Book V: The European Middle Ages

I

The Beginnings of European Culture[1]

1. BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY

Great Byzantium . . . where nothing ever changes.

William Butler Yeats

I begin with an apology, for we shall pursue the history of Medieval thought in the West, and only in this context shall we occasionally refer to a Byzantine commentary or controversy that had some impact in the West. Why not an independent chapter, at least a chapter, on Byzantine philosophy?

In fact, there is very little Byzantine philosophy, as opposed to scholarship, to write about. The schools in which the intellectual work was done were restricted to providing education for the civil service, in the Imperial establishments, and the clergy, in the Patriarchal Schools. No independent universities such as emerged in the West in the 12th century were to be found, and no innovations in logic, metaphysics and philosophy of language, as in the West. The doctrinal disputes within which these disciplines were so fruitfully employed in the West were fought out in a different way in the East. Disputes were settled with a certain finality. In the West, a multiplicity of views could coexist, even when many of them were frowned upon by the Hierarchy. The rivalry between Church and state provided places of refuge even to such dissidents as Scottus Eriugena and William Ockham. Perhaps more important, from early on, the recognition of the authority of Augustine combined with the initial poor understanding of his more radical theses meant that the Augustinian controversies over faith and reason, grace, original sin, free will, and predestination continued to be fought out, rather inconclusively, in European scholarship. Moreover, by the 11th century, with the writings of Anselm, the attempt to develop a purely rational and philosophical deduction of as much of the Faith as possible had

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[1]A very nice summary of the development of medieval thought in the West is to be found in Steven P. Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," in McGrade (2003). For the early period through the 11th century, good is Armstrong (1970). For Medieval philosophy in the west in general, I have used Copleston (1961), (1962), (1963), and (1974), Gilson (1955), Leff (1958), and Weinberg (1964).

become established in the West as a permissible project, whereas in the East it was always regarded with suspicion, and a defense of the logical possibility of the Faith was as much as was generally expected from a philosopher. Late Antique Platonism as it developed in the 12th century in the West found itself significantly at odds with what appeared to many to be orthodoxy, and the introduction of Aristotle and the ideas of the Islamic and Jewish Neoplatonists in the 13th century enriched these conflicts with new metaphysical and epistemological alternatives. The environment in the West, then, from early on, provided a multiplicity of theoretical options, and the extent and continuity of scholarship after 1000 was impressive.

Scholarship in the Eastern Empire was much more under the thumb of the state, for the collapse of central government that occurred in the West did not happen here, there was no conflict between Church and state to provide shelter to dissidents, and the monks and local communities never established their independence and their right to argue for their own view of things. The Church was one department of the state, and the state looked above all for unity in its doctrine. In the conviction that the chief task was to preserve what could be kept of the past, in an environment in which few theoretical options were available for exploration, scholarship was almost entirely of an antiquarian sort, with an occasional dissident thinker standing out, but never establishing a tradition of thought like the Aristotelianism beginning in the 13th century, or Nominalism in the 14th, in the West. Scholarship survived as a hobby indulged in by some in the upper classes. Christian doctrine in the Eastern Empire, being perfect already, needed no further discussion. Nor were governmental institutions open to criticism—there is no contribution to political philosophy in the whole of the Byzantine period after Justinian.

In the early centuries the Eastern Empire, in particular after the Muslim incursions, suffered much the same de-urbanization as the West did, and we find little in the way of architectural remains of Byzantine culture after the 7th century, but the destruction did not extend to major institutions. The Byzantine Empire clung to its past, as all power devolved into the hands of its Emperor. Innovation of any kind became suspect, for the glory of Rome could not be surpassed, it could only be preserved, and any innovation represented a simple departure from what was good. One could only wait for the end, however long that may be delayed, after which God would set things right in the new world. But even in that world, as one historian has noted, development was forbidden, for the doctrine of purgatory was rejected by the Eastern Church—no growth was

to be found in this life, or expected in the next.[2]

But let us survey what there is to survey. From the early period we should note especially the *Fount of Knowledge* of **John of Damascus (ca. 675–749)**, a patchwork of selections from earlier texts which became the standard summa of theology in the Orthodox Church. The first part of this work was translated by Robert Grosseteste in the 13th century as the *Dialectica*. It is a logical and metaphysical dictionary for theologians, drawing chiefly on the Late Neoplatonic logical syllabus. The second part, also translated by Grosseteste, is a history of heresies, following the *Panarion* of Epiphanius verbatim, then adding supplementary chapters on Islam and the Iconoclasts. The third part is a summa of theology, translated in the West on four different occasions as *De Fide Orthodoxa*. Drawing on Burgundio's translation (1235–40), the first of these, Peter Lombard makes frequent use of the work in his *Sentences*. John was known in particular for his opposition to the Iconoclasts, and regarded as a saint in the East from the 9th century. His views follow those of the Cappadocians and Pseudo-Dionysus.[3]

A flowering of scholarly activity, rather like that in Charlemagne's court in the West, occurred 840-960. The chief figure here is **Photios (ca. 810-after 893)**, Patriarch of Constantinople, who was interested in Aristotle's *Categories*, and rejected separated Platonic Forms.[4] He wrote on the Trinity in the *filioque* dispute, using an Aristotelian view of substance to develop his arguments, but his most noted work was a huge compilation of Greek literature, the *Library* (*Bibliotheke*), in which, for instance, what we have of Aenesidemus's *Pyrrhonian Discourses* happens to be preserved. The Emperor Leo VI the Wise, at the end of 9th century, was a student of Photius, and, like Charlemagne, made his court a home for scholars. Although the history of scholarship in the Byzantine Empire is continuous with that of Later Antiquity, cultural decline after the collapse of the West threatened the loss of many more advanced texts. The introduction of a minuscule script and a deliberate rescue program with Imperial support led to the preservation of many books that might otherwise have been lost. **Leo the Mathematician (ca. 790-after 869)** became famous even outside the bounds of the

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[2]Cyril Mango (2002), *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, pp. 6–9. For the sketch of Byzantine thought following here, I have used especially Katerian Ierodiakonou's 2008 article in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on the internet.

[3]Florovsky (1987) 254-92, provides an excellent discussion of John's theology. For translations of John's writings, see John of Damascus (1958) (1972) (1980).

[4]He held that the substantial form of a material particular was corporeal, though not itself a particular body. Moreover, the form does not add existence and form to preexisting matter. It is, taken as a universal, a secondary substance, an idea or word that designates the substance of a particular, though what is designated here, a primary substance, is a reality. Hence the term 'substance' is ambiguous. Tatakes (2003).

Empire, and he taught Aristotelian logic in Constantinople in addition to mathematics. **Arethas of Patras (ca. 850-932/44)**, Bishop of Caesaria, edited and commented on Plato and Aristotle, in particular the *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge*, and was instrumental in the preservation of Plato's dialogues.

The Late Ancient syllabus was in place at the time, and continued to the end. It focused on the elementary parts of Aristotle's logic, the *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, with the theory of assertoric syllogisms in *Prior Analytics* I 1-7, *Sophistic Elenchi* 1-7, and sometimes *Posterior Analytics* II, supplemented with extracts from Aristotle's physical works, Nicomachus and the first six books of Euclid. The peculiar development of the "disputed question" in the West did not happen here—the necessary background of instructional logical gaming was no doubt absent. The philosophical literature that emerged in each of the three major periods of activity generally took the form of dialogues, often with a polemical element, in imitation of Plato or Lucian, and collections of essays in imitation of Plutarch. There were also numerous compendia and encyclopedias of various sorts produced to reduce the efforts required in learning the syllabus, as well as paraphrases modeled on Themistius.

A second period of scholarly activity occurred 1040 to 1140, again beginning with a renewal of Imperial interest in the school at Constantinople. Before the 12th century, Byzantine commentaries on Aristotle were restricted to the logical works, but after 1118 Anna Komnene commissioned from **Eustratios of Nicaea** and **Michael of Ephesos** a number of commentaries on non-logical works. This effort remained exceptional, but still Eustratios became for the Latins the Commentator on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* I and VI, as well as *Posterior Analytics* II, and Michael commented on *Metaphysics* 7-14 (the commentary falsely attributed to Alexander), on the *Generation of Animals* (the commentary falsely attributed to Philoponus), and others of the biological works. The commentaries did not raise the sorts of controversies raised in the "question-commentaries" in the West from the 13th century on, except in a few cases imitative of the Western tradition, most notably Eustratios's commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II.

In 1045 the University of Constantinople was established in a new Imperial effort. **Michael Psellos (1018-after 1081)**, who much admired Proclus, was the most important representative of the faculty of that school. **Theodore of Smyrnos (died after 1112)** was author of a work on Physics, which survives but is unpublished as yet. **John Italos (ca. 1025-after 1082)** was tried and condemned in 1082 by the Church for

advocating the use of philosophy and logic in the discussion and clarification of theological issues.[5] The objectionable views seem most evident in a collection of 93 questions, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* posed to him by his students, where he argues for the view that theology is a part of philosophy, since its highest aim is to understand the First Principle. He remained an object example in the Orthodox Church to this day. On the first Sunday in Lent his condemnation is read during the Mass. Here one might compare the fate of John Scottus Eriugena in the West, whose work fascinated many thinkers as an example of the philosophical project actually worked out in an elaborate and attractive system, however they might question its orthodoxy, or the work of Anselm, who carried out the same project with more attention to maintaining the orthodoxy of his results. But John Italos seems only to have proposed the possibility of such a thing, not to have attempted it, and that was enough to attract the decisive intervention of the Church in the East.

Italos's discussion of universals has received some attention from historians. His views depend on a three-fold distinction on universals found in the later Neoplatonic tradition. It occurs first in Ammonius's 5th-century discussion of *On Interpretation*, then in Elias and David, Olympiodorus, and Philoponus's *On the Categories*, and is also found in Photios and Arethas, as well as Psellos in the Byzantine tradition. This division posits "genera before particulars," the ideas in God's mind or Plato's Forms, "genera in particulars," Aristotle's immanent substantial forms, and "genera after particulars," concepts applicable to particulars formed in the mind from acquaintance with them. Italos modifies the division a little, taking the last two items as both of them dependent on particulars, while the Forms in God's mind, of course, are there before the particulars that instantiate them are created. Both are acquired by the mind through abstraction (he seems to mean that there are both general concepts, genera "after particulars," and concepts of individuals which include in them the nature of the particular represented by them, genera "in particulars"), but both are also inseparable from their particulars (they cannot come into existence without particulars and require them as their intensional objects). The genera in particulars are each of them inseparable from a *particular* individual, and they are, as it were, themselves particular, though not substances. Indeed, those in individuals are predicable, each of them, of just one individual. So the animal in Socrates is not the animal in Plato, but the animal after Socrates *is* the same as the animal after Plato, and is universal, inasmuch as it is predicable of many distinct things. There have been different interpretations of Italos's intention here, but it looks as if he takes the universal to be a concept, and

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[5]He does not seem to have differed much from other scholars in his particular doctrines, and he is praised by Anna Komnene in her *Alexiad*, chronicling the reign of her father Alexios I (1081–1118).

reads the claim that a genus is in, not merely abstracted from, particulars to mean that there are, in addition to universal concepts, also individual forms, similar to one another, constituting particular things, each of which can be associated with only one thing. He does *not* take it to mean that there is something in the particular which, as it were, migrates into or reproduces itself in the intellect when a concept is formed by abstraction.[6] Nonetheless, Italos allows the concept can subsist only in dependence on the corporeal thing that it represents, and so is *incidentally* corporeal, though not corporeal in itself. Indeed, they are corporeal because they are in the corporeal particulars of which they are predicated, given the reading he has assigned to "in" here.[7]

Nicholas of Methone (d. ca. 1160/66) wrote a refutation of the *Elements of Theology* in defense of Christian Doctrine, attacking, for instance, the view that the Principle is pure unity, in defense of the Trinity. Proclus was the most important of the Ancients to refute, since he was admired especially by Psellos and his students. This second flowering of scholarship came to an end when the Western Crusaders took Constantinople in 1204. The center of studies shifted to a new Imperial school in Nicaea.

The third period of activity was the early Palaiologan, 1259–1341, inaugurated by the recapture of Constantinope in 1261. Once more the Emperor took an interest in the Imperial School at Constantinople, which pursued, in particular, astronomical studies. The Patriarchal School, however was also productive of important scholars from this time on, in particular, **George Pachymeres (1242-ca. 1310)**, who wrote several compendia, and a continuation of Proclus's commentary on the *Parmenides*, a continuation which differs sharply with the methods and views of Proclus himself. At this same time a number of Latin philosophical works, including Boëthius's *On Hypothetical Syllogisms* and *On Topical Differences*, were translated by **Manuel Holobolos**, and **Maximos Planoudes**. The influence of these translations was slight.

The most important figure in the Imperial School in this late period was probably **Theodoros Metochites (1270-1332)**, who wrote an *Introduction* to Ptolemaic astronomy, as well as a diverse collection of 120 brief essays on philosophical topics and paraphrases of Aristotle's natural works. His student, **Nikephoros Gregoras (1293/94–1360/61)**, was also notable, and **Barlaam of Calabria (c. 1290–1348)**, who was learned not only in Ancient philosophy and mathematics, but also in the philosophy of the West, and

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[6]The notion that the immanent form in the particular is a particular, not also found in other particulars, is found in Syrianus, and his pupil, Proclus. It would seem to capture Aristotle's own intentions.

[7]See Italos's *Quodlibetal Questions* 5 (the three-fold distinction), 3, 19, 31 (that genera are real beings), 8 (the two senses of 'corporeal').

wrote, among a good deal else, certain *Anti-Latin Treatises*.

Thessalonika in the 14th century was home to **Gregory Palamios**, and the development of Hesychasm, the "prayer of the heart," from the practice of retiring from the senses to experience God, established in the East from the 5th century. The practice as recorded in the Desert Fathers was supplemented with the "prayer of Jesus," using the *Christe eleison* as a chant to be recited continuously in the heart in order to bring about internal peace. It emphasizes humility, and was supposed to lead to the experience of the light manifested to Jesus's disciples at his transfiguration. Gregory defended the practice, and in 1351, obtained full recognition of its orthodoxy by connecting it to Ps.-Dionysius, and deploying a sophisticated discussion of the distinction between essence (*ousia*) and activity (*energeia*) to answer the accusation that the light supposedly experienced by the Hesychast must be a second God, since God is not visible. He held that the energies or operations of God are uncreated and Divine, but nonetheless distinguishable from God's essence, so that the experience of His energies leaves his essence still unknown. In arguing his point Gregory insisted on the skeptical view that general facts about the natural world, as opposed to specific observable events, were only knowable through the Holy Spirit. Gregory's chief opponent, Barlaam of Calabria, left the Orthodox Church in the end, rather than give over his accusation of heresy, and eventually became a Catholic Bishop.

Plethon also lived at this end-time in the Peloponnese. A secular scholar, he defended a Platonist form of Christianity, which he ended up lecturing about in Florence when there as part of an embassy to discuss re-uniting the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. He contributed strongly to the new Platonist movement in Renaissance Italy. His work, *The Differences between Plato and Aristotle* was answered by **George Scholarius** in his *Defence of Aristotle*, to which Plethon replied, and the resulting controversy ended up involving a number of Scholars both in the West and the East. These developments will be taken up later in their place.[8] Here, though, we should at least note that the tradition of secular scholarship maintained itself somehow right through the Middle Ages in Byzantium, and, despite its general lack of originality, it preserved parts of the Greek tradition not preserved in the West, and contributed to the new learning of the 15th and 16th centuries.

2. IRELAND AND ENGLAND

Though their false hope and imagination lead fools to believe that power and

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[8]See Book VI, Chapter I.

> wealth are the highest good, yet it is quite otherwise… by means of these
> worldly goods and the wealth of this life we oftener make foes than friends.
>
> Alfred the Great of England

The recovery of the Classical intellectual tradition in the West began, not in the old centers of Italy and Gaul, but in Ireland, and then England,[9] and this precisely because these lands lay at the edge of the once civilized world. Because of that position, they were less attractive targets for the barbarian invaders that destroyed the Roman civilization, and, as newcomers to Roman culture, they took an intense pride in it. Ireland and England held the intellectual lead in Europe for more than 200 years, from the late 6th to the to the end of the 8th century, when learning was revived on the continent under Charles Martel and Charlemagne. This revival was partly responsible for the decline of learning in the islands in the 9th century, for missionary efforts on the continent drained away the best men from what was always a small pool of scholars, but the Norsemen, who finally put an end to the island's security, must bear the chief blame for this decline.[10]

According to legend, Ireland was converted by Patrick and Palladius. **Patrick (385-461)**, the English son of a decurion, was captured by pirates and sold in Ireland as a slave. He worked as a shepherd at Antrim for six years, and then, in response to a vision, walked 200 miles to the coast, and found a ship in which he returned home to England. After receiving religious training in Gaul, he returned to Ireland as a missionary in 432, one year after the arrival of Palladius, the Pope's representative and Bishop.[11] Patrick went straight to Tara, converted the Kings, and then concentrated on establishing a native clergy. The Druids and older elements of the population opposed the new religion, but by Patrick's death most of Ireland was Christian. Or so goes the story of the Irish hagiographers in the 8th century and after. Probably Patrick made much less headway than these biographers, seizing on a colorful early missionary as their national saint, liked to think. But even so, it is clear that a number of monasteries arose in Ireland the century after his work.[12] Irish Christianity probably resulted from the work of British priests, of whom Patrick might have been one, seeking refuge from

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[9]For the Irish and English flowering of learning, see Laistner (1931) Chapter V.

[10]The Irish were called Scotti until the 11th century, when Scots began to be called by that name, and the Irish began to be called Hiberni, or *Peregrini* ("wanderers") on the continent.

[11]The earlier accounts say nothing about the pope's authorizing Patrick's mission. Later versions, written after the rapprochement of Rome and Britain, claim that the pope did authorize it.

[12]Laistner (1931) 138-139.

the Saxons, of Gaulish priests seeking refuge from the Germanic invasions, and possibly also of some Greek religious who brought with them both a language and texts not found elsewhere in Europe at that time.[13]

The Christianity thus established was entirely monastic. The diocesan organization of Roman lands developed from Roman administrative units. No such units ever existed in Ireland, and so the clergy were monks, not diocesan priests. Irish monasteries, moreover, were associated with the clans—each provided educational and religious services, including those elsewhere provided by the diocesan ministry, to that clan from which it drew its monks. The clergy were married, and formally the abbot was elected by the clan he served. The abbacy tended in fact to be hereditary, or at least closely held in the leading family, each abbot, usually, choosing his successor. The monks and their abbot lived together on clan lands in a group of huts, some performing manual labor, some studying, and some living as recluses, for the Irish were given to asceticism. Nearby clan members owed duties and protection, and the abbot might be a secular ruler as well, even a king. Abbeys participated in war, and even fought one another, monks sacking monasteries and killing monks. There were Bishops, who would serve an entire region and several clans, but they usually lived in the monasteries, though it does not seem they owed the abbot obedience. Though the title was largely honorary, a bishop had a higher wergeld[14] than the abbot. The rule of the Irish monasteries was quite harsh, judging by the surviving rule of St. Columban at Bangor, and, perhaps oddly, followed the Mosaic laws closely. By the 6th century the more severe monks were seeking out desert places, and many monasteries were thus established on islands, the Shetlands and Hebrides.

The Celts had their own ancient learned class, with schools of literature, history and law. There were recognized degrees, and a first-rate scholar's wergeld might match that of a petty king. Their poetry was end-rhymed, a technique that spread throughout Europe, often lyric, and generally hyperbolic and long-winded. There was native script, Ogan, in which we have some 360 inscriptions in old Celtic. The monks of the new religion naturally saw themselves as the Christian equivalent of learned men in their own Celtic tradition. These Christian scholars had their own script, of course. The half-uncial of the 5th and 6th centuries, the earliest Latin script in Ireland and England, originated in Western Gaul, and was later reintroduced there, forming the basis of the Carolingian minuscule. The separation of words in writing was first introduced by the Anglo-Irish in the

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[13]Cantor (1993) 162.

[14]A person's wergeld was the amount of money that his relatives were required to accept in satisfaction from the killer in case he was killed, the intent being to forestall a blood feud. In practice, then, one's wergeld was a rough measure of one's social status.

8th century. The books that formed the basis of Irish scholarship into the Carolingian period must have come for the most part into Ireland in the 5th and 6th centuries from Gaul, before the Saxons in England cut Ireland off from the continent.

Irish Christian scholarship echoed the Celtic tradition. There was no systematic philosophy or theology, but much in the way of poetry, chronicles, and biblical commentary of the allegorical sort, and some hagiography and excerpting from the Fathers. Greek was known and taught, and Latin was learned directly from the classical authors—since the vulgar tongue was not a form of Latin, one had to turn to written texts to learn the language. When the Irish and English spread their brand of scholarship to the continent, they introduced the practice of shaping one's Latinity through reading in the Classics, and the gulf between learned Latin and vulgar Latin merging into Old French opened wider. No doubt, as the monk saw it, if he was to practice the new religion he needed to master a new set of heroic poems embodied in the Bible and paralleling the traditional Irish literature, and even another set beyond that, embodied in classical Latin literature, and so he had to learn the language in which these poems were written. Indeed, classical literature may have seemed more like his own heroic literature than the *Bible* did, and the *Old Testament* would certainly have been more familiar than the *New*. God would have been seen as a great warrior to which one swore fealty, someone who performed mighty deeds.

In zealous pursuit of austerities, and imitation of the saints, the Irish monks sought out remote places, and proselytized their neighbors. They spread first to Scotland, then to the North of England. A Pictish king converted by St. Columba provided the island of Iona for a monastery. Born in 520 in Donegal, **Columba** was descended on both sides from kings, and in the traditional order of the learned poets. As a youth he wandered from one monastery to another, and was involved in some wars with King Dermot. He founded Iona in 563, and was abbot there until his death in 597. From Iona some 30 monasteries were established in Scotland, and another 30 or so in Ireland. These establishments were regarded as colonies, all of them ruled by Iona's abbot.[15] More important, from Iona, Lindisfarne was established in Northumbria. Pope Gregory had sent Paulinus to convert Edwin of Northumbria in 627, but when Edwin was killed in 633 by Welsh Christians and Mercian Pagans, his successors refused to follow his lead. Northern England was in fact converted from Iona when King Oswald defeated Edwin's successors in 634, and invited St. Aidan to Northumbria, giving him Lindisfarne as a site for a monastery. Many more Irish monasteries in Northumbria followed.

The English Church, no doubt founded by continental missionaries, had been healthy and in the

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[15]Adamnan wrote a life of St. Columban around 690.

mainstream until 410, when the legions withdrew into Gaul. The Saxons then began to settle in England, and cut the Welsh-Irish Church off from contact with the East, so that the Irish Church continued to hold to the old date of Easter after the new methods of computation were developed at Alexandria, and used an old rite of baptism. The Irish monks also wore an old-fashioned tonsure, and penance was worked out in private between the Abbot and the offender, with set penalties for various sins, as opposed to the Gaulic practice of public penance. (This last practice, unlike the others, had a future. It was introduced into Gaul by St. Columban[16] and caught on there.) At first the English church maintained contact with Gaul, calling on its bishops, for instance, for help against the spread of Pelagianism, and so attracting missions to Britain in 429 and 447. But by the end of the 5th century the situation became quite gloomy, and as Saxon strength grew the church seemed cut off and in danger of destruction. Even after a decisive defeat of the Saxons around 500, the English continued to be split into warring Pagan kingdoms, and the Church grew ever weaker and more isolated in the chaos.

