Salvation of the Damned Within the 'Periphyseon'

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THE SALVATION OF THE DAMNED WITHIN THE PERIPHYSEON

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation shall examine the claim of John Scottus Eriugena, the ninth century Irish philosopher, that all things must ultimately return to unity with their creator. This is the ancient Greek theme of *apokatastasis*, which essentially means reconstitution in full to that which was primordial. A special case subsumed under the class of all things is that segment of mankind traditionally understood as being damned, or separated from God. Eriugena holds that no portion of mankind can be so separated for God, as the Word, received the entire human race, not a subset of it.

Although sometimes thought to be at odds with Christianity, it is Eriugena’s position that the restoration of separated souls should be embraced. The word *apokatastasis* appears in both the Old and New Testaments. The first reference is found in Malachi 4:2-6, and speaks of the divine bond between children and their fathers, a
theme which will have special significance in this dissertation. The New Testament reference is found in Acts 3:21, where Peter affirms that the restoration of all things was ordained before the world began.

An additional question that this study seeks to answer is whether man is made happy in this restoration. Eriugena gives no clear resolution to this issue. His writing seems to contradict itself, and can reasonably be interpreted either way. Our answer is offered in the affirmative: man is made happy in his restoration. The final chapter of this dissertation examines some of the implications of the answer.
DEDICATION

For my family:

Patti, Jason, Erin, Lauren, and Shannon
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This dissertation will explore the position of the ninth century Irish philosopher, John Scottus Eriugena, and his work on the salvation of the damned. We will focus mainly on Book Five of his most noted work, the *Periphyseon*, however, his other writings on the subject will be examined as well. Eriugena holds that all men will gain salvation (Eriugena, *Per*, 1987, V, 923 C), but not complete salvation. In other words, all men will be restored to the original pristine condition that they enjoyed prior to their fall; however, they will remain unhappy, forced to suffer through the recollection of the evil that they worked while living their earthly lives (Eriugena, V, 944 D).

Concerning the first issue, the salvation of all souls, it seems to us that Eriugena has offered some compelling arguments in support of his position. These arguments are advanced mainly within a Christian framework. Although our study should be of interest to non-Christians as well, it seems to us that Christianity, with its unique notion of grace, must confront the issue.

Concerning the second question, the eternal torment or unhappiness of the saved, it is our position that Eriugena has failed to show that suffering can be experienced by a resurrected soul. The central argument that Eriugena uses to prove the former position tends to disprove the latter. The Word took all humanity upon Himself, not a subset of humanity (Eriugena, 923 C). Therefore, since man was essentially happy prior to the fall, he must once again be happy after his restoration.
Chapter I: Introduction

John the Scot

Eriugena was a Christian philosopher keenly influenced by his understanding of the Old and New Testaments. He also had an abiding respect for the authority of the Church Fathers as it had developed since the first century A.D. However, our aim is to present a study that will be of interest to both Christians and non-Christians. For the purposes of this study, we shall presuppose the immortality of the human soul and ask our reading audience to reflect upon this immortality. Could it be that some of the human race, and not others, are subject to eternal damnation at the end of their mortal lives? It is our position that Eriugena has answered this question in the negative, as well as providing a reasonable explanation as to why he is correct. In large measure, Eriugena took a position contrary to the established doctrine of the Western Church; a position perhaps best articulated by Augustine. In Book XXI of the City of God, Augustine states that “… the human race is cut in two, so that in one portion is displayed the power of merciful grace, in the other the power of just vengeance” (City of God, Bk. XXI, Ch. 12, 75). The precise qualifications for entry into the former state remain unclear. Grace was of paramount importance, for all were worthy of just vengeance (City of God, Bk. XXI, Ch. 15, 77). Nor could the victory be “… gained truly and sincerely except by a delight in true righteousness and this comes by believing in Christ” (City of God, Bk. XXI, Ch. 16, 101-102). In the end “… it is very hard to learn and ticklish to define what is the manner of life and what are the sins that stand in the way of reaching the Kingdom of God” (City of God, Bk. XXI, Ch. 27, 167). Perhaps it is better for us not to know; if we did, we
might tend to focus on the good works that secured our entrance into the blessed kingdom and neglect the true righteousness that attends a contrite heart (City of God, Bk. XXI, Ch. 27, 167).

Eriugena held a far less elitist position. He maintained that the human race cannot be cut in two because everyone in it is made in the image of the one unity that cannot be cut in two. To assert otherwise would be an admission that “… God the Word took upon Himself not the whole of human nature, but only a part of it, … which would be an absurd belief” (Periphyseon, Bk. V, 922 A). Evil men will not be punished, but the evil in them will be. “He [God] will rather extinguish in men their wickedness and impiety and baneful power… and… we may say that their eternal damnation will consist in the total abolition of their wickedness and impiety” (Periphyseon, Bk. V, 923 D). This ultimate restoration of every soul makes sense only in light of Eriugena’s distinctive understanding of the relation between particulars and universals. We will discuss this point later, but for now it is sufficient to say that Eriugena advances an “…idealist system [which] is consistently the most radical in ancient or medieval philosophy…” (Moran, 1989, 82). The human mind, as shown perfectly through the incarnation, contains all things as ideas, and this is their full reality.

Eriugena maintained that all things, including man, must return to their original source. Created things descend “…through generation in space and time, and… when this sensible world comes to an end, they return once again to those causes from which they sprang…” (Periphyseon, Bk. V, 886 A). This is the ancient Greek theme of apokatastasis. Deirdre Carabine has noted that one of the most interesting aspects of Eriugena’s philosophy is his integration of Eastern Greek thought with that of the Latin
Carabine’s observation is especially valid with regard to our present topic, the salvation of the damned. We begin with a brief historical sketch.

One of the most decisive battles in world history occurred in 732 A.D. near Tours, a town in central France about one hundred twenty miles southwest of Paris. It was there that Charles Martel, leader of the Franks, defeated the Saracens, thus halting their military advance into central Europe. The Frankish victory provided the stability that enabled the rise of the Carolingian dynasty which was to become the central European political power for the next two centuries and would influence European culture and learning beyond that time frame. This was a bright period in the history of philosophy in which the Christian West tended to consolidate around its own tradition of Latin scholarship. The five monarchs of this dynasty were Charles Martel (688-741), Pepin III (714-768), Charlemagne (742-814), Louis the Pious (778-840), and Charles the Bald (823-877) (Carabine, 2000, 8).

It is this last monarch who provided the security and patronage that enabled John Scottus Eriugena to complete his greatest work, the Periphyseon, the focus of our study. This intellectual revival had its genesis with Charlemagne, whose interest in learning is well chronicled. His famous capitulary of 789, the Admonitio Generalis, advised the cathedrals and monasteries to open schools with curriculums designed to advance theological scholarship. Incidental to this effort was the teaching of grammar and arithmetic, which benefited all learning. His close advisor was Alcuin of York, who laid the foundation of later medieval education in reliance on the seven liberal arts as outlined in the allegory, Marriage of Mercury and Philology by Martianus Capella. Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne, continued this legacy of scholarship. Charles, like his
grandfather, gathered noted intellectuals to his court, among them Hincmar, Bishop of Reims, and John Scottus Eriugena from Ireland (Carabine, 8, 2000).

Little is known of Eriugena’s early life or education. He refers to himself simply as “Eriugena,” a word which means born of Ireland. It can be accepted that he was born circa 810, arrived at the Court of Charles the Bald in the 840’s and is no longer heard from after 870. Eriugena held no distinguished rank within the church, and perhaps no rank at all. The most notable aspect of his education was his fluency in Greek, a very rare ability for his place and time. How Eriugena could have acquired such fluency has been the topic of much speculation, and it now seems that this will always remain a mystery. Undoubtedly, this ability in Greek increased his standing with his benefactor, Charles, who was very interested in Byzantine culture. Around 860 A.D., Charles requested a translation from Greek into Latin of the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius, and this important task was entrusted to Eriugena. It was thought at the time that Dionysius was the Apostle Paul’s Athenian convert to Christianity mentioned in Acts 17: 34, thereby conveying great authority on the work. However, two German scholars, Josef Stiglmayr and Hugo Koch, independently confirmed in 1895 that this was not the case. Nonetheless, the influence that the work of Dionysius was to have on later medieval scholars was great. Additionally, Eriugena completed translations from two other Greek theologians: Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor. All of these three were to have profound influence upon him as he worked through the various philosophical problems of the Periphyseon (Carabine, 16, 2000).

Eriugena was said to have been interested in music and medicine. He also authored several poems in celebration of major Christian festivals. The New Testament
book of John seemed to have a special interest for him. He wrote the Homily on the Prolougue of John and A Commentary on the Gospel of John (Carabine, 19, 2000).

Perhaps his most uncelebrated work was The Treatise on Divine Predestination, commissioned by Hincmar around 851. This writing can be said to be before its time. Like the Periphyseon, this treatise is original and bold: too bold for Hincmar. We shall examine this work below but for now suffice it to say that On Predestination foreshadows the theme of apokatastasis advanced so capably in the Periphyseon. All of these achievements seem much in keeping with Eriugena’s skill with and love of the seven liberal arts (Carabine 15, 2000).

The Periphyseon was begun around 864 and may be viewed as the culmination of Eriugena’s mature thought. The entire work is rendered in the form of a dialogue between a master (Nutritor) and his student (Alumnus). One has the distinct feeling upon studying the text that this is Eriugena conversing with himself. He asks the question, gives a response, then tests that response by advancing on it, refining it or sometimes asserting a contrary position. The style is rather open and fluid in the manner of a Platonic dialogue rather than a systematic approach such as that employed by Aquinas in his Summa Theologia. Eriugena’s dialectical method is an effective way of advancing his ideas for two reasons. The first is technical, and is in accordance with all good philosophical literature. Dialectic is an art esteemed since the time of the ancient Greeks and “which is defined as the science of good disputation” (Periphyseon, Bk. V, 869 A).

Second, and just as importantly, it is the way that God works through the creative process. This art “did not arise from human contrivances, but was first implanted in nature by the originator of all the arts” (Periphyseon, Bk. IV, 749 A). In other words,
Eriugena could claim that the *Periphyseon* is itself an image, albeit a secondary and latent one, of the created universe.

The *Periphyseon* consists of five books, each of the first four dealing roughly with Eriugena’s four divisions of nature: that which creates and is not created, that which is created and creates, that which is created and does not create, and that which neither creates nor is created. The fifth book is the most lengthy and discourses more fully on the fourth division. The fourth division is thus the most important since it is the end to which the others resolve; that which neither is created nor creates. Here we discern the theme of *apokatastasis*, that of all things returning to their source. All nature must return to God, for God alone endows it with value. Specifically, in our study we treat only one small subset of nature: man. All men must return to God, otherwise they cannot be men. Of course, we must say at the outset the word “man,” as used hereafter, does not mean male, but humankind both collectively and distributively. It must be noted that for Eriugena, gender is accidental. We adopt this convention merely for simplicity and consistency with the text of the *Periphyseon*.

The seven major influences, which we discuss below, are readily apparent in the *Periphyseon*. Eriugena’s command of the mathematical arts of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy), as well as his talent with the linguistic arts of the trivium (grammar, dialectic and rhetoric), are always apparent. Throughout the *Periphyseon* he calls upon authority. The most prolific references are to the scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. Additionally, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Dionysius and Maximus are often cited. These will each be dealt with below, but for now suffice it to say that Eriugena rarely disagrees with any of these sources. He does,
however, often disagree with the interpretation that others have given to them. This is especially true with regard to the scriptures and the writings of Augustine.

Despite the excellence of the work, Eriugena has never received just recognition for it. He seems to have had only slight influence on the later medieval philosophers. The noted scholars of the later Middle Ages, such as Anselm, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure, rarely mention Eriugena (Bett, 1964, 174). We can, however, reasonably claim that his influence has been appreciably greater than generally thought. This is mainly due to the work of Honorius of Autun, who wrote a summary of the *Periphyseon* called the *Clavis Physicae* circa 1125-1130 A.D. Through this summary, as well as through the translation works of Eriugena, currents of his thought can readily be discerned in the writings of Robert Grosseteste (1168-1253), Meister Eckhart of Hochheim (1260-1329), and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) (Moran, 1989, 274-279). The *Periphyseon* was actually condemned in 1050, 1059, 1210, and 1225. The first publication of the work was made at Oxford by Thomas Gale in 1681. Only three years later it was placed on an index of prohibited books (Carabine, 23, 2000). As evidenced below, one reason for these censures is the topic of our study, “Salvation of the Damned.” Eriugena holds that all things must return and be united with their source, and this includes man. Indeed, it includes man prior to all other things. Over the centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has said that this position is not doctrinally correct. This may be found as early as 543 A.D. in the Canons of the Provincial Council of Constantinople which held that any man who claimed that the “punishment of devils and wicked men is temporary and will eventually cease”…or that the “ungodly will be completely restored” was anathema (Clarkson, Edwards, Kelly, Welsh, 345, 1955). And again in the
Athanasian Creed of the 5th century “…those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire” (Clark, Edwards, Kelly, Welsh, 6, 1955). The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A. D. declared a “perpetual punishment with the devil” for the wicked, and that anyone who dies “…unrepentant in the state of mortal sin, he will undoubtedly be tormented forever in the fires of an everlasting hell” (Clark, Edwards, Kelly, Welsh, 348, 1955). And perhaps, most of all, the venerated Augustine wrote an entire book on the eternal punishment for the damned, namely Book XXI, in the City of God, 413-426 A. D. Just and certain recompense for the unsaved was to be material, fiery yet unconsuming, excruciatingly painful and eternal. Moreover, “…many more are left under punishment than are delivered from it, in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all” (Augustine, City of God, 1948, Bk. XXI, Ch. 12). Eriugena would answer that none are left under punishment, all are delivered from it, in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all. We may admire the eloquence of Augustine, but dispute the logic. His statement is inherently concerned with justice and it holds that all men are pronounced guilty because of their earthly origin. “That the whole human race has been condemned in its first origin this life itself… bears witness by the host of cruel ills with which it is filled” (Augustine, City of God, 1997, Bk. XXII, Ch. 22, 194). All men are children of Adam, thus all are justly condemned, according to this text. But if this were so, then all must be left under punishment in order to show what was due to all. This topic will be more fully addressed in Chapter IV. It is sufficient to say for now that if all men have equal status, as being in God’s image entitles them, then redemption is accidental under the Augustinian explanation. Eriugena presupposes that God’s justice is circumscribed by his nature. Moreover, His nature and His will are one and the same. Is it not God’s
will that “none should perish?” Of course, there was a great deal of controversy in the Middle Ages over whether God’s nature and will were one and the same. This question will be dealt with in Chapter V.

The Problem to be Investigated: The Salvation of the Damned

The New Testament is replete with statements that speak to the universality of redemption as well as statements to the contrary. We must therefore use our reason as best we can to decipher God’s intention.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Corinthians 15: 22, King James Version). In this most unequivocal statement, St. Paul seems to be asserting that all men are raised in incorruptible glory. The all-inclusive claim to life can immediately be discerned, and is often reinforced in other passages of the New Testament, such as Ephesians 1:10 and Luke 15:4-6. If the Word, in becoming incarnate, took away “the sins of the world” (John 1: 9, KJV), how can anyone remain eternally in darkness? If His mission was to “seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19: 10, KJV), how can that mission not be completed in absolute fullness?

Eriugena sees the Word as being in the world and providing truth (light) to it long before, during, and long after He was perceived in it. The Word eternally, albeit mysteriously, precedes the matter into which He descends. The Word became manifest in the world in time to save all that live in the world through time. Not all are raised to the same degree of beatitude, but all are restored to the original pristine nature from which they came (Carabine, 97, 2000). To claim otherwise is to assert that the very nature of Christ is other than what it is. The temporal part of His mission bears witness to an
eternal saving reality. Since God is unbound by time, He knows the future with the same certainty that He knows the present and past. God’s knowledge is His predestiny, one with Himself, thus His plans are neither contingent nor unfulfilled. Therefore, His plan for every man is sure and cannot be undone.

Moreover, Eriugena fully accepts the idea, as advanced by Augustine, that evil has no positive force; elementally it is a privation only. This is not to say that evil, as the opposite of good, is infinite as goodness is infinite. When we speak of something being finite or infinite we are usually speaking with respect to some magnitude of that thing, as opposed to its substance. Augustine’s position is that evil has no substance. It exists only as a privation of good, which does have substance. Similar to darkness, which has no existence apart from light, evil has no existence apart from good. Thus, speaking strictly, God does not even know evil; He knows it only by contrariety (Eriugena, Treatise on Divine Predestination, 1998, Ch. 1, 8). The notion of eternal punishment in recompense for finite, albeit grossly magnified sin, seems quite unjust. Following with Augustine, as the latter had written in On Free Choice of the Will, the sole cause of any evil act is the evil which underlies it (Augustine, Free Choice, 1964, Bk. 3, Ch. XVII, 126). One could ask if the evil which underlies the act is merely the will’s object, or the will itself. Our answer is that it is the will itself, but ultimately, these are one and the same. The instruments of operation, whatever they be, are without blame. Eriugena reasons that, as a good earthly judge seeks to punish only the evil will, a divine one would do the same. The just punishment for the evil-doer is to take away his ability to sin. Unlike the earthly judge, this is small work for God; He can accomplish it most thoroughly in an instant. He simply takes away the evil will. This is the justice and the circumscribed punishment.
Take the desire to sin away from the sinner and he is rendered helpless, for to sin is all he wants. The central question remains, is the sinner rendered happy in the process? It appears so. However, this question will remain unanswered for now.

Avital Wohlman has written an article entitled “John Scottus Eriugena, a Christian Philosopher,” in which she asserts that the entire Periphyseon may be characterized as a commentary on I Corinthians 15:28, which states, “God may be all in all.” Most people would agree with the statement, when taken broadly and viewed from the perspective of the subject. However, some would likely be troubled if the statement is interpreted to mean that each and every human being is ultimately reconciled to God. In other words, when the general principle of unification with God descends into particulars to include those who seem unworthy of salvation, “all hell breaks loose,” both literally and metaphorically. For this reason we focus on the special problem of salvation for the damned.

As Wohlman has pointed out, Eriugena has appropriated from Augustine the notion that true philosophy, namely Neoplatonism, is true religion. Yet it seems very likely that if the great pagan Neoplatonists were to return to this life they would be resistant to conversion. If this is so, then a radical difference must exist between the truths of philosophy and those of religion (Wohlman, 2005, 637). While we cannot necessarily agree that a radical difference exists between the truths of philosophy and those of religion, we do affirm that one’s traditions, culture, and education greatly influence the discernment of truth. It would seem that a better understanding of both disciplines would yield a better grasp of truth. After all, both disciplines ultimately seek it. We hold that this harmony is attainable because Christianity is not a philosophy, but
rather a fundamental set of beliefs. Of course, both the theologian and the philosopher seek the same thing, but they seek it through different avenues. Because this is a dissertation in philosophy, we do not seek to challenge the tenets of faith. We assert only that once those are accepted, philosophy, as the final arbiter of reason, can find particular answers to questions that always remain outside the axioms of faith. It is a valuable effort to undertake because the correct solution advances the interests of both disciplines.

Augustine and Eriugena were similarly inspired by the mysteries of man’s fall and God’s incarnation through the Word that was intended for man’s final salvation. Both used Neoplatonic concepts to explain their view of the created order. Augustine seemed especially sensitive to the pathos of sin and redemption as it was experienced in human life. Eriugena was attuned to the signature which the Creator had manifested in the corporeal universe as a clear indication of His redemptive intention. This intention was discernible through true philosophy as well as true religion. Eriugena’s purpose was to uncover this signature in his philosophical as well as his polemic works (Wohlman, 2005, 639).

Wohlman holds that the problem of salvation for the damned is solved by Eriugena’s postulation of a two-fold conception of grace (Wohlman, 2005, 640). The first is terrestrial and ethical, the second is spiritual and ontological. Therefore, we can agree with the above statement, and we defer to our later discussion of datum and donum. The second part is the major contribution of Eriugena. It originated with the Eastern Fathers, was given definition by Eriugena, and has been passed to the West through his writing. This will be the major focus of our study as well.

