJECTION OF MORAL EXCREMENT

III. The body is the root of Evil, just as intellect is the root of Virtue. For Virtue blossoms for the souls in the celestial regions, but, in the region of matter, evil comes to souls from "the Worse." The soul will be enabled to proceed to wherever it may aspire by rejecting into the material region evils eliminated from our nature. Temporarily, the soul is allotted to the whole of generation, or the material nature, since *evils* are here, and of necessity revolve in and around this place. Our body is a part of generation, or the sphere of time and sense, but the other part, the soul, is able to act independently of the power of generation, but may not destroy it entirely, without destroying its own being, or essence. We must, therefore, merely reject the envy and jealousy into the material sphere whence the soul originally drew them, for matter is the nurse of these material things.

Now when we say "restraining the mind's tendency to the Worse," or "not entirely extinguishing them," we do not mean a mere temporary repression; for passions, when merely cooped up, heat up their container. So instead of "restraining," which retains what is dammed up, let us eject the passions. That is the meaning of the *oracle*: "Defile not the spirit through that which is hidden within."

Now envy is material, for it dwells with privation of goods, and any privation implies unproductive matter, or sterility. But the theurgic race is beneficent, and is devoted to a zealous imitation of the goodness of God, and is not drawn down to the contentions and enmity of men. But when passions are cooped up within souls they impart to the spirit a material character, lifelessness, and sterility.

6- PROCESS OF UNIFICATION

IV. The soul becomes able to recognise true or divine beings by living according to its intellectual power; it becomes able to know all things by simple and impartible intuitions by establishing itself in the intellectual life of its particular essence. It energizes enthusiastically, and is united to the super-intellectual substance by ascending to the One through combining and minimising all manifoldness within itself. For everywhere the similar may naturally be untied to the similar, and through similitude every cognition binds to the Knower that which is known, the perceptible to the

sensible object of perception, the intelligible to the intelligible; and similarly the intellect's flower to the pre-intellectual.

For as in everything else the highest is not intellect, but its superior cause, so also in the souls the original form of energy is not intellectual, but the superintellectual. Every soul and every intellect has energies that are two-fold, the unitary which are superintellectual, and the intellectual. This intelligible, which exists *per se*, as substance, must therefore be apprehended by closing our eyes to all other lives and powers. For as we; apprehend intellect by becoming intellectual, so we ascend to union by becoming uniform, standing on the characteristic summit of intellect. For the eye, which can see light from fire without undergoing any change, cannot see the sun without assuming a global form.

7- GOD AS SUPRA-RATIONAL

Moreover, it is plain that this intelligible cannot be apprehended by ratiocination. But, as says the Oracle, You will come into contact with this intelligible by intellectual intuitions, if you apply your intellect, and thus you will apprehend it as understanding some particular thing. That is, you cannot grasp this intelligible by laving hold or it according to a certain measure of form and knowledge. For though such simple intellections may exist, they lack the unitary simplicity of the intelligible, and verge into the intellect's secondary conditions, considering intelligible things from the stand-point of manifoldness. For as no object of knowledge can be known enough or by an inferior kind of knowledge, neither can something super-intellectual be grasped through intellect. For the intellect pounces on some object all at once, pronouncing that it is apprehended, which manifold dictum must necessarily be secondary to the intelligible.

8 -THE SUPREME AS TRANSCENDENT

Now if we apprehend this intelligible by our *intellect's flower*, this intelligible which is established on the summit of the First Intelligible Triad, are we then also somehow related to the One which is incoordinated with anything, and is imparticipable? The Oracle says that "*the first father hastily withdraws himself from intellect and power*", now then what is the nature-of that which does not need to be thus withdrawn, existing simply in simple withdrawal or isolation, and which is celebrated as the Primary Universal Father? Does the Oracle elsewhere say the same about the Primary Father? What is that which is above the First Power of the Sacred Reason, and which the Oracle announces is sacred? And if...

[in the original the mimeograph did not reproduce the following line]

9 - SILENCE THE SUPREME

Now if the Oracle calls the Emanating Reason a still more Ineffable Reason, then reason must necessarily have been preceded by a Silence, as its reason or productive cause; and a deifying cause prior to every sacred reason. Proceeding on the principle that all things are united, beyond the intelligibles must lie the intelligibles' reasons or productive principles; and even these intelligibles' productive principles must depend

from more ineffable unity, while even this silence prior to Intelligibles must depend from a Silence of Silent Intelligibles.

Perhaps, therefore, this intellect's flower is not the flower of our whole soul soul, though it is the most unitary, element of our intellectual life, and that the soul-flower is the union of our multiform psychical powers. For we are not merely intellect, but combine discursive reason, opinion, attention and will; and all these powers are subsumed under an essence combining divisible manifoldness with indivisible unity.

10- TWO-FOLDNESS OF INTELLECTION

The Emanating One is two-fold: the first of our powers is unity, or the soul-flower; which alone unites us to the Father of the Intelligibles. The second element is the *whole combination* of the centre and of all its various surrounding powers. "While the first is intellectual the second is apprehended by the Paternal Intellect according to its contained unity. But the unity into which all the psychical powers converge, unite and centre is naturally the only element to the Principle which is beyond all things, and which is the unifying power of all within us. So we are rooted, or essentially planted in this Principle; and because of this our rootage we can never be entirely estranged from our Cause, even though we may descend from the intelligible region.

11- REINCARNATION BASED ON MEMORY

V. Philosophy declares that a forgetfulness of eternal reasons is the cause of the soul's departure from the Gods; and that a reminiscence of the knowledge of the eternal reasons or ideas is the cause of the return to them. The Oracles however assert that the causes of the souls' departure and return are forgetfulness and reminiscence of the Paternal Symbols. These two statements however harmonize, in that the soul is constituted from *both* the intellectual reasons, which proceed from the intellectual species, and also from the divine symbols, which proceed from the divine unities; we are both images of the intellectual essences, and also statues of the unknown symbols.

Now as the soul, subsisting wholly or simply according to one cause is a formfulness or *pleroma*, so also does it participate in all symbols, through which it is united with divine things. Now the soul's subsistence in the One is separable, so that every manifoldness in the soul is directed into one peak.

12- SOUL-FORM IS BASED ON CHARACTER

It is important to realize that every soul differs from every other by its form, or individual character, and that there are as many souls as there are different species. For as the one subject nature participates to a varying extent in (the various parts of) one form, this one form will constitute a congeries of many individual, unitary forms; so also as soul-essence consists generally of reason and simple form, no one soul will essentially differ from any other; it will differ only according to character.

But as the soul is form alone, so every soul, though to the same degree replete with the same reasons, is yet allotted a form distinct from others. So the sun's form characterizes the solar Soul, just as every other soul is characterized by its individual form.