But **Gregory the Great** at Rome saw the future of the Papacy in the West, and, apprised of an opportunity there, did not hesitate to attempt the establishment of an English church. England was by then largely Pagan, but Ethelbert of Kent, the most powerful king in England at the time, had wedded the Christian Berta, daughter of Charibert of Paris, who brought with her her own chaplain, the bishop Liudhard. In 597 Augustine was sent to convert Ethelbert of Kent, with the reluctant agreement of the Irish church, for the Irish and Welsh, of course, hated the Saxons. The effort may have been the fruition of a wish long considered, for it is said that Gregory, viewing some Angle slaves for sale, asked who they were. Upon being told they were Angles, he said, "*non angli sed potius angeli*," "not Angles, but rather angels," and resolved to convert them. Whatever prompted Gregory to send his embassy, the King met it under an open sky, for fear of sorcery, for he had been told about the miracles of the Saints, but he ended by giving the embassy Canterbury (Kent-burg) as their seat. Heathen feasts were turned to the honor of the new god, and fanes were consecrated priests. The religion caught on fast, and even kings became monks.

The English, except in the North, may have been converted by Gauls and Italians, but they still recognized the superiority of Irish Scholarship throughout the first half of the 7th century. Agilbert, for instance, who became bishop of Paris and contributed to the conversion of England, had, like many other English, gone to Ireland to study scripture, and observe the stricter monastic discipline. But the influence of the Irish was waning, and to the minds of the British, their isolation from Rome had put them behind the times. **Wilfrid**,

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[16]Columban and Columba are not the same person.

a British monk of noble lineage at Lindisfarne, became leader of the movement to reform the Irish practices. After study in Rome and Lyons, he returned to Northumbria in 658, and gained the King's ear, as well as the abbacy of Ripon in 661. His efforts finally resulted in the Synod of Whitby in 664, a gathering of both clergy and laymen, where his arguments were chiefly responsible for convincing the Irish to change the date of Easter and give up the old tonsure. This may have represented a reunion of the Irish with the Roman Church but it was scarcely a thoroughgoing reform, for the Irish kept their married clergy and the peculiar organization of their monasteries. Moreover, the Irish missionaries at Lindisfarne withdrew to Iona after the victory of Wilfrid's party. In their view Wilfrid and Rome had won the fight for Northumbria, and they no longer felt welcome there.[17]

In the end England was returned to the Church by the work of envoys from the continent, not by the Irish, despite their efforts in the North. Once the English Church became active, it proved more effective than the Irish in converting its neighbors. The Irish went far afield in establishing their monasteries, and were charismatic as only true ascetics can be, so that they would impress the nobles and establish an initial foothold in Pagan populations. But after that things did not usually go as well. Their monasteries remained dependent on their mother houses for support and recruitment, both as a matter of policy (they were viewed as colonies to be administered from the mother house) and because the Irish discipline was too strict for many otherwise enthusiastic local Christians to tolerate. They never saw the necessity for building an independent, self-regenerating, native priesthood, and their monasteries persisted as isolated establishments in a sea of Paganism. Hence the real conversion of the populace was generally carried out by the Anglo-Saxons, even if they arrived after the Irish.

But there were other, more political, reasons at work as well. The Roman clergy must have seen the native kingdoms of the English as hopelessly small and disorganized affairs, certainly not the sort of government they were accustomed to for support of the Church. The Bishops, sometimes no doubt unconsciously, and sometimes by design, influenced the stronger powers to seek a hegemony over all the English and set up a proper Kingdom, with proper laws, and above all, a proper system of taxation allowing public largesse to the Church, to maintain large monasteries, cathedrals, and all the pomp appropriate to the office of Bishop. With the arrival of the Roman Bishops and their advice to the local rulers, there arose a new system of taxation, and the Church began to throw its support quite consistently to the most likely candidate for bringing England into

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[17]Corbett (1913) 553 ff.

unity.[18]

In England, meanwhile, a native scholarship fostered by Rome grew up, which came to surpass the Irish. **Aldhelm (ca. 639 – 709)**, born in Wessex and a nephew of the King, studied under an Irish monk from whom he seems to have learned in both the Latin and the Celtic traditions, and then under Hadrian at Canterbury. He became a noted poet, experimenting with many meters, his work including a collection of 100 *Aenigmata* (Riddles) in hexameters that were much imitated in the following century. Aldhelm particularly encouraged the study of grammar with sacred scripture in view, after the pattern established by Cassian. He became abbot of Malmesbury in 675.

An Irish theological author, **Augustinus Hibernicus**, wrote around 655 a work *On the Miracles in Sacred Scripture*, in which he argued quite explicitly, from a thorough analysis of Scripture depending on Patristic commentary, that God had created all the natures of things in the beginning and whatever miracles are reported in scripture are consistent with those natures.[19] So, for instance, when God changed the waters of the Nile to blood in an instant, or Christ changed water to wine, they simply exploited the natural process by which water becomes blood or wine in the usual course of events, but over a longer period of time. This account of miracles may seem radically naturalistic, but in fact one finds it, for instance, in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*, where the point is not to emphasize naturalism, but to point out that everyday events in accord with nature are themselves 'miraculous,' revealing the power of God just as much as miracles do. The description of miracles as an acceleration of the processes of nature is also found in St. Augustine, who says in *On Genesis* that the *rationes seminales* of things can work at a normal pace, or be speeded up in their natural course of development immeasurably by the power of God. These theologians conceived a miracle as a violation of the usual course of events, revealing God's direct intervention, but not as a violation of the natures of created things. Perhaps originally intended was a reply to Neoplatonic criticism, which claimed that God *could* not violate nature, for the *Bible* does not say that God through his omnipotence violates nature, indeed, his power is revealed openly only in creation, which *produces* nature, and in speeding up natural processes on certain special occasions. Again, human beings are by nature capable of immortality, as well as death, and resurrection is rooted in the nature

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[18]For this, and much else relating to the English conversion, see Corbett (1913).

[19]Bracken (1998), and Smyth (2008), for detailed and interesting accounts. Augustinus gives the date, and says that the work was done under commission. It survived largely because it was, for a while, taken to be St. Augustine's. "*Liber de ordine creaturarum*," which is soon to appear in Scriptores Latini Hiberniae with a translation by Smyth, was written about the same time, and discusses the nature of the soul. As for *On the Miracles*, see Fr G. MacGinty, "The treatise *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*: critical edition, with introduction, English translation of the long recension and some notes" (unpublished PhD thesis, National University of Ireland 1971, 2 vols).

of dead matter, which becomes a living thing whenever an embryo forms. Augustinus reviews all the miracles in Scripture, giving an account in accord with this view of each. In particular, he reviews all the instances of resurrection and return from the dead, assuming that the spiritual body is material, though very light, so that it can be supported by air, in the middle of which it will meet Jesus. Lazarus, he holds, did not actually die, since death is final, but only appeared to do so. Elijah and Moses, on the other hand, temporarily returned from the grave when they spoke with Jesus in view of the disciples, but they then returned there, with their spiritual bodies, remaining dead to await the permanent resurrection of the body in the last days. They rose in a likeness of the resurrection, not as partakers of the resurrection itself, just as Lazarus suffered a likeness of death, not death itself. St. Augustine had distinguished between resurrection, and such temporary *suscitatio*.[20] The picture is very like that of the Neoplatonists, in which ghosts leave the grave clothed in the remnants of the material body, though that body is coarse and earthy, so that it cannot rise into the air. The possibility of a soul persisting with no body at all simply does not occur to Augustinus. Augustinus's book continued to be read and used through the Carolingian Renaissance, though his more theoretical discussions seem to be disregarded on the continent. One interesting application of his theory in Ireland occurs in the legend of Cuchulain, the gigantic chieftain who was resuscitated from death by St. Patrick at his barrow, and, when he begged for help, was baptized, so that he would, after returning to the tomb, share in the resurrection of the dead to eternal life at the end of time.

In 669, the new Bishop of Canterbury, the Greek **Theodore of Tarsus**, arrived from Rome with the charge of imposing central control on the British church. Upon his arrival he found resistance from Wilfrid, in York, who wanted to carry out such reforms himself, but gained temporary control of the situation when he brought under his influence Egfrith, the new king of Northumbria, in 671.[21] Egfrith then got himself into a war with Mercia, and in 679 Ethelbert of Mercia won such a decisive victory that Northumbria went into permanent eclipse, and Mercia came to the fore in English affairs. Theodore could see which way the wind blew and taking another tack, abandoned the prospects of Kent, and allied himself with Mercia. He worked with Abbot Hadrian to form a cathedral school at Canterbury which became the center of scholarship in Southern England. Hadrian took advantage of the Bishop's skills to introduce the study of Greek. Under Theodore's successful reorganization monasteries were established under the Benedictine rule in the North (after the Irish conversion of the area) at St. Peter's at Wearmouth in 674 and St. Paul's in Jarrow in 682 by Benedict Biscop

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[20]Augustine, *Epistle* 102.3.

[21]For the political side of Theodore, see Corbett (1913) 556-560.

(ca. 628-690). Biscop, one time Thane of King Oswiu of Northumbria, became a monk at Lérins in 666/7. He brought in books and art from his repeated trips to Italy, and made Jarrow in particular a center of learning. All of this was a result of deliberate policy at Rome. The English Church was to be made as prestigious as possible, and the Irish Church was to be brought into obedience to the Pope if the prestige of Rome with the Irish could possibly accomplish that.

The most noted scholar in England was **Bede**, whose *History of the English Church and People* (731) and lives of the saints provide us with much of our information on the period. He was born in 672, and offered to Benedict Biscop as an oblate at seven years of age, at Wearmouth. He went to Jarrow when it was founded, and settled there, never traveling much. He mastered all the scholarly knowledge available in his time and place, though this did not yet include dialectic, logic or philosophy. He wrote an *Opera Didascalica* (Works of Teaching), a *De rerum natura* (On the Nature of Things), a work on the seasons and another on the date of Easter. In all of this he depended a good deal on Isidore of Seville, supplementing his information from what other sources he could scare up. But these are side interests. The bulk of his writing is biblical commentary, mostly on the *Old Testament*, but also on *Mark*, *Luke*, and *Acts*. He gives more than the usual attention to the literal meaning, and credits his borrowed interpretations and allegories to the fathers from whom he got them, an unusual practice at the time. Most of this work is a matter of preserving, excerpting and systematizing material recorded in scarce manuscripts, or manuscripts borrowed from abroad, to give it wider circulation. There is little original thought here, and Bede systematically removes scientific and philosophical digressions from the works of the Fathers that he excerpts for his exegesis of Scripture. His historical work, on the other hand, *is* original and excellent. He wrote several chronological works on the pattern of Eusebius, and is responsible for the Western habit of dating from the birth of Christ. He traces British history back to Rome and Christianity, not its heroic pagan past. Bede, grown famous as a scholar, died in 735, just as **Alcuin of York** was born. Boniface wrote to Egbert of York requesting that a complete set of his works be sent to him in Gaul. Egbert, Archbishop in York after Bede, developed the cathedral school there into the leading cultural center in England. In 767 Aelbert succeeded Egbert, and Alcuin became the leading scholar at York.

3. MEROVINGIAN GAUL

It was in Gaul that the foundations of European Civilization were laid after the collapse of the Western

Roman Empire.[22] From 482 to 511 Clovis led the Franks across the Meuse and occupied northern Gaul, establishing the Merovingian Empire. He converted to Orthodox Christianity in 496, to gain more readily the allegiance of the Roman Gauls (who considerably outnumbered their conquerors), and to obtain the support of the Church with its economic and governmental power.[23] He drove the Visigoths south of the Pyrenees, his successors conquered Provence and Burgundy, and by 539 the Merovingians ruled the entire area once governed by Rome between the Alps and the Pyrenees. But the Kingdom, treated as a personal possession to be divided among the King's sons, fell apart as quickly as it had come together, and by 561 the Franks were divided into Burgundy, Neustria and Austrasia, this last Kingdom being established on the banks of the Rhine. Moreover, the notion that the Kingdom was a personal possession meant that the King generally felt no responsibility at all to do any good for his subjects. The Merovingians are marked by their extravagant vices and murderous instincts towards their kin (reducing the number of one's brothers always made one's own share larger), not by any project aimed at the public good. The old Roman system of taxation was kept, but, administered ever more poorly, by 600 it produced almost no revenue at all.

The most notable writer of these barren years was certainly **Gregory of Tours (538-594)**, author of the *History of the Franks*, which is our only real source for the Merovingian age. Gregory became Bishop of Tours in 573. His history deals with events from the creation to 511 in its first two books, the history of the Franks to 573 in the next two, and the period from 573 to 591 in the remaining six, the period for which he had first hand information. His prose is unpretentious and he fills his history with interesting tales and biographical portraits, Saint's lives and miraculous events. He is careful when recording his own time to give his sources and get the facts straight, though he has very little conception of the broader causes of events.

Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 535–ca. 600), the greatest poet of the age, is the only other literary figure of Merovingian Gaul worth noting. He was educated at Ravenna during the reign of Theodoric, and left there, he says, to make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Martin after the saint cured his eyesight. After making his way to Tours he met Agnes and Radegund at Poitiers, who ran an abbey there, and they became fast friends. He became a priest in 590, Bishop of Poitiers in 597. Fortunatus had a facility for pleasing occasional poems composed on a large variety of topics.

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[22]For Gaul before the arrival of Alcuin, see Pirenne (1939), Havighurst (1976), Cantor (1993), Laistner (1931) Chapter VI.

[23]The Burgundians had become Catholic in 430, but were badly beaten up by the Huns, and never threatened to unify Gaul.

It was in these years, too, that the Irishman, **St. Columban**,[24] Leinster born and a monk of Bangor, a scholar with some acquaintance with classical authors, pursued his spectacular missionary career. He wandered to England first, and then arrived in Gaul with a few disciples in 590, the year Gregory the Great became Pope. A striking man, he pleased King Gontran of Burgundy, grandson of Clovis, who gave him an old palace, Luxovium (Luxeuil) for a monastery. Many noble's sons joined the monastery, despite its strict rule. But after Gontran died, Theuderic, his successor, asked Columban to bless his illegitimate children, for his mother, Brunhilde, kept him supplied with mistresses, but seemed uninterested in his marrying. Columban replied that the scepter would never be held by anyone in this brothel brood, and pointed out that Brunhilde had an interest in keeping a legitimate successor from appearing on the scene. That made him *persona non grata*, for Theuderic was not going to buck his mother, but such was Columban's prestige that it was difficult to dislodge him from his monastery. Finally he was removed by force and taken down the Loire. According to the story he allowed himself to be taken when he saw the terror of the soldiers sent to do the job, and he had no doubt already decided Theuderic was hopeless. He supposedly prayed on the way down the river to visit the shrine where St. Martin's was later erected, and the boat went there despite the efforts of the rowers to prevent it. He was instructed to return to England, but instead traveled to Neustria, preaching to the heathen near Mainz and Lake Constance. When all Austrasia came under Theuderic's hand, he proceeded to Italy, and King Agiluf allowed him to establish the monastery at Bobbio, where he died the following year. His career was impressive, and lent prestige to his religion, but he moved among the nobles, not the common people. The real work of conversion was done by others.

In the course of the 7th century, it seems, the old town culture of the Romans, with its urban churches and Roman educational institutions, finally disappeared almost entirely. The towns had ceased to be secular administrative centers some time ago, for the King and his vassals lived off their estates, employing a minimal civil service, and disdaining urban life. The sea-borne commerce that once supported the cities had already been disrupted by the Vandal fleets, and overland commerce had broken down with the political fragmentation of the region during the barbarian invasions. Multiple borders and multiple tariffs even over relatively short distances destroys trade quickly, especially trade in relatively inexpensive products such as agricultural produce. It seems that what commerce there was, which was increasing somewhat in the 7th century due to a deliberate Byzantine effort to build trade with the West, was interrupted by the Moslem conquests. The cities still served as ecclesiastical centers, but even in this function they languished in the 7th century. The Church, always

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[24]Not to be confused with the earlier St. Columba mentioned above.

independent of Rome, had now become very much a local affair, neither supporting nor supported by the King, but providing a living for younger sons and unmarried daughters of local nobility. The result seems to have been that the Church eventually moved into the country with the nobility it served, leaving the cities and even the bishoprics vacant. Certainly, its devotion to scholarship disappeared, and one sees no missionary activity arising from Gaulish abbeys.

Austrasia, under the Mayor of the Palace, who had become the *de facto* ruler, gradually came to dominate the Franks, until, in 687, Pippin II came into control of all three kingdoms. Charles Martel succeeded Pippin in 714, and consolidated his position by confiscating Church lands in the south, in Neustria, and handing them over to his vassals in exchange for a formal commitment of annual military service. Thus Feudal institutions, quite capable of operating in a largely agrarian society without liquid capital, replaced the Roman institutions supported by salaried positions, and the personal fealty of the Barbarians to their chieftains replaced the formal relations between government officials.

Feudalism and a rural economy were salient features of the new European civilization. So was serfdom. By 600 the land was tilled by serfs, who made up perhaps 60% of the population. In 400 about 30% of the population had been slaves and another 20% Roman coloni, who, like the medieval serf, were legally tied to the land. Serfdom marked a modest improvement in the position of the agricultural laborer, for serfs had greater personal freedom, and also somewhat greater personal income. Nonetheless, serfs lived a life far poorer than the 20% or so of the population that staffed the Church and provided the secular nobility. Illiterate, they received precious little religious instruction, and would have been lucky to see a priest once a year. Pagan practices, Roman and Barbarian, lived a long subterranean life among them.

The center of gravity of early European civilization shifted away from the Mediterranean and to the North, to the British Isles, France and Germany, due for the most part to technological innovation. The invention of the horse collar, which enables a horse to pull a plow with its full strength without constricting its windpipe, enabled deep plowing, and improved tillage of the alluvial earth of the rain land. This, aided by the invention of the horse shoe, combined with the three-field system of triennial crop rotation, increased the agricultural yield of northern lands enormously, and made possible a considerable growth in population in the northern alluvial plains, with the deep soils most suitable for the new technology. When the agricultural revolution was complete, and the disruptions of the Norse invasions at an end, the growth of commerce in manufactured goods, and a new urbanization, arose on the new agricultural productivity.[25] But even before the

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[25]White (1962) 76-78.

political situation had stabilized enough to allow that, this northern productivity meant that larger armies could be fielded, and the Carolingian military successes hinged on military manpower from the North. They also hinged on the development of shock cavalry. The horse shoe and the adoption of the stirrup in the 730's enabled the Franks to develop cavalry tactics rotating around charges directly into enemy formations using heavy lances (with pennants attached so they would not sink too deeply into the bodies of the enemy soldiers, and could be withdrawn to be used again). Without the stirrup, the impact simply knocks the rider off his horse, and up to this point the most effective use of cavalry had hinged first, on its rapidity of movement, then on archery from horseback, a tactic developed on the steppes that bedeviled the later Romans. The new shock tactics of the European cavalry had a great deal to do with the defeat of the Muslim armies in the south of France.

Special note can be taken of the growth of the medieval nunnery. Noble women who chose not to marry, or not to remarry, would often betake themselves, sometimes with a considerable fortune, to abbeys, where they would live a cultured life of prayer, modest scholarship, and good works. Every noble family had a nunnery where relatives resided as one of its favorite charities. A certain equality came to upper class women in this way, for the nuns ran their own affairs to a considerable degree, which meant not only that a certain level of scholarship was possible, and a reputation for piety on a par with that of any monk, but that lands and wealth might be managed as well. The competent and scholarly abbess served as a constant reminder throughout the Middle Ages that women were not incapable of even the most worthwhile pursuits, all except, perhaps, warfare.

4. THE FRANKS AND THE CHURCH

Though it was necessary for scholarship to find refuge on the periphery during the disorders that gave birth to Europe, it moved once more to the center once the birth of the new order was accomplished and relative security restored. The first step here was the reform of the Gaulish Church, the matrix within which scholarship grew.

A number of missions were sent from Ireland to accomplish this aim, but St. Columban and St. Gall, founder of Gallus, were effective, as we have noted, only in making contact with the nobles. The Anglo-Saxons resorted to the easier Benedictine Rule for their monasteries, and worked hard to establish a native priesthood and a self-sustaining government within the monasteries that rendered them independent of charismatic leadership, which always failed with time. Thus, they were able to root the new style of monastically centered

Church in Frankish soil. But their success where the Irish failed was fostered by a new political situation, for the Mayors of the Palace in the Frankish Kingdoms had become the *de facto* rulers, the Merovingian Kings serving only ceremonial functions, and, as time went by, less and less of those. The first effect of this development was a more effective government.

The Anglo-Saxon missions to the continent began with **Willibrord**, from Northumbria, who attempted from 690 on to convert the Frisians in the Low Countries. He worked at first with the support of Pippin II, but drawing his authority from Rome, establishing the monastery at Esternach in Luxembourg as his base. Rome and the Frankish Church were drawn into closer association by his effort, but Pippin's death led to the resurgence of the pagans under Kind Radbod of Frisia.

Wynfrid, who came to be known as **Boniface**, gained more permanent success. He worked hard to reform the Frankish Church, convert the Germans, and cement the bond between the Pope and the Frankish ruler. Born ca. 675 in Southern England, he was a monk and scholar for 40 years, beginning with his first mission to the continent in 718, the year Charles Martel reconquered Frisia, marching to the Zuider Zee, and established Willibrord as Bishop in Utrecht. However, Boniface did not want to work under Willibrord, so he moved his operations to Germany, where he worked until 739 under Charles's protection, and quite successfully, to establish a German Church subject to Roman hegemony. His dependence on the Mayor of the Palace is clear from his own letters, where he professes that

> without the protection of the prince of the Franks, I can neither rule the people of the church
> nor defend the priests and clerks, monks and nuns; nor can I prevent the practice of pagan
> rites and sacrilegious worship of idols without his mandate and the awe inspired by his name.[26]

That he was working under the Pope is likewise clear. He visited Rome three times in this period, was given a papal commission and a Latin name at the first visit in 722, made a roving Bishop by Gregory II at the second, and appointed as Archbishop of the newly organized German Church at the third in 738. He founded the monastery at Fulda, which became a seat of learning, in 744, with the aid of Charles's successor as Mayor of the Palace, Pippin III.

The Mayors, recognizing the usefulness of converting the peoples they conquered, looked more and more to Rome to help them in this effort. Pope Gregory II pressed his advantage as far as he could, strengthening the bond between Rome and the Franks, for he had received orders from the Emperor in Constantinople to adopt the Iconoclastic program, orders he could not obey, since he neither recognized the

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[26]Cited in Cantor (1993) 168.

right of the Emperor to legislate on such an important theological issue, nor thought the Emperor right, since the West, ever since Gregory the Great, had consistently defended the use of images in the churches for instruction and edification. It was time for Rome to break with the Emperor. He sent an angry letter to Constantinople claiming that the West stood with him and was ready to defend him from the Imperial army in the south, but this was a bluff. In fact, when he called on Charles Martel in 739 to defend Rome from the Lombards, he was refused.

Nonetheless, in 742, the Franks moved a little closer to Rome. In a council called under Carlomann in Austrasia, Boniface reformed the Frankish Church, forbidding the clergy to hunt or bear arms, ordering false priests to be exposed, suppressing heathen practices, prescribing the Benedictine rule for all monasteries, and establishing monastic schools for the first time among the Franks. He met opposition from powerful Bishops but made progress with the backing of Carlomann. In 747 Carlomann abdicated and withdrew to a monastery, exemplifying a new type, the saintly King. He became a monk at Monte Carlo, where he claimed to be a murderer atoning for his sin, but was recognized and treated as the King he was nonetheless. The Kingdom was united under his brother, Pippin III, who aided Boniface in extending his reforms to Neustria.

Pippin had reason to please Rome, for though he was now sole ruler of the Franks, he was still only Mayor of the Palace. So upon his succession, he wrote to the Pope, asking if one who did not actually rule should be King. He would have simply declared himself king if he could have, of course, but the hereditary principle had become so powerful that he could not. And it was not simply pride that drove him to seek the office, for, should a Merovingian emerge that was truly throne worthy, it was conceivable that the Mayor would be thrust aside. So Pippin sought the support of the Church and divine authorization to take the throne himself. This was the break Gregory II had been waiting for. He replied that the one who exercised the power of the King in fact should be King, a reply in fact consistent with the Roman approach to such things, for the received view in the Church was that a ruler's authority depended, among other things, on his effectiveness. Boniface crowned Pippin III King in 750 at the Pope's behest, in an elaborate ceremony crowded with symbolism. There was a danger here for the Pope, as well as an opportunity. A theocratic monarch might claim, as the Emperor in the East had, the right to run the Church. So Gregory conducted the coronation in a way that made it clear that Pippin claimed no such authority.