Can this mean that the fulfillment of the second aspect of grace takes away the
notion of free will? Wohlman seems to think so, and here her thinking parts company with this dissertation. She cites examples from the Republic, the Laches, and the Phaedrus, where Plato always stressed that men could freely choose to do ill (Wohlman, 2005, 648). Yet we note that in these examples the characters had no sure knowledge of what good and ill were. We suggest here that perhaps always choosing the good in accordance with sure knowledge is not a violation of the principle of free will. Of course, we can never have the absolute knowledge that God has. However, it is possible for man to have sufficient surety of knowledge to enable him to always choose correctly, as well as freely.

Influences

Since the views of every philosopher are to some degree shaped by his predecessors, we will begin by outlining Eriugena’s most influential sources. It seems especially important to show how these sources are significant in relation to the question at hand: salvation for the damned. They will be addressed in chronological order. The first is not a philosopher at all, but a mind-set: a disposition to view the seven liberal arts as a method through which the answer to any question could be found. We list this first because Eriugena considered it to be eternal. Although these seven arts had been studied since antiquity, they were given special attention by the Latin Neoplatonist, Martianus Capella, in his allegorical work, The Marriage of Philology and Mercury. It was written circa 410-427 A. D., and was widely available to, and emphasized by, the monastic schools of the early Middle Ages. The arts were studied in the order of grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The first three literary arts were called the trivium and the final four mathematical arts were called the
quadrivium. First and foremost, Eriugena was a teacher of them and had written a commentary on Capella’s work circa 845 (Carabine, 15, 2000). He is quite eloquent in the adoption of them and makes it clear that they are the foundation of all knowledge (Eriugena, Bk. 1, 475A- 475B). All of the seven arts are keys used to unlock the wisdom hidden within scripture. Scripture was revealed holy and absolute, but it was written metaphorically owing to our own limitations of understanding. The liberal arts are eternal and reside in the soul, they are discovered as opposed to invented. They are termed “liberal” because they tend to free the mind or liberate it from material constraints.

Historically, the arts can be viewed as having their genesis in ancient Greece, for it was there that the initial systematic treatises of the arts were formulated. The arts quickly became integrated into the educational communities of the era, and gained an esteem recognized universally for many centuries. They were the framework of the curriculum in the ancient Greek schools and this continued through the Roman ascendancy, as it was customary for the children of the patrician class to be educated in Greece. Even the practical Romans seemed to value what most parents want for their legacy, a knowledge essentially grounded in something higher than the material. Thus, the arts continued to profoundly influence the Latin scholars and perhaps the most notable example here is Boethius (480-524 A.D). His works on music (De Institutione Musica) and arithmetic (De Institutione Arithmetica Libri Duo) were to have significant influence throughout the Middle Ages (Eco, 1959, 10, 30-31). The culminating codification of the liberal arts was accomplished by Martianus Capella in his allegory, The Marriage of Philology and Mercury. Martianus was most probably a Carthaginian
who wrote in the middle part of the fifth century. The work is hardly systematic and seldom rises above an elementary level. Yet it was widely available to the Carolingian scholars and represented their most complete source of secular knowledge (Moran, 1989, 40). In the allegory, the god Mercury is betrothed to Philology, a mortal, yet very wise and learned woman. After receiving a magic clock from her mother to protect her, and a potion from her sister to make her immortal, Philology traverses the heavens until she arrives at Jupiter’s palace in the Milky Way. The wedding guests are gods and philosophers, all assembled to bestow their blessing. Philology is attended by the seven liberal arts as bridesmaids, each of whom confers a dowry and gives a speech concerning her respective art. The marriage symbolizes the ultimate union of god and man, eloquence and knowledge, the return of the soul to its native home.

There has always been a privileged connection between the study of philosophy and that of the liberal arts. It was not until the rise of the Scholastics in the thirteenth century that this close bond began to be questioned. In some quarters it remains strong even today. However, for Eriugena and his contemporaries this connection was axiomatic. Philosophy was the study of wisdom, or as Augustine famously said in his Against the Academicians, the knowledge of things human and divine (Augustine, A.A., 1957, Bk. 1, Ch. 16, 25). For the Latin encyclopediasts, this meant that philosophy must comport with a broad understanding of all things, not just art and science but religion and theology as well. This tradition passed naturally to the Carolingians, and to none more so than to Eriugena. The seven liberal arts were considered as seven pillars of wisdom, so anyone contemplating the study of philosophy must first and concurrently study the liberal arts (Moran, 1989, 128).
Eriugena views the arts as being one with the Logos, Christ himself. This point must be underscored for the remainder of our study: all truth is derivative of the incarnation. In other words, when Euclid stated his first postulate circa 300 BC, two points determine a line, he was somehow mysteriously manifesting a truth the basis of which would not be revealed for another three centuries. How could Euclid possibly know this? He discovered it through the study of geometry which precedes the man, Jesus of Nazareth, in time yet succeeds the Logos by nature. We reiterate that all truth that man can lay claim to is lesser than, posterior to, or derivative of that ultimate truth of the Logos. In order for the conventional view of redemption to hold, the traditionalist must ground his thinking on the proposition that man can discern secondary truth while rejecting the primary from whence it comes. Eriugena views this proposition as unreasonable. We will discuss this topic more fully in Chapter 3. However, it is sufficient to say for the time being that man can never know God in Himself. God is known through theophanies, or “…manifestations which are comprehensible to the intellectual nature…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 446 C). In this life, theophanies can be received without the receiver knowing their reasons; hence, the mathematician can know mathematics without grasping the origin of numbers. However, in the life to come, man will know more in the sense that he will know both the theophanies and their source. When man is restored to the original state of his nature, he will have knowledge which equals that of angels, “…for he will have a Gnostic science of reasons in the things that are…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 535 A). In other words, although man cannot know the Logos in itself, even in the life to come, he will surely know then what he may not know now: that the Logos is the original truth of everything else. In this life, man can, of course, become confounded by the order, in
that he can attain knowledge of the arts before attaining knowledge of the Originator. Indeed he can get disordered just as easily as if he had mastered music before rhetoric. However, he cannot deny the source of the arts altogether. Ultimately he must accept it, for in so doing he is only laying claim to his own rationality. The liberal arts are not merely something we know, i.e., what we know, but they are how and why we know.

The Carolingians considered the arts to be eternal, complete and unchanging exemplars of knowledge. They were seen as an aid to man through which knowledge of the highest truth, that of their source, was restored. Through the fall, man turned away from God but not from the arts. Man always discovers them; he cannot create them. Let us return again to Euclid and his *Elements*. We may say with the highest degree of known certainty that he discovered his first four postulates and formulated them correctly. We cannot safely claim the same certainty with Euclid’s fifth, the parallel line postulate. It was immediately challenged, and remains in doubt to this day, proving itself valid in some contexts and invalid in others.

No other scholar of the time and perhaps none of any time consider the liberal arts to be of such vital importance to the study of philosophy and for human life in general as Eriugena (Moran, 1989, 130). The arts are so intrinsically bound to the mind that they are mind. They equip the mind to remember itself; to recollect the pristine nature that it enjoyed prior to the fall. In truth, they enable the soul to rest secure in the assurance of its own immortality. They liberate the mind from its earthly constraints and raise it to an ideal realm of eternal and unchanging truth. The general framework of this Carolingian’s thought with regard to the arts was grounded in Augustine, but Eriugena goes further. The arts transcend the mind, but the mind is co-eternal with the arts. Both share in and
partake of God’s eternal knowledge which is, of course, God, Himself. For the sake of convention, we treat the arts in the order that they were traditionally studied in the medieval schools.

“Grammar is the art which protects and controls articulate speech” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475A). It begins with the letter from which all words are derived and into which it is analyzed (Burch, 1951, 10). Grammar formed the basic discipline of the trivium, and a young student was advised to focus upon it until the age of fourteen. Only after mastering grammar could the student proceed to the study of rhetoric and dialectic (Wagner, 1983, 59). There were two central approaches for the subject, one tutorial, the other philosophical, and it is the latter which is of interest here for it is the one Eriugena refers to. Grammar for the philosopher of the Middle Ages had an inherently universal content and was not the unique province of one specific language. Like the other six arts, grammar resided in the soul. Whenever the bridesmaid of grammar accepted students, she would appeal to the “powers of reasoning” (Martianus, Bk. III, 66), and she “firmly held the different classes of things and the words for them” (Martianus, Bk. III, 66). Her duties were to ensure truthful reading, writing, then understanding and criticizing.

“Rhetoric is the art which carries out a full and elaborate examination of a set topic…” (Eriugena, Bk. 1, 475A). It begins with the questions from which an argument is built and then resolved into (Burch, 1951, 10). Of course, for the early Middle Ages, rhetoric had become synonymous with the works of Cicero. His De Inventione had become an accepted canonical work by the second century and this continued through the Carolingian period. In some ways, the art of rhetoric was even heightened following the collapse of the empire because when Rome fell, the orator and his narrow specialty also
fell. The rhetorician could no longer appeal to the beauty of spoken eloquence. Thus, the period of late antiquity saw the rise of figures such as Augustine and Boethius, scholars highly skilled in the broader elements of arrangement, style, and originality (Wagner, 1983, 97-99). In the common parlance of modern America, the word rhetoric is more often used as a pejorative word. This is unfortunate because for several centuries it was considered the highest art. The bridesmaid says “I am a virtue, a study, a science. … A science because I am the object of teaching … a virtue in that I possess the knowledge of how to speak well … a study in that I can be learned” (Martianus, Bk. V, 160). Her duty was to persuade through appropriate speech, and that speech must first and foremost be truthful. “It was worth even the gods’ efforts to hear such genius of argument, so rich a wealth of diction, so vast a store of memory and recollection” (Martianus, Bk. V, 157).

Continuing on, we come to dialectic, the crown jewel of the trivium. It is the “art which diligently investigates the rational, common concepts of the mind” (Eriugena, Bk. 1, 475A). It begins with the essence from which all forms proceed and into which they return (Burch, 1951, 10). There can be little doubt that Eriugena considers this the highest art. He speaks about it more than the other six and indeed the Periphyseon itself can be viewed as a five book exercise in dialectic. This is the one art that seems to most fully echo the work of God himself through His creative, sustaining and perfecting process. It did not arise from human contrivance but rather was “… implanted in nature by the originator of all arts…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 749A). Indeed, many philosophers, including Aristotle, have held that grammar and rhetoric are branches of dialectic (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 869D). This is the high art of good disputation first discovered by the Greeks “… from which every division and every multiplication of those things which the art
discusses takes its origin… “then by intelligible rules of synthesis, it returns to the same origin always seeking that “… in which it yearns to rest forever…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 869A). For Eriugena, dialectic is the never ending manifestation of the Logos. This art seems to have the highest place for all philosophers. Indeed as the bridesmaid says “… there are six canons on which the other disciplines rely, and they are all under my power and authority” (Martianus, Bk. IV, 110). Of course, she is not immediately impressive for she is revealed only though labored study and long contemplation. At the wedding ceremony, Jupiter, himself, waits on her alone and is silent. “And many of the gods, who had at first laughed at her, trembled before her” (Martianus, 154).

We underscore the paramount importance of the liberal arts in the method of Eriugena, with dialectic being the highest art. Much of this is derived from Maximus, according to Catherine Kavanaugh in her article, “The Influence of Maximus on Eriugena’s Treatment of Aristotle’s Categories.” She highlights a tension in the thought of Maximus that was largely passed on in Eriugena, and this was a healthy respect for the cogency of Aristotle’s logic, laid on top of a Platonic metaphysical framework. Maximus was a true Neoplatonist who held no sympathy with Aristotelian thought in general, but he did recognize the forceful, convincing nature of the logic of the Prior Analytics (Kavanaugh, 2005, 570). Later, we will also see that Eriugena has a formulation of time which is very similar, although slightly more nuanced, than that of Aristotle.

The categories, as formulated by Aristotle, are an essential element in Eriugena’s philosophical system. Our philosopher, at heart a Neoplatonist, can effectively employ them because, for him, dialectic is more than a mere function of language: it is the fundamental framework of all reality. As we have noted earlier, to engage in dialectic is
Eriugena comments on the ten categories in Book I, parts 463 A through 524 B of the *Periphyseon*. They pertain to created things that come after God. He holds that nothing can be found in created nature or in the various comprehensions of human minds which is not contained in one of these categories. There are innumerable subdivisions of the basic ten, and it is the function of that branch of philosophy termed dialectic to analyze and synthesize this complex framework. We may note immediately that the categories cannot apply to Eriugena’s first and fourth divisions of nature.

Aristotle’s treatise on the *Categories* has been very important in the history of Western philosophy. In the traditional order, it comprises the first six parts of the *Organon*. Those in the Platonic and Neoplatonic camps have not always been in agreement with Aristotle’s teaching. The various interpretations of the *Categories* have generally fallen into one of four types: the grammatical, the ontological, the logical, and the inclusive (Evangeliou, 1988, 29-32). We focus here on the two most germane to our study, the ontological and the inclusive. Plotinus held to the former interpretation, and criticized the *Categories* in Book VI of his *Enneads*. He held that the *Categories* did not apply to the intelligible realm of being and had to be modified even to apply to the sensible realm (Evangeliou, 94). His most noted disciple, Porphry, advanced the inclusive interpretation, thereby achieving something of a reconciliation between Aristotelianism and Platonism. Eriugena accepts the *Categories* in their broadest possible interpretation, as does Porphry. He sees them as a practical framework under which the things of this world can be studied. However, they do not apply to God, nor do they apply to the human mind, it being a direct extension of God (Moran, 1989, 133). Eriugena even turns in the
direction of Plotinus by claiming that the ten categories might not be exhaustive and that others might be discovered. “…[N]o one of the less able should suppose that a thorough investigation of things could [not] get further than the above mentioned quantity of categories” (Eriugena, Periphyseon, Bk. II, 597 A). We must now qualify our original statement about the ten categories. They apply only to some of the things that come after God, namely corporeal things. They do not apply to any of the primordial causes, of which man is one (Moran, 134). To conclude, we may say that Eriugena is not so much interested in what the Categories order, but rather what they do not order. He thus extends the art of dialectic exponentially beyond the categories to apply to the activities of God, man, and the universe (Moran, 134). In other words, this exposition on the Categories has been a necessary, yet intermediate, step toward Eriugena’s primary method of negative theology, which we treat below.

Since, however, Eriugena holds that ideas, such as the idea of God, are not contained by the categories, we must then ask if the logic is still sound. It is, because dialectic has a higher priority than simple conformity to material things: dialectic is the very structure of all reality. In other words, it can be thought of as extending over and through all of Eriugena’s four divisions of nature, and not just corporeal nature. Moreover, the logic can be employed in the negative to investigate the nature of God Himself, the highest reality. We will discuss this technique of negative theology more fully in Chapter III.

For Eriugena, dialectic is the inherent principle which links the genus to the species. It moves from the universal to the particular and back again, and this process is always at work in nature (Kavanaugh, 2005, 577). Eriugena’s explanation of the ten
categories is taken from the work of Boethius. However, his appropriation of this realistic application of the categories is the most important contribution of Maximus to the Periphyseon (Kavanaugh, 2005, 570). The language of Maximus, as written in his Contemplation 37 of the Ambigua and Iohannem, is very close to that of Eriugena in Book I as it pertains to this art of dialectic.

“For it is moved from the most universal kind through the more universal kinds to the species, by which and in which everything is naturally divided, proceeding… by a process of expansion, circumscribing its being toward what is below, and again it is gathered together from the most specific species, retreating through the more universal, up to the most universal kind, by a process of contraction, defining its being toward what is above.” (Maximus Confessor, Ambigua, CSG 18, P. 92, II, 1387-97; ii 77 C), (as per Kavanaugh, 2005, 575).

“Arithmetic is the reasoned and pure art of the numbers which come under the contemplations of the mind” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475A). It begins with the monad that is multiplied to form every other number and yet retains its unity in the numbers that are derived from it (Burch, 1951, 10). Eriugena gives considerable attention to the notion of the monad in Book III of the Periphyseon. Today, of course, we tend to think of the number one as having no certain uniqueness, just another number in an infinite string. The ancient Greeks and Romans had no such mind set, and this thinking continued long past the Carolingian period. One was not considered to be a number, but was the basis of numbers. Two was the first number. All numbers can be understood as existing in two different modes; they exist potentially in the monad, yet they exist actually in so far as
they are made (Eriugena, Bk. III, 657B). Eriugena gives an ingenious argument to prove that arithmetic is an eternal art generated by God and discovered by man. Numbers are perfect, immutable and supremely ordered. If they were merely a human contrivance, they would suffer imperfection, change, and disharmony (Eriugena, Bk. III, 658A). But more than any other single influence of the liberal arts on the mind of Eriugena, we find the most manifestly apparent to be the correlation between that of number theory as advanced in the Marriage and the four divisions of nature as outlined in Book I of the Periphyseon. These are “first that which creates and is not created, secondly that which is created and creates, thirdly into that which is created and does not create, while the fourth neither creates nor is created” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 441B). Scholars have given much speculation on the source of this but we find it given explicitly by the bridesmaid of arithmetic. Within the first ten numbers there are those which are ungenerated (prime) and generate (2, 3, 5); numbers which are generated and generate (4); numbers which are generated and do not generate (6, 8, 9, 10); numbers which neither generate nor are generated (7). “What reasons should I recount for your veneration, oh Heptad?” (Marianus, Bk. VII, 281). The number seven represents the topic of our study.

“Geometry is the art which considers, by the mind’s acute observation, the intervals and surfaces of plane and solid figures” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475A). It begins with the point from which all figures are developed and into which they are resolved (Burch, 1951, 10). The word literally means to measure the earth. Indeed, the French equivalent for the English word “surveyor” is “géomètre.” We mention this fact because it is in this art that the notion of all the liberal arts residing in the soul is most easily comprehended. Geometry is by the “mind’s observation,” not the eyes. We normally think of geometry as
a discipline which studies figures in ideal space. This is not so for Eriugena, rather space is the outward manifestation of geometry, an astounding claim. “I am forced to confess that place exists in the mind alone. For if every definition is in art and every art is in mind, every place, since place is definition, will necessarily be nowhere else but in the mind” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475B). This leads to a very interesting question. God surely knows geometry but does He know space? Perhaps not. In the Marriage, the bridesmaid Geometry knows every part of the earth but the gods do not. She tells the gods that her scholars have knowledge that they do not possess. “I see my Archimedes and the most learned Euclid… I could call upon them to expound my doctrines to you…” (Martianus, Bk. VI, 220).

“Music is the art which by the light of reason studies the harmony of all things that are in motion that is knowable by natural proportions” (Eriugena, 1987, 475A). It begins with the tone from which all symphonies are composed and in which they find rest (Burch, 1951, 10). Music is mentioned only twice in the Periphyseon: once in Book I (Eriugena, Periphyseon, 475 B), and once in Book V (Eriugena, Periphyseon, 869 C). Yet many of Eriugena’s statements concerning number are clearly musical, as this art was understood in the ninth century. This line of thought follows directly from Augustine’s De Musica, an essay which held that music was an art properly founded in the ratio of audible harmony and fixed according to the principle of number (Augustine, Mus., 1979, Bk. I, 14-15). We know by studying the Marriage that it enjoyed equal status with the other arts and perhaps even higher. Harmony sings her instruction to the gods “… having long since taken her departure from earth” (Martianus, Bk. IX, 349). We are speaking here not of individual skill in musicianship, but rather of a knowledge of music that
transcends the theoretical and could be termed metaphysical. In his *De Institutione Musica*, Boethius reinforced the thinking of Plato by claiming that “… musical concord united the soul of the universe” (Wagner, 1983, 171). Music alone, of all the mathematical arts, was occupied with the pursuit of not only truth, but morality as well. Music is the most mystical of the arts. “She indeed, above all others, will be able to soothe the cares of the gods, gladdening the heavens with her song and rhythms” (Martianus, Bk. IX, 349).

“Astronomy is the art which investigates the dimensions of the heavenly bodies and their motions and their returnings at fixed times” (Eriugena, Bk. VII, 475A). It begins with the instant of time from which all change is measured and into which all is returned. (Burch, 1951, 10). Unlike music, Eriugena discourses on astronomy at some length. This occurs mainly in Book III of the *Periphyseon* where he speculates on the creation of the universe. Perhaps astronomy, more than any other art, best illustrates Eriugena’s consistent theme of the return of all things to their source. This discipline grants us the opportunity to actually see heavenly bodies begin and complete their recurring courses. For Eriugena, astronomy is an art which reflects an ordered extra-terrestrial creation. He gives several examples of astronomical observations and relevant calculations concerning the earth, moon, planets, and stars (Eriugena, Bk. III, 715 C-726 D). Eriugena promotes the study of this art because “… although nothing definite is found in the divine scriptures concerning such measurements… I would not say that the constitution of the world lies outside the understanding of the rational nature when it was for [that nature’s] sake that it was created” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 723 B). In the *Marriage*, the bridesmaid, Astronomy, is very modest and respectful of the gods. She knows that the gods in vanity
believe that the movements of the stars and planets are controlled by themselves. Her study is so long and diligent as to seem eternal. “Forty thousand years I kept myself in seclusion there, in reverent observation” (Martianus, Bk. VIII, 316). Astronomy tells the assembled gods that her discourse is to be understood in a theoretical sense and is not concerned with transitory conditions in the heavens. Her calculations are of sublime intervals. “Never would the understanding of your journey and your return reach mortal intelligence” (Martianus, Bk. VIII, 318). We now leave this most elemental source of the liberal arts and turn to the thinkers which significantly influenced Eriugena.

The first of these is Plato. Eriugena refers to him as the “greatest of those who philosophized about the world” and it seems apparent that he had great confidence in Platonic theory in outline (Eriugena, Bk. I, 476C). However, the specific influence of Plato is hard to trace. It seems most likely that the influence was indirect and filtered through the writings of the following thinkers that we consider hereafter. Eriugena makes only fifteen references to Plato in the *Periphyseon* (Moran, 1989, 105). We may be certain only that Eriugena had access to the *Timaeus*, and even that was not in the original Greek, but rather through the Latin translation of Chalcidius (Bett, 1964, 166).

Nor can it be shown that Eriugena had available any of the writing of Philo or the pagan Neoplatonist scholars such as Proclus or Plotinus. Our philosopher never refers to any of them. Therefore, we must conclude in paradox that Eriugena, perhaps one of the greatest Platonic thinkers of all time, had little direct knowledge of Plato himself. Moreover, Eriugena, who in later centuries would become the main channel through which Neoplatonism would flow to the mysticism of the high Middle Ages and the Renaissance had even less knowledge of the pagan Neoplatonist disciples (Bett, 1964, 169). Of
course, Eriugena did have works of various Christian Neoplatonists at his disposal.

Thus, we focus on what we know for sure and continue with a careful reading of the *Timaeus*, paying particular attention to what Plato has to say about God’s will and His apparent plan for the world. We must give the utmost consideration to any passage which even hints that life cannot be lost; that death is not so much a recompense, but more properly, a restoration. We need not concern ourselves with any process of purification; or perhaps better said, whether the soul rises in staged advancement. The only question is whether or not the soul attains its ultimate restoration. How this restoration occurs is of no consequence to our study, only that it happens.

Plato gives early warning that not all men are going to accept the truth of their own creation. “But the Father and maker of this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible” (*Timaeus*, pt. 28, 12). Some men will not be converted. Can this possibly mean that the one who made them ceases in his love for them? Of course not, for “He desired that all things be as like Him as they could be” (*Timaeus*, pt. 30, 13). The creator is infinitely good, thus, lacks any jealousy of any kind. He wants only to make, sustain and perfect the universe, to bring it into total concord with himself. This process can only be an eternal one wherein the three modes of his action are eternal not sequential. *Timaeus* tells Socrates that when the Father and supreme artisan saw what he had made, living and moving, an image of the eternal “He rejoiced and in his joy, determined to make the copy still more like the original” (*Timaeus*, pt. 37, 19). God initially fashions a community of lesser gods and children of these lesser gods, and then binds each in the security of this most genuine covenant. “Wherefore, since ye are but creatures, ye are not altogether immortal and
indissoluble, but ye shall certainly not be dissolved, nor be liable to the fate of death, having in my will a greater and mightier bond than those with which you were bound at the time of your birth” (Timaeus, pt. 41, 23). Then God instructs His lesser gods to continue to “betake yourselves to the formation of animals, imitating the power which was shown by me in creating you. The part of them… which is called divine… I will myself sow the seed… beget living creatures… and receive them again in death” (Timaeus, pt. 41, 24). We must assume by this that Plato held the soul to be immortal, otherwise there would be nothing for the gods to receive other than constituent particles, which they already have. The lesser gods are obedient and receiving from Him the “immortal principle of the soul; and around this they proceed to fashion a mortal body” (Timaeus, pt. 69, 52). It is important to note the genealogical nature of this explanation of the universe. The most perfect God makes lesser gods who are referred to as “his children” (Timaeus, pt. 43, 25), and they in turn make the “men of old” (Timaeus, pt. 40, 23), who are most surely Plato’s ancestors. The significance of this relationship is detailed below.

We next consider the influence of Origen Adamantius (185-254) on the philosophy of Eriugena. Origen was a Platonic Christian scholar and distinguished Father of the early church, who studied and taught in Alexandria. Eriugena refers to him in Book IV of the Periphyseon, as being “that supreme commentator of scripture” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 818B). Origen was a prolific writer, composing about 6000 works, many of which have been lost. Fortunately, his systematic Treatise on First Principles, written between 212 and 215, has survived in the translation of Rufinus. This is important for we know that Eriugena had access to Origen’s Principles because he made
reference to the work in the *Periphyseon* (Eriugena, Bk. V, 929A). We choose to expound on the connection in some detail, for this is an area which is rarely mentioned in contemporary scholarship concerning Eriugena.

Eriugena borrows three central themes from Origen. The first is stressed continually in the *Principles*, that God’s act of creation is an eternal, not a temporal one. The word ‘eternal’ raises the question as to whether it is ‘always going on’ or as per the nature of things created. We mean both: God is always creating things, and those things always abide. The second is that God’s creation involves only the creation of rational beings, not corporeal ones. The third, and Origen is one of the first, if not the first Christian theologian to state it, is that all of the rational beings that God creates, can and will be restored in Him. God does not curse what He has made. This last theme flows naturally from the first two and it is the essence of our study herein.

“We can imagine no moment when [God] was not engaged in acts of well-doings … It follows plainly from this, that at no time whatever was God not creator, nor benefactor, nor providence” (Origen, *First Prin.*, 1936, Bk. I, Ch. 4, 42). The first theme of creation being an eternal as opposed to a temporal action on the part of God arose from Origen’s optimistic and fairly successful intention of reconciling Christianity to Platonism. Plato, as well as Aristotle, as all the rest of the ancient philosophers had thought the world to be eternal. However, this did not necessarily mean that everything in it was eternal. It should be stated that Plato is not explicit and unambiguous on this point. For this reason, we do find some ancient interpreters rejecting this usual reading as an unjustified assimilation of Plato to Aristotle. Christianity in its rather literal interpretation of the Old Testament claimed that the world was created in time. This most interesting
question was to become a topic of great disputation in the high Middle Ages and in large measure remains so today. The question turns on the meaning of the word “eternal.” It is interesting to note that the ancient Greek formulation of the problem addressed only the world in its infinite duration. In other words, extended backwards and forwards in time. However, when Christ said “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Revelation 1:8, KJV), His claim involved much more. Boethius would later give definition to eternity as “the complete possession of an endless life enjoyed as one simultaneous whole” (Boethius, Con Phil., 1957, Bk. V, pt. 6, 62). Understood in this latter way, the world could well extend infinitely in time and yet still not have the simultaneous and whole possession of itself. Said better, the world could be infinite in time yet still dependent on something else, namely God, for its duration. This is Origen’s claim. God creates the world yet He creates infinitely with Himself, not in temporal time. It is most interesting to note that Plato himself sows the seeds of this line of reasoning in the Timaeus.

Where the traditional Christian viewpoint makes its greatest contribution is not so much its technical correctness, but rather in the importance with which it views the material world. This viewpoint is in accordance with Origen, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and the non-Christian Neoplatonists, all of whom regarded the corporeal world as good. While this claim of the goodness of the corporeal world cannot be unqualified, we find it to be generally true in such works as the First Principles of Origin, the Timaeus of Plato, the Ethics of Aristotle, the Meditations of Aurelius, and the Enneads of Plotinus. The body is good, the world is good, albeit not as good as the soul. Thus the world is good and we must cling to it so long as we are able. The Christian viewpoint, as well as the
Platonic, is that the world is our only ticket to eternity and must not be given up prematurely. This material world is our one means of regaining that which we have lost, so it seems reasonable that it is infinite in duration, as are our souls. This seems to imply that Eriugena is resorting to the employment of dialectical logic, and we will address this below in the treatment of negative theology. For now, let us simply state that this present world of time and space is our punishment; sometimes unpleasant, but always good. As we shall discuss below, Augustine explained our human condition in the City of God: “And yet the whole of mortal life is itself a punishment…” (Augustine, City of God 1972, Bk. XXI, Ch. 14 81). It is worth noting that from the very heart of the question Plato was correct in holding that the wise man does not avoid punishment, he seeks it. “And in what way is it profitable to get away with doing injustice and not pay the penalty? … For the man who doesn’t get away with it and is punished, his whole soul [is] brought to its best nature” (Plato, Republic, 1968, Bk. IX, 591B, 274). Thus, it is ultimately good and we must do our best with it. Not only did Origen teach this philosophy, he lived it charitably through a long life of bitter hardship.

This leads directly to his second contribution to the thought of Eriugena; the idea that God creates only intelligible beings, not matter (Moran, 108, 1990). Strictly speaking, man makes his own material world. In other words, God creates only souls. The soul is like God in that it seeks the good, but unlike God because it has only limited knowledge of the good. Hence it falls to a condition of equilibrium, a world of its own making where it can begin its own ascent. It falls into a world of time and space, similar to a mountaineer rappelling down a cliff. Where he stops is that position from which he can regain his footing and begin climbing again. We are not in time and space, but rather
time and space are elemental definitions in the mind which all rational beings constitute. This world with all of its accompanying examples of terror and beauty is a product of our own making, a natural consequence of our own free will.

Origen holds that this strange descent and then re-ascent happens so that the creator of all may be manifestly made greater. It has nothing to do with us and everything to do with Him. We have free will. Indeed, our legal and social systems are premised on this foundation. We may rightly ask why we have it. Of course we benefit from it, but is our benefit His ultimate end? Surely it is not. Consider the parable of the prodigal son. The obedient son is greater for exercising his free will to return, but the paramount consideration is that of the father whose joy is made full. And as any father knows, he can be made complete in no alternate way other than by having both of the sons in communion with him. What if he could force both sons to remain? In such case, their presence abides, but their communion is broken. The very kinship that inherently binds the relationship is lost. The father is not happy, he is not great and most of all he is not even a father. The sons must have the freedom to choose so that when they choose wisely, as they surely will, the father is more exalted. Put another way, it has been said that Paganini was the greatest violinist of all time. His audiences acknowledged his genius with great adorations. Let us suppose that Paganini could push some magic button and force his audience to wildly applaud. His greatness cannot possibly be made manifest under such conditions. His fans must have the freedom to do as they wish in order for his talent to shine forth. This is Origen’s teaching on free will, one that Eriugena adopts, and advances upon (Origen, Bk. III, Ch. 6, 254). It is true that men must have the freedom to choose against God. However, this choice is a temporal one, made
within the confines of incomplete knowledge, and easily rescinded.

Thirdly is the idea that all rational creatures will ultimately be restored to the original condition to which God created them, and this necessarily means redeeming harmony with Him. Origen is the first Christian to overtly assert this as fact. He does so in a most ingenious way by comparison, similar to a mathematician who proves that one series is infinite by showing that it is larger than another series which is already known to be infinite. Origen conjures up a personality for Satan, surely the worst rational being which has ever existed. Origen has only to show that Satan will be restored and everyone on our list neatly follows. “The demons themselves and the rulers of the darkness in any world of worlds, if they desire to turn to better things, become men and so revert to their original condition in order that being disciplined by the punishments and torments which they endure for a long or short period while in the bodies of men they may in time reach the exalted rank of angels” (Origen, Bk. I, Ch. 4, 56). And later he states, “For the destruction of the last enemy [Satan] must be understood in this way, not that its substance which was made by God shall perish but that the hostile purpose and will which proceeded not from God but from itself will come to an end. It will be destroyed, therefore, not in the sense of ceasing to exist, but of being no longer an enemy and no longer death” (Origen, Bk. III, Ch. 4, 250). Rufinus, the Latin translator, has concealed the original reference to the devil and left the question of his salvation open but the intention of Origen was quite clear (Origen, Bk. III, Ch. 4, 251). No other idea of Origen’s was more reviled than this. Theophilus, in his Doctrina Patrum, states that “[h]e has dared to pay great honor to the devil, saying that when he is freed from all sin he will be restored to his ancient rank…” (Origen, Bk. III, Ch. 4, 251).
There is one significant difference between Origen and Eriugena, and this should be addressed. For Origen, man may fall and be raised, then fall again and be raised again, in infinite succession. Since “[t]he soul is immortal and eternal, it is possible that in the many and endless periods throughout diverse and immeasurable ages it may either descend… or be restored…” (Origen, First Prin., Bk. III, Ch. 1, 209). For Eriugena, this is not the case because he believes that the primordial causes, of which man is one (Eriugena, Periphyseon, Bk. III, 536 B), descend only once. “In His Word, God created all at once the causes of the intelligible and the sensible essences (Eriugena, Bk. II, 554 C). These primordial causes are understood to be divine definitions or predestinations (Eriugena, 615 D). They are goodness itself, being itself, life itself, truth itself, etc. Thus, there can only be one manifestation of them. For Eriugena, man falls and is restored only once. It is apparent from the above discussion that Eriugena had a much more nuanced conception of time than Origen. This is due mostly to the influence of Augustine, which will be addressed below.

Another important source for Eriugena was Gregory of Nyssa (circa 335-394). He became bishop of this city in present day Turkey, in 372, and is known to have been present at the Council of Antioch and the Second Ecumencial Council. Eriugena takes two main themes from Gregory, his theory of matter and his teaching on the image of God as manifested in man (Bett, 1964, 164). Gregory of Nyssa’s important work, On the Creation of Man, is frequently quoted by Eriugena, who refers to it as “the Image” (Bett, 1964, 162).

Turning to the first, Eriugena followed Gregory in maintaining that all matter as we know it is nothing other than the concourse of accidents (Eriugena, Bk. I, 502 B). He
maintains that the objects we sense have their origins in immaterial primal causes, which we cannot sense. Moreover, material objects are immaterial in our constitution and analysis of them. For instance, the familiar elements of geometry, i.e., points, lines, and figures, are not sensed but intuited. Such is likewise the case with the other sciences which study objects, though admittedly not as readily perceived. Thus, matter is really nothing more than the conjoining of immaterial categories. Matter is purely accidental in that it could surely be other than what it is. It is made up of some combination of the four ancient elements: earth, water, air, and fire, mixed into some mutable proportion (Bett, 1964, 47). Eriugena likens matter to a shadow formed out of the concourse of light and a body. When the shadow vanishes it returns to its causes, neither of which has suffered change. The various qualities that constitute an object, such as form, color, density, etc., cannot be understood apart from it. They precede the object not in time but in natural priority of order, as causes precede effects. To clinch this argument Eriugena returns to the science of dialectic and underscores the definition as given by Gregory, that matter is that which is produced by the concourse of accidents.

“For whether it has accidents or does not have them, whether there are in it things which cannot exist without it or whether things which, either by thought alone or by act and operation, can be separated from it withdraw from it, it always subsists without change by its own natural resources. But body, when the accidents are withdrawn, can by no means subsist by itself since it is not supported by any substance on its own. For if you withdraw quantity from body it will not be a body” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 503 B).
Such an innovative and thoughtful theory of matter has tremendous implications for one’s views on creation, as we shall soon see.

As to the second major theme for Eriugena that originates in Gregory, that of the image of God as manifested in man, we maintain that this theoretical argument is the mainstay for salvation of the damned. Eriugena references St. Gregory’s *Treatise on the Image* twenty times in Book IV of the *Periphyseon*. The Genesis passage “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26, KJV), was interpreted of the Word of God, or the second person of the Trinity. Essentially, God conjured up in the divine mind a man possessed of a similar mind to His own. God’s contemplation was the actualization of all mortal men, though each one would, of course, be materially manifested through time and space. But the time and space are man’s, rather than God’s. “… [B]efore the establishment of man there was a council, and he was prefigured by the Creator through the Word of Scripture as to what he should be … All these things were first considered by the Word … before he came forth … in the world of becoming …” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 758 B). Man was and is bound for unification with God whether he sinned or not. By sinning, he merely brings upon himself mortal death, or perhaps better said mortal life, as well as a host of other misfortunes. Man cannot surrender his essence because it is not his to surrender. It belongs to God, who has the authority to take it, but doing so runs contrary to His nature because man’s soul is an image of God and bears likeness to it.

We may affirm the above argument by observing nature itself. All of nature desires to live. Nothing, save man, voluntarily kills itself, and even he but rarely. We need only examine the example of suicide to show that the desire for life is universal, and
Augustine may be our guide here. The man who takes his own life does not do so freely, but only when racked by some unbearable hardship. He desires rest and mistakenly reasons that death will provide it. But here is the supreme irony, he truly wants to live more, not less; he seeks a higher condition of being, not a lower one. “Be careful that you do not make a mistake in the very place you think that you see the truth. If you were happy you would rather be alive…” (Augustine, On Free Choice, 1964, Bk. III, Ch.7, 102). We may conclude that all nature, everywhere, in all times desires to live.

Perhaps we may best illustrate this notion of man being an image of God through the following example. Augustine looks like Simone de Beauvoir, but they do not look alike in that they both have two eyes, two arms, etc. Rather they look alike because he is an image of the Word and she is an image of the Word. Both are created according to a certain essence, both are images of it and bear likeness to it. Of course, we do not mean to suggest that their likeness is physical but rather they are alike in that unique essence that makes them both human. They have the freedom to choose whether or not they want to be good but not the freedom to choose whether or not to be human. A man can choose to reject Christ in his mortal lifetime, but not in his eternal essence. He can believe what he wants in this world, but he cannot deny who he is in the next. He is ultimately God’s man, not his own.

Interestingly, Gregory holds that not only is all human nature derived from one source, the Word, it is also derived at once. “He who brought all things into being formed man … after the Divine Image [He] did not establish intervals in which future things would gradually be added, … but intellected … the whole of human nature at once in its fullness…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 812 A). This leads to the perplexing paradox that
even though birth and death are understood to be in time, life is not. Thus the soul is not constrained in time, just as the archetype, the Word, from which it originated, is not constrained in time.

The writings of Augustine had a remarkable influence upon the course of medieval philosophy in the West, and this influence is highly evident in the work of Eriugena. The North African bishop is referenced constantly in the Periphyseon, and we may justly say there was some community of thought which influences all of our philosophers’ writing. Oftentimes it seems as if Eriugena takes an Augustinian principle and pushes it far beyond where Augustine would have it go. We focus here on the one doctrine which seems to us to have had the most significant influence for our present study and this is Augustine’s teaching on the problem of evil (Bett, 1964, 158).

We all recognize the existence of evil in the world but accounting for it presents a serious intellectual problem for any thinking person. There seems to be only four explanations for it:

(1) God, himself, is evil. This was the scheme posited by the ancient Babylonians. It surely explains evil in the world but poses a greater problem. Whence comes good?

(2) God is not all good.

(3) God is all good, but not all powerful; thus He lacks the ability to end evil in the world.

(4) God is all good and all powerful and he allows evil in the world so that a greater good can eventually come.

Augustine’s answer to this most perplexing question came over a lifetime of
honestly seeking truth, first in the liberal arts, second in philosophy, and lastly in religious studies. The first explanation given above was a serious one for him at one point in his early life. He first became a disciple of Mani, a third century Babylonian, who taught that reality was essentially a dynamic dualism between two opposing sources of evil and good. Each was a positive force which tended to counter balance the other. After following Manicheanism for several years, Augustine finally concluded that it was merely empty eloquence. Ironically, the notion that evil is a positive source seems likely enough on the surface. Perhaps this is why Manicheanism flourished for some time and moreover why Christianity still suffers from the latent effects of it. Augustine ultimately concluded that it would not withstand rigorous intellectual investigation. From this he turned to the skeptics of the New Academy who advanced no positive doctrine concerning God. This philosophy satisfied Augustine for a time, but in their wisdom the Academicians claimed that they had no wisdom. Through long and diligent intellectual speculation and aided by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Augustine was able to formulate an accounting for the problem of evil, based upon his earlier studies from “certain books of the Platonists” (Augustine, Con., 1960, Bk. VII, Ch. 9, 168). This was his important contribution: that evil has no positive dimension; it is merely the absence of good. Augustine spent the remainder of his life enthusiastically and successfully championing this idea.