Gregory of Tours, in his *History of the Franks*, refers to St. Sylvester in a legend that probably originated in Italy around the time of Pope Gelasius I. Pope Sylvester, the story goes, cured Constantine of leprosy, and in gratitude the Emperor not only made him the head of the Church, but also gave him his secular power and

his royal crown. To show this forth in action, he acted as the Pope's groom, leading his horse. Sylvester accepted the first gift, but restored Constantine's crown and secular power. The legend, of course, presents the Gelasian view of the relation of the temporal to the priestly power—the Pope has the right to bestow the temporal power on whom he will. The Roman Curia was convinced of the truth of the tale, it seems, and they produced a forged document, the Donation of Constantine, to prove it. (They perhaps thought the original document had somehow been mislaid or destroyed, and so produced a forgery, much in the way that many a monastery would forge a charter to meet a legal challenge to its rights when unable to find the original among its records.) At the coronation of Pippin the King led the Pope's horse for a few paces, just as he thought Constantine had done. At the great ceremony at St. Denis, Pippin was named the protector of the Roman Church, and he vowed to restore to the Romans the Exarchate of Ravenna, that grand Byzantine fortress, once capital of the Western Empire, which had very recently fallen into the hands of the Lombards. He fulfilled this promise the following year, invading Lombardy and, once he had control of Ravenna, handing it over, not to the Emperor, but to Rome. The divorce from the East was now complete. Henceforth Rome looked West, and never again recognized in any form the authority of the East in ecclesiastical or temporal affairs.

Charles Martel had fought shy of too close a connection to Rome, and rejected Boniface's suggestions that he reform the Frankish Church, bringing it under Rome. However happy he may have been to have Rome convert the heathen, he wanted sole control of the French Church so its offices could be delivered to his vassals. In the end, despite Pippin's coronation, Martel won, for once the Carolingian dynasty was established, its authority rested in itself, as far as its vassals were concerned, and Pippin was the last to lead the Pope's horse, or to receive willingly the crown from an ecclesiastic. Charlemagne was, though only through a deception, crowned Emperor by the Pope, but not King of the Franks. To a degree, the Church ceased to be splintered into fragments loyal to local lords, but it became national, loyal to the King, not to the Pope, even if regulations and organization proceeded from Rome. Indeed, even Carlomann, dominated as he was by Boniface, had put the Church reforms out as capitularies, under his name and his authority. Only the Abbey at Fulda was directly under Rome, by the King's sufferance. Regular synods of the Frankish Church were held, but their decrees could be set aside by the King.

Fulda and the other monasteries established by Boniface were the first important monastic schools, but by 786 Boniface's pupils had all died, and *fideles* of the King, mostly from Alcuin's school, had moved into their places. Boniface's students had been quite independent of the secular authority, Alcuin's were not. Now began the long, and largely successful, struggle of the medieval King to secure the Monastic schools and the Church

to educate his civil servants, while still protecting himself from the growth of an internal constituency for a foreign power, Rome.

  Charlemagne consolidated a Frankish empire that had been building already for some time. In 800, when he was crowned Emperor of the West by the Pope at Rome, all of Christendom in the West was under his sway, except for some Byzantine territory in Italy and the Anglo-Saxon kingdom in Britain. The Bishop of Rome had good reason to crown him Emperor. Rome was at last free of interference from the East, and safe from the Lombards, but this was at the cost of becoming a Frankish protectorate. The arrangement seemed threatened by various events after Pippin's death, but when Charles became sole ruler upon his brother's death in 771, Pope Hadrian immediately sought his assistance against the Lombards. By 774 the Lombard Kingdom was no more, and the last Lombard King ended his days in the monastery at Corbie. But Charles had many fronts on which to fight, and often must have resented the troops and time periodically devoted to Italian affairs.

  Pope Leo III then provided Charles with an opportunity when he had to be rescued from the unruly Roman nobility, who wanted their own candidate elected in his place, and charged him with immorality. Leo fled to Charles, where, by Alcuin's advice, the King waited a good long time, and then staged a trial of the Pope in Rome in which he was exonerated, but only after a rather humiliating procedure in court that underlined the superiority of the secular jurisdiction of the King. Leo desperately wanted to recover some of his authority, and so, catching Charles by surprise as he prayed, he crowned him Emperor in 800. The act enlisted Charles as the Pope's protector, and it made the rejection of the Eastern Emperor's authority entirely explicit, but it also once more asserted the Gelasian doctrine, and Charles would have none of it. He could not return the gift, but he was miffed by it, and kept it perfectly clear that his real power was as King of the Franks, an office he had deliberately avoided formalizing through any priestly coronation.

  The new Emperor lay his own interpretation on the relation between himself and the Pope. Charles expected to receive the Pope's blessing and the support of his prayers in all his activities, most especially his military activities. In return he would protect Rome. The Pope might have his own dominions, held, *de facto*, on suffrage from the Franks, but the Christian Church of which he was the leader was reduced to a state Church, required to support the secular power of France in all it did.

5. ALCUIN OF YORK

We are little men, at the end of time.

Alcuin.

> . . . of all Kings, this [Charlemagne] was the most eager to seek out learned men and provide them with the means to philosophize at their ease, by which he was able to foster a new flowering of all knowledge, much of it hitherto unknown in this barbarous world.
>
> Walafrid Strabo, in his preface to
> Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*[27]

> Lend a hand, good master. Flint has fire within, which comes out only when struck; so the light of knowledge exists by nature in human minds, but a teacher is needed to knock it out. . .
>
> Alcuin, *De Grammatico*

In 781 Charlemagne encountered **Alcuin of York**,[28] who was already near fifty years old, at Pavia, and invited him to come to France and take charge of training missionaries to Saxony. Alcuin, a Briton born in 730, had become the most important scholar at the Cathedral School of York, so he was well set up, but this was too good an opportunity to miss, and he took up residence in the palace at Aachen. When he arrived in 782, he found the King had changed his mind, and wanted him to run the Palace School instead of playing the missionary, and make it a rival to the Cathedral School at York. He lived there from 782 to 796, visiting England in 786 and 790-793. He was convinced by the King to return from England in 794 only by the offer of St. Martin's Monastery at Tours, a large and very wealthy establishment, where he remained, working and writing, and pressing the monks into his legions of copyists, until his death in 804.

Much of the point was to educate the Counts to read and write and calculate, to improve administrative efficiency by imitating the old Romans. Charles wanted written laws, records of transactions and inventories of his estates, all the apparatus of a literate civil service. He had ordered Counts to keep clerks with them to read his letters and reply to them, though for the most part they didn't, and he even ordered that local laws and traditional practices be written down and preserved so that judges could decide their cases fairly. Charles was interested in reforming the Church and the monasteries because he wanted to be a good Christian King, but also because he wanted a civil service, and that civil service would have to be provided by the clergy. But there

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[27]Translation from Wolff (1968) 36.

[28]My account of Alcuin and the Carolingian period is developed from Wolff (1968) Part I and Laistner (1931) Part III.

was more than this going on. Charles ruled an Empire, a conglomeration of peoples with different tongues and customs, but a common religion. It was Christianity that made a unity of his domains. His father, Pippin, had seen that already, when ruling only Neustria and Austrasia, and launched a reform of the Church to strengthen that bond of unity. Charles felt compelled to pursue the same policy, for nothing else could hold the Empire together.

Alcuin, as counselor to the King, earned enough respect so that he could oppose some of Charles's settled policies, for instance, forced conversion. His opposition on this point was largely ineffective, it is true, but still he did not anger the King, and he was not *always* ineffective.[29] Charles paid close attention to his advice on Church reform, relations with the Pope, and similar matters. Much of the reform work was done in Alcuin's last years, at St. Martin's. In particular, he put together a good text of the Latin Bible there (797-801), and made sure that everyone got copies. (Theodulf also produced an excellent text, but it did not spread as widely as Alcuin's did.) Alcuin's Bible remained the vulgate throughout the Middle Ages.[30] He got a copy of the Church Law from Hadrian, and the Canons and Decretals of Dionysius Exiguus, which were made universally binding at the Synod of Aix la Chapelle in 802. He also asked for the sacramentary of Gregory I, and had two certified copies made from a fair copy. He promulgated an accurate copy of Benedict's rule to the monasteries,[31] and using Gregory's sacramentary, put together a unified liturgy worked up from Frankish and Latin tradition, which is the ancestor of the Latin Missal. Paul the Deacon assembled a collection of sermons which was used throughout the Middle ages. He even had Hadrian send him a compilation of grammatical rules to improve the clergy's Latin, and a copy of Vitruvius on architecture to improve church construction. (Some of this had been tried before. St. Boniface had written a grammar and treatise on versification, and the School

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[29]Alcuin spoke out against forced mass conversions at the Synod of Frankfurt in 793, which he dominated, speaking out at Charlemagne's behest against the Adoptionist heresy in the South, but also insisting, "it is inadmissible for the body to receive the sacrament of baptism, unless the soul has first welcomed the truth of the Faith". Wolff (1968) 45.

[30]The copies of the Bible available in Spain, the British Isles and Gaul when Alcuin came on the scene were often full of interpolations with various tendencies, and only some of them were from Jerome's translation, older, deficient translations, and translations of the Septuagint often being mixed up with or substituting for Jerome's text. Alcuin did not have a clean copy of Jerome, and his reconstruction of the text depended on collating varied copies to eliminate interpolations and reconstruct the text. He could not read Hebrew or Greek, of course, and would not have had the original texts available had he been able to, so the reconstruction of the text often depended on conjecture. Much of the time, Alcuin managed to identify Jerome's text as the best one. Alcuin's work is done well, sometimes brilliantly, but he aims to preserve a single correct reading in each case, whereas Theodulf's work notes and preserves interesting variants, and often got closer to the original Hebrew. Theodulf's work would be preferred by a modern scholar, though it served the purposes of Charles less well.

[31]Wolff (1968) 32-33 points out that Benedict's rule was not intended to make a monastery a center of intellectual life, but Chapter 48 of the rule did set aside several hours a day for reading and study, and the six or seven hours a day to be devoted to manual labor could be turned to the work of copying, and so the rule could be adapted to that purpose.

of Utrecht had produced similar publications, but Charles did not want Merovingian works to be used, and preferred instituting his own reforms.) In his most advanced work on these lines, Alcuin wrote for Charles *On Rhetoric and the Virtues*, an epitome of rhetoric based on Cicero (especially *On Invention*) to equip him for the prosecution of civil suits. The list of virtues at the end of Cicero's *On Invention*, the most popular work on rhetoric in the early Middle Ages, also inspired Abelard in the 12th century to comment, producing a far subtler analysis than Cicero's casual remarks could have intended.

Alcuin went to a great deal of trouble to borrow books, developing an exceptionally wide range of contacts, and had them copied to build up the libraries in France.[32] Most places had very few books before he arrived, but the Rule of St. Benedict almost demands a good library, since it requires the monks to read three or four hours a day. It is a difficult business to transport books, and often people were reluctant to loan them not only because they did not want to be without them for a period of years, but also for fear they would be lost or destroyed on the journey. It was expensive to copy a book, and the work of the copyist might best be turned to one's own needs, and so a request for a copy was not always well received, either. Moreover, in the days before union catalogues, it was hard to find out who might have a given book. But after Alcuin's work, every important monastery was in possession of several hundred volumes, and Fulda, with the largest collection, had perhaps a thousand volumes in the 9th century. This work was extremely important. Many of the Classical texts we possess today trace back to a single Carolingian copy.[33] The classical authors were read to gain the mastery of Latin necessary for scholarship in the Scriptures, available only in Latin, and the Fathers. It was at this time that Cicero and Vergil became especially valued as models of Latinity.

Charlemagne ordered schools established at episcopal centers, and schools both for the monks and the local populace at the monasteries. (It was difficult to persuade the monasteries to educate boys not destined to become monks, and this part of Charlemagne's arrangements, especially, was probably more often ignored than observed, particularly after the King's death.) There were also to be parish schools, at which local priests could teach what they knew. Much of this never materialized, but things did improve. The main point was to teach

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[32]Even books already available in France were generally unreliable, since copyists of the 6th and 7th centuries had often been quite careless.

[33]That the books survived was in part due to the Muslim conquests and the consequent interruption of Mediterranean commerce. By the middle of the seventh century papyrus was no longer obtainable from Egypt with any ease, and so the new centers of book production for the most part used parchment, which lasts far longer than papyrus, indeed, almost indefinitely with any luck. The ink used was a foul smelling stuff with pigment of iron compounds rather than carbon. It also lasts almost forever, whereas carbon based inks gradually burn away into carbon dioxide, leaving a blank page after a few centuries. One can see the ink fading already in modern books from the 18th and 19th centuries.

people to read and write Latin, and to sing the services. Vulgar Latin had become French, and a simplified Classical Latin was taught in the schools.

To further his book collecting, Alcuin completed the general reformation of the manuscript hand and orthography, and set everyone to copying the exemplars he pulled in from abroad. The existing book hands in Italy and England, the 'Capital' and 'Uncial,' despite their beauty, required considerable skill and went rather slowly. The more practical scribal hand of the ecclesiastical administrator was full of ligatures and abbreviations, and quite difficult to read. What was needed was a hand easily learned and executed, so that many scribes could be trained to work quickly, but nonetheless clear and easy to read. Several different solutions to the problem were developed in England and the Irish monasteries on the continent. In the final outcome Alcuin, working at Tours, adapted a script developed at Luxeuil and then Corbie, which was generally adopted throughout the Empire, and became known as the Carolingian Minuscule. The monastery at Tours became a general publishing house of standard texts, especially the *Bible*.

The course of studies began with grammar, covering Donatus's *Lesser Art* (on which Remigius of Auxerre wrote a commentary ca. 908) and the compilations of Bede and Alcuin, and then Donatus's *Greater Art*, and Priscian. Latin literature would be read, the student parsing as he went. Composition would be taken up next, "rhetoric" lumped together with "dialectic", generally proceeding from Alcuin's perfunctory texts.[34] The study of the Quadrivium focused on computational methods (Alcuin wrote a text on computational arithmetic) and Isidore of Seville. Some effort was made to lighten the dull material through its translation into riddles and the like.

Everyone wrote poetry, some of which isn't bad, in imitation of old Roman civil servants, and accentual verse was revived. This was a conscious deviation from Classical models, but Vergil and Ovid were everyone's favorites, and, in prose, Cicero was much respected. History, the other branch of a courtier's learning, was also well represented. The *Annals* were the first effort, written under the Merovingians by Monks as glosses on Easter tables. Charlemagne had (rather biased) court annals kept, and **Freiculf (ca. 825)** wrote a *Chronicles*, proceeding year by year from the beginning of time. He devoted seven books to the period before Christ, and five more to the time up to Justinian. **Paul the Deacon (d. ca. 800)** wrote a history of the Lombards, and a history of the Romans for the court. **Nithard**, a grandson of Charlemagne, wrote an account of Louis the Pious and his successors in 841-4, again following an earlier exemplar, the *Life of Charlemagne* by

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[34]Perfunctory? From the text on dialectic, proceeding by way of catechism, we have, for instance: "CHARLEMAGNE: 'How should a syllogism be constructed?' ALCUIN: 'From three elements so that from the first two premises the third follows as the conclusion.'" That is all we get about the syllogism.

Einhard, the Emperor's secretary, who apparently succeeded Alcuin as head of the palace school in 796. Einhard had been educated at Fulda, and his life is modeled on Suetonius's life of Augustus. Willibald wrote a life of Boniface, and Alcuin himself wrote a (rather poor) life of Willibrord, combining Bede's approach and that of Gregory in his life of St. Benedict.

In all this work, it was important to flatter and entertain Charles, of course, and Alcuin describes him as the first philosopher of the realm, comparing him to Plato's philosopher-king. Einhard's life of Charlemagne also flatters the King's pretensions to scholarship, claiming that his command of Latin was as perfect as his French. That seems unlikely,[35] but Charles was an intelligent and genial man, who much enjoyed the company of his court scholars. Generally the meetings involved a great deal of eating and drinking (Alcuin is reported to have been particularly brilliant after a bit of wine), and the adoption of Biblical and Classical nicknames, so that Charles was addressed as David, Alcuin as Albinus. Intellectual games such as riddling, rooted in Celtic tradition, were played: What is a letter? The guardian of history. A word? The betrayer of the mind. The tongue? A whip of the air. But more serious questions intruded as well, for instance, the distinction between the eternal and the sempiternal, the perpetual and the immortal.[36] The King's interest in astronomy led him to ask why Mars should have vanished from sight for a year, and why the moon seemed shrunken on March 18, 799. Exegetical questions included the discussion of apparent contradictions in scripture.[37] As in most court scholarship in every age it was generally the *bon mot*, not serious argumentation, that one aimed at. Alcuin didn't always manage to, or apparently need to, maintain an obsequious pose. At one point, for instance, he asked Charles in a letter about a complicated problem concerning the calendar, as Charles, who would no doubt be flattered to be consulted, happened to be an amateur astrologer. (He consulted Alcuin at one point to see if an acceleration of Mars in its orbit portended anything important, while on campaign in Saxony). So, unexpectedly, he replied at length. Alcuin, convinced that the King was wrong, replied that the clergy at the court must responsible for it, and wrote a refutation. It was usual to blame anything that went wrong on the

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[35]He might have spoken the language with some fluency, but the King read and wrote only with difficulty, though he endeavored to learn. As King, of course, he would have kept a clerk about to read to him and take dictation, and he had no real need to learn to do these things himself. Charles took an interest in preserving the old Frankish tongue, recording traditional historical poems in the language, and even working up a Frankish grammar. Unfortunately, none of his work survives, for his son, Louis the Pious, had it all destroyed as Pagan literature when he came to the throne. Frankish was being pushed out by the Vulgar Latin, now French, in the West.

[36]This could have been quite a serious discussion, for the notion that the eternal, unlike the sempiternal, stands outside of time altogether, as it is worked out, for instance, in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, is not an easy one to grasp or make sense of. The perpetual will always have existed, whereas the immortal may have a beginning of its existence, even if it will never cease to exist.

[37]Wolff (1968) 47-48.

King's underlings, of course. The *Libri Carolini*, on the Iconoclast controversy, were supposedly by Charles, although it is clear that it is chiefly the work of Theodulf the Goth.

The nature of Alcuin's work was dictated by his assessment of his times. He thought the world old, ready to come to an end, and new achievements in thought no longer possible—it was barely possible to comprehend something of the old. This view was inherited from Late Antiquity, and reinforced, of course, by Christian speculation about the end time. So in theology, Alcuin suggested, we should proceed with the Fathers as physicians collect and mix herbs, selecting with an eye to present needs, but adding nothing of our own. He follows his own advice in summaries of Augustine's *On the Trinity* (*Belief in the Holy and Undivided Trinity*) and *The Nature and Origin of the Soul,* and in his *Vices and Virtues*, a compendium of apothegms drawn from Augustine's sermons and various commentaries on scripture. Like his pupil, Hrabanus Maurus, he viewed lack of originality as a reflection of proper humility, and nothing to be criticized. Although Alcuin was much concerned to extend scholarship to all the seven arts, the trivium had been as much as anyone had dared to take on for some time. He himself did a little work in mathematics and astronomy, but it is a measure of the state of things that Boethius was considered extremely advanced in logic. Only slowly did scholarship recover.

Alcuin's *On Grammar* is typical of the time. It presses the pursuit of wisdom for the sake of God, the soul's purity, truth, even for its own sake, but warns the scholar away from its pursuit for the sake of honors. What lasts is better than the transitory; human beings are rational, and in their better part an image of God; and so the soul should seek the lasting, not the transitory good, and this is wisdom. Clearly his thinking is inspired by Augustine. We should ascend the seven steps of philosophy, then, as a preparation for the study of scripture and theology. What this means in practice is that one is prepared to do a decent edition of the *Bible*, for instance, and to understand it when one reads it. A discussion of letters and syllables follows, with definitions from Donatus, Priscian, and Isidore. No fewer than twenty-six topics ("species of grammar") are laid out for investigation, but only etymologies are actually discussed. For some time to come scholars would find catalogs far easier to produce than an honest treatment of the topics listed in them.

In logic, Alcuin introduced ***On the Ten Categories*** in the 790's, a late antique summary of Aristotle written by a colleague of Themistius, which he attributed to St. Augustine, prefacing it with dedicatory verses to Charlemagne. In particular, Alcuin and his students used the doctrine of the categories here to distinguish between God's metaphysical status (he falls under substance, but none of the other categories) and that of his creation, a theme picked up, as we shall see, in Eriugena later. In the 870's glossed copies of the book began to appear, and it formed the center of logical studies for a while. (Some were interested in the text as a tool

for expositing Eriugena.) About the same time Alcuin wrote his own summary of logic, *On Dialectic*, where we read that logic is made up of dialectic and rhetoric, that the species of dialectic are the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, the *Categories* of Aristotle, the *Syllogisms* and the *Topics* (both works of Boethius), and the *Periermeneias* of Apuleius, containing an account of syllogistic. But this is only a list of books that Alcuin had heard of, and his information is drawn from Isidore, Cassiodorus, and *On the Ten Categories*. For example, substance is what is discerned by corporeal sense (!), while an accident changes frequently (!) and is perceived by the mind (!), accidents being found in the underlying substance. In another treatise, *The Nature of the Soul*, the material is drawn from Augustine's *On the Nature and Origin of the Soul*, so that a human being is defined as a soul using a body, and an Augustinian theory of perception is presented, but Alcuin has a rather low level of understanding of the material he excerpts, and even less understanding what alternative views might be taken of the matters discussed. One finds the same thing in his epitome of Augustine's *On the Trinity*, entitled *Belief in the Holy and Undivided Trinity*. He is struggling for a sheer grasp of what is being said, and there is no attempt at all to get at the reasoning behind it.[38] Nonetheless, the book had lain unused in the libraries for some time, and Alcuin was attempting to bring it once more to the attention of scholars. He performed the same service for Boethius's *Consolation*.

Other scholars at the court included **Peter of Pisa**, who probably succeeded Alcuin as head of the palace school. He was a great debater, and an expert in grammar who knew the classical authors, and taught them to Charles, as much as he could, as his private tutor. **Paulinus**, a Lombard from Fiuli, came to the palace in 777, and returned home as a Frankish agent in 787. He wrote a treatise against adoptionism, and was eventually Patriarch of Aquileia, on the border of the Byzantine Empire. **Paul the Deacon** (neither Alcuin nor Peter of Pisa ever became priests, either) was also from Friuli. He came to court to obtain clemency for his brother, who had participated in the Lombard rebellion on 776. He spent nine years there, 777-786,

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[38]A collection of excerpts and remarks by Alcuin and his fellow scholars, apparently intended for use in instruction, from around 800, is the *Usia Graecae*, which may have been the work of Alcuin's associate, Candidus. Contents: VII On the Trinity by Alcuin, and VIII by Candidus, the only two with names attached. XII on subjects vs. accidents from Claudianus Mamertius, XIII from Boëthius on the *Categories* about substance, XIV and XV on space and time from the *Categoriae Decem*, (another ms. of about 817, belonging the Bishop of Lyons, contains Porphyry's *Introduction*, *Of the Ten Categories*, extracts from Alcuin's *On Dialectic*, Apuleius's *De Interpretatione*, Boethius's first commentary on the *De Interpretatione*, and a list of the categories of things from his *On Music*). I, from Augustine *On the Trinity*, states that only substance applies to God, and V and VI concern God's relation to space and time. X argues that soul does not have a position in space, since the activities of soul cannot be contained within a material container. III and IV argue for the existence of God, drawing from Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, but moving directly from the hierarchical ordering principle to God at the top of the order without the consideration of the relation of the soul to Truth. Truth is considered in XI, which argues from Augustine's *Soliloquies* that what is true is so because of Truth, which is not bodily. A somewhat later ms. of the same material (2nd half of 9th) adds excerpts from Boethius's short theological works, Seneca's *Natural Questions*, and Chalcidius's translation of the *Timaeus*. An original passage perhaps by Candidus (inspired by Augustine *On Music*) argues that all things can be analyzed into three components, being, being able, and willing (acting), which are like beginning, middle and end.

presumably endeavoring to help his relatives, though his brother's lands were never restored. A grammarian, he returned to Monte Cassino, where he continued to assist in the work of the Palace School, and wrote histories of the Lombards, and of the Bishops of Metz. **Theodulf the Goth**, author of the *Libri Carolini*, was a good Latin poet and theologian who eventually became Bishop of Orleans. He feuded a lot with Alcuin, and outlived him, dying in 821.

The theological work of the court scholars shows little depth. Wisdom is sought, i.e. correct belief, and there is an evident conviction that correct beliefs are the key to salvation, not one's works in this life. For Alcuin, rational insight leads to, or at least aids, faith, and conducts one to the love of God and neighbor, but this love was a kind of friendship, the sort of thing that occurred in social relations with a close associate and ally. God was a powerful friend highly placed. The common beliefs of the time saw God as a King, and it was generally accepted that revolt against one's masters, disturbing the established order, would result in similar disturbances in the universe at large, so that portents resulted. If the relations among the people are kept right, and God is worshiped properly, then fertility, health and general prosperity will follow. The king had the task of maintaining the peace—the *City of God* was one of Charlemagne's favorite books. Little was made of Christ's relation to humble men. He was frequently represented as a lamb, or King of the world, a sort of leader of feudal vassals. The lowly are brought in only so Christ can perform miracles of healing. Charles tended to think of the Church as the baptized, and had faith in the supernatural power of baptism to save even those who did not hold Christian beliefs. It was a common belief that the commands of Christ in the Gospels applied only to monks.

The palace school was supported by the booty picked up in Charles's ceaseless wars. In particular, a lot of gold was acquired from the Avars, and many nations paid annual tributes. Scholars were paid, and eventually made abbots, or, if ordained, Bishops and Archbishops. Alcuin became wealthy over time. He spent a lot of money on curious items from abroad, including a camel with which he was quite delighted. His writings suggest that scholars tended to become dissolute at court, and he himself drank a great deal in his early years. He apparently felt guilty about his wealth, and perhaps that is why he asked to be given a monastery near the end. Between 793 and 796 he wrote to everyone to pray for his sins, including the Pope, and sent a good deal of money to English monasteries for this purpose. Everyone prayed for other people's souls in those days. Regular fraternities were set up for the purpose, and the members would do hundred or so masses or psalters for the soul of each member as he died. Eventually monasteries and clergy came to depend on payments for such prayers as a major source of income.

The work of Alcuin was never reversed, but the continued efforts of councils to enforce Charlemagne's decrees concerning the monastery schools, for instance, testify to the fact that his program was never fully executed, either, especially in the troubled decades after his death. Einhard, who had arrived at court a little after 790, became secretary to Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's successor, and continued the work until 828, when he retired to a monastery in the face of growing political instability. Hrabanus Maurus, Alcuin's disciple at Tours, returned to Fulda upon his death in 804, and headed the school there, eventually becoming abbot (822-842), a position he lost due to an impolitic stance on the succession. He continued the work in Germany, writing textbooks and doing everything he could to further education and scholarship, and became known as the "Preceptor of the Gemans" even in his own lifetime. Dragooned into the Archbishopric at Mainz, he ended his life in that office (847-856).

Hincmar of Rheims was born about 806, and brought up at St. Denis. He came to Court as arch-chaplain and religious advisor to the emperor, serving under both Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald. He was made archbishop of Rheims in 845, where he was responsible for the production of the Carolingian *Annals*. He was politically very active, and in his many disputes with secular authorities he argued against ordeals and trial by combat. Walafrid Strabo, tutor to Charles the Bald, was made abbot of Reichenau in 838, but died young, in 849, drowning while crossing the Loire on a mission to Charles. He is especially noted for his poetry. Servat Loup, a Frank who studied under Hrabanus at Fulda, became abbot of Ferrières in 840, and left 127 letters which provide a rich picture of the life of a learned abbot in the ninth century. Probably the most notable thing that Charles had done was to create a class of scholars carrying on the work in the great monasteries, which were self-supporting institutions with their own incomes and lands. Even when Imperial patronage failed, as it did after Charles the Bald, the abbeys carried on building their libraries and running their schools on their own momentum. Europe would not fall back again into the darkness of the 7th and 8th centuries.

6. FRIDUGISIUS AND THE DISPUTE OVER NOTHING

Fridugisus of Tours (died 834), a student of Alcuin's at York who accompanied him to Charlemagne's court, may have taken over his position there when he left. His correspondence with his master survives.[39] In 804 he succeeded Alcuin as Abbot of Tours, and became Secretary to Louis the Pious in 819.

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[39]Migne, PL 101, 57 ff.

Fridigisus is the author of a letter on nothing,[40] addressed to some courtiers of Charlemagne. The question it raises is whether nothing is something or not? The question seems to have been one of those batted around by Charlemagne's companions. The 'Athenian Sophist,' for instance, argued that the dead must be real, for it is they who receive eternal life, and whatever receives eternal life must be something more than a simple absence.[41] Fridugisus complains that people have raised the question often, but only to mystify, treating it as something impossible to explain. He himself intends to answer the question.

> Fridugisus, taking a line similar to that of the Athenian Sophist, argues that

> If one answers, 'It seems to me to be nothing,' this, which he supposes to be a denial, forces him to confess that something is nothing, for he says, 'It seems to me to be nothing,'[42] which is as if he were to say 'It seems to me that nothing is something.' But if it seems to be something it cannot seem to be in no way at all. . . Thus the only alternative is that it seems to be something.

> Again, he argues that "It seems to me to be nothing and not something", comes to the same thing as "It

seems to me that it is a being".

> Every finite name[43] signifies something, for instance, 'man,' 'stone' and 'wood,' for when these have once been said, at the same time we understand what has been signified. And surely the name of man designates man, a certain universality quite aside from any difference [in individual men]. 'Stone' and 'wood' similarly embrace their own universality. . .

But 'nothing' is a finite name according to the grammarians, so it must designate something, that is, some universal kind.

> Again, "'nothing' is a signifying word, but everything signifying is referred to that which it signifies,

and so it is proved that it cannot fail to be something". What is more, everything signifying is of what is, and so 'nothing' signifies something which is.

> Thus far, what he seems to be arguing is that 'nothing' must refer to a certain sort of thing, not that

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[40]There are translations of "On the being of nothing and shadows" by Paul Vincent Spade, available at his web site online, and by Hermigild Dressler, in Wippel and Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine Nicholas of Cusa*, 104–108.

[41]Maurice de Wulf, *History of Medieval Philosophy: From the Beginnings to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Paris: 1912, translated by E.C. Messenger, 1935) 143-144.

[42]In Latin, the two sentences in quotations differ only by a transposition of "*esse*", "to be" and "*nihil*", "nothing".

[43]Note that it does not occur to Fridugisus that 'nothing' might not be a finite name. A finite name is one that names some definite, limited thing or things, whereas an infinite name names whatever is not named by a related finite name. So 'non-human' is an infinite name, naming whatever is not named by the finite name 'human.' One good line might be to take it that 'no-thing' is an infinite name, equivalent to 'non-thing' or 'non-being.' This may seem an obvious move in English. It is much less obvious in Latin that '*nihil*' means '*non-ens.*'

anything of that sort must exist. But now Fridugisus turns to authority, and points out that the world was made out of nothing. This means that nothing must be something very great and notable, if it is that from which everything in the world was made. Fridugisus might seem to take nothing to be the pure potentiality of the Platonists, prime matter, but probably we should not take this too seriously. He is making a clever verbal point, nothing more.

Fridugisus next turns to the question whether darkness exists. First he points out that Scripture refers to darkness and seems to say something about it, so, *Genesis* 1:2, "Darkness was on the face of the deep". Here "was" is a 'substantival' verb, that is, a form of 'to be' that indicates existence, not merely the possession of a predicate, for darkness could not be located on the face of the deep if it did not exist.

Again, God called the darkness 'night' (*Genesis* 1:5), and God would not have established a word for something if there was not something there for the word to be applied to. Again, it is said that darkness was made from the sixth to the ninth hour the day of God's death (*Mark* 15:33), and what is made must exist.

Thus Fridugisius concludes that nothing not only is something, in the sense that it is of some kind, but also that it exists. One might think he takes it that an absence is to be identified as a nothing, and absences exist, but his insistence that the world was literally made from nothing, and that nothing can be made by God, suggests more than this, that nothing is an actual presence, some sort of thing. His motivation here was probably more to make sure that sacred writ is taken seriously and honored than to resolve logical issues. He denies any claim about nothing that might lead even to a merely verbal rejection of doctrine or the words of the *Bible*, and so settles the matter from Scripture.

7. THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES

> Together with the King and God I worship the Purple of the Body, not as a robe nor as a fourth Person . . . but as being God also . . . therefore I boldly represent the invisible God not as invisible but as having become visible for our sakes.
>
> John of Damascus, *Fount of Wisdom*

The Iconoclastic controversy broke out in the East when Emperor Leo II Isaurian (717-741) forbade the worship of images in 726, apparently to please the Monophysites. This reflected Muslim influence, and a fear of superstition, and indeed, some iconodules believed that the image had mediative power. Constantine V, who succeeded Leo, repeated the prohibition in a council of 754. But in 787 the iconodules got

their way under the Empress Irene, and worship was allowed as long as what the image represented, and not the image itself, was worshiped. In 843 the whole matter was decisively settled in their favor.

The theoretical foundations of Christian art were at issue, for something was needed in view of the Old Testament prohibition of images. It was **John of Damascus** who made the decisive moves in his *Font of Wisdom* (ca. 730), as well as an independent treatise on the matter, arguing that Christ had become depictable when he became man, for he became his own image, mediating as image of himself between himself and man. Thus a mediation through images was implicitly authorized by Christ himself as part of the new dispensation. God had made man in his image,[44] but had also made himself in the image of man so that he could be known by man.

The issue somewhat strained East/West relations. In 754 the Eastern Church had forbidden the use of images entirely, and Pippin had the decision set aside at the Synod of Gentilly in 767. In 787 the Council of Nicaea in the East reversed the 754 decision, since the new Empress, Irene, approved of image worship. Charlemagne disapproved the Eastern council, in part because the Franks had not been officially represented at the conference or informed of its decision, and he had the ***Libri Carolini*** written to express his view of the matter. This deprecated image worship, which had been authorized by the Council, though it recognized as legitimate the decorative function of images. It described the making of images as a poor second to the literary art for instruction, since it can depict only the physical side of human beings, whereas they must be treated as the spiritual image of God as well. On this point, of course, the East was very much at odds with the West, for the art of Charles's palace was quite naturalistic, whereas the spiritualization of the image was a central aim of the iconodules. 'Charles' insisted that the force of sanctity cannot be depicted in an image in such a way that one gazing at it will tend to become saintly, as iconodules thought, though this might be done in literature. The book also suggested that the outcome of the council was the sort of thing to be expected under the reign of a woman. This was not very politic, of course, and the book's arguments were in part based on the faulty translation of the relevant Greek texts provided by the Eastern Church. 'Charles' went so far as to claim that the distinction between worship of the image and worship of what it represented was too subtle for an Easterner, for Irene claimed to reign *with* God, as though God worked in time. Byzantine theocratic pretensions make God into a kind of powerful material agent supporting the Empire in time, and not only do they materialize God, they make the Empress an object of worship. So no doubt Easterners would have a hard time

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[44]Clement of Alexandria had held in his *Miscellanies* that the divine word is the image of God, and so the human mind is the image of an image, while Tertullian had claimed that Adam was modeled on his future redeemer, and so an image of God in a more material sense.

seeing past the material world to the immaterial God so beloved of our Saint Augustine, and worship through the medium of images is likely in their case to degenerate to worship of the images themselves.

When Charles later sought recognition as Emperor from the Byzantine Empire, he shut up on the iconoclastic question. It appears that the *Libri Carolini* had been chiefly intended to needle the Empress, and provide a pretext for erudition. (There are a number of ostentatious displays of logical learning in it.) When Charles was recognized as Emperor of the Franks by the Byzantines, relations were normalized, so it was no longer in Charles' program to advertise theological differences.

Around 820, Claudius of Turin wrote condemning not only the worship of images and relics, but also the adoration of the Cross, pilgrimages, and the seeking of intercession by the saints.[45] Jonas, Bishop of Orleans, and an Irishman, Dungal, were asked by Louis the Pious to defend orthodoxy from his attacks, and they both followed the moderate line of the *Libri Carolini*.

In quite another dispute with the East, the *Libri Carolini* had mentioned the matter of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which the Western Augustinians made to be from Father and Son jointly, the Spirit being the mutual love of the two for each other, while the Byzantines held that the Spirit proceeded from the Father alone. Indeed, the Creed as recited in the Frankish Church stated that the Spirit proceeded *a patre filioque* (from the Father and the Son), a phrase that had been added by Gregory I, and from this the dispute has come to be called **the *filioque* controversy**. About 802 Alcuin brought out a book defending the Western view, a number of other books by Theodulf and others followed, and in 808 a synod at Aachen formally approved the addition of '*filioque*' to the creed. Pope Leo refrained from making the addition formal at Rome, though Gregory the Great had approved it, wishing to avoid annoying the East unnecessarily, but it was added at Rome soon after him.

The most interesting document to come out of the West due to these disputes was *Against the Objections of the Greeks* (*Conta Graecorum opposita*) by Ratramnus of Corbie, one of a number of works responding to an attack of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, against Roman usages. It was written at Pope Nicholas I's behest in 867. In the fourth and last book of this work Ratramnus reviews a number of other doctrinal disputes with the East, defending celibacy and the tonsure, and declares flatly for the superiority of the Bishop of Rome over the Patriarch of Constantinople.

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[45]Claudius had an unusually deep knowledge of Augustine, whom he much respected, much of it apparently acquired at Lyons in his early days, which had an unusually large collection of Augustine's works. It may be that his unpopular positions were somehow rooted in his study of Augustine (the same enthusiasm for Augustine got Gottschalk into trouble). His dislike for superstition led him also to argue against the persecution of witches: no human being can raise a thunderstorm, only God can do that.

Another theological threat came from Spain, where Elipandus, Archbishop of Toledo, defended a form of **Adoptionism** against which Alcuin wrote. When Felix, the learned and pious Bishop of Urgel, a part of the Frankish Empire, took up the heretical view, he was reproved at the Council of Ratisbon in 792, and recanted, but returned to his old views in a few years. Alcuin argued strongly against the Adoptionist view at a synod in Frankfurt in 494, and when new treatises from Felix's pen defending the view appeared in France, he wrote *A Little Book Against the Heresy of Felix* (797), and then a more carefully argued *Seven Books Against Felix*. The Pope condemned the heresy, and Paulinus of Aquileia wrote against it around 800. The outcome was that Felix faced a second council at Aachen, was condemned, and placed under the custody of Leidrad, Archbishop of Lyons. Adoptianism was blocked from the Empire, then, though it lingered a while in Spain.

8. HRABANUS MAURUS

The writings of Hrabanus Maurus, "Preceptor of Germany," reveal both the extent and the limitations of Carolingian scholarship of the time. His *On the Instruction of Clerics*, patterned after (and to a large extent copied from) Augustine's *On Christian Teaching* and Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule*, treats the seven arts as ancillary to the study of scripture, no doubt in an attempt to answer those who argued for the elimination of secular studies entirely. It suggests we may use whatever is true in Pagan philosophy, as the Hebrews despoiled the Egyptians (*Exodus* 12:35–36). Book III, which is almost entirely a compilation from earlier authors, includes a chapter on each of the seven arts and one on the books of the philosophers. Grammar it defines as the science of interpreting the poets (i.e. learning to read and parse their Latin using the grammar of Donatus and Priscian). Dialectic is

> the discipline of rational investigation—of defining and discussing and distinguishing the true from the false. It is therefore the discipline of disciplines. It teaches how to teach and how to learn. . . through it we detect falsehood and truth, argue and discover what is consequent and inconsequent. . . wherefore the clergy ought to know this noble art, and have its laws in constant meditation, so that subtly they may discern the wiles of heretics and confute their poisoned sayings with the conclusions of the syllogism.[46]

Hrabanus's *On Number* also reveals Augustinian influence, drawing on the discussion of measure in *The City of God*—"Take away number and all is enveloped in blind ignorance." It is number in the world that renders it intelligible. The work is chiefly intended to aid the scriptural interpreter, however, and does not even rise

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[46]Hrabanus Maurus, *On the Instruction of Clerics* 3, 20.

to the discussion of calculation, much less mathematics and the theory of numbers. His *Treatise on the Soul* summarizes Augustine, and makes occasional original remarks, arguing, for instance, that the soul cannot have a form, since that would be a shape, and can only belong, therefore, to a corporeal body, not the incorporeal soul.

On the Natures of Things is drawn mostly from Isidore, but also uses Vegetius, the Classical etymologist. Here Hrabanus is chiefly interested in words and their etymologies, and the allegorical interpretation of facts, in particular when a word or topic occurs in Scripture. There is no natural history or science here. The same approach infects the work of John Scottus Eriugena, and Bonaventure. Hrabanus's *On the Universe* is the same sort of thing.

Hrabanus also wrote huge biblical commentaries, intended to exhaust all the allegorical interpretations found in any existing older commentary, and then add yet more of his own. Walafrid Strabo, his pupil, did even a more thorough-going job in his *Glossa Ordinaria*, a clear and terse presentation used for centuries after.

9. JOHN SCOTTUS ERIUGENA

Authority proceeds from true reason, but reason does not proceed from authority. For all authority which is not approved by true reason seems weak, but true reason, since it is established by its own strength, needs to be strengthened by the assent of no authority.

Eriugena, *On the Division of Nature* I 69.

As many as are the souls of the faithful, so many are the theophanies.

Eriugena, *On theDivision of Nature* IV 7.

Turning from scholarship and biblical theology to philosophical speculation, we find that the most noted philosopher by far of the 9th century took his cue, inevitably, from the Christian Neoplatonic tradition, and his doctrine underscored, in the eyes of orthodox scholars like Hrabanus Maurus, the danger of too much

philosophy for one's Christian faith.[47] John Scottus Eriugena,[48] an Irish monk born around 810, learned Greek in Ireland, and traveled to the continent in the 840's, perhaps to escape the Viking raids. He got on friendly terms with Prudentius of Troyes, though the relationship waned after Prudentius became Bishop in 851. More important, he became a boon companion of Charles the Bald, who once asked him during a drinking bout, "What distance is there between a Scot and a sot?" to which the Scot replied, "only this table."[49] It was Charles's patronage, and most especially his protection, that enabled John to develop and express his thought as he saw fit. John died before 877 (perhaps about 870) and Malmesbury has it that he returned to England on Alfred's invitation upon the death of his protector Charles, and his students stabbed him to death with their pens. This lacks the ring of literal historical truth, and we must confess that John's life is shrouded in obscurity both before and after his association with Charles.

The Abbey of St. Denis outside Paris took its name from the Denis who was the apostle to the Gauls, but this Denis was confused with Dionysus the Areopagite at the time (a confusion straightened out by Abelard). Because of the confusion it was considered appropriate to make presentation copies of Ps.-Dionysus's works for the Frankish Kings, which were, of course, thought to be the works of Dionysus the Areopagite. Copies had been sent by the Pope to Pepin in 757, again a little later to the Abbot of the monastery, Fuldrad, and then by the Emperor Michael to Louis the Pious in 827. The Abbot of the monastery at that time, Hildwin, had tried to translate the works, but apparently his efforts were unsatisfactory, and about 860, Charles asked his favorite scholar, known for his unusual skill in Greek, to try his hand at it.[50] John ended up translating Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Making of Man* as well, and Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua*, a commentary on Ps. Dionysus and Gregory Nazianzenus. He was stimulated by these works to an explosion of scholarly activity, commenting on all of Ps.-Dionysus except for the *Mystical Theology,* on the *Gospel of John* (he also wrote a homily

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[47]For Scottus Eriugena, I have used Copleston (1962), Bett (1964), Duclow (1975), Gardner (1900), and Carabine (2000). It is to be noted that the text of Eriugena's chief work, the *Periphyseon*, is fairly obviously heavily revised, and not all the revisions are due to the author. The hand of one or more disciples, one of whom often introduces his remarks with the phrase "*nisi forte*," that is, "unless perhaps," to provide more orthodox alternatives to what has just been said, is clear in these revisions. So, especially where the text seems to veer toward orthodoxy, it cannot always be trusted. Scholars are currently at work producing a new edition of this work reflecting more accurately the history of the text. Perhaps the tradition that Eriugena was stabbed to death by his disciples with their pens reflects these revisions of his work.

[48]The accent in Eriugena goes on the *u*. Sometimes one finds Erigena, with the accent on the *i*. One also sometimes finds Scotus. He is not to be confused with John Duns Scotus, the 14th-century thinker. Ireland was considered a part of Scotland at the time, and so the name means "John from Scotland, the Irishman."

[49]William of Malmesbury, *De Pontif. Angl.* V, cited in Bett (1964).

[50]John confesses himself a beginner in Greek in his preface to the translation, and it is indeed somewhat labored, very literal and marred by a few errors, but it is also substantially accurate.

on the prologue to *John*), and on Boëthius's *Consolation* and theological works. Between 862 and 866 he turned to an exposition of his own views, a development of the late Ancient tradition of Christian Neoplatonism in Augustine as well as the Easterners he had been working with. The product was *Periphyseon, or On the Division of Nature*, the first systematic work of philosophy in the Middle Ages.[51] As was inevitable for any honest *thinker* in the period, John was in and out of trouble with the ecclesiastical hierarchy (in particular, he was suspected of favoring the Eastern Church),[52] but he died before any definitive action was brought against him. His work was finally condemned in 1225, largely because the Albigensians admired it, but it had a wide influence on the Platonists of the 12th century, and through them, on subsequent times. A copy of parts of it was in the library of Nicholas of Cusa.

Eriugena's views might seem to be modeled closely on the 5th-century Neoplatonist thinkers that he translated for Charles the Bald, but in fact they only confirmed what the Irishman already thought. Prudentius of Troyes, in his work against Scotus on predestination, written in 851, well before these translations, reports that his already radical cosmological views were rooted in a reading of Martianus Capella, and it seems that John also used Macrobius.[53] Prudentius attacks him for spreading Pagan superstition.[54] Moreover, the earliest form of *On the Division of Nature* seems to have been an essay on dialectic drawing only on Latin sources, i.e. Augustine and Boëthius, Capella, and the Pseudo-Augustinian *On the Ten Categories*.[55] Scotus's most characteristic ideas had already formed, using Western sources, before his encounter with Ps.-Dionysus.[56]

In the opening of *Periphyseon* John divides nature, the totality of real things, into four species: (1) what

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[51]The title *Periphyseon* is simply Greek for *On Nature*. For a complete translation into English, see Eriugena (1968, 1972, 1981, 1995). Eriugena (1976) is an abridged translation, with summaries of the portions not translated. Given the repetitiveness of the text, anyone but a determined scholar would probably do well to use the abridgement, which is intelligently done, and still runs to more than 300 pages. The standard references to the work are to the pagination of PL 122.

[52]In addition to the difficulties in France over predestination and the Eucharist, Pope Nicholas asked Charles for John's translation of Ps.-Dionysus, and there was concern about his doctrine on the Holy Spirit. Moreover, he seems to have written some verses exalting Constantinople above Rome, which displeased the Pope. Charles took no notice of any of this, but John probably did well for himself to retreat from France when the King died. Bett (1964) 12. For Eriugena's poetry, written for the most part for Christian feasts at the court of Charles, see Eriugena (1993).