Augustine is explicitly clear that every being is good in so far as it has being. He does so by an argument involving three possibilities or modes of goodness in things. All things are totally good, partially good or not good. The first and the last categories are resolved immediately. If something is totally good it cannot be corrupted; if something is
totally bad then there is nothing in it to corrupt. It is the second category, the one that comprises everything within our realm of perception, that we must seek to fully explain. These beings have some good and some bad and can, therefore, suffer corruption. But what is corruption other than the diminution of good? Thus, the very fact that they can suffer corruption means that they are good, at least in some measure. Moreover, concerning the possibility of beings in the third category, i.e. beings that are in no way good, we may rightly say that there are no such things. “What is more monstrous than to claim that things become better by losing all their good? Therefore, if they are deprived of all good, they will be absolutely nothing. Hence, as long as they exist they are good” (Augustine, Con., 1960, Bk. VII, Ch. 12, 172).

This is not to say that evil does not exist in this world or that it has no reality. It is merely to say that its reality is qualified. Evil has no substance and could not be known apart from good. However, if we speak of evil as being a lack of perfection or goodness, then evil surely exists. Perhaps we could say that when we call something evil, we are merely using a convention of language so our ideas are more easily conveyed. For instance when we say “Judas was evil,” we do not imply that he was inherently evil. We only mean that he lacks the goodness that he could have had. He chose a temporal good, thirty pieces of silver, over an eternal one. Judas lost sight of the eternal, but is he damned for all time? Of course, Augustine would affirm that he is. The human race is to be cut in two and Judas, having proven himself worthy of just vengeance, would inherit the same. However, insofar as he still exists, albeit in eternal torture, he is still good. Augustine’s position is consistent granted that a good thing can be eternally tortured, i.e. infinitely deprived of that end for which it was created, namely restoration with its
creator. Eriugena’s position is more nuanced. Judas is fully restored in his spiritual body, but eternally tortured in the memory of his evil work. Eriugena’s position is consistent granted that a restored soul, i.e. one that has reached the end for which it was intended, can still be tormented. We will substantively address this question at great length in subsequent chapters.

Such was the core of the Augustinian doctrine of evil which Eriugena accepted. Every good derives from God. Evil, which appears to actively counter good, is merely a turning away from God. A most fitting analogy is our experience of the sun’s physical light. At noon we enjoy the light, at midnight we suffer darkness. But that darkness has no source. It is merely the absence of light. Eriugena quoted Augustine’s City of God, Chapter 13, “But evil begins within them secretly at first to draw them into open disobedience afterwards. For there would have been no evil work had there not been an evil will before it.…” (Eriugena, Periphyseon, 1987, Bk. IV, 808 C). Eriugena interpreted this passage to mean that man was never without sin, because man was never without the mutability of will. The will, being free, has a certain irrational nature that must always accompany it. Man can always choose the good but does not always do so, for sometimes the irrational tendency wins out. Sometimes man loses sight of the eternal and becomes fixated on the temporal. Both Augustine and Eriugena would hold that free will is a good gift from God that man has misused. God intended it so that man could turn to Him, thereby completely perfecting his nature. However, man has too often used the gift for something other than its intended purpose. One could ask: why did God create man with the vulnerability to turn away from Him? Why not just create man as perfect? The answer lies in the ambiguity of the word “perfect” as used in the question. God is perfect in that
his free will is always coincident with his rational choice. To robotically force man to be
“perfect” would be to deprive him of being like God. Perfection in the first instance
means never committing wrongful acts. In the second it means being like God, who never
commits wrongful acts. Free will safeguards man’s perfection to the highest degree
because it allows man to be like God to the highest degree.

All of the above statements place the core of evil in the brokenness of the
relationship of man to God, as opposed to the wrongness of the evil act itself. The evil act
is merely the continuance and likewise the manifestation of the irrational choice by man
to turn away from the good. The evil act is wrong, to be sure, but it is not the essence of
wrongness. This point must be stressed emphatically for our study. The essence of the
sinful act is the sinful turn away from God; the essence of the turning away is the
fractured relationship. If the relationship between God and man is ordered as it should be,
no sin of any kind follows.

On this theory of evil, shared by both Augustine and Eriugena, there is one
specific topic on which the two would disagree and this is the very important concept of
original sin. As noted earlier once general Augustinian theory descends into the
particulars Eriugena tends to reinterpret it, despite calling upon his predecessor as
authority. This is most apparent concerning this notion of original sin. The difference
arises due to the varying degree that both philosophers held as to what extent scripture
could be interpreted as allegory. St. Ambrose had taught Augustine that the employment
of the allegorical method was appropriate when trying to reconcile seemingly
contradictory passages, and the latter made impressive use of it throughout his long
career. However, it appears clear that Augustine held to a very literal interpretation of the
Genesis account of Adam, as the first man in time. This meant that all other men were biological descendents of Adam. Thus, Adam’s original sin in the Garden of Eden was genetically transferred to all other men. Despite the eloquent rhetoric, Augustine was never able to show how this transference was just. “If Adam and Eve sinned, what did we, poor wretches, do? Why should we be born with the blindness of ignorance and the tortures of difficulty? … Our reply to these men is brief: Let them be silent and cease to murmur against God” (Augustine, Free Choice, 1964, Bk. III, Ch. 19, 129). Eriugena has no such difficulty because for him, Adam is not a man in time, rather he is all men.

Eriugena employs a very liberal and allegorical interpretation of the Genesis story. It was not an individual who turned away from God, but humanity. It was not one who suffered under a broken relationship with his creator, but all of mankind. Moreover, it is not one that enjoys the restoration and homecoming but all. In a very mysterious yet rational explanation Eriugena holds that all men are created at once, yet each turns away and then falls into a material world of space and time. One should not conclude from this notion of all men being created at once that Eriugena concurs with a theory of pre-existence.

Rather, he claims, through an assertion detailed below in Chapter III, that all men are both eternal and made. Man’s manifestation in the material world of space and time is his fall, and follows his turning away from God. The sin is still original but it is each man’s original not his great great-grandfather’s (Bett, 1964, 133).

The works of the Pseudo-Dionysius were translated by Eriugena at the request of Charles the Bald circa 860, and these writings had a profound influence. Prominent in these translations is the employment of negative theology, a device used so effectively by Eriugena. Much has already been written on this and indeed we will discuss it below, but
for now, we proceed rather boldly and focus on one specific passage in the Divine Names of Dionysius that bears greater importance for our subject. “The procession of all of our intellectual activity can at least go this far, that all fatherhood and all sonship are gifts bestowed by that supreme source of Fatherhood and Sonship on us and on the celestial powers” (Pseudo-Dionysius, Divine Names, 1987, Ch. 2, pt. 8, 64). This is a most astonishing claim and one that has the highest importance for our study. Clearly, this relationship of father to son can be broadened by the principle of equivalence to include father to daughter, mother to son, and mother to daughter, because for Eriugena gender is accidental. The human family is a compound of two dimensions: vertical, which is parent to child, and horizontal, which is husband to wife, or brother to sister. The claim of Dionysius that the father-son relationship is a spiritual one can now be reformulated to say that the parent-child relationship is a spiritual one. Thus, we have established that the vertical dimension of the family is a spiritual one. There are many who would claim that all the various facets of family relationships are spiritual, and we are among them. However, it is sufficient for our study to limit the claim to what is clearly apparent from the works of Dionysius. Incidentally, other philosophers prior to Eriugena have come sufficiently close to making this same claim so that for speculative purposes we may accept it. Plato so claimed in the Timaeus, as was explained above. Likewise, Aristotle in the Ethics holds “…parents love their children as themselves” (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1161 A) because the children are themselves by extension. Lastly, Augustine in the Confessions, states “[a] child… forces himself upon our love” (Augustine, Con., 1960, Bk. IV, Ch. 2, 94). No other love can be forced upon us. The essence of this relationship, i.e. the spiritual as opposed to the material nature of it, must be accepted by all who
reasonably reflect upon it, for this is a nature which approaches universal recognition. It is a relationship clearly and appropriately reflected in our most ancient literature, art, and law, and it continues to be reflected at present with no indication that it will ever be extinguished. “Fatherhood and sonship of this kind are brought to perfection in a spiritual fashion … in the domain of mind, and this is the work of the divine spirit which is located beyond all conceptual immateriality … it is the work too of the Father and Son who supremely transcend all divine Fatherhood and Sonship” (Pseudo-Dionysius, Divine Names, 1987, Ch. 2, pt. 8, 64). We must examine this claim, for it has the utmost consequences for our study.

The entire core of this argument is that the relationship of parent to child must ultimately be made whole. The child cannot be forever lost, else the loving parent is incomplete. We have observed the saddest event in all of all human experience: the death of a child. There can be no human redemption from this most hateful intrusion into the natural order of the world. Thus, we may conclude that parenthood has priority over even the most important earthly offices. A relationship is established which may or may not be material, but is always spiritual. If the relationship is a spiritual one, akin to God’s relationship to man, as Dionysius maintains, all the more must God save what is His. This is the meaning of countless New Testament parables. In the Letters, he writes that God “…wishes everything to be always akin in him and to have fellowship with him…” (Pseudo-Dionysius, Letters, 1987, let. 8, 271). It is true that God wishes, but does not demand, that man return to Him. To demand it would be to destroy the essential nature of the relationship. To wish it is to allow for its completion. His concern never ceases, even when they are far away and living with pigs. He receives them so that all may rejoice. To
those who say that the Prodigal Son had to return while he was alive and physically able
to do so we summon the loving Father’s own words: “… he was dead, now he is alive…”

What is this overwhelming force of attraction that exists primordially in the
Father and wills Him to eternally call forth His Son? And what is this same force that
ultimately brings the son home, restoring him to his father’s house? Dionysius teaches
that it is simply love. In the Divine Names, he defines love as a yearning which brings
about unity. Love pre-exists in that which is good. It is a divine attraction that brings
lasting happiness so that the lover belongs not to himself but to the beloved (Pseudo-
Dionysius, Divine Names, 1987, Ch. 4, pt. 12, 81). This world exhibits some very fine
examples of love, but who will deny that the highest manifestation of human love exists
in the vertical dimension of the family? Aristotle was right in claiming that the highest
love was a mother for her child, but he need not have been a great philosopher to come to
this realization. It is known by every mother, insofar as she is a mother, and also by every
father.

Eriugena appropriates the Dionysian understanding of love completely. “Love is a
bond and chain by which the totality of all things is bound together in ineffable friendship
and indissoluble unity. It can be defined in this way too: Love is the end and quiet resting
place of the natural motion of all things that are in motion, beyond which no motion of
the creature extends” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 519 A). And from the Divine Hymns: “This divine
yearning brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to the self but to the beloved…. And
it is shown by the subordinates in their divine return toward what is higher… his benign
yearning for all is carried outside of himself in the loving care he has for everything”
(Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, Ch. 4, pt. 13, 82). “Rightly therefore is God called Love since He is the Cause of all love and is diffused through all things and gathers all things together into one and involved them in Himself in an ineffable Return, and brings to an end in Himself the motions of love of the whole creature” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 520 A).

In other words, the love manifested in the relationship of parent to child is a theophany of God’s love for his creation. Moreover, it is the highest and best one we have. All parents discipline their children in one way or another, but no parent, qua parent, curses his child, condemns his child, or destroys his child. This idea is most pointedly demonstrated in the case of Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, and perhaps the most despicable American who has ever lived. His father beautifully pleaded for his life saying, “I know this was wrong, but I love him, he is my son.” In modern art it is shown in lamentations of the mother of Judas Iscariot, who sought mercy on only one count, “He is my son.” Ironically, the salvation of Judas is even addressed by Eriugena in his *Treatise on Divine Predestination* (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 13, pt. 1, 83-84). Can anyone claim that McVeigh’s father or Iscariot’s mother are some special case of the human family that surpasses the ideal? Of course not, for we say herein that these two particular cases are instances that reach close to the ideal, perhaps as near as human families can reach. We abhor the crimes, yet we praise the wholeness of the relationships.

Lastly, we trace the influence of Maximus the Confessor on our philosopher. Eriugena took from Maximus the fundamental idea that in Christ, the Logos, all wordly divisions are united with and through Him in redeemed humanity (Bett, 1964, 164). In effect, the Logos was the link between Plato’s world of being and that of becoming. This
entailed an intimate connection between the form and all the images of that form. The images are dependent upon the form; however, the form is paradoxically dependent on the images. All men are images of Christ, but He is the prior form of each of them. This idea was stated very profoundly by the contemporary theologian, Karl Barth. “…[B]ecause this one is also man, every man in his place and time is changed, i.e. he is something other than what he would have been if this One had not been man too” (Barth, 1961,168). Every man is His and He is every man’s. Eriugena can make this claim because of his unique understanding of the relationship between universals and particulars. We noted this very early in Chapter I. The human mind, as shown perfectly through the incarnation, contains all things as ideas, and this constitutes their full reality. Nothing is more real for Christ than man, and nothing is more real for man than Christ. Every man derives his ontological status from Him, but He has relational status in every man. He does not need them for His being; but because He has created them, He needs them for having created them. Like the father who begets a son, He cannot be complete without unity with the son. However, not only is man restored but all creation is restored through man because it is in man that the irrational part of creation has its being.

Eriugena refers to Maximus very early in the Periphysion, only thirty paragraphs into the work. The Nutritor asks the Alumnus a question concerning theophanies, a Greek term meaning divine manifestations which take their names from the eternal causes of which they are the images. Now only God exists immutably in Himself but He reproduces these theophanies and gives them the name God. No creature can see God directly, for He dwells in inaccessible light, but angels, certain mystics and resurrected men see and know God through His theophanies. These manifestations are made in us
and in our world by Him. The Word of God, the Logos, the one unified form which all things desire and seek, bestows these theophanies upon each created nature, as grace admits. Eriugena here interprets the gospel (John 14:2 KJV), “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” to mean that while the one form remains immutable and unified the multitudes that view it will contemplate it in infinite ways. The Alumnus presses on about the details of these theophanies, what, whence, how, etc. The Nutritor explains that this is perhaps the most perplexing question in all of human inquiry and that the best way to gain insight is to visit the work of Maximus. He teaches that the theophanies are a result of the diffusion of the Divine Word, the only begotten Son, the wisdom of the Father. They descend downward upon human nature with creation and rise upward to the Word through divine love. This diffusion and unification of wisdom from divine to human and back explains why the liberal arts, Eriugena’s first mentioned influence, figure so prominently in his metaphysics. They are the very workings of the soul. This process is timeless, not constrained by the incarnation, and effects a certain deification of the creature. This also explains why the theophanies, although they are manifested in every man, are the more abundant in good men. Maximus teaches that they descend through divine compassion and rise through human charity, so men who are the most virtuous have the highest capacity to send them back. Consequently, a man like Buddha enjoys a phenomenal myriad of vivid theophanies without ever knowing Christ as his savior. Wisdom for Maximus has a certain communal nature; it abounds all the more when shared. And the more the soul comprehends, the more it becomes. “Therefore, to the extent that the mind comprehends virtue, to that extent it becomes virtue itself” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 448B – 450A).
Maximus illustrates his argument using the example of light in air. “For just as air illuminated by the sun appears to be nothing else but light, not because it loses its own nature, but because the light prevails in it so that it is believed itself to be light, so human nature when it is united with God is said to be God through and through, not because it ceases to be (its own) nature but because it receives a share in Divinity so that only God appears to be in it” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 450 A).

As we would expect, Eriugena often refers to Maximus in Books IV and V of the *Periphyseon*. Here he explains the apparent divisions in creation and the final unification of them. He writes that in the end of eschatological time, all divisions are resolved in the Word. Maximus is an appropriate authority for he taught that all created nature is by the Father in the divine Logos and through redeemed man. It is interesting to note that the return of man has ontological status in that this return is simply what all men do. Like iron being attracted by a magnet, there is no choice involved. Eriugena does not seek a way to God such as conversion, self-denial, mystical union, etc. It is not needed for man is holy already. The Logos existing in itself and through itself, has accomplished this before the first man in time ever existed. The soul is so constituted that it is always and ever seeking its appointed end, God the uncreated and uncreating. The soul in its last and final theophany has returned to God just as it began. In a paradoxically real sense, the soul is God and always has been; hence there is no need to look for something extraneous to itself. Though many philosophers of negative theology look for an alternate way, Eriugena did not. Maximus had taught that creation was already sanctified. The verse from Ephesians 1:10 (KJV), “[t]hat in the dispensation of the fullness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on the
earth,” had literal understanding. Eriugena advanced an eschatologic direction to history rather than a temporal one. It flowed from the Genesis account of creation to the end of time as in Revelation and back irrespective of what we currently think of as one-dimensional time. This orientation derived ultimately from Maximus. In typically Hegelian fashion, it was not that the end was justified by the beginning but rather that the beginning was justified by the end. The Logos stands primordially before any and all men even, and especially the men of Genesis. Whoever they were, the very fact that they were created at all means that their destiny is secure in He who created them (Carabine, 2000, 107).

**Authority**

We should briefly examine Eriugena’s views on the idea of authority. Eriugena continually refers to such sources as the Old and New Testaments, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and the eastern scholars. It would have been essential for Eriugena to have a well-defined conception of authority since many of his sources are in apparent disagreement. We examine this topic as closely as we can considering the overall subject of our study, salvation of the damned. First, it should be noted that Scripture itself is contradictory on the question of salvation. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Corinthians, 15:22 KJV). This statement seems to be about as definitive as one could get. As does this one, “So shall it be at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire” (Matthew 15:49-50 KJV). There even seems to be contradiction when one considers Scripture by the same author within the same book. The parable of
the one hundredth sheep (Luke 15:4-6 KJV) tells us that Christ will actively go forth and reconcile the wayward even though they show no inclination to return. The parable of the gate (Luke 13: 24-28 KJV) seems to say that Christ will passively turn away even those who are honestly trying to return. We have already seen how the revered Augustine taught on this question. Many are left to judgment, all the better to show God’s mercy since all are justly damned, none are worthy. This notion is in direct opposition to some of the eastern fathers, namely Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, who, steeped as they are in Platonic teaching, maintain that all things including and especially man, must return to the essential unity of their source.

Perhaps we can gain some insight by first examining various comments by Eriugena on the nature of wisdom. We noted earlier that in his *Treatise on Divine Predestination* he said that “true philosophy is true religion and conversely true religion is true philosophy” (Eriugena, *Treat Div. Pred.*, 1998, Ch. 1, pt. 1, 7). Elementally, the philosopher seeks to understand and promulgate the rules of religion through which God, the cause and end of all created things, is served and worshipped. There can be no ultimate conflict between reason and authority under Eriugena’s scheme because the latter derives entirely from the former (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 748 A). The entire question reduces to which takes priority for us in the search for both because in the disciplined adherence to that priority we will hopefully attain both. Eriugena is clear that reason must have priority. “For there is no worse death than ignorance of the truth, no deeper pitfall than taking the false for the true” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 650 A). Yet he warns us to continually pray for God’s help in seeking the truth for God Himself is the true light. Wisdom has a four-part organization according to Eriugena and we detail it in ascending
order of importance. The first and lowest is practical and this is akin to the study of ethics. It is the study by which vices are replaced by virtues in the moral self in greater and greater degree until all vices are gone and only virtue remains. The second is natural wisdom in which one investigates the causes and their effects in the material world. This is the wisdom of the scientist. The third is the wisdom of religion which seeks to discover the most proper and reverent ways to approach God, the cause and end of all creation. The fourth, and highest, is rational wisdom. It guides and controls the other three. Now, in our study of rational wisdom we do well to consider the historical account rendered by the philosophers of the past (Eriugena, Bk. III, 705 B). They were seeking the same thing and they had much skill, presumably more than our own. It should be emphasized that rational wisdom controls religious wisdom. Therefore, in considering any problem, even one of faith such as salvation for the damned, rational wisdom should have priority. Of course, we must proceed very carefully for the question, although fundamentally one of reason, has already been ruled in rather dogmatic fashion by the aforementioned authorities of the western church. We must thoughtfully consult scripture, as we have, for we may well gain some insight. However, we should not expect to find our solution there, as we have not.