[53]De Praedestinatione contra Johannem Scotum, PL 115, 1293D. We have John's original annotations on Capella, see Labowsky (1943). About 860, as he was working on the translations of Ps.-Dionysus, John redrafted the Capella commentary, to remove the easier targets for attack, but held to the same basic line as before. This later redaction is reflected in Eriugena (1939).

[54]PL 115, 1011, 1293 ff.

[55]Sheldon-William's introduction to Eriugena (1968) 5-6.

[56]These are the sources John cites, but he might also have known Chalcidius's translation of the central part of the *Timaeus*, and Rufinus's translation of Origen's *First Principles*.

creates and is not created, (2) what is created and creates, (3) what is created and does not create, and (4) what neither creates nor is created.[57] It is certainly sensible enough to divide all being in the first instance into natural things subject to causal laws, which can be grasped by the human intellect, and the supernatural creator, who cannot. The former are, of course, created, and themselves incapable of the act of creation, and the supernatural creator creates and is not created, so this accounts for the third and the first divisions, but what of the other two? The second, what creates and is created, refers to the Ideas in God, the First Causes of natural things. John wants to say of any production of God, including productions from eternity within himself, that they are created, and that means that some created things are *not* ruled by natural laws, for to be ruled by natural law is to be ruled by what is specified in the Ideas. Ideas constitute nature, they are not ruled by it. John says the Ideas create because they are the patterns on which God creates, and, given the manner of the creation, can be treated as though they themselves simply produced their images in matter as far as they are able.[58] If we see creation as production which does not occur through nature, then we have to identify two sorts of creation. God's creation has no explanation at all, being an entirely free act by an omnipotent being. Creation by the Ideas is not in accord with natural law, for no natural law can reasonably be supposed to govern the participation of things in ideas. Aristotle had seen this, and concluded that no sense could be made of Ideas contributing anything at all to the operation of the world.[59] It seems Eriugena saw it as well, but, accustomed to the notion of God's creative activity, which is ungoverned by nature, he saw no problem, only a verification of the divine character of Ideas. But the creative activity of Ideas is different from God's, for Ideas, if they *have* no nature or essence, still *are* the natures and essences of things, and their creative activity is a result of this fact, and so might be said to be essential to them. It is also limited by this fact, and so the Idea of cat can only create cats. It has no other option, and it invariably creates cats as far as the world allows it to, without exercising any freedom of choice.

The fourth division, that which is neither created nor creates, is God, once again, but God as he is in himself. Created things are essentially created, and their very being is relative and dependent on God. Some

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[57]There are similar divisions in Augustine and Marius Victorinus.

[58]Or else, to move to a pre-Christian Neoplatonist idealism, for God to conceive or understand a thing is to create it, a view that we will see John gravitating toward. He keeps the view Christian by insisting that God lies behind the creative activity in every case, so that God freely conceives what he will in his own creation, and in all subsequent creation through conception, there is but a reflection of, that is, an understanding of, the initial creative activity of God.

[59]See *Metaphysics* I 9. The problem is that any causal law governing the imitation of an Idea by its participant will gain purchase on the participant only if it has a suitable nature, say the nature of an imitator of such an Idea as this. But that nature is *gained* through participation and does not precede it. So no account within nature or natural law can be given of participation.

of them, natural particulars, are essentially incapable of creation, and some, Ideas, are essentially creators, and necessarily give rise to particulars imitating them as far as they may. But God is not essentially a creator. Indeed, it is necessarily the case that God's creation is done freely, not in accord with any natural law or higher Form, or with any nature which God is. (Here, of course, one might demur. Surely God is good, and so his actions are determined by his goodness. The most reasonable reply would be to deny that God is good because he is good in his essence, living up to the Idea of the Good, making him rather good because he is the creator of the Idea of the Good, which is the highest Idea, implicitly containing all other Ideas.) That means that God as he is in himself is not a creator. Creation is something he chooses to do, not something essential to his being.

Looking at the matter a little differently, John views the four-fold division as a matter of God sending forth, and the things he has created then returning to their source. Thus we begin with the uncreated creator, move on to the created creator, the Forms, and then to the changing world of sensible particulars participating in the forms, and finally we return to the original source, the uncreated that does not create, but remains reserved to itself, and, though incomprehensible to reason, contains implicit and perfect within it all that is expressed in those imperfect creations that reason grasps through the Ideas. This final return to the beginning is accomplished through mystical contemplation, in which the rational soul returns to the God that is its source, bringing with it the natural world, which, as we shall see, is contained within it. The departure and return, from oneness to multiplicity and back to oneness, is fundamentally epistemological. The return of created nature occurs through its knowledge of God, and the only way a creature can know God is by first knowing a natural world through the Forms, and then transcending that knowledge and moving to the Creator it divines behind the Forms. Thus it is only in humanity, a microcosm of all that is in the world, that nature is able to return to God. Eriugena represents this circle in terms of the four causes of Aristotle, the beginning and the uncreated creator representing the efficient cause, the natural world in the middle representing the formal cause, the Ideas, and the effects of this formal cause in matter, and the end to which the rational soul is drawn representing the final cause.[60]

This departure and return is echoed in the tighter, interior circle involving the natural world and the Forms,

> whatever things seem in the processes of their natures to be separated and divided multiply
> are united and one in the primordial causes, and, destined to return to that unity, they will

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[60]*On the Division of Nature* III 23.

abide in it everlastingly and immutably.[61]

> What is meant by procession is the multiplication of the Divine Goodness into all things that are, descending from the highest to the lowest, first through the general essence of all things, then through the most universal genera, then through the less universal . . . to the most particularized; and then this same Divine Goodness returns by gathering itself together from the infinitely varied multiplicity of things that are, through the same stages to that most unified unity of all things which is God.[62]

This return means that, for all except individual human souls, it seems, natural particulars will disappear back into their Forms. The departure and return is in one way a timeless process, for the cat timelessly departs from and returns to the Idea of cat—participation is not a causal process. On the other hand, the cat participates more or less successfully in its Idea, and, in maturing from an embryo to a full grown cat, a causal process, it comes to participate in its Idea more fully, while realizing its own nature. Similarly, the world's relation to God is in a way timeless, for God made creatures from eternity, inasmuch as he foresaw them from eternity, so that they existed already in God. But the history of the world, centering in the fall and redemption of human beings, also completes the process begun at creation, bringing the world into the fullest possible relationship to God.

John speaks often as though the development of the world were a development within God, but as a matter of fact he was not a pantheist, and such talk is generally intended metaphorically—though, of course, he thinks one can *only* speak of God metaphorically, and the orthodox might reasonably argue that it matters what metaphors we use. So creatures subsist and move in God and through God, and God is their middle for that reason, as well their beginning, and their end, the final cause all creatures seek. John says that the Fathers hold that God is made, or begins to be, in creatures, a statement that he tags as disturbing, since God is *not* created. But they only mean that God appears or manifests himself there, as an Idea manifests itself only in sensibles, by creating the natures of things. He says that God is the essence of all things. For John, 'essence' is the sort of being or existence characteristics of a substance, a reality which is of itself, not as a quality, say redness, is, by belonging to some substance. So how is it that God is the essence of all things? This means only

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[61] *On the Division of Nature* II, PL 122 col. 527A, cited and translated (I've slightly modified the translation) in Laistner (1957) 325.

[62] From the prologue to John's translation of the *Ambigua* of Maximus. Cited in Carlos Steel and D. W. Hadley, "John Scottus Eriugena," in Gracia and Noone (2003). Note in this passage in particular the Platonic suggestion that the good is the highest genus for all things, which suggest that a single science of the good would cover all the things that are.

that things exist as real substances through participation in God, not that God is somehow identical to creatures or that creatures are somehow part of God. In an attempt to explain himself he notes an analogous situation involving the human soul. Our intellect, before we think, is, but it might be said to be made in the memory when its thoughts receive form from images, and to be made yet again when it expresses its thoughts in words. What happens, of course, is that it reveals itself, in the only way it can, first to itself, and then to others, and this revelation we call a kind of making of itself.[63]

One key to John's expression of these matters, at the very beginning of Book I, is his division of Nature into things that are and things that are not. John then tries to say what is meant by 'being' to explicate his division in terms of creation, and he makes several suggestions.[64] In the first place, to be is to be sensible and intelligible, and what is not sensible and intelligible is not—and so God is not, except insofar as he becomes sensible or intelligible through his creation. Also, matter is not, for as such it has no form and is neither perceptible nor intelligible, and the Forms or natures of things are not, because they are not sensible, and cannot be understood, for understanding something means tracing its essence or nature, and they, being themselves essences or natures, have no further essence or nature. What he says is that just as God is beyond all creation, so the Forms are in the *innermost* recesses of creation, and so they too cannot be understood. What we know in the natural world is always the outer surface, the accidents of things, from which we know *that* they are, but not *what* they are.

Indeed, not even God, John says, knows himself as he is in himself, because the difficulty here is not the incapacity of our intellect, but the unknowableness of God. God has no nature, being above the Forms, and so "God does not know of Himself what he is because he is not a 'what', being in everything incomprehensible both to himself and to every intellect."[65] Nonetheless, God's ignorance surpasses knowledge, being above it. He knows himself in a way superior to intellectual knowledge relying on the Forms, presumably through a kind of direct awareness of Himself. In particular, he knows that he is not a 'what'.

This view of God argues that he cannot be said to be identical to any creature. To be identical to a creature involves being the same sort of thing as that creature is, and God is not the same sort of thing as any creature at all. Nor is God the nature of the creature, for to be the same nature or Form would require that something be a certain Form falling under a certain definition, and God is not like this. God is 'nothing'. John

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[63]For this whole paragraph, *On the Division of Nature* I 12–13.

[64]*On the Division of Nature* I 3–7.

[65]*On the Division of Nature* II. Eriugena (1972), 143; see also for this paragraph 144–147, 153. Eriugena (1976) 112–113.

cannot forebear a stroke of cleverness depending on this fact when he considers the doctrine of creation from nothing. This doctrine was normally taken to mean that there is no previously existing thing other than God from which God constructed the world, rejecting the notion in the *Timaeus* that the world arose from a substrate or receptacle, unformed space—either there was no such preexisting space (for such a thing cannot exist unformed, which is John's view), or God created space first, and then introduced the Forms into it. John claims that the nothing from which the world is created is God himself.[66] This sounds as though it may be pantheistic, as though the world somehow evolved from the stuff of God, but his meaning is only that the natural world arose from, that is, is due to the creative activity of, something above nature which is not a what. The view is in fact unexceptionably orthodox.[67]

In another sense of 'to be' discussed by John, to be is to be actual as opposed to potential, to have developed out of seeds, and what remains potential within its seeds, whether the Ideas or God, is not.[68] Higher things are not, in this sense, then, since they are *above* being, and only come to be in lower things which unfold the possibilities within them and make them intelligible.[69] Of course, there are things that are not, in yet other senses of being, because they are lower. So material objects are not insofar as they are not purely objects of reason, matter (as we have already observed) is not insofar as it is unformed, and human nature in sin is not, insofar as it is deprived of what properly belongs to it. In this sense all evil is not. What is not in this way is not knowable, that is, it cannot be brought under the Forms and understood as part of the plan of nature, but this is a failure of knowledge different from God's knowledge *above* knowledge, for these things, having no nature,

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[66]On the Division of Nature III*, PL 122, 686C–687A. Compare Augustine, *Confessions* XII 3–9, who does not identify any reference for the word 'nothing' in 'creation from nothing', and so avoids even the appearance of theological error here in a way that John does not. Compare also the discussion of Fridugisius's letter on nothing above. Like Fridugisius, John resists Augustine's conclusion that the apparent reference of the word 'nothing' drops out when the sentence is properly analyzed. He would like to know what this nothing is from which the world is created, and his discussion of the way in which God is nothing opens up a possible answer.

[67]This is clear, for instance, from *On the Division of Nature* III 14 and 15, Eriugena (1976) 179–180. Somewhere in the earlier history of John's borrowed ideas a purer Neoplatonist no doubt would have taken it that God does produce himself by thinking the Ideas in which he is expressed, and would have identified the Ideas (actually *the* Idea that contains them all, the Idea of the Good) with God's mind in the shape it takes when God knows himself. None of this is present in John, even though his ideas and metaphors derive some plausibility from this background, except more or less obscurely in his treatment of the Trinity. In particular, it seems clear that John takes the Ideas to be *created*, not a natural evolution within the Godhead arising from God's knowledge of himself.

[68]Just as the first sense of 'to be' is developed explicitly from remarks of Gregory Thaumaturgos, this sense of 'to be' is developed from Augustine, with special reference to the preexistence of the seeds of all men in the first man created, which do not yet exist until they have become actual men.

[69]This is perhaps the earmark of a Platonist—John takes potentiality, in the Forms, to be prior to actuality. This precedence is necessarily muddied somewhat by the presence of God prior even to the Forms, but God is not actually anything, either, of course, having no nature. God would seem to be, in Himself, neither actual nor potential, though He is perhaps the potentiality of the created world.

also have no being at all. Hence, God does not know these things, just as he does not know himself, but he is *entirely* without knowledge of these. He is, perhaps, directly acquainted with himself, but in the case of evil, there is nothing there to be acquainted with. Augustine said, "He does not know them because they are, but they are because he knows them. For He was not ignorant what he was about to create."[70] If God knew evil, he would have caused it, for he knows only that which has its eternal ground in himself—but he causes no evil. God knows only the world as *it is*, as it lives up to the Forms.

A pair of very deep Platonic themes are developed here. First, we must postulate the Forms to explain knowledge and the reality of what we know, but there is a question whether these Forms exist. Plato supposes in the *Sophist* that they are because they enter inescapably into the explanations of things that are. But this being, later Platonists supposed, could not be simple existence. A Form is not an individual existing in the natural world. It is, but it is in some different, more fundamental way. There must be a sort of being which involves not only accessibility by the intellect, but also the formation of the existing world, for they are the natures of things. This being is beyond mere existence. The Forms have such being, and then God, of course, has an even more exalted sort of being, for he is the ground of this being of the Forms as well as of existence, but as He is in Himself, he is not intelligible, and is not the nature of any created thing. In the second place, these higher sorts of being are not only the source of natural existence, but also depend on natural existence to become realized in actuality. John has to fight shy of this notion to preserve the utter priority of God, who can depend in no way on his creation, but he sees the point well enough to make it at least in the epistemological realm. God is only known through his creation, and forms are only known through their instances. He avoids saying that *God is* only insofar as his creation is, but he does try on saying that Forms are actual only insofar as they have existing natural instances, and that the divine nature is created in the Forms. Perhaps the best way to take this 'is created' is that God 'comes to-be-in-creation', and so to be knowable, through the Forms. Similarly, God, that is, the Father's Wisdom, the second person of the Trinity, the repository of the Forms, is likewise created and made in everything it creates, as well as containing everything that it creates.[71] Here John is careful *not* to say that it is God that is the essence of creatures, even though all things participate in God, rather this *participation* in God is the essence of creatures.[72]

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[70]Augustine, *On the Trinity* XV 22.

[71]*On the Division of Nature* III 7, Eriugena (1976) 156.

[72]*On the Division of Nature* III 7, Eriugena (1976) 153. John does not always say this so clearly that he cannot be misunderstood. For instance, he says that in creatures God is their essence (I 71, Eriugena (1976) 95), meaning, it seems, that considered as he is made or created in creatures, God is their essence. So the essence of creatures is a theophany, so that God is

God, then, appears in his creatures, who are 'theophanies' insofar as they are at all. The Ideas likewise are known as theophanies, since the Son makes them known through illumination of the understanding. God and Forms are not knowable even to the highest angels, except through such a created theophany.[73] A theophany is created by God *in* the creature experiencing them, and is an apprehension of God in something else in the created world. The blessed receive a theophany in accord with their sanctity and wisdom, and indeed, wisdom and virtues are themselves theophanies. When one enters Heaven one is deified, and in receiving the vision of God one becomes like God, and being like God, he can see more of God.[74] To the blessed, all creation reveals God, and the promised Heaven is the Heaven of a philosopher, for "the very glory promised to us in the future life is experience of those things which are here accepted on faith, investigated by reason, and become matters of conviction as far as possible."[75]

Why is John attracted to what he professedly says is metaphorical talk in saying that God is the essence of creatures? Like all of his contemporaries, he thought of natural causation as a matter of the effect being present already, but potentially or implicitly, 'in' the cause. This would apply to the causation involved in the production of the world from the Forms as well. He tended to give a literal reading of the word 'in' here, not because of bewitchment by language, but because he could not see how anything genuinely new could emerge in the world through the natural order. If the effect were not in the cause, we would have a case of creation from nothing. Moreover, he tended to think of the effect as quite possibly losing something that is in the cause, but certainly never gaining greater perfection than the cause had. This sort of thought is behind the Aristotelian conviction that something actual must always render the potential actual. Reality is lost in causal processes, but never gained. Just as it is only the Idea of cat that is really cat, so it is only God, the source of all being, that really is. But why would he apply these notions to God? God in fact *does* create something entirely new when he produces the world. It may not be mere metaphor to say that the effect was contained already in the cause

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revealed in the essence of creatures, that is, in their participation in him.

[73]*On the Division of Nature* I 7–10. Note that a theophany (Greek for 'an appearance of God') is a creation, not something emanating from God in Neoplatonic fashion. Indeed, John says that in general things are naturally known to themselves, and to what is above them, but not to what is below them. So human beings do not know angels, for instance. The problem is raised immediately after this whether the blessed in Heaven see God as he is, and John holds his ground, insisting that they receive better theophanies than we do in this world, theophanies of the sort that angels receive, and so Paul says that we shall then see face to face, but nonetheless they will experience only theophanies, not God as he is in himself.

[74]*On the Division of Nature* I 9. John cites Maximus, "the intellect becomes whatever it can grasp", a notion that is rooted in Aristotle, of course, but allows inferences in these mystical writers that Aristotle likely never envisioned.

[75]*On the Division of Nature* I 10, translation from Eriugena (1976) 13.

beforehand when we are dealing with the temporal causal order here below the Moon, but it *is* mere metaphor when applied to God. John seems in fact to agree with all this, but he also thinks that natural causation is the only causation we can understand, and so God's creative action can only be understood in terms of natural causation. All his talk of God being in creatures as their essence is strictly false, and he knows it is. He even says it is. But every understanding we form of God is strictly false. Nonetheless, such an understanding often points us to God's unknowable being, and here it does so as God is the source of the being of creatures.

Like his Greek sources, John is especially concerned about the incomprehensibility of God. He takes up most of Book I of *On the Division of Nature* establishing at length that God falls under none of the ten categories of Aristotle (not even substance), and can have nothing predicated of him quite literally and properly. Whatever is predicated affirmatively is predicated metaphorically, and these very metaphorical predications we accept must be denied in their literal sense if we are to hold to the truth.[76] So, speaking affirmatively we equate God with Being, Wisdom, and the like, meaning that he is somehow more than these things, as their source. We also deny of him these things, for God is, meaning that he is something above being, and the only perfect and complete reality (he embraces all being in himself, at least potentially, that is, he is source of all being), literally and properly he is not, meaning that he is not one of those that, speaking literally and properly, are in any sense we can understand, drawing on our experience of the created world. We point to God as the source of everything positive and good in creation, without knowing what God, in himself, is, or understanding at all how he produces his creation.

It should be noted that the key notions in Eriugena's analysis, the notions of being and a source, are not conceived by him to correspond to Forms. There is no form of Being or Cause precisely because these notions must be applied to our understanding of Forms—we need to discuss what sort of being an Idea has, and what sort of cause it is. Unlike Plato, Eriugena never seems to consider the possibility of Forms sharing as Forms in other Forms. So, although he assumes we can only understand the natural world through the Forms, he also assumes that there is a mental grasp to be gained of Forms themselves that does not depend on their falling under Forms. However, being and causation as it applies to the Forms is understood in the consideration of the relation of Forms to the natural things falling under them, and this is why the being and causal activity of Forms is cashed in in terms of possible and actual participation of natural particulars in them. Forms establish themselves, not outside the realm of nature, but, as it were, at its furthest boundary, reflecting the natural order back to us. Nonetheless, Eriugena has at his disposal the notions of being and cause when he wishes to

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[76]*On the Division of Nature* I 76.

talk about God, even if he cannot make out God as a participant in any of the Forms. Thus as close as we can come to God is to see him as the source of the Forms, but not a source in the way that one natural thing is a source of another under natural laws, nor in the way that Forms are the sources of things, but somehow explaining, what must seem an odd fact upon reflection, why it is that the Forms eventuate in a natural world at all. There must *be* such an explanation, we might feel, though, of course, we cannot understand it, and so God becomes our name for this mystery. And when it is demanded of us how *God* can create the Forms and the world that follows on them, we at last draw the line, and assert that he simply can, we know not how, and that without dependence on any more ultimate reality. After all, one must draw the line somewhere, for the chain of causes cannot recede into infinity.

John's understanding of the Trinity is evolved in Platonic terms. The Ideas, the sum of which are the Logos, are created eternally by the Father in the Son,[77] though the Son is the cause of those Ideas (presumably because they are his thoughts), whereas the Spirit is the cause of the distribution of those ideas, that is, their presence in the natural world. (This seems to bring the Christian trinity as close to the Neoplatonic trinity of the One, Nous, and Psyche as can practically be managed.) "The Father wills, the Son creates, the Holy Spirit perfects," or again, "The Father is, the Son is wise, the Spirit lives".[78] Nonetheless, the Father's willing all things and the Son's creating all things are the same action, and the same willing, so that the Father is said to create all things in the Son. Similarly the Spirit's perfection of things is only the one will of God, once more, so that God perfects all things through the Spirit. The three names of God do not name different substances, powers or operations, then, despite the appearance that they do so produced by John's apportionment of their different roles in creation. They only indicate relations among themselves, within the Godhead, relations of production which are echoed in creation.[79] Thus far, John seems to stay within Western orthodoxy, but he steps outside it when he rejects the *filioque* doctrine approved at Aachen, arguing that the Father produced the Spirit through the Son, for each thing has only one cause.[80] This is in agreement with the Eastern Church.

Just as he thinks there is one God, Scotus thinks there is but one soul, which acts as a whole in understanding and willing, even though we identify parts of it, some associated with knowing, the understanding, discursive reason, and the common sense, and some accruing to it in virtue of its body, life and

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[77]*On the Division of Nature* II, PL 122, 560 A–B.

[78]*On the Division of Nature* II, PL 122, 553 C–D, and I, PL 122, 455 C.

[79]*On the Division of Nature* I, Pl 122, 456 C–457 D; IV, PL 122, 794 C–D.

[80]*On the Division of Nature* II, PL 122, 601B–615C.

its corporeal powers. The uniqueness of the soul of a particular human being is not asserted for Aristotelian reasons (this is not an anticipation of Aquinas's doctrine of the unity of the substantial form), but rather to ensure that it is the image of God. The one soul is joined to the body, though we cannot know how. This leads to a question, for the soul seems then to have contradictory properties. In its embracing all things, corporeal, vital, sensitive, rational and intellectual, it is both animal and something spiritual, and so contrary to animal. How can this be? John's answer appears to be that the soul participates in these opposed things at one and the same time, but in virtue of different activities and powers, and this involves no contradiction.[81] In short, he resolves the difficulties here just in the same way as he would resolve parallel difficulties with the Trinity. Indeed, when the student presses the objection, arguing that a human being is said both to be an animal and a spirit, and these surely are contraries, John retreats to the position that it is possible for human beings to have these contrary characteristics, since they are made in the image of God, and God embraces contradictions within himself. The point is that just as God embraces contradictions because he is above the contradictories as their source, so human nature embraces all of the natural world within it, and, as God's image, stands above it, reflecting its source in its knowledge of it, and so human nature, too, can have opposites within it.[82]Indeed, human beings are as like God as a created thing can be, and their free will corresponds to God's omnipotence, while their "created wisdom, which is human nature, knows all things it itself which are made before they are made."[83]Though this knowledge is in God insofar as he is cause of all things, and in human beings as the effect of God's creation of them, Eriugena speaks of human knowledge as creating all things within itself, since it produces their ideas within itself independently of the effects of created things on it. The Fall, however, has obscured this natural knowledge of all things in ourselves.