Christ is the Logos, “the only begotten Word of God, who makes all things and is made in all” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 743 C). As was noted earlier, the liberal arts abide in Him and He in them, thus to engage in the arts is to converse most directly with Christ. The arts inform the visible as well as the invisible parts of creation so when we study them we abstractly bypass all distractions. The arts have a certain high priority that cannot be abridged so Eriugena appeals to them time and time again. If we employ them correctly
we are always free from error and can have supreme confidence that we are on safe ground. This is akin to the example of Socrates, who maintained that if we have disagreement as to some number of objects we simply need to count. Of course things are not so simple with the linguistic arts as they are with the mathematical but in theory they are equally as correct. “...[I]t is possible for the rational soul to discuss within herself the liberal arts without recourse to utterance of articulate speech or fluent disquisition” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 870 B). In a very real sense the proper employment of the arts is the key to the proper interpretation of the lesser authorities. We could rightly say that in the study of arts we reach our highest grasp of divine exemplars, and when we reach this we have reached our highest knowledge of God both as cause and end. The arts abide in the mind of God and man pure and undiluted, free from all material distraction.

The next authority for Eriugena is the Old and New Testaments. It will be immediately recognized that Scripture is diluted in two ways. The first and most obvious is that it is revealed to us through the medium of language. Everyone has a disposition to attach certain emotive or even pejorative value to words. This is simply human dynamics so we must constantly guard against introducing our own prejudices into Scripture. Second and much more significant is the very nature of Scripture. It is intended to convey truth, not fact. Truth and facts differ. Facts are small bits of information which we use to discern truth, but they may not capture truth. Statistics and detailed accounts are facts, not truth. Anyone who cannot grasp the difference needs only to ask himself if he would rather be esteemed as a truthful man or accepted as a factual one. Reporters seek to capture facts; however, we must accept that those who wrote Scripture were seeking truth. To cite a specific passage, we note Matthew 18:22, where Peter asks Jesus how
many times one must forgive a transgressor. The answer is factual (“four hundred ninety,” Jesus replies). Yet any reasonable interpretation of the underlying truth behind the fact actually negates the number of offenses. The meaning is that one must always forgive. Scripture is written for us, not for God and not for itself and it is written in such a way that we with our limited intellects can glean the most truth from it.

“For the authority of Holy Scripture must in all things be followed because the truth dwells there as though in a retreat of its own, but it is not to be believed as a book which always uses verbs and nouns in their proper sense when it teaches about the divine Nature, but it employs certain allegories and transfers in various ways the meanings of the verbs or nouns out of condescension toward our weakness and to encourage by uncomplicated doctrine our senses which are still untrained and childish”

(Eriugena, Bk. 1, 509 A).

Take perhaps the most troubling passage in the entire Old and New Testament, that of Genesis, Chapter 22. Are we to literally believe that God had to test Abraham as if He did not know what Abraham would do? Can God order Abraham to kill his own son thereby violating God’s own eternal ordinance? Moreover, is Abraham following God’s will in being ready to kill, to say nothing of lying three times on the way to the sacrificial altar? Eriugena holds that there are infinite interpretations of such passages (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 749 C). Dierdre Carabine has observed that for Eriugena there are four levels on which the intelligible world of Scriptures corresponds to the sensible world. These are the historical, literal, ethical, and theological (Carabine, 2000, 18). Although the theological is the most important, no passage can be properly interpreted on a level completely
independent of the other three. We would suggest that Eriugena would likely explain this passage in the considered order of the theological, ethical, historical, and literal. First, the passage is not so much about Abraham and Isaac as it is about the incarnation of Christ; in other words, it is prophetic. Second, no father could ethically kill his son, unless he was bound by some divine command the certainty of which would be beyond the ability of most, if not all, mortals to know. Third, this account should be considered as the historical genesis of a race of people. This leads back to the first level, in that it was this particular race of people into which the Logos chose to manifest Himself. Last, the literal level is so pale in relation to the former three that it is almost negligible. This does not mean that the events did not happen. It simply means that they could not have happened in the factual, inerrant manner that many choose to believe they happened.

Finally we have the authority of man, the Holy Fathers, the philosophers, and the natural scientists. The authority of these persons is always judged in the light of how well their teaching corresponds to first the arts, second the Scripture. Eriugena will often write such statements as “… [of this] no one instructed in the liberal arts is ignorant” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 504 B). It is clear that he considers each of his cited sources with full contemplation of how well each accords with reason. In his Treatise on Divine Predestination, he goes so far as to accuse Gottschalk, an antagonist of the work, of being ignorant of the arts (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch.18, pt. 1, 117). In this vein, Eriugena holds the eastern fathers, Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus, and Gregory higher than Augustine. Most often when citing Augustine, Eriugena will go further and subtly, or perhaps not so subtly, change the meaning of what Augustine was trying to expound. This is never done with the eastern fathers. It seems clear that Eriugena has the
highest regard for them. Yet he acknowledges that any authority, no matter how highly
respected, can err. “And that is why reason must be employed first in our business, and
authority afterwards” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 513 C). We usually yield to them, not because
they are right, but because they are wiser than we and probably right. However, reason
must always have priority over authority because reason always precedes authority. The
Holy Fathers, and philosophers themselves, became recognized as authorities over the
centuries because they sought reason. They did have some success in finding it, and we
would do well to defer to them. However, in the end we must follow our own soul’s
calling and Eriugena is perhaps more democratic on this point than most medieval
philosophers. “Let every man hold what opinion he will until that light shall come which
makes of the light of the false philosophers a darkness and converts the darkness of those
who truly know into light” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 1022 C).
Chapter II: Presuppositions for This Work

There are four presuppositions for our study. We list them here and discuss each in turn for the remainder of this chapter:

I. God exists.

II. The human soul is immortal.

III. God has a triune nature that wills, creates, perfects.

IV. Jesus of Nazareth was Christ Incarnate.

Existence of God

Eriugena makes no attempt to prove that God exists in the Periphyseon, and neither do we. He begins with the traditional notion of God as that nature which creates and is not created. God alone truly is. He has no beginning, middle or end, yet He is the beginning, middle and end for all that which He creates; “Beginning because from Him all things that [exist] participate in essence; the Middle because in Him and through Him they subsist and move; the End because it is toward Him that they move in seeking rest from their movement and the stability of their perfection” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 452 A). Eriugena goes on to say that he firmly believes this, but does not fully understand it.

Immortality of the Human Soul

The human soul is immortal. Eriugena accepted the notion that the soul is eternal, and we presuppose this for our study. If the damned are to attain salvation, surely the essential part of them must be brought into a state of eternal security. This essential part of them is the soul. Eriugena writes that the soul is like God in that it is simple and without parts. Unlike material being it is whole unto itself and cannot be divided. The soul animates the body, for it provides life, nourishment, composition and growth. It
regulates the five senses and brings into subordination an overall sense of judgment. We refer to the soul by the use of many names: life, mind, reason, sense, memory, spirit, etc. All these names are appropriate when used within the proper context. Even in these cases the soul is indivisible and everywhere whole in itself. Also, the soul leads one to higher judgements; namely to speculation concerning the universe and its creator. It is the faculty that allows the human to apprehend truth, goodness, and beauty (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 754 B-D). This sounds much like Augustine; but for Eriugena there is a greater unity between the soul and body. The soul is not one substance and the body another. Rather, the soul itself can be said to receive its essence both from God and from material being. “Therefore the whole soul is on the one hand produced from the earth in the genus of the animals, and on the other hand is made in the image of God. For this and nothing else is what must follow from the foregoing arguments… Just so. And no true and orthodox philosopher should doubt it, lest he appear impiously to rend in twain this most simple and indivisible nature” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 755 A). This is a most curious and interesting turn from the usual way of Christian thinking, for it seems to imply that since part of the soul comes from the same genus as that of the animals, and since the whole human soul is returned to God, then the souls of animals will likewise be returned to God. This is exactly what Eriugena will later assert, that all creatures are restored through the redemption of man. This is not to imply that Eriugena held to a form of dualism where the mind is comprised of one material and the body another. Rather, both are spiritual. In this mortal life, the mind simply perceives that material as real. A “coat of skin” is added to the soul in mortality, which is removed via the resurrection (Petroff, 2005, 603).

Unlike the existence of God, which Eriugena seems to take wholly on faith, he
does demonstrate the immortality of the soul, and his proof for this relies on the liberal arts. He asserts that the seven arts are gifts of the Holy Spirit manifested through the Logos, Christ Himself, and are one with Him. They illuminate, perfect, immortalize, and transcend the soul all while residing within the soul. The arts are eternal, yet can be understood as being contained in the soul. Since the arts cannot reside in anything temporal, we may conclude that the soul is immortal. No philosopher can be said to depend more on the arts for philosophy, happiness, even life than Eriugena (Moran, 1989, 130).

“For it has been rightly sought out and found by the philosophers that the arts are eternal and are immutably attached to the soul forever, in such a way that they seem to be not some kind of accidents of it, but natural powers [and actions] which do not and could not withdraw from it, and which do not come from anywhere but are innate in it as part of its nature, so that it is doubtful whether it is the arts which confer eternity upon it because they are eternal and eternally associated with it so that it may be eternal, or whether it is by reason of the subject which is the soul, that eternity is supplied to the arts (for the essence and the power and the operation of the soul are eternal), or whether they cohere in each other, all being eternal, in such a way that they cannot be separated from one another” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 486 D).

*Trinitarian Nature of God*

The Trinity is not simply a mystery of revelation for Eriugena, but the fundamental truth through which the universe abides. Still, the Trinity and the unity of God are not such as can be understood by rational creatures. Following Dionysius,
Eriugena affirms that “…there is no way of signifying by verb or noun or by any other part of articulated speech how the supreme and causal essence of all things can be signified” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 456 A). The name ‘Trinity’ is an expression devised and promulgated by “…holy theoligians so that we may believe in our hearts and confess with our lips that the Divine Goodness is constituted in three substances of one essence” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 456 B). This notion of believing stands opposed to that of understanding. We may inquire into this mystery only so far, for it can only be discovered through spiritual understanding. The terms ‘Father’, ‘Son’, and ‘Spirit’ signify neither a nature nor an operation, but a relation. Eriugena does not allow himself to entertain the question of whether the Trinity is one essence in three substances, as the Greeks say; or one substance in three persons, as the Latins say. Such a distinction is semantical and cannot be translated in literal fashion (Eriugena, Bk. II, 567 B). The name is a symbol, employed by us so that we may inquire how the Trinity in our nature expresses the image and likeness of the created Trinity.

Eriugena has referenced Dionysius, so it is especially fitting to consult with the latter’s teaching at this point. In the Divine Names he writes, “They also describe it as a Trinity, for with a transcendent fecundity it is manifested as three persons. This is why all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named after it” (Dionysius, Divine Names, 1987, Ch. 1, pt. 4, 51). And if all fatherhood is named after it, then surely all sonship, motherhood, and daughtership is also named after it. The human family, at least in the vertical dimension of parent to child, is once again affirmed as eternal.

Eriugena understands the creation to be a process of God rather than a specific act of God. This important distinction allows Eriugena to claim an unseverable connection
between the creator and the created orders. Since all things are created in the image of
God, they have a triune nature that is a reflection of God’s triune nature. They subsist in
an inseparable unity that can be understood in terms of the three aspects of essence,
power and operation. The essence is the unknowable reality of a thing, its power is the
sum total of the necessary attributes that make it what it is; and its operation is its specific
motion. In the case of the oak tree, it exists; it has the potential to grow, bear acorns,
reproduce, etc. The creation is the unfolding process of these three aspects. Their essence
is created by God the Father, their power by God the Son, their operation by God the
Holy Spirit. The four divisions of nature are brought about by the actions of the three
persons of the one Trinity. The Father wills, the Son makes, the Holy Ghost perfects.
These three reflect the method of division in the Periphyseon in a dialectical manner. The
Father is the unbegotten, the Son is the begotten, and the Spirit is the proceeding. These
three correspond to essence, power, and operation, which are inherent to every created
thing in an inseparable way (Eriugena, Bk. I A, 1987).

The Father wills. He can be understood as the “cause of causes. For He is the
cause of that which is born and of the cause which proceeds” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 600 B).
God the Father in His incomprehensible infinity wills, knows, sees and makes all created
things. For any created being these actions are each distinct, but for the Father they are
one and the same. For the artist composing his project these four actions can each be
separated one from another. He must first will his project, then he must know it in his
mind’s eye, next he must make it as best he is able and finally he sees it in its completed
state. For God the Father, all of these are the same. At the instant that He wills it, He
knows it, He makes it, and He sees it. The creature can only know an object subsequent
to its actual material existence. For the Father it is just the opposite; the object acquires its material existence because He knows it. His knowledge of His creatures is their very essence. Moreover, the creation is not constrained to an instant in time but is rather an unfolding through time. The universe is eternal, made, good and incorruptible. It is eternal because the divine will makes it eternal. It is made for exactly the same reason. It is made outside of and beyond all time, even though it may well have a material existence in time. This is not to be understood that created things are co-eternal with the Father in all respects, such as the Son is co-eternal in all respects. Rather, it means that created things have their essence in the eternal will of the Father and subsist therein. The universe is good because the Father that makes it is good and wills nothing evil. It is incorruptible because there is nothing to corrupt it (Burch, 1951, 13). While it does often appear to us that things in the universe are subject to corruption, this is actually completion in disguise. Ultimately, everything created finds its final rest in unification with God.

The Son makes. He is understood as the divine archetype of all that is, and from which all things radiate (Moran, 79, 1990). God the Son, in His incomprehensible creativity, conceives eternal ideas that are the prototypes of all created things. These ideas are appropriately called primordial causes, for they are the source of the material universe. Such things as beauty, truth, wisdom, unity and a multitude of other good things should be included here. The primordial causes render a created thing to be what it is and continually sustain it through all time and beyond. The Son is the “… form of all intelligible life. For otherwise it remains imperfect and without form” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 548 C). Once again we note the importance of the seven liberal arts as the Logos manifested with the art of dialectic especially giving rational expression to the analysis
and synthesis of the cosmos.

The Holy Spirit perfects. It is understood as that which distributes the divine causes in accordance with its own divine order. “Finally, the distribution of all the causes which the Father created in His word generically and essentially we find allotted by the divine word to the Holy Spirit” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 563 B). God the Holy Spirit in this eternal activity brings all creatures to a state of immutable rest. He operates in time and space, through accidents and essentials to fulfill His creation and return it unto Himself. And this return is led back to Him by redeemed humanity. Essentially, God the Father wills rational beings that God the Son creates and that God the Spirit perfects. Thus all nature is resolved into Eriugena’s fourth division, that which neither creates nor is created. By Trinity, we mean that unexplainable idea that is a unity of three substances in one essence, as Eriugena accepted it, and as a being reflected in the created order in terms of essence, power, and operation. “There is no way of signifying by verb or noun or any other part of articulated speech how the supreme and causal essence of all things can be signified. For it is not unity or trinity of such a kind as can be conceived by any human intellect however pure…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 456 A).

Special Consideration of the Word Incarnate

Our final presupposition is the Word, the Logos, Christ and the very special considerations which attend it. The reason for this is the unique nature of the Word as understood by Eriugena. Philosophy is the love of wisdom, and Christ is essentially wisdom; not simply spiritual but all wisdom. The Logos is the intersection point where the knower and the known become one. Thus, to employ dialectic of any sort, theoretical or practical, is to engage the mind of Christ Himself. The mathematician solving his
problems or the artist painting a landscape are both striving for a unity with Christ, though neither may recognize it as such. The Word, who was prior to all space and time, decreed that His wisdom must abide throughout all creatures that would become material in space and time. Essentially, the mathematician and the artist are merely capturing the rationality that the logos has posited already. Thus, they are engaging Him directly. “…Christ, who understands all things, indeed is the understanding of all things, really unified all that He assured…” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 545 B). And then even more to the point for our study: “…who doubts that what first took place in the Head and Exemplar of the whole of human nature will eventually happen in the whole…” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 545 B). And further, “For He was made perfect man. For He left nothing of man except sin, that He would receive into the unity of His substance…” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 541 C).

The incarnation of the Word was not a temporal event in history, but history itself. Our use of the term ‘history’, as we use it in this context, requires some explanation. We use it to include the entire sweep and drama of the human experience as it unfolds from creation to final restoration. For us, it includes future eschatological events as well as past occurrences. This meaning stands opposed to the common use of the word ‘history’ as a branch of knowledge which concerns past events. For Eriugena, conventional history is a contingent area of study, and as J.C Marler has pointed out in his article “The Eriugenian Tension Between History and Eschatology,” it has conventional time as its originating principle. The fall, which succeeds the evil will, although itself not an event in time, does initiate time. Thus, conventional history is a study of accidents and is inseperable from the problem of evil (Marler, 2002, 34). We will discuss the important conceptions datum and donum below, but for now it is sufficient to say that a datum is a descending gift and
*donum* an ascending and greater gift. Conventional history is the study of the particular accidents which result from the corruption of *datum*. Returning to the original, broad meaning of history, it is fair to say that the Logos entirely circumscribes it, for in descending He took upon Himself the whole of human nature (Eriugena, Bk. V, 923 C). He restores the *datum* to its original pristine condition. Moreover, it is not just human history in all its multiplicity that finds its completion in the Logos but also natural history, for the Word assumed this responsibility when He descended into human nature (Marler, 2002, 33).

“Therefore in the Only-Begotten Word of God, Incarnate and made man, the whole world is restored even now according to its species, but at the end the world will return universally and in its genus. For what He wrought specially in Himself He will perfect generally in all; and not only in all men but in every sensible creature. For when the Word of God took upon Himself our human nature He also took upon Himself every created substance which is contained in that nature” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 912 B). In other words, the manifestation of the divine essence in man is not defined by history; rather, history is defined by it. Indeed, all knowledge is defined by it, and all truth is derived from it. Thus, we return to our earlier postulate that even the most fundamental truths of logic and mathematics are derivative. They are true because the Logos has preceded them.
Chapter III: Overview of the Periphyseon

Modes of Being and Not-being

The Periphyseon begins with no fanfare, just a straightforward statement made by one learned philosopher skilled in his discipline to a student trying to become equally as skilled: “As I frequently ponder and, so far as my talents allow, ever more carefully investigate that the first and fundamental division of all things which either can be grasped by the mind or lie beyond its grasp is into those that are and those that are not, there comes to mind as a general term for them all what… in Latin [is called] Natura” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 441A). Therefore, the mind is the keystone of our all-encompassing universe, the totality of all things. Those things that the mind can grasp can be defined, those things that it cannot grasp are unbounded, thus undefined. For what the mind cannot understand cannot in any manner be bound, and so must remain undefined. All of these things, whether understood by the mind or not, can be said to be, or not be, in accordance with five separate modes of interpretation (Eriugena, Bk. I, 443 A).

The first mode is “… that by means of which reason convinces us that all things which fall within the perception of bodily sense or intelligence are truly and reasonably said to be, but those which because of the excellence of their nature elude not only all sense but also all intellect and reason rightly seem not to be …” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 443 B). The first subset of the first mode is denoted easily enough, material objects are said to be, for they lie within the perception of our senses. However, for the second Eriugena relies on the example cited by the Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa: God is said not to be, for He is the essence of all other things and can be thought of as being beyond them. His nature exceeds all sense perception, all intellect, all reason, and even all truth. Just as
His knowledge is prior to all created intellect, nothing created can rise to it. One could ask how we can even know that God exists. Eriugena stresses that we know through accidents, that is, things that could have been different than they are, for these are somehow mysteriously added to God’s essence. We can know the accidents, therefore we can know that God is, but we can never know what God is. This first mode of being is not simply a restatement of the Dionysian idea that God’s being is non-being in a transcendent manner. Rather, God can be said not to be, for any nature unknowable by the human mind can likewise be said not to be. This mode has important implications for the entire Periphyseon and the following four modes are variations of it (Carabine, 2000, 38).