Like Leibniz in the 17th century and Kant in the 18th, Eriugena sees the solution of the mind-body problem in the recognition that human nature is not a part of material nature, nor a nature entirely outside material nature, but rather a nature underlying it. The reality of bodies is imparted to them, he thinks, by mind's perception and understanding of them, and thus a particular mind can be associated with its own body

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[81]*On the Division of Nature* IV 5, Eriugena (1976) 221–224. Further discussion raises the issue how one genus can contain opposed species within it, to which it is replied that the opposed differentia falling under a genus are not contradictory opposites, for something outside the genus typically falls under neither of these differentia, and, of course, the opposed differentia belong to different species, and neither of them to the genus as such (224–226).

[82]*On the Division of Nature* IV 5, Eriugena (1976) 227.

[83]*On the Division of Nature* IV 778D, cited in Carlos Steel and D.W. Hadley, "John Scottus Eriugena," Gracia and Noone (2003) 402.

even though it is not one. Eriugena did not see the rationale for this position as clearly as these later thinkers, who explain that the mind gains a body (following a Neoplatonic theme) by coming to know itself, something it can only do by bringing itself under its own understanding, making itself observable, as it were, through the senses. He did not explain *how* the soul gains a body as they did, but he located the source of the possibility in the same place. His thought here, even if it is left incomplete, is not a trivial dodge, but a genuine hypothesis worth exploring. I will examine one by one the various elements of this complex of ideas, to clarify the situation.

Let us turn first to John's understanding of bodies. The essence of a thing cannot be understood or defined by us as it is in itself, John thinks, but it can be understood in terms of its realization in the material world.[84] The essence of a thing is inseparable from time and space, for it can only have (actual) being in time and place.[85] Now time and place are not themselves bodies, nor are they prime matter, which is in itself completely without qualities, and so unrestricted to any particular time or place, and unrestricted to any individual.[86] The corporeal things realizing essence in the natural world, John thought, were composed of sensible qualities inhering in prime matter. These qualities have shape, and it is the spatial arrangement of the qualities that realizes the substantial forms in things, the body itself being identified as a particular quantity (for instance, this seven cubic centimeters).[87] The four elements arise when sensible qualities, heat and cold, moistness and dryness, are added to shape and quantity.[88] The idea is that a natural material object can be viewed in two ways, either as a material thing, in which case we consider the distribution of its qualities in space, and treat it more or less as something purely mechanical, without regard to its ultimate end or purpose, or the Idea it realizes in the world. Or we can treat it as an actualization of an Idea in the world, in which case we attend to its ends and purposes, note how well it lives up to what it is (what it intends to be), and so on. It is rather like an artifact, an adding machine, say, which can be looked at simply as a physical arrangement of

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[84]He thinks there *is* such a thing as what it is in itself, but he does not think we can know this thing. His position, then, is more like Kant's position on the thing-in-itself that it is like Fichte or Hegel's. He does not think that the universal idea's reality is exhausted by its expression in the natural world. After all, something needs to be there to be expressed. But he does not think that human nature has the power to grasp what that something is.

[85]*On the Division of Nature* I, 45. Eriugena (1976) 57–58.

[86]*On the Division of Nature* I, 46–47. Eriugena (1976) 59–61. No essence is a body, because every essence is simple and uncompounded.

[87]*On the Division of Nature* I, 49–52. Eriugena (1976) 64–66. Eriugena notes that geometric bodies are imaginary, for they do not subsist in any essence, adopting a form of the view that mathematicals are abstracted from physical bodies in the mind.

[88]*On the Division of Nature* I, 53. Eriugena (1976) 68–69..

material things, and understood in that way, or can be looked at as something intended to add, and assessed on such points as how well it realizes that end if it works exactly as intended, and whether it is in fact in good working order. Viewed in the one way, it produces marks on paper in a complicated way. Viewed in the other way, those marks become numbers, the addends and their sum. The essence of a thing (adding machine) is not itself the form of the matter, but rather has matter, or is realized in it, and the form of the matter is that set of characteristics it has which makes it follow the laws of physics.[89] At this point, one may ask whether any body understood purely materially has an essence. Surely the elemental bodies must, for how else can we explain their having the characteristics they do? Eriugena does not seem unaware of the difficulty, but he thinks of the elements as arising secondarily from *ousia* of complex things. It is as if the only real essences were essences of complex machines designed for various purposes, and the elements of those machines arose only in the context of those machines, having no independent sources of existence. The elements arise from the meeting of the accidents that realize an essence.[90] Thus, to summarize all this in the opaque phrase of the handbooks, Eriugena follows Gregory of Nyssa, in holding that bodies arise from the coming together of sensible accidents, and are not themselves essences or substances.[91] Lying behind this view is the conviction that the entire reality of the natural world is exhausted by what is accessible to human knowledge through the senses. Indeed, if we look for an intelligible essence behind what the senses provide, John will point out that we can know that only through the understanding, which seizes not on material objects, but on Ideas. If one looks for a more fundamental reality behind the sensible presentation of the world, John allows that there is one, but it is not found in material particulars at all, but rather in the realm of Ideas, as they are realized in Prime Matter, which, as we have seen, is Plato's Receptacle, and itself a universal without time or place. For John, everything that is in the natural world is knowable, either through the understanding or the senses, though the underlying universal essences are only knowable as they express themselves in natural particulars, not as they are in themselves.

In the second place, then, what is John's understanding of minds? He argues in one place that the

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[89]*On the Division of Nature* I, 53. Eriugena (1976) 69–70.

[90]*On the Division of Nature* I, 53. Eriugena (1976) 68–69. Perhaps the intention is the Platonic point that the elements can only be understood through their interactions, their effects, and these interactions can only be understood if we conceive a larger context for them, so that they occur within a natural kind falling under an essence. It is, of course, unclear that the way up depends so entirely on the way down. Relations between material elements seem sufficient to understand things at a material level, and if a substance is needed to perceive them, that surely does not mean that they cannot be conceived independently of perceiving substances.

[91]*On the Division of Nature* I, 59. Eriugena (1976) 76.

natural corporeal world (along with sexual reproduction, and the loss of intelligence that makes us ignorant of God) arose because of the Fall, which was due to the sin of pride, a turning from God to self. Now one might think that this meant that human beings were originally immaterial natures like angels, but in fact John held that God foresaw sin, and so created humanity in the genus of animal even before sin occurred.[92] This priority of animality to sin, however, is not temporal, for humanity fell under sin at the very moment of its creation, so that it attained to no perfection at all before the fall (a position that leads to some fancy exegesis of the story of Eden, discussed below). Moreover, John sees the Fall as a matter of becoming enamored of material things, being caught up in the senses, and so losing sight of God. God created men as animals because he foresaw that they would come to live as animals, in a life of irrational passion, and so placed them in a genus appropriate to this life. If the Fall was causally prior to the world, we can only interpret this sin of bodily concupiscence, symbolized in sex, as a kind of metaphor for a more abstract pride and self-will. If man was going to prefer himself, lusting after created things, then, as punishment, he would be made subject to material things.

But in another place, in direct reply to the question whether humanity would have been animal even if there had been no Fall, John replies that indeed it would have. In the first place, there is nothing wrong in itself with being an animal, or with being moved by irrational desires, for this is perfectly appropriate to beasts. It is only in humanity that this sometimes presents a problem, for reason ought to rule the irrational desires, and so a rational being ought not to be subject to them.[93] A human animal in which reason always ruled would be free from sin. But to approach the question more directly, God wished that there be one thing in creation in his Image, which surpassed and embraced everything in nature as God himself surpasses and embraces all things.[94] In fact, human beings do not even know what they are, for they can identify no essence for themselves, even if they know what they are, and this is a sign of the image of God in them, for that image could not be reflected in them if they had a positive nature.[95] John suggests that the essence of a human being lies simply in its reflecting the image of God, that is, in its understanding, which reflects the Forms in God. So,

> . . . spirit is an incorporeal nature which, of itself, lacks form and matter; for all spirit, whether rational or intellectual, is formless in itself. But if it turns to its Cause, the Word by which everything has been made, then it receives form. God's Word, then, is the one Form of all spirits, rational and intellectual. If the spirit is irrational, it is likewise formless in itself,

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[92]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 807C.

[93]*On the Division of Nature* IV 6, Eriugena (1976) 230–232.

[94]*On the Division of Nature* IV 7, Eriugena (1976) 232–234.

[95]*On the Division of Nature* IV 7, Eriugena (1976) 243–244.

but receives form from the *phantasiae* [images] of sensible things. In other words, the *phantasia* of corporeal things, fixed in the memory through the physical senses, is the form of irrational spirits.[96]

There doesn't seem to be a way to reconcile these two different reasons to create human beings as animals—if it is for punishment or instruction it would not have happened had God not foreseen man's fall, and if it was because he wished his image to be present in some creature, it would have happened in any case—but the second is perhaps John's more considered view. He introduces it, not in the context of a discussion of the Fall, but after explaining how it is that human nature contains within it all creation, so that the return of human nature to God would involve a return of all creation to God. Human nature in a way joins God to his Creation, for it is animal, material, and sensible, while also being celestial in its rationality, and wholly devoid of animal nature as it participates in the divine essence. It is, in its freedom, able to be animal, or (with the help of grace) spiritual.[97] As Paul says, "it is sown in an animal body, it will rise in a spiritual body."[98] Indeed, human nature includes *all* creation in it, even angelic natures, which it was intended it should equal.[99]

We can note here once more the transformation of the Pagan Platonic tradition in the hands of Christian Platonism. Originally, in the Plotinian idealism, humanity embraced all of nature simply in virtue of knowing the Forms. It was Reason (Nous) that gave rise to Soul (Psyche), which realized itself in the changing material world splintered into a myriad kinds of things, but also united in the human reason which understood it all. The notion that human nature embraced all of nature simply fell out of the metaphysics. And indeed, John argues much of this himself, insisting that human nature, as it exists in the mind of God, contains within itself all that is found in the world, which is why it can understand all that is found in the world, and so, as *Genesis* tells, us, *name* all that is found in the world.[100] But for John these notions still require motivation, for the world does not emanate from God, but is created freely by Him, and so God could have made the world without a being that understood all to be found within the world, or he could have refused to make any material world at all, both impossibilities for Plotinus. So human nature embraces all of nature as a suitable reflection of its

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[96]*On the Division of Nature* I 27, Eriugena (1976) 42.

[97]*On the Division of Nature* IV 5, PL 122, 755B–756A, Eriugena (1976) 223–5.

[98]I *Corinthians* 15.44. *On the Division of Nature* IV 5, PL 122, 760C (Eriugena (1976) 229), 764A; II 584C.

[99]*On the Division of Nature* IV 8, Eriugena (1976) 245–249. To reconcile this with Augustine, John argues that when God said "Let there be light", light included *all* rational natures, human as well as angelic. *On the Division of Nature* IV, Pl 122, 780D–782B.

[100]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 769A. (*Genesis* 2:19)

condition after the Fall, or perhaps because God *chooses* to have one creature who understands the rest, because it recapitulates all things in itself. What was necessity becomes contingency rooted in God's choice.

This would seem to spoil the connection I wished to make between Eriugena's approach to the mind-body problem and that of Leibniz and Kant. John simply does not grant that the soul's presence in the material world is necessary if it is to exist, that is, if it is to know itself, at all. But perhaps not. It is true that John holds that God could have created a world without his image in any creature in it, and such a world would have drawn its existence from God's knowledge of it, as the world of Ideas, the Word, exists because God knows it. But given that he did decide to make a creature in his image, that is, a knowing creature, what would John have held such a creature must be like?

John follows Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Making of Man* in holding that there are two aspects, and two creations, of human nature. In the first (parallel to the arising of Psyche in the Plotinian world view), body and soul arose together, intellect, reason and sense in an image of the Trinity. In the second (parallel to the fall of Psyche into time), the other two parts of the soul arose, the body and its life, as human nature was born into this world.[101] It seems, then, that any creature that is to be a knower, that is, an image of God the Trinity, must have intellect, reason and sense. But what are these three powers of the soul? John follows Augustine, and identifies intellect as the direct grasp of the Ideas and first principles in God, reason as a temporal power, the power of discursive thought using language, and the senses as an internal sense or awareness of one's own thoughts which enable one to assign the conceptions one has to the images reported from the world in one's external senses. This last power is present, in virtue of the first two, whether one in fact receives sense reports or not. The other two powers of the soul are gained when the soul acquires a body. They constitute the power to be joined to a body (controlling it by one's will and perceiving the impressions made in its sense organs), and to give that body life.

The double creation of the soul presented a difficulty when compared to Augustine's doctrine, and John labors to make it out that there is room for it within the Augustinian view. His solution to the problem aids us in understanding his approach to the relation between mind and body. He focuses on showing that Augustine subscribes to the first creation, by arguing that according to his view (*On the Trinity* IX 9) the concepts of things in the mind are better and higher than the things themselves. (After all, they rule the particular things, for they

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[101]*On the Division of Nature* II, Pl 122, 582 AB; IV, 800D–801D. For the five parts of the soul and the original image of the Trinity in it, II, 570D–571B, where John relates the first three and the last two parts to the inner and the outer man in II *Corinthians* 4:16. John denies that there are two souls in a man, the rational soul corresponding to the first three parts here, and the animal souls to the last two.

specify what these things ought to be.) The things understood in God's mind are, of course, superior even to those in human and angelic minds. Indeed, Augustine agrees with him that the 'concept' of a thing in God's mind is actually its true essence. Thus, from Augustine, we can argue that human nature is in itself a concept in the Mind of God, and only accidentally and outwardly is it rational, mortal animal.[102] In this way, of course, human nature is like the natures of all other things, so the conclusion is not surprising, but the point to note is that human nature is clearly first created in the mind of God, even according to Augustine, only afterwards appearing in the world.

John makes the Fall of humanity parallel to the creation of the soul and the world by God, just as in Plotinus the fall of Psyche into time just is the 'arising' of the natural world. All things are contained within human understanding, just as they are in the divine mind, and the human understanding becomes irrationally attached to those things that are not God. As a result of this, these things become, as it were, real. Human nature is given over to that which it has chosen to love, and its fantasies converted to a horrifying reality as the soul acquires a body. The acquisition of the body makes these things real, for it means the acquisition of the senses, so that the sensible qualities which make up the material world become known to a being that is capable of understanding them in terms of their more ultimate, underlying reality, the Ideas in God. Without the presence of human bodies, an intelligible material world would not exist. Still, one might say that that would not have been so bad a thing. The Forms themselves, more ultimately real than any particular falling under them, and embracing within themselves all the reality of those particulars, would still have existed, and with them the unrealized potentialities, reflected in the incorporeal human common sense, of actualization in a sensible world. And human beings would also have existed, and been self-aware, would they not? Actually, that is not entirely clear. John does not think that human beings know any Idea, including that of the soul, as it is in itself, as we have seen. They only know the Ideas insofar as they know how they are realized in sensibles. This goes double for human beings, for even if one did know the nature of a human being one would only know it as a mirror that reflects the Ideas. So it seems that a human being would have known of his existence if he never had a body, but nothing else about himself. What one wants to say is that human nature, to become something, something knowable to itself, must become involved in the world, loving and seeking worldly things, so that it acquires a body and comes to understand itself in terms of its body and its *worldly* functioning. But all this is sin. Is the Fall, then, inevitable?

John's insistence that the Fall occurred immediately upon the creation of human nature suggests

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[102]*On the Division of Nature* IV 7, PL 122, 766A–768C, Eriugena (1976) 242–243.

inevitability. John is forced by this view to give a thoroughly allegorical reading of the story of the Garden of Eden. In particular, Adam can have been in Paradise no time at all before the Fall, for had he been there however short a time, he would have attained sufficient perfection to avoid the Fall. The story of Paradise prefigures the end, rather than describing the beginning.[103] John draws on the interpretations of the Fathers to fill out an acceptable meaning for the story. So, following Ambrose of Milan, he suggests that Adam be viewed as reason and Eve as the senses, the whole story taking place within human nature, and Adam's sin is that he fell in love with Eve (sense) abandoning God.[104] Again, when it is suggested by God, "let us make woman, for it is not good that man should be alone", this is to be taken ironically. The intention is that man does not find it good to be left alone, unified and perfect as the image of God, but wishes to propagate himself as an object of sense, in matter, like the animals.[105] And it is noted that God does not curse Adam or Eve, but only the serpent, who is the irrational desire for the sensible that seduces Eve, and is not made by God, as are Adam and Eve.[106] In good people, the woman is not deceived by the Serpent, but where she is, the 'curse' of Eve is imposed. This is that she should bear children only with labor and difficulty, but since Eve is the sensory power, that means that is with difficulty that the soul comes to an understanding of natural things, for having turned from God, it no longer has the intuitive understanding of the natures of things that is to be derived from God, but must extort these things from the senses.[107] The 'curse' of Adam, that he shall find the earth barren and have to work hard to make it bear, refers to the emptiness of his own heart, barren of virtue, and consumed with the desire for what is nothing.[108] Indeed, Paradise itself is not a place, but the original perfection of human nature in the image of God. The Tree of Life is the Word planted in the interior sense, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is evil disguised as the good, the fruit of which is lustful attachment to material things. God planted both trees in human nature, of course, but is not guilty of any evil, for the second tree is in itself good, and it is only human sensuality that sees it as a good in itself and lusts after it. It is Eve's misuse

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[103]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 809A–810C. At one point in the ensuing allegorical interpretation the Student interrupts and claims that Ambrose surely intended it to supplement the literal reading, but the Teacher will have none of this, and insists that the literal meaning here is false (816B–817).

[104]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 813BC, 815CD, 833AB.

[105]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 846BC.

[106]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 848CD.

[107]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 855A–856B.

[108]*On the Division of Nature* IV, PL 122, 858A–860A.

of the tree that makes the problem.[109]

Is sin inevitable, then? Following Augustine and Boethius, John insists that sin has no cause, and is in itself nothing, simply the exercise of free will lacking something. The creature himself is good, it is only the action that is bad. Sin is essentially a turning away from the contemplation of God, to self-will and a love of his material creation. Sin is error, and even the worst of men would turn to goodness if they saw things clearly. This, of course, does not rule out, for a close reader of Augustine, the notion that the error is willful and, to a degree, self-imposed, a subversion of the intellect by the will. Punishment is the misery of the perverted will when it discovers that what it hoped to find in earthly things cannot be found there. It is only the perverted will that is punished, and the substance which is the person, which is good, will be fully restored, not subjected to evil at all. Thus our truest selves (our selves as they are in themselves, before any action occurs, perhaps) are untouched by evil, and it is only because we falsely identify ourselves in our perverted wills, which were not created by God, and which we can turn away from, that we suffer. Punishment consists in the realization of the futility of our sinful actions and desires, vexation at the failure of our perverse intentions when God brings good even out of our sinful actions, and anger at our failure to assert ourselves in God's world.[110]

The Fall limits itself. God is infinite, and progress towards God therefore has no end, but pure nothing sets a limit to travel away from God, and so human beings, who, as created things must ever be in motion, as it were rebound from this nothingness and begin to move again toward God.[111] John argues that human nature can only be restored as a whole, and so the nature of all human beings will be restored at the end of things (despite the fact that individual human beings are only some of them saved, while some are damned). Human nature is restored because the Word becomes human, and remains free from sin, and so returns to the Father, bringing undivided human nature with it.[112] The process is parallel to the one we have discussed in which human nature, when it is restored to God, brings the whole natural world with it, since the natural world is contained in its nature. The discussion of Christ's sacrifice no doubt looked most unsatisfactory to many more orthodox Christians, for here too, though he can scarcely get away with it, John seems to give an allegorical reading of

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[109]*On the Division of Nature* IV 822A–828A. All this follows Ambrose and Gregory of Nyssa quite closely.

[110] *On the Division of Nature* V 26–33. Eriugena (1976) 315–323. Again, at IV 5, Eriugena (1976) 229–230, Scotus says that "human nature did not wish to sin, and hence its Creator, since he is just, did not wish to punish it, but to add something . . . in which sin could be cleansed. . .", and this is the reason he gave human nature its animal nature and the body. What appears to be punishment is always for the sake of reform and instruction, not for the sake of pure retaliation, which, it appears, is not just.

[111]*On the Division of Nature* V 26. The argument is drawn from Gregory of Nyssa.

[112]*On the Division of Nature* II, PL 122, 535D–539D; IV, 777BC.

the plain historical text. The event as he describes it is a metaphysical one, in which the Universal Human Nature is restored through its identification with the Word, its restoration amounting to a reunification of it and a turning back to God's light, away from the darkness of ignorance. The elements of morality and the violated obligation to God scarcely seem to figure at all, and certainly no tale is told of the sort we shall see rehearsed by Anselm in the 11th century, centering on matters of moral obligation and forgiveness. In fact, it is not as bad as it looks, for John finds a moral failing in ignorance, which is rooted in a lustful turning away from God, and if he seems not to attend so much to love of one's fellow man as a modern Christian would like, he does deal with that which turns us from such love, our lust for power and worldly goods, and he is not so much at odds with his contemporaries in his emphases here as he is with us. But it is bad enough, for it seems that John has no truck with the drama so skillfully portrayed in Anselm, in which a just God's forgiveness must be obtained when there is no justice in it, given the gravity of our sin. God in John's view, as in Origen's before him, has no problem forgiving us, and never intended any punishment. Rather we inflict punishment on ourselves, and the problem is to turn us to see God again, and accept him. A metaphysical rent is metaphysically restored, a failure of reason and knowledge is recovered through skillful teaching. That, it seems, is all. Here, surely, would be the center of Orthodox dissatisfaction with John's thought.

John's view supposes that human nature was corrupted as a whole. It represents what has been called 'extreme realism', viewing universals (Ideas) as natural objects, as it were, which are even capable of having their own individual histories, like the particulars in the natural world. Their history, of course, is not part of the natural world, but occurs within a supernatural realm, and so they cannot be understood in terms of natural causes. It seems only to be the nature of human beings that has any significant history, for we need to tell a story to give a nature a history, and in the case of human beings, who have free will, we can tell a story without reference to natural causes. The history of the Ideas begins with their coming to be, of course. Eriugena claims that they always were potentially in the Word, but they came to be in eternity, and are *not* coeternal with God (!) inasmuch as they are causally posterior to the uncreated Creator.[113] Looking from the Creator and toward creation, the Ideas, or First Causes, came to be (actually) in the creation of the world, though they always were potentially in the Word.[114] To us the Ideas have two histories, a history insofar as they are in the things in the created world, and a history proper to themselves, which occurs outside of time, and is constituted by a set of atemporal causal priorities. This all should help us to make sense of John's notion that the Fall occurs

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[113]*On the Division of Nature* II, PL 122, 561D–562A.

[114]*On the Division of Nature* III, PL 122, 665 B–C.

simultaneously with the creation. He needs this assumption, it seems, because one prominent feature of the temporal creation, its materiality, can only be explained, John thinks, from the Fall. So the Fall had to occur in eternity. It is part of the *proper* history of the Nature of Humanity, not part of the history of its unfolding in the natural world. This might lead us to ask whether we individuals could have been involved in that prehistory, as it were, of their nature. Certainly we are, insofar as we *are* that nature, for it is our substance. But he seems to trade on the ambiguity here. I seem to come into being fallen (I suffer from original sin, which was always problematic as long as sin was taken to be a matter of personal moral failure in action), and this is explained by pointing out that my very nature is fallen. Does the restoration of things in God, then, mean that I cease to be as an individual? This John does not want to admit. It is as if the career of Humanity in the world it 'creates' leaves a mark on it which persists even when it has returned to God and the created material world has passed away. Perhaps John takes it that matter gives rise to particulars, but the particulars, at least human particulars, persist after matter passes away. Let us look at the details here.

John points out that human nature is a positive reality, and every positive reality will be completed at the end of things. Only the unreal *accidents*, including the perverted will of the sinner, will be left unrestored, to suffer eternally. So it is one's unreal will, which one identifies with oneself, that suffers, not the real human nature. Now that may seem to suggest that the individual, who surely can only be identified with these accidents, not with the universal nature, is somehow unreal. This John cannot mean, for he points out that Scripture also rewards individuals with theophanies, the contemplation of God, at various levels suited to their love of God and their virtue, at the end of things. These theophanies are the same sort of thing as the phantasies which the damned must live with, and they are peculiar to individuals, depending as they do on individual accidents, that is, individual movements of the will. If in the end the phantasies suffered by the damned are unreal, and their suffering is unreal, then this is not because it is not substance, but accident, but rather because it is an absence or rooted in an absence. Some accidents are real, i.e., those which express and unfold the reality of the substance in which they inhere. This absence of reality in the will, however, is not an absence of a natural reality, for in the damned nature is fully restored. Rather it must be the absence of a supernatural reality, for human beings have a supernatural end, the contemplation of God, which cannot be realized through nature, but only through God's provision of theophanies. Indeed, in a way, a theophany would be infinitely painful to a sinner with a perverted will, for it would not be anything which he could interpret as fulfilling his sinful desires for dominance and the like, but would reveal only the glory of God and his own nothingness. The light

of God is wondrous to the elect, and hellfire to the damned.[115]

Perhaps, then, we can identify God's creation as giving rise to a certain gap between himself and what he has created, a gap that can only be filled by God's revelation of himself to his creation. Not knowing God, creation turns to itself, though its only end is in its creator. God can only reveal himself to creation through theophany, played out in time and a material world, and in mere appearances to the minds to which they are revealed. All this is unreal, in comparison to God, though not in comparison to evil, which is completely out of connection to the Ideas, and hence to God, and so is nothing at all. But once the first step of creation has been taken, this 'unreality', including the production of individuals within the material confines of the created world, cannot be entirely eliminated. It can only be brought to perfection, and even that perfection is spoiled by those individuals who become set in an orientation towards themselves rather than God, to whom what perhaps should be a theophany appears as an eternal Hell.[116]

It is worth noting that John thought God's justice would be revealed to be perfect in the end. This covers the justice of retribution, which is due entirely to perverted wills punishing themselves in the presence of God's good things, not to God's positive action—indeed, God is not even aware of their punishment inasmuch as the evil of their wills and their suffering is nothing at all. But it also covers distributive justice, for John points out that those who claim the distribution of good and evil in the world is uneven and unfair err inasmuch as they take earthly 'goods' to which their corrupt wills attach to be true goods. True goods will be revealed in the end to have been freely available to all equally from the beginning.[117]

The return to God at the end of things entails not only the perfection of our natures, but the perfection of all natures, including those of animals. John seems to think that the spirit of animals will be restored and perfected, but it is not at all clear if he thinks that animals, like human beings, enjoy true individual existence, so he may be saying only that the Idea of each sort of animal comes once again to be perfectly reflected in the natural world. In particular, he explicitly rules out resurrection of the body for animals, and this would mean the individual would not be restored, unless he thinks that animals' spirits are individuated, which is not

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[115]*On the Division of Nature* V 35–36. Eriugena (1976) 325–328.

[116]One who takes all this as foreshadowing Hegelian themes should observe how the final return to oneness must *preserve* the multiplicity which first gave rise to alienation. One comes back to the place from which he began, but it is not the same place.

[117]*On the Division of Nature* V, end of chapter 35. Eriugena (1976) 329.

clear.[118] In any case, after the restoration of the physical universe, things will progress further, as all things return to its causes in the Ideas and physical nature disappears.[119] For the individual human being at this point all that will remain is the experience of nature in its Ideas, and of whatever theophanies or phantasies are bestowed on her due to her virtuous or vicious will. The opportunity to work through an irrational attachment to natural things will have utterly disappeared, and one can see how a sinful will would view the situation as a Hell in which he is removed eternally from all those things he loves.

Now that all the pieces are in front of us, what should we say about this doctrine? It would be perilously easy to say that the Fall is indeed inevitable. It is simply a necessary stage in creation, and a happy Fall, for from the Fall arises the individual human being who is in the end saved when all things return to God. And this Neoplatonic story would indeed be told that way centuries later, in the work of Hegel, for instance. Not to tell it that way may seem to condemn the story to incoherence. Whether John does it that way or not, that is the way it has to go, and if he does not do it that way, he is simply avoiding its logic in a benighted (or possibly canny) attempt to satisfy orthodoxy. But the *free* creative activity of God is as central to Eriugena's thought as it is to that of any Christian, and we must confess that John holds that God could have refrained from making human nature animal. This might have happened in two ways, it seems. Human nature might not have sinned upon its very creation, and in that case, John tells us, it would have multiplied nonetheless, but without the use of sex, as the angels do (!),[120] and received theophanies perhaps of the sort the angels receive. One assumes they would have known of the possible material world in which they would have had bodies only as a possibility. Or human nature might have sinned, in which case it would have been deprived of the way back to God that the material world provides. Perhaps it would have languished in impotent lust after material things, not unlike those condemned to Hell in the account John actually gives. In any case, it is clear that John does not see any impossibility either in the Fall's never having occurred at all, or in God's refraining from creation of the physical world once it did occur, unless we ground an impossibility in the second case in the necessity of God's wisdom.

Despite John's efforts to remain orthodox in his consideration of the Trinity and other topics of Christian metaphysics, the more conservative thinkers in the West who controlled the hierarchy could not accept his ultimate vision of salvation. In the first place, despite John's careful explanations of his meaning and

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[118]*On the Division of Nature* III, 737A–738B. V 25–26. Eriugena (1976) 204–205, 312–316. It is argued in the former passage that each species must be preserved, else the genus would be destroyed, and so humanity would be destroyed. Moreover, the soul of an animal will persist after the death of its body. But the issue is still not entirely clear.

[119]*On the Division of Nature* V 34, 36–38. Eriugena (1976) 324, 340–341.

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his reliance on Augustine, *On the Division of Nature* seemed to eliminate the distance between God and his creation, and to treat this sojourn in the world, and even sin, almost as an illusion. So the charge of pantheism was brought, and, despite John's care to avoid it, he was accused of Origen's heresy, bringing even the Devil to salvation. In the second place, John's other writings, as we shall see immediately below, seemed to demand too much of people, and give too little credit to God, as he rejected the automatic magic of the sacraments and God's predestination to salvation for advancement along moral and spiritual paths through a person's own efforts. In the third place, John seemed to denigrate the role of authority, insisting that the authority of the Fathers rested on their possession of truth discovered through reason, even if it was reason applied to the study of Scripture. If he considered it legitimate to employ reason in assessing the statements of the Fathers, he was even bolder in its application to the pronouncements of his contemporaries, even if they were Bishops or Councils.

John's unpopularity with conservatives does not mean that he had no following. Heiric of Auxerre (841–ca. 876) makes use of John's work in a commentary on the prologue to John's Gospel, and in his life of St. Germanus. The tradition of glosses, particular the glosses to *On the Ten Categories*, in the 9th and 10th centuries, contain many points taken from his work.[121] He was particularly widely read in the *Clavis Physicae* of Honorius Augustodunensis (d. ca. 1151), a collection of extracts from the *Periphyseon*. Indeed, John's work was quite influential in the speculative Platonism of the 11th and 12th centuries, influencing in particular Hugh of St. Victor and Alan of Lille, and even after it had been decisively slapped down by the more orthodox by the end of the 12th century, it continued an underground existence, emerging into the open in the mystical writers of the 14th century, and again in Renaissance Platonism. Above all, the divine metaphors he drew from his Platonism persisted even where his metaphysics did not, for they resonated with at least one school of mystical practice, and seemed to set forth its contemplative experience of God and the road to that experience too well to be ignored.

10. THE DISPUTE OVER GRACE AND PREDESTINATION

Eriugena had already gotten into trouble with ecclesiastical authority some years before he wrote *On*

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[121]See Marenbon (2002) 71–76. The gloss traditions arose from the custom by which a master would have a classic work copied with very ample margins, which he would then fill with comments or glosses, many of them borrowed or adapted from earlier glosses done in the same fashion, for the sake of study or teaching. Loose traditions of glosses thus arose, particularly within a group of scholars working in the same library, with much common material appearing in all or most of the manuscripts.

the Division of Nature, when he was drawn into writing on the explosive issue of Augustine's teachings on predestination and grace. The immediate cause of the dispute was a wayward monk, **Gottschalk**, a talented poet and scholar who wanted to free himself from the oblate's vows. His demands drew fire from Hrabanus Maurus in *The Book on the Offering of Boys,* which argued that children could not break the vows made on their behalf upon reaching the age of discretion.

Although Gottschalk's request was at first granted in 829, Hrabanus's arguments led to a reversal of his decision, though Gottschalk was allowed to leave Fulda, no doubt to alleviate the tension with Hrabanus. He stayed a while at Corbie, where he studied under Ratramnus, and then went to Orbais, where he pursued an intense study of Augustine. He was ordained a priest, and then went to Italy, entertained by the Count Eberhard of Friuli. But he had become known for his Augustinian rejection of the semi-Pelagianism generally accepted in the West. Hrabanus pursued him with an urgent appeal to the Count, describing Gottschalk's heresy, in which he argued:

> This teaching of Gottschalk has brought many men to despair of themselves. They are saying: "What good is it from to toil for my salvation and for eternal happiness? If I do good and I am not marked down for Heaven, it avails me nothing. If, on the other hand, God *has* destined me for happiness throughout eternity, then I can do all the evil I like on earth and I shall reach Heaven just the same!"[122]

Eberhard drove Gottschalk out, and he wandered back to Germany. In 848 Gottschalk, due in part to Hrabanus's accusations, was condemned at the Synod of Mayence, and handed over to Hincmar, Bishop of Rheims. After a second decision against him (for leaving his monastery and receiving ordination without his superior's permission, as well as his doctrines), he was defrocked, flogged, and imprisoned. He was allowed to write until 850, but then he was forbidden to communicate with anyone and condemned to perpetual silence. He lived for another decade or two under these conditions, and never recanted.

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[122]Translation from Duckett (1962) 157. The argument of these despairing men does not seem to follow. If God predestines us to Heaven or Hell on the basis, in part, at least, of his sure knowledge how we will conduct our lives, then the manner in which we conduct our lives will affect his decision, even if this causation runs from the present to the past! It is God's eternity which enables him to know how we will conduct ourselves, for he is simultaneously present at our future actions and at the beginnings of the world, when he has already eternally decided our fate. But Gottschalk's point seems a different one, namely that our works do *not* affect God's decision. One might still ask if there are not some actions or traits of character that correlate with his decision, that is, with his granting of grace. One might reasonably try the best he can to be the sort of person that one is when under grace, in hope that this will be no mere imitation of such a person, and in confidence that one is certainly *not* saved if one does not act like such a person. (I am not sure if this is reasonable, but it looks at least as though it may be so.) If it is objected that one may turn to God only at the very end, so that he is not, until then, the right sort of person, then one might argue that the ground must be prepared for the turning by one's earlier striving and reflection. If there is indeed no correlation at all between one's manner of life and the decision of God, then it seems it would indeed be reasonable to pursue a life of pleasure, honors, and so on, as long as these genuinely are goods.

Gottschalk chafed at the restrictions of his position and kept himself in hot water with his insubordination and contempt for the rules, but he was a brilliant scholar. He had worked out through his own study a just understanding of the position of St. Augustine on grace, free will, and predestination, but in his time semi-Pelagianism had taken its toll, and almost no one else in the Frankish Church seems to have understood Augustine's real thought. The doctrine concerning these matters had been established by the Synod of Orange in 529, which put an end to the semi-Pelagian controversy with a compromise. The synod rejected the predestination of the damned, on the ground that God desires the salvation of all, and offered the redemption of Christ to all, and allowed as much scope as possible to merit in gaining heaven, allowing with John Cassian that one can, even under original sin, will the good, and that God does not compel anyone to will the good, but that one needs the grace of God to bring a good will to fruition. There was no development of doctrine over the next three centuries, and so Gottschalk, with his precise understanding of Augustine, found himself at odds with the Church. He argued for a twofold predestination, and claimed that after Adam's sin, no one was capable of exercising free will for good without God's grace. God only predestines good things, as the Synod of Orange had claimed, but there are two sorts of good things, the offering of grace, and the exercise of justice. By the first some are predestined to eternal life, and by the second, others to Hell. Christ died for those who will be saved, and the sacraments do no good for those predestined to eternal punishment.

Gottschalk's views spurred many responses. Hrabanus, Hincmar and Amalar of Metz defended the traditional views most closely, rejecting the double predestination. But Prudentius of Troyes, Amolo of Lyons, Lupus of Ferrières, the deacon Florus, Remigius of Lyons and Ratramnus of Corbie all accepted the double predestination after taking a closer look at Augustine.

Ratramnus of Corbie defended predestination to salvation and damnation, but explicitly rejected predestination to sin. Remigius, Bishop of Lyons 852-875, in his *Against the Three Letters* (the letters from Hincmar and Pardulus to Lyons defending the harsh treatment of Gottschalk), argued that his views boiled down to five theses, the first four of which were straightforwardly true: (1) God predestined to death whom he willed, and to life whom he willed; (2) Those predestined to death cannot be saved, nor those predestined to life lost; (3) God does not wish that all men be saved, but only that those who are in fact to be saved should be saved; (4) Christ did not come to save all or suffer for all, but only to save those whom he in fact saved; (5) After the Fall, no man can do anything but evil through free will. The objection to the fifth point is that, after the Fall, mankind can do good freely, but not without God's grace. Free will and grace work together to produce a good action.

Lupus of Ferrières argued similarly, writing to Charles in 849–850:

Through Adam all human souls of all time came, and were to come, into the world doomed to a life of sin. God did not cause the sin of Adam; but he foresaw it and its fatal consequence for the human race. Therefore, before the foundation of this world, before Adam and Eve were created, God of his Mercy chose out from the sum of human life those souls whom by gift of His grace He willed to deliver from sin and from the punishment due to sin, both actual sin, and that sin inherited by Adam's fall. The rest of His human creatures, those on whom He did not will to bestow this gift of saving grace, in His altogether just and righteous judgment He left to meet that damnation for all eternity which their guilt deserved. This dividing into the saved and the condemned has been, is and will be; and it will be revealed when time is over, at the Last Judgment. Those on whom god has pit are predestined to enjoy Him and His heaven. Those whom He hardens in spirit, that is, those whose hearts he does not will to soften, are left without hope in His sight. . . So, blessed Augustine did not hesitate to declare in many books.

In regard to free will, the truth is the same. Original sin took away from man, through Adam, his free will for goodness; it left him but a will for evil. Only the grace of God can restore to guilty man the power of his will for good. No one is driven by God of necessity to do either good or evil. Man is free. God simply omits to bestow the gift of grace where he does not will to bestow it.

And on redemption. Did the Lord suffer death for all men, or only for those . . . saved by His gift of grace? Saint Matthew wrote of the Blood "shed for many for the remission of sins". "For many" also wrote St. Mark; Saint Luke wrote "for you". None of them wrote "for all".[123]

In 850 Lupus sent a treatise presenting his views, *On the Three Questions*, to Gottschalk (and to King Charles) in response to his old friend's request. Gottschalk later wrote Ratramnus that it was a book "in which he does not identify himself with either side. Lupus is a cautious and a cunning man."[124]

John Scottus Eriugena's *Treatise on Divine Predestination against Gottschalk*, written in 851 at the request of Hincmar of Rheims, stands by itself in this controversy.[125] It attracted as much unfavorable attention as the work of Gottschalk himself, and the works of Prudentius and Florus are directed chiefly against it. The Synods of Valence and Langres in 855 and 857 condemn it, referring to it as old wives's tales and Scot's porridge.

The problem was twofold. First, John's doctrine—he argued that God is perfectly unified, so that any

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[123]Translated in Duckett (1962) 197-8.

[124]Duckett (1962) 199.

[125]See Carabine (2000) 10-12, Gardner (1900) 46–72, Marenbon (2002) 56–57. For an English translation of the text, see Eriugena (1998).

talk about God that assumes otherwise is at best metaphorical, and so the predestination or fore-knowledge we speak of would have to be one, since it is identical to God himself. Moreover, since God is eternal, it is wrong to speak of *pre*-destination or *fore*-knowledge, for God wills and knows only what is, for him, in the present. But more than this, God causes only what is, and so what is good. In particular, he does not cause the evils involved in the punishment of sin, knows nothing of, and does not predestine this punishment. The sin itself does. It is a turning away from the good and so its own punishment. The eternal fire of Hell is only the light of God, which is a delight to the healthy eye, and pains the eye of the diseased sinner. For the sinner, good produces suffering.[126] Moreover, the free actions of men who sin have no cause except the men that produce them, and, insofar as they are evil, such acts are nothing, and so are not known to Pure Being.[127] Despite this lack of "knowledge" God is in no way defective, for there is, from the standpoint of reality, nothing here to be known. This all means that there is no predestination at all of men's actions, and although God desires that all men be saved, he does not predestine men to Salvation, or to Hell either. Heaven and hell are both natural outcomes of men's virtue or sin. Virtuous men gain bodies of aether, vicious men bodies of air, and so, though both dwell in fire, one finds the fire delightful, the other painful. The sinful create their own Hell by distancing themselves from God and the good in their pursuit of non-being, which God will not allow them ever entirely to obtain. They are like envious people in a beautiful palace, who only suffer pain from what they see because they envy its owner. The virtuous produce their own heaven by enjoying what God gives them. Hincmar of Rheims, who had requested the treatise be written, recoiled in horror when he saw that John denied the predestination to salvation, for he thought this contradicted Augustine.

Second, there was the matter of John's method—it was clear to his readers that he relied on rational argument, dialectic, to establish his conclusions, quoting scripture only to support what he had already established by reason. Indeed, John uses all the standard means to bring scripture in line with his thought, most especially allegorical interpretation, and treats Augustine similarly, occasionally going so far as to assert simply that Augustine didn't mean what he had said, despite the fact that he thought the authority of Augustine rooted in Scripture and reason, and so was willing, in principle, to set it aside if his own reason clearly indicated an

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[126]Perhaps we could say, given John's discussion of theophany in *On the Division of Nature*, that God reveals himself to the sinner, but the sinner takes it in his own way, from his sin, and sees nothing except the opposition to his own will, where the virtuous man sees God and a universal goodness transcending his will. This is not mere adventurous speculation, but rooted in remarks made by Augustine, though Augustine would not wholly have approved of John's view. See *Confessions* VII 16, *On the City of God* XXII 2.

[127]Scotus insists that human beings have free will by nature, so that they may do good actions, and it is retained even after sin, maneuvering mightily to avoid or reinterpret passages in Augustine that say otherwise. Prudentius identifies this as heretical. As for grace, it is by God's grace that the human being, of his own free will, turns to the divine.

error. Prudentius attacked John for his use of non-Christian sources (i.e., Martianus Capella and Macrobius), and both Prudentius and Florus reject his argumentation as "sophistry." The correct method to determine the truth was to rely on Scripture alone. John no doubt thought he did rely on scripture, but he interpreted scripture so as to make it accord with reason, trusting that reason and scripture could not conflict. Others mistrusted human reason, and thought argument should be set aside for the established, traditional interpretations of Holy Writ.

The controversy was brought to an end in 860 at the Synod of Toucy, which declared that there is only one predestination, that God wills all men to be saved and Christ's sacrifice was for the salvation of all, and that free will was restored to all men by Grace, i.e. Christ's sacrifice, just as it was lost through Adam's sin, so that men now can will the good. Indeed, "if men of their own free will could neither avoid evil nor do the good, they would be like to stones, to lifeless matter without feeling or reason, rather than to beings made in the image of God".[128]

11. THE DISPUTE OVER THE EUCHARIST

Another controversy in which Eriugena took the losing side was occasioned by **Paschasius Radbertus**, a monk of Corbie (ca. 810? – c. 865). He became the fourth abbot of the place in 844, and retired to concentrate on his studies in 853. His monks included both Gottschalk and Ratramnus, who challenged received views, but Radbertus himself was a defender of orthodoxy, and suspicious of profane letters. He also had a scholarly mind a cut above those of most of his contemporaries, which is apparent especially in his commentary on *Matthew*, in which, in a carefully organized and thought-out work very different from the usual chain of Patristic quotations, he undertook to disagree with the Fathers when he found their interpretation lacking. But he is most noted for ***The Lord's Body and Blood***,[129] which he wrote in 831, and then revised for Charles the Bold in 844 when that King, following his custom, proposed a topic for his scholars on which to write. The King's intention was no doubt to settle the correct view of the matter, but he seems to have sparked controversy instead when Ratramnus defended quite different views from those of his abbot. We have seen the dispute already carried on between Origen and his fellows over the body and blood of Christ and the nature of its presence in the Eucharist. Radbertus held that the elements making up the bread and wine were changed

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[128]Duckett (1962) 262.

[129]Selections in English from this work are to be found in McCracken(1957).

inwardly, but not outwardly in appearance. Thus faith and understanding might grasp the true nature of the elements in the Eucharist, but the senses do not.[130] They are the true flesh and blood of Christ, and "in them eternity and participation in Christ may be granted to men in the unity of the body".[131]

> In that visible sacrament of communion the divine virtue sustains us unto immortality by its invisible power . . . For this, then, 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.'[132]

It seems he thought we must believe that the elements are the true body and blood of Christ because otherwise the Eucharist will not work. It is hard to see why it won't work unless we view it as a form of magic. If one is to gain courage by eating a lion's heart, it must be a real lion's heart, not beefsteak, and if one is to gain immortality by eating the God, it must truly be the God. But it might be objected that the thing is impossible. To this Radbertus answers that God is omnipotent, and so

> . . . if the order of nature is sought, reason fails—and yet the truth of the fact remains outside human reason, so that in the reasoning of faith the force and power of the Godhead is believed in every way effective—but the doubting mind, though he who has the doubt be of a good life, excludes the power of God, so as not to reach an understanding of the sacrament.[133]

The thing must be a miracle both because of the natural impossibility of such a transition, and because the accidents naturally occurring in flesh and blood do not occur here. In any case, God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is up to the task:

> . . . The Spirit, which without seed created the man Christ in the womb of the virgin, from the substance of bread and wine creates the flesh and blood of Christ by invisible power through the sanctification of his sacrament. . . "[134]

The sacrament is in a way a figure, but the elements are Christ's body and blood in truth. It is a figure "when, through the agency of the priest at the altar, outwardly performing another thing, in memory of his sacred passion, the Lamb is daily sacrificed as he was once for all. . ."[135]

But Radbertus notes that the sacrament won't work except for those who approach it properly, in faith

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[130]Radbertus, *On the Body and Blood* III.4.

[131]*On the Body and Blood* I.4-5.

[132]*On the Body and Blood* I.6.

[133]*On the Body and Blood* I.4; the same view is asserted in IV.3.

[134]*On the Body and Blood* III.4.

[135]*On the Body and Blood* IV.1.

and hope. As for why that is so, it seems to be that the mana of the sacrifice will be positively harmful to a person without faith, and so alien to it.[136] Or he might wonder why faith is not sufficient without the magical action of the body and blood, of course, but Radbertus at least explains why faith is necessary. He suggests that the elements are body and blood in truth, not in figure, but there is a figurative aspect of the sacrament, for what the priest does does not transform the bread and wine, rather the Holy Spirit does so, and his actions merely recall Christ's sacrifice.[137]

And what is the relation of all this to faith and reason?

> . . . No one of the faithful ought to be ignorant or unaware what in it pertains to faith and what to knowledge, because faith in the mystery is not rightly defended without knowledge, nor is knowledge nurtured without faith. . .[138]

The line seems to be Augustinian, holding that we need faith to guide our reasoning if we are not to err and go astray, at least after the Fall, under the influence of sin.