The second mode of interpretation involves the order and gradations in the created universe. This order begins with the highest intellectual creature and extends downward to the most irrational part of the soul. Then it ascends upward from the lowest part of the soul to the highest intellectual creature. The negation of a lower order yields the affirmation of a higher one; conversely, the affirmation of a lower order yields the negation of a higher one. Thus, any one species in the hierarchy can be said to be and not to be. Eriugena uses the example of an angel and a man; to be an angel means not being a man, and being a man means not being an angel. This process confirms that there is a highest created being for the upward negation leaves just one being than which nothing is higher, i.e. God; and a lowest for the downward negation leaves just one being than which nothing is lower, i.e. material nature (Eriugena, Bk. I, 444 A). Now, it is very important to note that this hierarchy is one of being, not simply knowing, for if these levels are merely mental then one can never affirm or negate. By this, we mean that a
thing with a higher intellectual nature actually has a higher level of being. In other words, something that exists and thinks occupies a place in a hierarchy which is above something which merely exists. God is the only thing that truly exists; all created things exist only insofar as they participate in Him (Carrabine, 2000, 39). Each level has a certain status that it cannot transcend, for the next highest level defines it. A particular level can be said to be in so far as it is known by itself and those above, but not to be insofar as it will not allow itself to be known by the levels below it. Eriugena is strictly relying on the art of dialectic in outlining this second mode. This is a further reinforcement of the principle that God cannot be known directly by us. However, it tends to counter His assertion that God cannot comprehend Himself since every order does know itself. Of course, Aquinas would argue that God does comprehend Himself (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., Ques. 14, Art. 2, 194), and we are inclined to agree. This problem will be treated below.

The third mode of interpretation is made manifest in the dynamic nature of the created world and involves visible things and things unseen yet potential in their causes. “For whatsoever of these causes through generation is known as to matter and form, as to times and places, is by a certain human convention said to be, while whatsoever is still held in those folds of nature and is not manifest as to form and matter, place and time, … is said not to be” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 444 D). This third mode will be of special interest to us in our study, for Eriugena says that God, in making that first and one man in His image, made all other men at that time even though they were not brought into physical existence at the same time. Thus, the incarnation of Christ, though it occurred in time and space, must somehow transcend time and space. It is a defining moment in history, even
though it is not the beginning of history in a temporal sense. Examples of the third mode are numerous in nature. The latent oak tree is said to not be when viewing the acorn, yet it is said to be potentially in its cause. For Eriugena, God brought all things into existence at the same time and from nothing, yet some, even most, of those things are not yet manifest; they are hidden in the secret recesses of nature to be unveiled according to some sequence known only to Him.

The fourth mode of interpretation holds that only those things which are contemplated by the intellect alone are truly said to be while those things which are in a state of becoming are said to not be (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 C). Eriugena says that this mode is “according to the philosophers,” and by this he surely means Plato. We recognize the realm of ideas, forms, which alone truly exists. Those material things in this material world are only images and cannot be understood to truly be. The circle truly is; the wheel is a mere copy of it and cannot be understood to be, for in the course of time it passes away.

The fifth mode of interpretation involves human nature only, and for this reason it will also hold special relevance for our study. When man sinned, he renounced his special status as a divine image and lost part of his being. He lost the harmonious, ordering part, which tends to keep all other parts in proper perspective. In other words, when man lost his ordered relationship with God, he, at the same time and in the same manner, lost it with himself. In this way, he is understood not to be. However, when restored through the grace of Christ he is brought back and fully recovers that part of his substance which was lost and is said to be (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 C). God can be understood to call the things that are as well as the things that are not, in other words, those who have been resurrected
and those who have not yet been. This even includes those men not yet born; they are called from the secret folds of nature. This last mode speaks most markedly to what the essential nature of sin is, i.e. a broken relationship. Why else would God need to call? The evil act is sinful, but it is secondary to the evil will, which in turn is secondary to the broken relationship. For sure this is what was meant when Christ claimed to be the fulfillment of ancient law. No one can keep the law; moreover, no one can fully overcome his evil will. What one can do is restore his relationship, and if he succeeds here the rest will follow. He can answer that call now or later but answer he will, for in so doing he recovers his own being. “God daily calls forth from the secret folds of nature in which they are considered not to be” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 D). We must remember that time is a mental construction, thus those in the secret folds of nature are the unborn as well as the dead.

_Four Divisions of Nature_

_First Division- God as Creator_

Eriugena employs the term nature to mean all that is, or is not, and all the mind can grasp or cannot grasp. In other words, he means that celestial bodies, angels, demons, ideas, virtues, etc. are all included. So his first task is to give some structure to this vast totality of things and he accomplishes this through the famous four-fold division of nature. “It is my opinion that the division of nature by means of four differences results in four species (being divided). First into that which creates and is not created, secondly into that which is created and also creates, thirdly into that which is created and does not create, while the fourth neither creates nor is created” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 442 A). The first and fourth are essentially the same, but we contemplate them differently: God as cause as
opposed to God as end. In other words, God is always one and the same. However, when
the mind considers Him, it does so only insofar as it is able, i.e. in the various ways in
which He draws the mind. Granted our own existence, any reflection would lead us to ask
from what source and for what purpose is that existence. The first is God as a cause, the
second is God as an end. We now address the first division.

The first division, God as that which creates and is not created, is a very
traditional notion and perhaps the one most comfortable to us. He is the source of all that
we perceive, and nothing, at least nothing outside of Him, is the source of Him. He makes
the world from scratch, or better said, from nothing. Yet this notion of God is perhaps the
most problematic one for the philosopher, for it involves a leap from a realm of nothing
to a realm of something, invisible to visible, spiritual to physical. Eriugena makes this
leap by postulating an understanding of God in terms of creation. In fact, the first three of
his divisions of nature presuppose this. Except for the fourth division of nature, God
simply cannot be understood apart from His creative act. The first division of nature has a
two-fold composition, the second part of which we can understand, the first part of which
we cannot. We can grasp God as creator, but not as uncreated. We can know that He is,
but not what He is.

Eriugena employs interesting and appropriate methods for studying both
components of his first division of nature. The first we have already touched upon, and
this is the theophany. Properly, of course, theophany describes only the third division of
nature. However, we, who are creatures of this third division, being temporally and
locally constrained by it, use what we see to study nature in the first division. Maximus
the Confessor teaches that the theophany is an accident attached to the essence of God, a
downward manifestation of God’s creative will in which God’s ideas become material (Eriugena, Bk. I, 449 A-C). Our senses perceive the material object, yet our intellect tells us that it is a theophany of God. The objects of the world are numerous beyond imagination, ordered, beautiful, and seemingly infinite, thereby attesting to their creation by a seemingly infinite God. This line of reasoning brings on a perplexing question from the Alumnus: could God not be thought of as actually creating Himself through his theophanies? Some of the Holy Fathers assert just that. In other words, if God could have essence only in terms of His creation, in manifesting His creation does He not also create Himself? The Nutritor answers in such a way as to clarify the definition. It is not God’s essence that is created but merely our understanding of His essence. God is said to be made only in that He actualizes His will in us. “… [T]he motion of the Divine Nature is to be understood as nothing else but the purpose of the Divine Will to establish the things that are to be made. Therefore it is said that in all things the Divine Nature is being made, which is nothing else than the Divine Will. For in that Nature being is not different from willing, but willing and being are one and the same in the establishment of all things that are to be made” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 453 C-D).

To study the uncreated component to the definition of the First Division of Nature, Eriugena must first proceed upward from the material aspect of the world to that which underlies it and for this he relies on Aristotle. The “shrewdest among the Greeks” had posited ten universal genera, or categories, used to discover the way of all natural things. These were: substance, quantity, relation, quality, place, time, situation, condition, action and passion. Although we have taken a step upward, and gotten beyond the material aspects of this world, we still have a long way to go for as we examine these ten
categories we find that God cannot be circumscribed by any of them. Surely He is beyond or perhaps in all places, and the same can be said for all the other nine categories. So Eriugena resorts to the important method of negative theology. Traces of this method can be discerned in the writings of most of the sources high-lighted in Chapter I, but none more so than the Pseudo-Dionysius. As noted in Chapter I, it is Dionysius that Eriugena always cites when he employs negative theology.

Positive statements about God affirm the truth of His nature but not the entire truth, for they proclaim only the creating part of His nature, not the uncreating. For example, let us quote the famous passage of I John 4:7, “God is love.” Now surely this is true; however, it is not exclusively true and does not capture the whole truth. In other words, we could say that an animal is a horse, but we cannot stop there if we are trying to understand the essence of what an animal is. Returning to I John 4:7, God is love, but indeed He is much more than love: He is all love and the original cause of all love. We can draw similar conclusions concerning all positive statements concerning God. He is, yet we can just as confidently say that He is not, for He is beyond what He is and transcends it. This inherent tension demands the employment of negative theology for Eriugena. In this twist of conventional logic, negative statements which are essentially de dicto come closer to capturing God’s nature than positive de re statements. Again and again Eriugena strives to stay with his method and is largely successful in doing so. Negative theology is more removed from the senses, therefore it is the more appropriate method to study God. “For whatever negation you make about Him will be a true negation, but not every affirmation you make will be a true affirmation. [He who can] … abandon all the senses and the operations of the intellect, together with the sensibles …
having achieved a state of not-knowing, is restored to the unity "as far as possible"
(Eriugena, Bk. I, 510 C). Viewed in the common parlance of descriptive language,
positive statements about God are not considered false, but they are less complete than
negative ones. Affirmative propositions cannot withstand the scrutiny of penetrating
reflection. They are indeed practical in the study of scripture and for the child-like
acceptance of faith, but not as appropriate for philosophical speculation. Eriugena holds
that positive statements are valuable for we never think anything unworthy of God when
employing them. They are for those people "who thus far have been nourished in the
nursery of the church" (Eriugena, Bk. I, 511 C). Yet the names that scripture uses to
denote God, such as Sun, Light, Rain, River, Lion, Dove, etc. all refer to His creating
nature, not His uncreated nature. Hearing such things predicated of God can deceive the
soul more readily than unlike things. The soul is rational, but limited, and may tend to
become confused and actually think that natural things are properly predicated of God.
However, when things contrary to nature are predicated of God, the soul discerns them
correctly. It either judges them as false and rejects them entirely or acknowledges them
with the understanding that they are said figuratively (Eriugena, Bk. I, 512 B).

Notwithstanding the constant reliance on negative theology, Eriugena seems to
understand that this technique is fundamentally grounded in the affirmation so far as
human understanding is concerned. In other words, we humans must know something in
a primordial way in order to negate that which we know. In our earlier example, God is
love, yet He is not love for He surpasses love; He is super love. We must discourse for
one moment on the word ‘super,’ for we do not use it herein in the conventional way of
meaning. Common parlance takes the word super to mean better than the rest. When we
say that Tiger Woods is a super golfer, Naomi Campbell is a supermodel or Spiderman is a superhero we do not literally mean they are in a class by themselves. We simply mean that they do what they do better than most, perhaps all other golfers, models, or heroes. There may well be other supers. However, God is uniquely ‘super’ love for there is no other in His class. He has a certain uniqueness that rises above all the particular manifestations of love. He is the cause of all the particulars, not one of them. God loves more than any others, but He is not a ‘super’ lover for this reason. He is a ‘super’ lover because all the other lovers derive their essence from him. Take the example of space. God must be a being who transcends the three dimensions of length, width, and depth, yet each of these particulars receive their essence from Him. We thus postulate that God is a being who resides infinitely in infinite dimensions. This is not to suggest that God might be thought of as merely a being of infinite extension, a claim which nearly every medieval philosopher would deny. We see their denial as being correct, for a rational man cannot conceptualize beyond three spatial dimensions, and surely God cannot be circumscribed by infinite space. Rather, our postulate asserts that God exists beyond infinite dimensions, thus defining them all. The same can be said of each one of His infinite attributes. One must keep in mind that the entire dialectical process begins with the affirmation of what we know and then advances via the liberal arts. There can be no grounding in something that we do not know. We know it, bind it, define it, and negate it. Then we realize that what appeared to be a contradiction is in no way a mutual opposition when we apply it to divine nature (Eriugena, Bk. I, 461 B). However, the entire exercise must have its origin in something that is known.

We conclude this discussion of the first division of nature with the summation
that it has a two-fold composition insofar as we may understand it. God as creator, we grasp through the theophany of His effects. God as uncreated, we grasp through employment of the liberal arts, the very well-spring of the human soul. Already we see here a possible reconciliation for a problem that would soon vex medieval philosophy. The Christian theologians held that God created freely and many of the Islamic philosophers held that God had to create. Both may be right depending on which understanding of God prevails in the mindset. The Christian seems right when viewing God as theophany, the Islamic philosopher when viewing God as understood through the arts.

*The Second Division- The Primordial Causes*

The second division of nature is that which is created and also creates. These are the divine exemplars, and here we find Eriugena giving a decidedly Christian interpretation to Plato. These divine exemplars, or primordial causes, are created by God and they in turn create the particulars which we sense, but not in temporal order. Eriugena introduces them through an interpretation of the Genesis text. When Moses wrote that in the beginning the world was “void and waste,” this was not to be understood in a temporal way but rather that the sensible world could not be understood apart from its formation by the primordial causes. It was “… void of every sensible thing in its effects until it issued forth into the genera and species of sensible nature” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 549 A). It was “[w]aste because the understanding of the prophet who was initiated into the Divine mysteries had as yet beheld no quality, no quantity, nothing filled out by corporeal matter…” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 549 B). Thus the language “void and waste” was complete and perfect. Moreover, it meant that Moses in writing the Genesis text was
actually displaying knowledge of the highest sort, that of unknowing. The prophet surely
had observed things “filled out by corporeal matter” yet in his initiation in “Divine
Mysteries” he had actually beheld no such thing. Moreover, the words “void and waste”
were, even in common language, used to praise the beauty and order of the universe. In
an explicit call to the liberal arts of music and astronomy, Eriugena wrote the upper
regions of air and space were termed void and waste to denote that which was pure and
bright. “For it is the most serene save for the harmonious symphonies of the planets and
surpasses every mortal and earthly sense by the high pitch of its tone and semitones”
(Eriugena, Bk. II, 549 C). The divine exemplars are pure and ideal forms, patterns
through which the sensibles receive their composition. They exist ever and always yet
dependent upon God for their own being.

Of course, Plato had come up with this scheme thirteen hundred years before. He
taught that there existed an ideal world of forms, a world of being, separate and distinct
from this material world of becoming. All the things that we see here are but images of
the ideal world. Things here are imperfect and constantly changing, things there are
perfect and always the same. Thus, the only way for us to have true knowledge was to
study that real world of being where the forms are eternal. Plato never said where this
real world was located though surely it could not be a place in local terms. Philo of
Alexandria (circa 20 BCE- 40 AD) advanced upon this theory of Plato by placing this
real world in the mind of God. “What Plato called the forms (in the higher world) were
really the thoughts of God” (Solomon, Higgins, 1996, 112-113). Eriugena follows this
thinking, and even goes so far as to call these primordial exemplars predefinitions or
predestinations. God has them in His mind before they are actualized in corporeal matter
Not in a temporal sense but in logical priority the body of a man exists in God’s mind before it exists in flesh and bone and the same can be said for any other creature. With this doctrine of primordial causes, Eriugena has lessened the gap between God and His creation.

We could perhaps raise the question as to precisely how the primordial causes are to be studied, and also ask if we can know of their truth. It should be recalled from our discourse on the first division of nature that we studied it using a two-fold process, first by studying God as creator via His effects, and secondly God as uncreated through intellection. We do not employ that process with the second division of nature for we study it via the intellect alone and only after we come to an understanding of God as uncreated. But it does seem to us that Eriugena’s method is valid, for he conceives of God and creation as linked through a continuum of creative acts. They are distinct in essence, but clearly not mutually exclusive in regard to our knowledge. It even seems to us that Eriugena is able to theorize on primordial causes from a more advantageous position than Plato, for he had to appeal to reason alone. Eriugena appeals not only to pure reason but also to faith, for he continually says that faith comes first and prepares the way (Moran, 1989, 90). “For faith is nothing else, in my opinion, but a certain principle from which knowledge of the Creator begins to emerge in the rational nature” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 551 C). And writing later in life, in his Prologue, he states “… faith necessarily enters first into the tomb of Holy Scripture, followed by the intellect, for which faith has prepared the entry” (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. 3, 73).

It seems to us that only a philosopher with both a theistic and a Platonic disposition of mind would accept this formulation of the second division of nature as that
which is created and creates. For instance, Plato, who came close in holding that his real world of being was a realm of divine exemplars, had no conception of a creating first cause. Thus, his real world might be construed as creating, but not being created. And both the Old Testament and the Quron, works which contain no notion of a Platonic world of being, hold that God created the world directly without intermediaries.

However, Eriugena, who states that faith prepares the way, reconciles Platonism to Christianity in a novel manner: by placing the Trinity at a level just above the divine exemplars. Although Eriugena does not consider the Trinity as a divine exemplar, it causes all of them. He writes, “Before we consider … the primordial causes… [w]e should … say a few words about the first and supreme cause of all, I mean, about the Holy Trinity” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 556 A). “For the most high Trinity, creative of all things and by nothing created, made from nothing all that it made” (Eriugena, Bk. II, 580 C).

The Trinity is higher than the primordial causes, for it informs all nature. For students of the Republic it may be thought of as corresponding to Plato’s “the good.” All the lesser causes, as well the entire created realm, participate in the Trinity (Eriugena, Bk. II, 560 A). The procession radiates downward through gift and returns upward through grace. Both gift and grace are essentially the same thing considered from two different perspectives. As noted above, the Father makes, the Son wills, and the Spirit perfects in an infinite manifestation into discernibles and resolution into unity (Eriugena, 1987, 553 C). The division and return is eternally synchronized by the art of dialectic. Lesser primordial causes derive from the Trinity and these causes are themselves infinite.

Eriugena names several of the lesser primordial causes which are most proximate to the Trinity. These are goodness through itself, being through itself, life through itself, reason,
intellect, wisdom, power, blessedness, justice, truth, eternity, magnitude, peace, love, omnipotence, unity, perfection (Eriugena, Bk. II, 622 B to 623 C). We could add courage, temperance, beauty, eloquence, and multitudes more.

This section of the Periphyseon that treats of the second division of nature is an appropriate place to discourse on the topic of participation and here Eriugena borrows from Dionysius the Areopagite (Eriugena, Bk. III, 644B). Participation may be thought of as a kind of nontransitive relation resulting from God’s downward manifestation into creation. All things in nature either participate or are participated in and some, such as the divine exemplars, do both. Strictly speaking, one level in the hierarchy receives its being from the levels above it and therefore participates in them. For example God, the cause of the divine exemplars, brings them into being, thus they participate in Him, not He in them. Likewise the divine exemplars bring man into being and man participates in them, not they in man. The key element in this participation is that it must be continuous and not terminating subsequent to some creative act. Thus, man is infinitely dependent upon God, not simply for his coming into being but rather for his being through all time and even beyond. This concept is the more discernible if one contemplates the primordial causes. They have no beginning in time and always participate in God. We need to reconsider, especially after we erroneously extend Newton’s laws of mechanics into metaphysics, that a falling stone continues to fall until something stops it. This may be so in physics, but not in the metaphysics of Eriugena. The stone continues to fall because God sustains it in its falling, indeed in its very being. By contemplating the divine exemplars, we get a much better sense of this notion of participation because we clearly discern that the laws of mechanics simply do not apply to ideas; for us to have an idea we
must sustain it. All the more for God to have the idea of some divine exemplar He must sustain it.

Eriugena’s most effective example of the second division of nature is the monad, the unity from which all the mathematical sciences begin. It is created by God and it in turn creates all other numbers, i.e. the integers through multiples of the monad, the rational numbers. Eriugena refers to it throughout the *Periphyseon*. This raises the question of irrational numbers for they cannot be expressed as a proportion of integers. Does this mean that they cannot be thought of as having their divine exemplar in the monad? The answer seems to be no, for although there is no direct proportionality in the irrational numbers, they still have relation in the integers which have proportionality in the monad. For instance the number pi, 3.1416…, though irrational, still bears the relation of the circumference of a circle, divided by its diameter. The irrational numbers can still be understood as having their essence in the monad, even though they seem to represent some strange confluence between geometry and arithmetic that the average mind cannot fully synchronize.