Ratramnus of Corbie wrote ***The Lord's Body and Blood*** in response to Radbertus about 844.[139] Like Radbertus, Ratramnus defines a mystery as an action "performed in a figurative sense". Now Radbertus took the action in question to be that of the priest, which is figurative for the action of the Holy Spirit, but Ratramnus disagrees. He seems to think that the bread and wine, since they appear as bread and wine to the bodily senses, must really be bread and wine. His evidence for this seems rather unsophisticated—he points out that no change occurs in any sensible quality, and concludes that therefore no change has occurred. Here Radbertus would seem to have the upper hand, for surely God in his omnipotence could change (or rather, *replace*) the underlying substance and leave the sensible accidents undisturbed. But Ratramnus probably was working from the assumption that the bread and wine was asserted by scripture to become the same as Christ's body and blood, and this assertion would make no sense if there were no bread and wine to be Christ's body and blood after the transformation occurred. Having concluded that no change takes place *in* the bread and wine, and that the bread and wine remain present, Ratramnus takes it that the talk about Christ's body and blood must be figurative, so that the bread and wine is a figure for Christ's body and blood, due to the action of the priest, which gives it that significance. The faithful read the bread and wine here as one would read a text

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[136]*On the Body and Blood* II.3; VI.3.

[137]*On the Body and Blood* IV.1.

[138]*On the Body and Blood* II.1.

[139]Excerpts translated in McCracken (1957).

in the *Bible*, discovering a spiritual meaning in them, a meaning there beforehand to be discovered, but without denying the literal, corporeal meaning—those without faith, who are not spiritual, cannot see with the spirit, and so cannot see the spiritual meaning.

Part of the motivation behind this difference with Radbertus is to be found in Ratramnus's view of the nature of the sacrament's efficacy. He simply sees no need for the body and blood of Christ to be physically present, for he does not see the sacrament as that sort of magic. For one thing, it is only effective for the faithful, and its efficacy is only seen through the eye of faith, which is why the sacrament is a *mystery*—it is hidden from all save the faithful. None of this differs with Radbertus's views, but Ratramnus thinks it ought to, for if the body and blood are physically present and the ceremony imparts immortality magically, it would work even for those who did not realize that the body and blood of Christ were present, just as medicine will work whether or not one knows one has taken it. Radbertus, of course, allows that there is an effect on the unfaithful, but an adverse effect suitable to hostile mana. Ratramnus thinks rather that there is no effect at all on those who do not believe, since, for them, the body and blood of Christ is simply not present. Its presence is a spiritual presence for the faithful alone.[140] The change in the elements is a matter of their coming to be, spiritually, the body and blood of Christ, so that these are spiritually present. But what is spiritual presence? It seems, as with Origen, that it amounts to nothing more than the presence of these things to the spirit, which can occur when the bread and wine are given a new meaning that turns the spirit's attention to Christ's body and blood, leading one to reflect on and accept Christ's sacrifice for his sins. In his manner of expression, Ratramnus *seems* to go further, speaking of the presence of a spiritual body and blood, which suggest that this spiritual thing (which is related in what way to the physical body and blood of Christ?) is present in the bread and wine, together with the substance and accidents of these things. But if it is present in it, it is distinct from it, and it is said that the bread *is* the body of Christ. Surely this manner of speaking is figurative, and indicates only that the body and blood is present here to the eyes of faith, and so spiritually. But something does follow from that "merely" spiritual presence, according to Ratramnus—the spiritual presence of the body and blood is revealed by their power to grant immortality, and they are present just as the Holy Spirit is present in the water of baptism, through their power, even if that power arises from the spiritual awareness of the faithful.

John Scottus Eriugena also wrote a work on the controversy, which agreed with Ratramnus, but it is lost, and his position has to be reconstructed from his adversaries and remarks elsewhere in existing works. Hincmar said that he held that there was no true blood and body of the Lord, but only a memory of it, and John

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[140]From Paragraph 50 on, in particular.

remarks in his commentaries on *John* and the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Ps.-Dionysus[141] that it is with the mind, not the teeth, that the faithful participate in this mystery. No doubt John held that the Eucharist was to be taken as a theophany, and treated as he treats other theophanies in *On the Division of Nature*.

Ratramnus perhaps had the more subtle view, here, a view to be preferred if miracles are not to be multiplied beyond necessity, he seems to produce the more convincing citations of the Fathers,[142] and his views seem to have agreed with those of Hrabanus and Eriugena, but Radbertus's view captured the thinking of most Christians at the time. About 1050, Berengar of Tours defended Ratramnus's work on the Eucharist, which was erroneously attributed to John Scottus Eriugena, no doubt as the sort of heretical thing one might expect from him. Berengar, completing the argument of Ratramnus, argues that the bread and wine could not continue to appear as such if their substance changed, since no quality survives the destruction of its substance. So the visible things on the altar must be a sign of the divine presence. No transformation of matter can bring Christ to earth. At the Council of Vercelli in 1050, Ratramnus's book was ordered burned. It was condemned a second time at the Lateran Synod of 1059, but some copies survived to influence Protestant theologians in the sixteenth century.[143] It was Radbertus's view that became orthodox within the Church.

12. THE DISPUTE OVER UNIVERSALS

At the behest of Odo of Beauvais, his diocesan bishop, **Ratramnus of Corbie** wrote a work *On the Soul*,[144] in which he criticized a view, held, he says, once by a Macarius Scotus, and recently revived by an

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[141]Ps.-Dionysus gives an account of communion in *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* in which no mention of made of the sacrificial aspect of the mass, or of transubstantiation. For the Eucharistic dispute in general, and John's position in it in particular, see Gardner (1900) 73 ff.

[142]In particular, he notes Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* III 16.24: "If the sentence is one of command, either forbidding a crime or vice, or enjoining an act of prudence or benevolence, it is not figurative. If, however, it seems to enjoin a crime or vice, or to forbid an act of prudence or benevolence, it is figurative. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man", says Christ, "and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us."

[143]R. W. Southern (1941).

[144]See Marenbon (2002) 54–55. Ratramnus (1952) 131: "Thus it arises that genera or species is not a cause of the existing of those which are called individuals, but rather the individuals offer a cause of existence for species or genera. So he was wrong to say that particular souls cannot exist without the species existing, that is, universal soul." 136: "And of whatever human being soul might be enunciated as a single thing, as for instance of Cicero, even though it be many insofar as soul is a species, still insofar as it is called the soul of Cicero, not many, but one, is predicated in the manner of a singular." He also wrote an *On the Quantity of the Soul*.

unnamed monk, that "all human beings are one in respect of substance." The reason is that the species of human beings, soul, is the substance of human beings, and is divided up and allocated to individual bodies, by its possession of various accidental (and mutually contradictory) properties. Even when divided in this way, the species remains in existence as the source of the individual souls. Ratramnus argues that if such were the case, "the result would be that there is only one man and only one soul".[145] Arguing against the view, Ratramnus takes up the Aristotelian line of Alexander of Aphrodisias in Boëthius's remarks on universals, claiming that genera and species are not in existing things, but are "formed in thoughts through the understanding of the mind," and since they do not exist in things, but only as concepts, they cannot cause individual souls to exist. (He says species and genera are taken from existing, particular things, but does not discuss Boëthius's question how they can fail to be empty and misleading if they are not found in existing things.)

More in particular, Ratramnus points out that "All human beings are one in respect of substance" can be taken in two ways: it may mean "all human beings taken together are one in respect of substance," and in this case it is false and absurd, since "all human beings" are many, and not one, and they are certainly not one in respect of *substance*, since a substance is always intrinsically one, and all human beings, being many, cannot possibly be the same, singular substance. Ratramnus cites Augustine for his view that substance is intrinsically one (*On the Trinity* VII), and then points out that sometimes "substance" is used to identify a thing's essence, and if *that* is what is meant here, then "every human being is one in essence" simply comes to "all human beings are of the same essence (genus, species)." This is true enough, but in no way argues that they are one, or all the same substance. This line of argument hangs, of course, on identifying the multiplex essence with something other than the substance of the things it belongs to, and Ratramnus seems ready to identify the essence as a

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[145]The view criticized is rooted in Augustine, *On the Quantity of the Soul* 32.69: "I don't know what I should answer you concerning the number of souls, even though you might think this pertinent to the question, for I would say more quickly that the question is not to be asked at all, or certainly it ought to be put off for now, for as much as number and multitude do not belong to quantity, so much can such an involved question now be resolved for you by me. For if I were to say the soul is one, you would be disturbed, since in one it is happy, and in another unhappy, nor can one reality at the same time be happy and unhappy. But if I say it is at the same time both one and many, you will laugh, nor will it be easy for me, once I have suppressed your laughter, to come up to the mark. . ." Ratramnus states the problem as follows: "In brief, it is asked whether the genus animal represents an understanding of one subsisting thing alone. Now if you say, since it is singular in number, it must be limited to an understanding of one alone, it will be responded: Then how is it predicated of many? For it is predicated of biped and quadruped and reptile, and so it cannot be called one animal, because it is predicated of many." If animal is one, it is, surely, one animal! "And if you say that what is animal is one animal and many animals both, this is contrary to nature. For what is one cannot be many, since unity lacks multitude, nor can many manage to be one, since many are not a single thing. Therefore it cannot be said that the genus animal is at the same time both one and many. Perhaps you can say that it is many [animals] insofar as it signifies [many] animals. But if that is so, how can it be predicated of one animal alone, for instance, of this horse, of that cow?" The problem is that if the genus animal is a set, say, of many animals, then one animal is not a set of animals, and so the genus cannot be predicated of the species or an individual. "Do you see then that the genus has a certain confused understanding, which you can neither say is altogether one, nor one and many at the same time, nor many alone. . ."

concept, something formed in the mind, that belongs to many things not insofar as it is of or identical to their substance, but insofar as it represents, conceives, or is predicable of many.[146]

The same view of things was taken, it seems, by **Eric of Auxerre (841–876)**, who argued to the contrary that one can point to individuals, but not to universals, so that one can point out white men, but not white—therefore there are no external objects corresponding to generic concepts. The mind forms the idea of a species from the multitude of individuals (it "gathers them together"), and the idea of the genus from the multitude of species.

Setting aside the mid-9th-century development here of a 'Boethian' point of view on universals, there was little interest in Boëthius's logical works before the later part of the 10th century. Nonetheless, a controversy simmered over his *Consolation of Philosophy* in the second half of the 9th. **Remigius of Auxerre** (841–908) wrote the standard commentary. He had studied under Servatus Lupus, and Heiric of Auxerre, who seems to have been a follower of Eriugena. In 893 Remigius became head of the Cathedral School at Rheims, and about 900 he began to teach at Paris. The most vexed aspect of Boethius's work at the time was the summary of the *Timaeus* in Poetry III 9, and a number of commentaries and glosses on this passage, including one by Eriugena, are known from this period. The problem, as Bovo of Corbey (d. 916) puts it, is that the book is surely by the same man who wrote the theological tractates, but he writes here like a Pagan.[147] Bovo even worries whether commenting on such a book is appropriate work for a Christian monk. To explain the text, he brings in Macrobius's commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*, which was recognized as a Pagan work. He finds the notion of a soul of the world non-Christian, and is eager not to identify any of the material he is commenting on as fact. For Book V, he uses Macrobius again, worrying about the pre-existence of the soul. Bishop Adalbold of Utrecht (d. 1026), by contrast, found Boëthius a Christian even in the *Consolation*.[148] When reference is made to souls coming down from heaven, he interprets this as the creation of souls by God, and treats the Forms as God's instruments of creation, after the pattern of Eriugena. Remigius likewise treats Boëthius here as a Christian, identifying the "wisdom by which the world is governed" as the Son, and "the form of the highest good" as the exemplary ideas in God's mind, to which he looked when he created the world.

Another 9th-century dispute revolved around 'Exaggerated Realism', the view we have identified in

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[146]Ratramnus (1952) 127–30.

[147]PL 64, 1239-46; R.B.C. Huygens, "Mittelalterlich Kommentare zu AO qui perpetus", *Sacris erudiri* VI (1954) pp. 383 ff. provides a critical edition of Bovo.

[148]Gregory, *Platonismo Medievale* (1958) pp. 1-15; C.T. Silk, "Ps. Joh. Scotus, Adalbold of Utrecht and the early commentaries on Boëthius", *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* III (1954) pp. 14-24).

Eriugena that would make Ideas or the natures of things entities that do not merely have being independently of their instances, but enjoy histories of their own. The view was attacked, as we have seen, by Ratramnus and Eric of Auxerre, but **Remigius of Auxerre** later defended it in his commentary on Boëthius. He held that the species is a *partitio substantialis*, a substantial part, of the genus, species the *unitas substantialis*, a substantial unity, of many individuals. In the 10th century **Odo of Tournai (d. 1113)** drew from this the conclusion that individual men differ from one another accidentally, that is, in accidents alone. This is the view we have seen was attacked by Ratramnus some decades before. We have seen that Eriugena is difficult to pin down on the matter, but his view that matter is made up entirely of accidents would suggest that he agreed with Odo, if he thought the body individuates a person or thing. Most likely he would have agreed with Odo regarding animals and the like, but not regarding human beings, who have a history of salvation or damnation even after their bodies have disappeared, and so would not appear to be individuated by their bodies. Nonetheless, when Odo traced the transmission of original sin to the corruption of the human substance, pointing out that when a child is born God produces a new set of accidents for the preexisting substance, he was following the same line of thought as Eriugena, even if he put it into new, logical, dress that Eriugena might have found hard to accept.

It seems then that two views on the question of universals had crystallized out of the discussion by the end of the 9th century, the exaggerated realism of Eriugena, Remigius and Odo of Tournai, and the "Boethian" conceptualism of Ratramnus and Eric of Auxerre. Both views faced serious problems. Exaggerated realism seemed to make incoherent the relation between particulars and their secondary substances, and to lead to the heretical view that there was a single soul for all human beings, while conceptualism at this point made no effort to explain how it is that universal concepts somehow captured real facts about the structure of the world, rather than reflecting merely the conceptual propensities of human beings. With the emergence of yet a third view, the nominalism of Garland the Computist and Roscelin, in the 11th century, the stage would be set for the monumental work of Abelard on the question.

13. CONSERVATIVE OUTCOMES IN THEOLOGY

> By the particle of the Oblation placed in the chalice is shown the Body of Christ which now is risen from the dead; by that part consumed by the priest and by the people is shown the Body which still walks on earth; by that left upon the altar is shown the Body lying in graves. That Body takes with it to the grave the Oblation which the holy Church calls the *viaticum* of the dying; hence it may be shown that those who die in Christ ought not to be thought

of as dead, but as sleeping. . . The particle remains upon the altar until the
end of the Mass because until the end of the world the bodies of the saints
shall lie in their grave.

Amalar of Metz, from the *Liber Officialis*[149]

Not every charge of heresy rested on a genuine theological dispute. Sometimes they were more a
matter of politics and personal animus. A case in point is **Amalar of Metz**,[150] a noted scholar of the liturgy
who produced, among other works, the *Book of the Office* in four books, which not only reformed the liturgy
in light of its exemplars, laying out its history and literal meaning throughout the ecclesiastical year, but also
ventured to interpret the inner meaning of the rituals. In 835 he was called to Lyons to take charge of the
diocese (though not as Bishop) after the exile of Agobard, who was party to a rebellion of Lothar, heir to the
throne, from his father. There he met opposition from Agobard's friends in his attempt to introduce liturgical
reforms. Amalar came under increasingly vicious attack from Agobard's party, until he was condemned as a
heretic at a Synod at Quierzy in 838, and Agobard was recalled to his old post.

There were six charges. One of them was that he held that Christ had three bodies, this on the ground
that he claimed that the three part division of the host during the Mass had a mystical meaning, the part on the
altar indicating Christ's body lying in the tomb, the part eaten, the body that still walks on Earth, and the part
placed in the chalice, the body that is risen from the dead. This is, of course, a trumped up charge. More to the
point, Amalar had to confess that he had not gotten most of his interpretations of the ritual out of scripture or
the Fathers, but had "read them in his own soul." A conservative bent in scriptural interpretation quite at odds
with the usual practice of the time seems to underlie the fifth of the charges, which is that Amalar uses spiritual
interpretations to understand the liturgy which are in fact appropriate only to the *Old Testament*, in which a
passage might be expected to be prophetic. The liturgy, and, it seems, the *New Testament,* was to be taken
literally. It seems that this charge reflects the influence of the Antiochene School,[151] but it would surely not have
been brought had the prelates not had it in for Amalar. Despite his condemnation, his work was influential in
the following centuries.

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[149]Translation from Duckett (1962) 112.

[150]For Amalarius, see Laistner (1957) 310-314; Duckett (1962) Ch. 4.

[151]For this see Laistner (1957) 313, who cites *Harvard Theological Review* 40 (1947) 19 ff., and Bischoff in *Sacris Erudiri* VI
(1954), 190 and 210.

Quite another sort of persecution was directed toward the Jews, especially under Louis the Pious. There were many tracts written against the Jews, containing a great deal of slander and many proofs that Jews were all damned to Hell. One of the more irksome regulations against the Jews was the law that they could not have Christian slaves, so that any slave of a Jew who converted must be released, though in theory the owner was to be compensated.

14. POLITICAL THEORY

> The wise ruler summons wise men to his council and does nothing without their advice, but the foolish ponders within himself and does what his momentary wishes bid without the advice of others.
>
> Sedulius Scotus, *Concerning Christian Rulers*

There were a number of works in the 9th century bearing on political theory.[152] Alcuin's *On Rhetoric* had also expressed some straightforward ideas on the subject. All of these works are essentially hortatory, and most are addressed to Kings. There is a letter from Kathvulf to Charlemagne,[153] the *Way of the Kingdom* (*Via Regia*) written for Louis the Pious by Smaragdus of St. Mihiel between 812 and 815,[154] *Concerning the Establishment of the Kingdom* (*De institutione regia*) by Jonas of Orléans, written in 834,[155] and *Concerning Christian Rulers* (*De rectoribus Christianis*) by Sedulius Scotus, about 854.[156] Hincmar of Rheims wrote a treatise for Charles the Bald, *On the Person of the King and the Administration of the Kingdom*,[157] consisting of a collection of abstracts from Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory. Hincmar also wrote *Against the Nobles of the King and on the Order of the Palace* (*Ad proceres regis et de ordine palatii*), an adaptation of *On the order of the Palace* (*De ordine palatii*) by Adalhard of Corbie, a contemporary of Charlemagne, with something of Hincmar's own thought in it.

These theorists simply assume that an autocracy is the only justifiable form of government. Their

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[152]For this section, see Laistner (1957) Ch. 13.

[153]MGH, Epist., IV, pp. 502 f.

[154]PL 102, coll. 933 ff. See Laistner, *Speculum* 3 (1928) 392 ff.

[155]PL 106. Coll. 279 ff.

[156]Edited by S. Hellman, *Sedulius Scotus* (Munich, 1906) 19-91.

[157]PL 125, coll. 833 ff.

question is not what sort of government we should have, but how to make the monarchy work well. In particular, Hincmar insists that even the King has a responsibility to follow the laws once they have been established, even if he has the right to establish them. Sedulius claims that the King

> must in the first place rule himself; in the next, he must rule his wife and children and their servants; in the third place he must rule his people, committed to his care, with a reasonable and exalted governance.

Here we should note that the King cannot rule others as he ought until he first rules himself, that is, brings his own passions under reason, and rules his family, a true desideratum in the Frankish monarchy. Again, the King must not let pride lead him to mistreat the vanquished, who ought to be granted mercy. In general, these writers accept the world as they find it, advising Kings to rule well within existing institutions, though Smaragdus calls on Louis to prohibit slavery.

There are few suggestions in Charlemagne's time that the temporal power is to be subordinated to the spiritual, though the independence of spiritual power is consistently upheld. Indeed, Sedulius Scotus, if he asserts that the good ruler will endeavor to be the servant of God, never concludes from this that the good ruler is the servant of any recognizable authority in the Church. Indeed, he suggests that the good King will, in service of the most high, see to it that irregularities in the Church are corrected. He also asserts, however, that the good King will support the leaders of the Church in exercising their offices, not allowing the secular power to hinder them—so the meaning of the claim that he would correct irregularities was no doubt that he would lend secular support to the larger Church in dealing with local problems, not that he would assume authority over the Church as a whole. Rhetorically, there seems to be a shift of emphasis in the increasing decentralization after Charlemagne. Jonas claims that the priestly power is more excellent than the temporal, inasmuch as the Pope must render the accounts of Kings themselves to God, and that the first duty of a king is to defend the Church. Hincmar of Rheims upholds the authority of the Bishop even over the King in matters of religion and morality, going so far as to claim the right of Bishops to depose Kings under certain conditions. But there is little in any of this for the philosopher, for no attempt is made, or even envisioned, to approach the issues of the day from the standpoint of a general theory of the state and the legitimacy of its authority.

Of the Popes in the 9th century, Nicholas I (858-867) made the most determined effort to establish the independence of Rome from the Emperor, despite the fact that he owed his election to the Emperor's interference. He forbade non-Romans to interfere in Papal elections, and refused to annul the marriage of the

King's brother, Lothar. He claimed universal primacy in the Church, and denied the secular power the right to depose a Bishop without his approval. There was a good deal of popular support for the right of appeal of a Bishop from his Metropolitan to the Pope, a right opposed by the secular power, which wished to keep things in local hands. But the "false decretals" were accepted by the 11th century, and the right to an appeal to Rome became well established. Between the rights of the Pope over the Bishop's office and the right to decide on issues of marriage and annulment, the Pope gained a good deal of secular power, and came repeatedly into conflict with the King. The upshot was that Emperors and Kings tried to gain control of the Papacy, and between 904 and 963 the Ottonian Emperors were entirely in control. Otto I simply replaced John XII when he decided he didn't like him.

The relation of philosophy in these European beginnings to other institutions was, however unique its future development might be, very similar to the relation of philosophy, and especially Greek Philosophy, to other institutions elsewhere. It begins again because of its association with schooling and the need for a literate civil service, and it dwells, in Baghdad or in Constantinople, above all in the administrative center of things, a creature of the court and the King. It cuts its teeth, as in Baghdad and Constantinople, on religious disputes as it is pressed into service for the refutation of heresy and alien views. This provides something of a double life for philosophy, for a good scholar with an attractive and charismatic personality can gain the support of the King even when the priests are appalled by him, as we see with Eriugena, and al-Kindi. But, as we have observed in connection with Byzantium, not all things were the same. In the West the powers of the State and the Church were not joined in a single head, and the Church was not, like Islam, a mass-movement without much internal organization. The continued rivalry and Church and State set the stage for philosophy and scholarship to develop a certain independence between the two powers, playing off one against the other, and the Church provided a model in its own institutions. Scholarship, of a domesticated sort, already had a home in the monasteries, and it grew there after Charlemagne despite widespread disorder. The University system arose, as we shall see, and scholarship became its own, quasi-independent institution, a match for Church and State, in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries, and within this educational institution, philosophy found a place with some freedom to pursue its own interests, in undergraduate education, and, still tame but increasingly restive, within the Theology Faculty. Within the universities independent thought and full-time scholarly investigation were possible, and it was from this chrysalis that modern science was to emerge in 17th and 18th centuries. But first, curricular matters will concern us, as the foundations technique in logic and debate,

elementary mathematics and observational astronomy, became established, in the 10th and 11th centuries, emerging into the open in Religious/Philosophical debate with Anselm. In Islam, we shall see, things were different, and philosophy grew up faster, assuming independence early on from religious supervision. It also grew weak roots, though, as fast growing plants do, and came to a fairly abrupt end when government support for it withered away. It had not learned to make its living. Moreover, it had gained a terrible reputation for anti-religious views. It had not learned the art of gaining tolerance, and had not the power to survive in adversarial and contrary relations to religious institutions. So by the 14th century, philosophy ceased in the Muslim world.