The monad is a good demonstration of the divine exemplars for a civilization that considers the number two as the first number. We posit the notion of truth as a better one for the philosopher. Of course, in the ninth century truth had a more or less standard meaning, grounded externally in the reality of things. This is not so today for we have various theories: correspondence for the lawyer, coherence for the scientist, pragmatic for the engineer, constructivist for the sociologist, etc. Each may have their place and each may even reach to the level demanded by the respective professions. Yet the divine exemplar, truth, is the cause of all others and precedes them. When the Word said, “I am
truth,” that was the definition of it given in time but preceding time. All truth is therefore derivative of the subject “I” in the above statement. Eriugena considers the divine exemplar of supreme truth to be in the ninth position of importance after goodness, essence, life, reason, intellect, wisdom, power, and blessedness. Its highest “…participation is truth-through-itself, after which and through which… all truths are true” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 623 B). Like the other primordial causes, we do not comprehend it in itself, but rather through its effects. Thus, it would seem that the more we are able to simplify the effects, i.e. by abstracting particular phenomena from them, the better we are able to rise to the truth. One such example would be arithmetic, the pure art of numbers, which would be closer to supreme truth than, for instance, accounting, which has the particular of currency attached to pure numbers. Truths relating to Divine Nature are discovered through negative theology, or “Affirmation and Negation” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 461 B). Statements such as “It is truth” appear to contradict statements such as “It is not truth.” However, these are not mutually opposed when applied to Divine Nature. The former statement does not properly affirm that the Divine Substance is truth, merely that it can be called truth. The latter statement more clearly demonstrates that the Divine Nature is beyond truth and is the cause of it (Eriugena, Bk. I, 461 B-C). Eriugena is clear that truth, to whatever extent it can be known, is such only because the Logos descended into the world. “…[O]ur sole quest should be joy in the truth, which is Christ…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 989 A). “I should say that by these words of truth, or one might call them words of the Word, for truth is the Word, are meant none other than these causes and substances for these are immutable ‘reasons’ of things, created in the wisdom of God, and in accordance with all things visible and invisible…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 887 C).
Moreover, when Christ was present in this world He used audible words of speech, which, due to their source, can be counted as truth in itself. To mistake the false for the true is our greatest error, “[f]or there is no worse death than ignorance of the truth…” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 650 A).

The Third Division- Corporeal Things

The third division of nature is that which is created and does not create. This includes man and his physical world, angels, and demons. It is our world, the one that Aristotle says that we know best, and indeed many of us side with him. This third division of nature can be thought of as the concluding effects of God’s creative act manifested downward through the primordial causes. Eriugena holds that it is the lowest state of nature “for the devolution of the universe ceases with them, having no place further whither to descend, for it is now established in the realm of corporeal objects” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 743 C).

This third division of nature is discussed in Book III of the Periphyseon, and Eriugena deals with the subject mainly through the creation account in Genesis. This is a natural course for our philosopher to follow because for him the third person of the Trinity is the “infinite founder” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 690 C) of the text. The actual author, presumably Moses, is relaying through figurative language what the Holy Spirit intended. The words “in the beginning” cannot be meant to signify a beginning in time because the continuum that the scientist calls time does not exist without the corporeal world. Thus, “in the beginning” refers to the condition of things that were, or perhaps better said, things that were not, prior to the first division of nature manifesting itself downward into the second. The words “empty and void” describe matter without form and the word
“darkness” signifies that the grandeur of the creation was hidden in God’s mind. Eriugena discourses at length about the meaning of the phrase “let there be light.” Some of the early church fathers had held that this meant the creation of physical light as we know it and others maintained that this signified the creation of angelic and intellectual essence. Still others thought this referred to the creation of fire. Noting that scripture often refers to effects by the name of their cause and causes by the name of their effects, Eriugena concludes that these interpretations are reasonable. However, Augustine goes beyond them and says that the phrase “let there be light” refers instead to the planetary workings, as yet undiscovered, by which God manifested His physical laws. In other words, the division of light from darkness meant the enformation of formless matter into multiple forms we recognize (Eriugena, Bk. III, 691A-691 D). As we should expect, Eriugena goes further still and gives a more subtle interpretation. “Let there be light” refers to the creation act in which the primordial causes become manifested into the corporeal world. “In those words of Holy Scripture ‘let there be light,’ [we] say that by the creation of light is signified the procession of the primordial causes into their effects” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 692 B). As noted above these causes are divine predefinitions hidden in their own mysterious darkness. God, as the first division of nature, impels them downward into the invisible, then into visible theophanies. So light is not so much a created thing as it is the way a created thing is known. Once again we see a certain priority of knowledge over being, however, this time it applies even to corporeal things. Hence, there is a high importance on the liberal arts, not simply for general knowledge of the material world, but active interpretation between the knower and the object known. Through this last and lowest manifestation of the creative act into discernible things, God surpasses all
understanding and “… suffers Himself to be in a kind of way understood” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 692 C).

There is also in Book III a discussion on the meaning of the phrase “out of nothing” as this pertains to creation. The Alumnus asks what is signified by the word “nothing” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 634 B). Does it mean the privation of all essence, substance or accident or the excellence of divine super-essentiality? Earlier we noted that when discussing God via negative theology the word “nothing” was used in the latter sense. When we say God is as nothing we simply mean He is beyond all things, the super essential cause of them. However, when we talk about the “stuff” out of which God made the universe we use the term in the former sense. We rightly can say that the world is made from nothing because before it came into being there was complete privation of everything. The Christian authorities that Eriugena has cited, namely Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Dionysius, and Maximus, all seem to be in agreement here, that there is no pre-existing material that God uses to fashion into a world (Eriugena, Bk. III, 635 A). Thus the word “create” has a very narrow meaning for Eriugena. The artist, the author, and the statesman do not, strictly speaking, create; they rearrange in novel ways. We often judge the artist by the more he can do with the less that he has. It was said that Paganini was never so great as when he, having broken three strings on his instrument, continued to astound the audience by playing masterfully on only one. God, as the first division of nature, does infinitely more. He shows up to a concert with no violin, to say nothing of the music or audience. He alone creates something out of nothing. Here Eriugena is at odds with some of the pagan Greek philosophers such as Plato in the Timaeus, for they had taught that God simply arranged the world from a certain
unformed matter that existed co-eternally with Him. While Eriugena does not deny the notion of unformed matter, he certainly rejects the idea that it is co-eternal with God. “For He who made the world from unformed matter also made unformed matter out of nothing at all” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 636 D). Once again Eriugena likens the creative act to the liberal arts “just as all numbers burst forth from the monad and all radii from the centre” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 637 A). However, this discussion of unformed matter seems to lead Eriugena into a difficult dilemma, for it suggests that God has created in an unworthy manner. In other words, He who is eternal and immutable has created unformed matter which is temporal and mutable. Thus, the world is an accident. The ingenious and bold solution is to show that it is both eternal and made (Eriugena, Bk. III, 638 C).

At first glance, these two aspects of a thing being eternal and made appear to contend with one another. Yet Eriugena insists that the universe is both eternal and made at the same time and, moreover, that a careful investigation by reason will reconcile the two. Eriugena discourses for approximately twenty-four thousand words, over a third of Book III, to argue this point. Augustine had claimed in Book XI, 7, and Book XII, 29 of the Confessions, that God could not be separated from His acts. While we tend to view the creation as an event that occurred at some point in time, this is simply the usual mode of our mindset. Understood from God’s perspective, the creation is eternal. “Therefore you say once and forever all that you say by the Word, who is co-eternal with you. Whatever you say shall be made…” (Augustine, Con., 1960, Bk. XI, Ch. 7, 283). Erigena drives this argument to its paradoxical end; all things are both eternal and made. In essence, to view the creation of this world in the common mode of a past event that just
happened is to focus solely on the made part of the equation and to lose sight of who
made it. Eriugena maintains fervently that there is no separation between Creator and
creature. To view the creation is not an add-on to God’s nature but it is His nature
through and through, eternal in Him.

“Nutritor: Is God receptive of accidents?

Alumnus: His nature is simple and more than simple, and free and more than free
from all accident.

Nutritor: Then nothing in God is an accident?

Alumnus: Nothing at all.

Nutritor: Then it was not an accident in Him to establish the universe and
Creatures” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 639 A).

In other words there is one creation and God knows its property, through its
predefinitions, as spoken in the Word. Man is capable of viewing this creation from two
perspectives; eternally in its causes, or temporally in its effects (Moran, 1989, 232-234).

In bringing the discourse on all things being eternal and made to a conclusion,
Eriugena returns to a familiar example from the liberal arts. “Arithmetic is the science of
numbers, not of those which we count but of those by which we count” (Eriugena, Bk.
III, 651 A). It finds its eternal cause in the unity of the monad. This unity is not simply
the beginning but the middle and end of all numbers. The various numbers can be viewed
as being made since all have some multiple to the monad, i.e. in their effects, yet they are
eternal in their cause.

The Fourth Division- God as End

The fourth division of nature, that which neither creates nor is created, is the most
original and bold contribution of Eriugena. He grants that the exposition of this division is the most challenging of all. Up until now we have sailed in calm waters, steering a safe course without fear of disaster. “Now, however, we enter upon a voyage where the course has to be picked from the mass of tortuous digressions, where we have to climb the steeps of obscure doctrines, encounter the region of the Syrtes, that is to say, the dangers of the currents of unfamiliar teaching, ever in immediate danger of shipwreck in the obscurity of the subtlest intellects, which like concealed rocks may suddenly split our vessel” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 744 A). The first three divisions of nature all dealt with the outward manifestation of God’s goodness, however, this fourth division concerns the inward. It is God calling His creation back to Him, eternally home to rest with Him and in Him. We set the stage for this study of homecoming by addressing ourselves to a proposition made by Plato in the Symposium. The wise priestess, Diotima of Mantinea, tells Socrates that man being mortal seeks to be immortal. For this reason he creates in the form of other men: works of art, literature, and laws. These things live after him and he continues to live through them. To live forever is man’s ultimate desire; he creates in order to live (Plato, Sym., 1970, 207 A- 209 A). However, in refutation of apparent wisdom of Diotima we ask the mother, the artist, the author, the statesman: do you create to live, or do you live to create? We are quite sure that the mother, the artist, the author, the statesman, per se, will always choose the latter. The answer is not a simple one, for being a man means being an image of God, which means being a creator insofar as we are able. Of course we cannot literally make something from nothing, and few of us can even approach Paganini. However, to the extent that we are an image we have a share in the act of creating. Moreover, we have a share in the act of living. Our final answer is that the
two are so intertwined that they cannot be separated either for God or man. The living is
the creating, the creating is the living. This is so for God as source and end, likewise it is
so for man as God’s image.

God’s creative acts manifested outward in the first three divisions of nature are
resolved inward in the fourth to live and rest eternally. God will be all in all, as He has
always been, is, and will always be. The entire process of creating, resolving, and resting
is an eternal one always abiding in the living. From our limited time bound perspective,
we view it, write in it, and even philosophize about it the only way we can, in temporal
fashion. It is therefore fitting that Eriugena continues to cite the creation in Genesis even
in the fourth and fifth books so as to highlight the idea that an end for creation can only
be understood in terms of the beginning.

Early on in Book I, Eriugena had posed the question of why there even needed to
be a return. Could not creation proceed in linear mode, always reaching for its own
infinity? No, because creation has no value apart from its creator. Through the creative
act, God vests the world in worth, most notably His worth (Carabine, 2000, 94). Only
through the return can creation become complete. Similarly, we could ask Diotima: if
man were to live forever and never create anything, what would be the point? “For it
[Divine Power] is above every likeness and surpasses every example and while by itself
and in itself it is immutably and eternally at rest, yet it is said to move all things since
through it and in it subsist and have been brought from not-being into being, for by its
being, all things proceed out of nothing, and it draws all things to itself” (Eriugena, Bk. I,
521 C). This bond is appropriately called love. God loves His creation with such eternal
compassion, indeed the bond is His very being, that unity ultimately prevails. Eriugena
gives numerous examples from nature that mirror this return process. The magnet draws iron back to itself. The planets, stars, sun and moon all return eventually to their original positions. Sensible light fills the entire visible realm yet remains ever immutable in its source. And once again we have the example of the seven liberal arts, which are complete and immutable in themselves. This can be understood to move rational minds in accordance with eternal principles (Eriugena, Bk. I, 520-521).

Having discussed the essential reason why all things must return to God we turn our attention to the proximate. Man is not now with God; he is not now with God because he has fallen through the sin of Adam. Of course, this only explains why man must return to God, not the remainder of creation. The astounding solution here is that the remainder of creation abides in man and through man. All else, planets, animals, rocks, plants, stars, everything is created in man. Thus, when man fell he took all of creation down with him, save angels, and when man returns again he takes all creation back with him. “He has created in man all the creatures visible and invisible, for the whole spread of creation is understood to inhere in man…. There is nothing naturally present in the celestial essences which does not subsist essentially in man. For there is innate in him intellect and reason…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 764 A). Therefore, even angels are created in man, even more amazing demons, most amazingly Satan himself. We do know why God chose one particular species to create all others through, and this is so that His supreme rank in the order of all nature is most appropriately reflected in that of created nature. “Just as the Primal Archetype transcends all by the excellence of His Essence, so His image should transcend all created things in dignity and grace” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 764 B).

Midway through the lengthy argument on why all things must return to their
origin, Eriugena makes a claim that many of his sources would not agree with. Eriugena holds that the knowledge of a thing is higher than the thing itself (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 765). We must challenge this idea for it seems controversial, and yet it is the keystone of Eriugena’s continued speculation. Supposing we have complete knowledge of a thing, is that really better than the thing? Most of us would be tempted to answer no. However, let us posit some functional object, such as a space shuttle, or even some work of art, such as Rodin’s “The Thinker.” Cannot the knowledge contained in the thousands of intellects who assembled the space shuttle or the artistry of Rodin be thought of as being prior to, therefore better than, the object? We are inclined to agree, at least to the extent that knowledge of the object cannot be less than the object in any case and greater in the vast majority of cases. Here our philosopher quotes and fully agrees with Augustine, “… the phantasm of a body in the mind is better than the species of the body, inasmuch as it is in a better nature, namely in a vital substance, for such the mind is” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 766 B). It seems appropriate to reflect on Augustine’s Concerning the Teacher here, for the same idea is advanced in that work, and Eriugena is likely relying on it. “…[E]verything that exists because of another is inferior to that because of which it exists” (Augustine, Teacher, 1938, Ch. 9, 36). In our case, the space shuttle and “The Thinker” exist due to the knowledge of their respective makers; therefore the knowledge is greater than the object. Again, we have the example of the liberal arts which pre-exist in the mind and again we encounter the concept that knowledge is prior to being. So, returning to the example of “The Thinker,” for simplicity we can say that a certain trinity is established for the mind (Rodin), its skill (Rodin’s talent), and the art (The Thinker) are all of the same substance. The latter two are not to be thought as potencies of the mind but rather as
substantial and constituent parts of the mind, a co-natural trinity that is co-essential and co-equal in itself (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 767 A- 768 A). Both the catholic faith and truth assent to this teaching. We are now in a position to define man as follows: “Man is a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the mind of God” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 768 B). From God’s perspective this is all that is needed, a definition, complete and simple. Of course this definition will not do for us because it includes too much. We may refine it by adding that man is a mortal, rational animal in the customary way. Still the most important element, the essential nature, is that idea in the mind of God. It precedes all men, and is all men, and ever will precede and be all men. It is the Word, Logos, Christ Himself. Thus, no man can rightly claim that he is something else. He may claim to be a Muslim or a Jew, but he cannot claim that he is his own man, or that he is an image of any other apart from that first man. Every man is different than he otherwise would have been had not the Word been first.

Eriugena’s conception of the return to unity, the fulfillment of the fourth division of nature, is founded upon the incarnation of the Word. Prior to all time, the Word descended in time so as to redeem the effects of those causes that are eternally present in the Word. The return of all things occurs in man, however, it is always accomplished within a Christological framework (Carabine, 2001, 97). As in the earlier divisions, there is always some tension between the concepts of gift and grace. However, in the return, grace is the clear dominant. Whereas gift is a *datum*, a calling forth from nothingness into created nature, grace is a *donum*, a calling beyond which brings man into unity with God Himself (Eriugena, Bk. V, 905 A). “… [T]he general resurrection of the dead, of the wicked as well as of the good, could not be effected without the grace of the Redeemer to
achieve it: so that if God, the Word, had not been made flesh and had not made His
dwelling with men and had not taken upon Himself the whole of our human nature, in
which He suffered and arose from the dead, there would be no resurrection of the dead at
all” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 899 B). The incarnation of the Word is the point of beginning in
which the created realm finds its rest.

We now turn to that instant which initiates the dynamic movement from gift to
grace: the fall. The account of the creation of Adam is not to be understood as the
creation of one individual man but rather of all men in general. “For the name Adam is
not here given to the creature as later on in the story, but the name given to the man who
was created is of universal application” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 797 A). The creation story of
Genesis is not the story of one man in history, it is the story of all men past, present, and
future. Man was created in God’s image. The essence that lies behind the image is not the
essence of one image only, but of all. In other words, we are all the images of God, not of
Adam, one individual in time. “Therefore, all human nature which has endured from the
beginning until now is an image of Him who truly exists” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 797 C). This
especially includes Eve; she is not second, she is co-eternal just as all the rest of us. God
creates in love, in wisdom, gift and grace, not in time. Nor does He create in gender, for
in that one eternal creation of man there was neither male nor female. This separation of
man into two genders occurs after the fall, or better said, as a result of the fall, not before.
Man was originally created in paradise, which is to say, he was created in a state of
complete communion with God. This condition is what the Garden of Eden symbolizes
(Eriugena, Bk. IV, 829 C). However, at the instant of his creation, he turns away from the
blessedness that is his by divine gift, embraces the senses, and literally falls into a
sensory world of his own making. The division into genders is an accident, not an essence in that it could have been otherwise. Adam is already compromised when he is way-laid by Eve and she is already compromised when she is tricked by the serpent, for the serpent is a “man-slayer” already (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 811 B). Much of the thought advanced in this part of the Periphyseon bears a striking similarity to Gregory of Nyssa’s writings in On the Making of Man. In Chapter XXVI of that work, we note the same creation of man as being rational and unified in the image of God. There is no prior distinction as to gender. The passage of Genesis 1:27 (…”male and female He created them…”)) is specifically cited by Eriugena as an argument to support the claim that gender is accidental. The peculiar attributes of male and female are added after man’s initial creation. God creates for no reason, other than that He is good, thus He makes man in His image as a perfect form. “…[F]or if the Deity is the fullness of good, and this is His image, then the image finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being filled with all good” (Gregory of Nyssa, Man, 2010, pt. 3, 3). We also note that in Chapter XVI, there is the same idea: that Adam is not a particular man but rather a signification of all men.

We may say that at the instant of man’s creation, the very moment man descends from that which creates but is not created, his relationship with God is broken, and contemporaneously, he openly manifests sin. “For it is in man, not to God, that the sin was a future event, and that the consequences of sin anticipate the sin itself, seeing that even the sin itself anticipates itself in the same man” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 808 B). And again our philosopher quotes Augustine, “For there would have been no evil work had there not been an evil will before it…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 808 C). In Adam, the descent of the image severs the unity of the divine relationship, but only temporarily. The gift of
life is itself the event that breaks the bond while at the same time paving the way for the grace of return to that which neither creates nor is created. “…[T]he first man, Adam, is always a figure of the man to come, Christ; but an inverse figure. [That is, Christ is prior] … In the first man all nature was expelled from the blessedness of paradise; in the second man is recalled and re-established into the same blessedness” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 836 C).
Chapter IV: That the Damned are Redeemed

Resurrection of All

Eriugena is very clear and unequivocal in forwarding his claim that all men will be resurrected. Not only man, but the tangible creation that man senses around him; having been created in man, it will make the return with him. In the end, God will be all in all, yet somehow through the mystic transformation into that one unity each retains its identity. Before proceeding further, we note only that on the ethical level, this arrangement does seem just and appropriate. We hold that Aristotle discovered the form of friendship best when he defined a friend as someone who wished his friend well, and for his friend’s sake (Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1992, 1156 B). We take no issue with this definition, or on one of his subsequent claims that we originally have friends for our own sake. God can be viewed as the truest friend in both respects: He creates us for His sake, and He wishes us well for our own sake. Following on this definition, it seems to us that any gift given by one friend to another is given so that the receiving friend can use it well and for his own sake. Moreover, we must remember that one has friends for his own sake. Thus, with due respect to both of Aristotle’s maxims, we can infer that no friend will knowingly give a gift that will destroy his friend. Neither can God, who is the truest and wisest of all friends, give such a gift. Therefore, the only explanation seems to be that this mortal life is a gift intended to be used by us for our benefit. At the same time, it is a gift which cannot destroy us or our relationship with God. Moreover, a gift, to be a gift, cannot be reclaimed by the giver. Of course, even the best of friends can be compromised; however, they are not compromised by the giving of gifts. It is not the gift that needs to be reconciled, but the relationship, which, as will be shown, is accomplished
through grace. The higher the grace, the higher the potential to heal; the highest grace overcomes the deepest division, thus infinite grace transcends all division. This is the condition of fallen man. In our case the gift given and the recipient to whom it was given have collapsed into the same thing: life. All the more is the gift not recalled, for to do so is to actually destroy the gift, the friend, the friendship, and for all these reasons to lessen the giver. The solution is to overcome the fall, restore the relationship, and bring all the parties back into the same condition that they originally enjoyed. God does not move; He calls. Man does not call; he moves. “For all men in general whether perfect or imperfect, chaste or defiled, redeemed through knowledge of truth in Christ or lingering in the darkness of ignorance … have one and the same natural yearning after being and well-being and being forever” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 867 C). The idea of humanity from God’s perspective lacks nothing. Contrarily, man’s idea of himself lacks completeness. All men, no matter what their condition, desire this being, well-being, and being forever; none can do otherwise.

In order to show this, Eriugena returns to the account of creation in Genesis and gives his interpretation of its actual meaning. We have already seen that the story is not an historical account of origin, but rather an allegorical statement of being. This myth differs from all others in that the Genesis account is divinely inspired, while the others are not. Thus, we may conclude that the truth which underlies Genesis is certain, even though our ability to interpret it is not. Moreover, Eriugena goes even further and holds that the Genesis account is a covenant of prophesy. What happened to the mythical figures of Adam and Eve will, in truth, happen to us. It is more a story of hope than one of demise. He states that “…the prophetic virtue of these words… give the clearest
promise of the return of human nature…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 859 D). In reality we are not
dealing with an event in the past, but rather our condition as incomplete human beings.
To begin, we note that there are two trees in the Garden of Eden that we must be
concerned with. The first is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam is
commanded not to eat of this tree, for by doing so he shall die. In eating the fruit of this
tree, Adam breaks his community with God, for he chooses the irrationality of non-sense
and non-being. Furthermore, in vainly choosing non-being, which he mistakes for
knowledge, he even seeks it via the senses, for the tree was “good for food, pleasant to
the eye, and desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6, KJV). Of course, Adam then openly
secured his death; he ate of the fruit and died, thereby fulfilling the prophecy. Moreover,
he brought unto himself much more than death; he earned such miseries as thorns,
thistles, sorrow, hard labor, and bad food. At the end of all this unpleasantness he returns
to the dust from which he fashioned his own body. However, the misfortune ends there
for God immediately begins his care anew, or better said, continues his care anew, for He
has never really forsaken it. He makes for Adam and Eve coats of skins and He clothes
them.

The key to understanding this myth is found in the final few verses of Chapter III.
Here Eriugena up-ends the conventional interpretation. “Now therefore, may he not
perchance put forth his hand, and take also the Tree of Life, and eat of it, and live forever.
And he cast Adam out, and set cherubim before the paradise of pleasure, and a flaming
sword to turn every way to guard the path to the Tree of Life” (Genesis 3: 22-24, KJV).
The hope of return is contained in the words “Now therefore” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 862 B).
For God, in speaking these words, is accepting the choice that man has made and is
working to overcome it. God takes Adam as sad, not happy; wretched, not blessed; temporal, not eternal; separated, not whole; and most of all mortal, not immortal, as man was intended to be. Yet God can still reconcile man to Himself and bring him home. Of course, man must leave the garden, for therein stands the Tree of Life. If Adam eats from this tree, as he surely will if left to his own devices, he will continue to live, but in the unhappy mode he has already chosen. As Socrates has said the goal should be “not to live, but to live well.” God cannot allow man to live endlessly in his wretched state, for if He does, man will never come to realize that he is living with pigs, just as the prodigal son will one day say, “why do I perish,” when all he has to do is return home. In other words, Eriugena holds that taking the fruit from the Tree of Life away from man is for man’s salvation, not his punishment. Man must experience physical death in order to return home. Moreover, the allegory does not end there, but continues to be confirmed in the eternal security of the Tree of Life. A cherubim, the longstanding symbol of intellectual knowledge, is posted at the garden’s gate. This is not a belligerent warrior; rather it is an invitation to divine wisdom. He holds a “flaming sword” that turns “every way.” The sword symbolizes Christ, the Word, the one truth that all men must recognize in order to gain eternal life. And all men will, for the sword turns “every way.” All rational men of this world recognize the sword, even though many are constrained in their customs from understanding the One who inflames it. The allegory in Chapter 3 of Genesis confirms rather than limits man’s salvation, for all men die mortal deaths. If a man were to succeed in avoiding it, this would mean he had somehow gotten around the flaming sword which turns every way. Essentially, he would be denying the truth which constitutes his very nature.
Incidental to our specific topic of salvation for the damned is Eriugena’s notion that all created nature enjoys the return to God as that which is uncreated and does not create. Very interesting in its own merit, we treat it briefly given that our thesis concerns universal salvation, and the notion that all of created nature returns to God is part of universal salvation. Eriugena is unique among medieval Christian philosophers for he maintains that plants and animals enjoy the return the same as man does. Eriugena builds on the notion, first advanced by Plato in the *Timaeus*, that the created cosmos is itself an animal possessed of body and soul. The creatures that inhabit the world are not so much constituent parts of it but rather are images of it. They also have body and soul. Their bodies are corruptible, but their souls are immortal, akin to the souls of gods, all being fashioned from the same stuff that constitutes the soul of the cosmos (Harrington, 2005, 612-614). Plato is the only one of Eriugena’s sources who holds to the idea that the souls of all living things are immortal. There is, however, one significant difference, in that for Plato the souls of animals can become rational by returning to earth and dwelling in human bodies, and Eriugena never speaks of this. The created and non-creating nature of the third division does not return to itself; it returns to the fourth division, that which is uncreated and does not create. For Eriugena, plants and animals are indeed immortal, but they remain eternally irrational. The claim that all creation must return to the fourth division helps us, for if all creation returns, then surely the damned return. Eriugena states that if “… everything which is naturally moved received the source of its motion from some life, it necessarily follows that every creature is either life-through-itself or participates in life and is somehow alive” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 728 B). He further states that “if all bodies which are naturally constituted are governed by some aspects of life,
and every species seeks its own genus while every genus takes its origin from universal substance, it must be that every species of life which contains the numerousness of the various bodies returns to universal life by participation in which it is a species” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 728 D- 729 A). There must then be a universal life or life-in-itself (Harrington, 2005, 619). This argument may be extended to inanimate objects. Seeds sown in the earth do not sprout unless they first separate as to matter and form, or, in effect, die. The extension proceeds even further to non-living creatures for their vital motion, though not clearly apparent, is “hiddenly governed through life” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 728 B). Eriugena first calls upon the teaching of Plato to support his claim that no body can be without life. “[T]here is no… body that is deprived of life; and that life, whether general or special, we confidently dare to call the soul…” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 728 B). Because all bodies move, and the source of this movement is either life-through-itself or through participation in life, they are somehow alive. Secondly, Eriugena cites the work On True Religion by Augustine to affirm that this life-through-itself is Christ, the Word. “For every form derives from Him. And who is this but the one God, the one Truth, the one Salvation of all, and the first and highest essence from which comes everything that is insofar as it is” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 728 C). Our point here is that if all animals, plants and rocks are made complete through the return to the Word, then surely all men are likewise made complete, for they participate more directly in the life-through-itself principle than the aforementioned objects.

Returning now to the particular subject of man, all can agree that man has a body and a soul, and Eriugena argues that if this is so now it will always be so, indeed it has always been so (Eriugena, Bk. III, 729 D). When the human body is generated, the soul
assumes control of it, retaining control until death. At that time, the soul surrenders control of the body, and soul and body become separated with the body returning to the elements. However, since man is a composition of the two, the relationship must continue. Thus, what appears to the senses to be a separation is in reality the continuance of that relationship on a higher level. The soul remains the controller of the body after it has receded into the elements just as it did before. The control of the body is even greater in this state, for the soul is more able to control what is similar to it than what is dissimilar. The soul is not corporeal but spiritual, as is the body after it has dissolved into the elements. It is not that the body ceases to be, but rather that it passes “into the lightest,” most ethereal particles and becomes “as spiritual” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 730 B).

The relation of body and soul is not so much one of “composition” as we used the word above, but of “compound,” in the sense that the term is used in chemistry.

By extension of the above dissolution, the same argument applies to irrational beasts and even inanimate objects. The soul of an animal controls that animal’s body as well, and when the animal dies that soul continues to control the body. This raises the question of what happens when former parts of one body become parts of another. Eriugena does not say, but presumably the resurrection is of such an all-encompassing magnitude that it sorts out and restores all parts. The same can be said of stationary objects, which can be said to move, in that they are subject to diminution (Eriugena, Bk. III, 737 B- 738 A). This is not to say that animals are raised as human, for they remain animal. Presumably, an entire animal and environmental system of ethics could be built around this notion with those animals and objects closest to man’s rationality having the highest value, and those farthest away the least. We leave this discussion with a statement
from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians given as a recapitulation: “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth” (Ephesians 1:10, KJV).

For man, his lowest depth in the fall, both described and foretold in Genesis, is his own death. This is the point from which his return begins. However, this depth should not be considered so much as a death of the flesh, but rather as a death from death. For the human body has been bestowed upon man not for punishment but for betterment. The body is corruptible, thus a separation of the body from the soul signifies a release from corruption, a rest from labor, a resurrection from darkness. In summation, one’s death brings about the final end to all misfortune and evil, and the resolution of true nature (Eriugena, Bk. V, 875 C-876 A). There is a five-fold process through which this redemption takes place. The first step is taken when the body suffers dissolution and returns to the four elements of the sensible world from which it came. These four elements are earth, air, water, and fire. The second step occurs in the resurrection of Christ, when each man shall claim his own spiritual body from the commonality of the four elements. The third occurs when this spiritual body is changed into soul. The fourth step involves the return of the soul, and also the whole of human nature to the primordial causes. These primordial causes reside eternally and immutably in God. The fifth step is fulfilled when the primordial causes are absorbed into God, the uncreated, uncreating, Fourth Division. At this point, God alone will be all things in all things (Eriugena, Bk. V, 876 A-B). Eriugena uses the analogy of air being absorbed into light. The air is unnoticeable in the light, yet it remains. Therefore, we can expect human fellowship to continue after the final unification in total communion with itself. Each man will be more
unique, yet somehow more integrated into every other. Again, this restoration does not happen in time, but rather eternally in the present instant.

One telling example of this unification is the integration in the return of male and female. Eriugena is unique among his western sources to maintain that after the resurrection there will be no distinction as to gender. Adam and Eve are not to be regarded as male and female, nor is the Garden of Eden to be regarded as a local place of paradise. Instead, Adam is understood to be the essential nature of man, and Eve is that part of man vulnerable to temptation through the senses. The Garden of Eden is a non-local, non-temporal bliss in complete harmony with God. Therefore, the separation of man into male and female had to have happened after the fall rather than before it. Moreover, there never was a time in which man was in paradise, for he fell the instant he was created. “[T]his distinction [male and female] has absolutely no connection with the divine image and likeness, and would never have existed had man not sinned, nor will it exist after the restoration of our nature…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 799 B). On first glance, this collapse of the male and female genders into one man would seem to wreak havoc on the eternal establishment of the family, something we have stressed the importance of to this point. However, we respond, a fortiori, that relation of father to son, or mother to daughter, carries no inherent notion of gender whatsoever. As we have continually maintained, the family is not comprised of constituent parts. Members abide in their various relationships only through their relationship to the family as a whole. The family is a unity, and the bond that each member shares with it is a spiritual one, not a genetic or material one. Of course, the bonds usually are genetic ones. However, they do not have to be so, for the ontological bond transcends all biology.
To solidify this idea that the male and female genders are not to be found within the image of God, Eriugena makes one final claim. Christ, the Word, the ideal first man, of which all other men are copies, was resurrected without gender. The savior gave us a foretaste of what was to come by rising from the dead. The acceptance of the resurrection of Christ rests in faith, and those who assent to it have the ultimate guarantee. Those who do not accept it still have the guarantee, though they do not know it. However, we who accept it do so because there were some who experienced it through the senses and bore witness to it. We are grateful that others witnessed these events and not ourselves, for we would not have believed our own eyes. Thankfully, those whom we trust did. Of course, in order for them to believe it, they had to be able to recognize Him, thus He appeared to them in the male gender. However, in the Word there is neither male nor female, simply the true and whole man. “For the humanity of Christ, made one with God, is contained in no one place, is moved through no time, is limited by no bodily shape, characteristic of sex” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 894 B-C). Before the Word became incarnate, He was not confined to the male form, thus He is not confined to it after His resurrection. A person who subscribes to the Christian faith could ask why the fatherhood of God is so important to the Christ? Our answer is that fatherhood, although often genetic, is not essentially so. It is essentially spiritual. We wrote earlier of Eriugena’s claim that the terms ‘father’ and ‘son’ were terms of relation, as both are one. The relationship of the son to the father was apparently of such a character that all genetic connections were transcended.

Modes of Justice

In most western societies, the ideal of justice is invariably symbolized by a goddess holding three objects: the sword, which represents coercive power; the
blindfold, which represents impartiality; and the scale, which represent the authority to weigh competing claims. In our discussion, we may immediately dispense with the forms represented by the first two symbols. God does not force anyone to accept Him, and He manifests the ultimate in impartiality, for He desires all men to accept Him. We need only concern ourselves with the final symbol, the scales, for we can agree that God has the authority under our presuppositions, to weigh competing claims. We note at the outset that the scales imply a limited reservoir of resources. In other words, with any human action of any kind in which one party seeks to gain just recompense from another, the entire contest is preconditioned by the notion that the first party has been harmed by the second and that the second party has taken something away from the first in an unjust manner. That something, whatever it is, has been subtracted from a finite reservoir of the first party’s. Perhaps one can already determine where our discourse is headed. If the reservoir of the first party is infinite, such as is the case with God, there is no damage. In other words, all those who hold that the condemnation of the damned is just are viewing justice in human terms. We will now examine several well-known conceptions of justice and show that, under all of them, the resurrection of the damned is just.

Plato argues in the Republic that justice is an ideal virtue, capable of definition. The main objective of the dialogue is to discover what this consists of. The aged Cephalus confides to Socrates his concern that during his long life he may have performed unjust actions, and may soon be required to pay the penalty for them (Plato, Rep., 1968, 330 D). This prompts Socrates to seek a definition of justice (Plato, Rep., 1968, 331 D). Many competing notions are advanced by the various characters.
Socrates suggests that since justice abides in both individual men and whole cities, the definition could possibly be more easily discovered by first considering the city, for “…perhaps there would be more justice in the bigger and it would be easier to observe closely” (Plato, Rep., 1968, 368 E). He then formulates a theoretical city in which the four human virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice are all brought to perfection. Such a city which “… has been correctly founded – is perfectly good” (Plato, Rep., 1968, 427 E). Now, the first three of the virtues are rather easily discerned in this city, for they are respectively characterized in the three classes of its citizens: rulers, auxiliaries, and craftsmen. Socrates reasons that whatever is left over in the city after wisdom, courage, and moderation have been extracted must be justice. “Therefore, just as with any other four things… if we recognized the other three first, this would also suffice for the recognition of the thing looked for. For plainly it couldn’t be anything but what’s left over” (Plato, Rep., 1968, 428 A). As it turns out, justice, the final virtue, is the one that tends to keep the other three in harmony. “[J]ustice… is the rival of these others in contributing to the city’s virtue” (Plato, 1968, 434 E). “[T]he having and doing of one’s own and what belongs to oneself would be agreed to be justice” (Plato, Rep., 1968, 434 A). Now, the just man would be no different from the just city, for a good man must have the four virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice within him (Plato, Rep., 1968, 435 B). Similarly, “…a man is just in the same manner that a city too … [is] just” (Plato, Rep., 1968, 441 D). He is a man in whom the virtues of wisdom, courage, and moderation are all in proper balance with justice, being that virtue which tends to keep the other three in perspective. However, for man, justice is more of an internal quality residing in the soul, and is concerned with “…what is within… [and] what truly concerns

We view Eriugena’s teaching on the general resurrection of all men as being in full compliance with Plato’s formulation of justice. It should be remembered that the entire dialogue is launched in response to a concern with the question of punishment for the soul after death. Therefore, Plato’s *Republic* could be considered as substantive to the overall topic. Eriugena holds that death is the lowest depth of the fall (Eriugena, Bk. V, 875 C). It is the point where the soul assumes complete control of the body, a completeness which is lacking in mortal life. “The end of this present life, then, is the beginning of the next; and the death of the flesh is the token of the restoration of our nature, and the return to our pristine integrity” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 876 A). If our nature is brought to a state of pure and incorruptible completeness, then surely Plato’s virtues of the soul (wisdom, courage, and moderation), are brought into a harmonious perfection. In other words, this is perfectly just, for justice is the very quality which encourages a man to inwardly “… arrange himself, become his own friend, and harmonize the [other] three parts…” (Plato, *Rep.*, 1968, 443 D). We need say little about the just community, for the entire exercise of founding an ideally just city was done for the purpose of discovering justice in the individual soul. Suffice it to say that an eternal community, whose every citizen is perfectly just, would surely seem to be a perfectly just community. One could ask whether there would be punishment in the ideal city. Our answer here is, *a fortiori*, that there would be no punishment. The city in Plato’s *Republic* is not completely ideal; it is practically ideal, being a community of men, not one of resurrected men.

A second concept of justice views it to be derived from divine command. Many of the great medieval philosophers were in this camp, and we suspect that Eriugena would
be one of them. We may dispense with the old question of whether something is right because God says it is right, or whether He says it is right because it is. This is irrelevant for our discussion. If it is the latter, then all the arguments concerning the above paragraphs on harmony apply. If it is the former, then justice seems arbitrary based on God’s whim, even though it is still divine. Eriugena would surely claim a false dichotomy here, for he would say that God is over and above all forms while still containing all forms, and this includes the form of justice. Reconciling this type of divine justice is best explained by recalling the parable of the Prodigal Son. Note that the prodigal son had already taken his inheritance when he came to the realization that he was living with pigs. The father owed him nothing more, not a ring, robe, sandals, not even the spiritual benefits of fatherhood, for the prodigal son had abandoned his natural son-ship. Yet the father gives all these and more, for we know that the son is fully restored. Moreover, the father even speaks directly to the question, for when the obedient son says, “Father, where is the justice? I have worked here with you all this time and you never gave me anything,” the father calms him by saying, “Look son, your idea of justice and mine are two completely different things. What is just is what restores mine to me. You are always with me and that is just. All that I have is yours, not half of what I have, but all. And the same goes for your brother because my resources are infinite. It is right for us to rejoice because he is now claiming his all, just as you have always claimed yours. He was dead, now he is alive, just as you have always been alive.” It is true that justice is concerned with what is owed to others. However, a better word for this would be fairness. Essentially, the argument of the obedient son is that the restoration of the prodigal son is unfair. Our point here is that fairness is completely subsumed by justice. This conception
of justice is in full agreement with the resurrection of the damned, for the damned are claiming what is rightly theirs: essential and eternal life (Eriugena, Book V, 1004 D). Of course they are not worthy of it, for none are. The damned simply lay claim to the same inheritance that the saved lay claim to, a divine inheritance. One could ask: what if they do not even lay a claim to it? We have answered this above: failing to do so means they are not men.

A third concept of justice holds that it is rooted in natural law. This theory posits that justice is an ideal determined by nature, and as such has validity across all cultures and time periods. Aristotle was an early proponent of natural law. In the Nichomachean Ethics he writes, “Of political justice part is natural, part legal; natural, that which everywhere has the same force and does not exist by people’s thinking this or that…” (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1134 B). Aquinas followed this line of reasoning when he held that man, as a rational creature, holds a certain share in eternal reason, “… whereby [he] has a natural inclination to [his] proper act and end…” (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., 1945, QXCI, 2nd Art, 618). The ideas that all men seek happiness, or that all men have certain inalienable rights are well recognized precepts of natural law theory. Natural laws are always discovered, never revealed or invented. Being that natural law applies only to this world, as opposed to the next, we note that nothing in it could render restoration of the damned as unjust. Moreover, there is and always has been a strong current of passive acceptance in natural law that holds to the notion that anything not unjust is just. Aside from this, we cannot positively show through natural law theory that salvation of the damned is just. There are, however, a few general principles that point in this direction. The first is that all men should seek what is good and avoid what is evil. We see no
reason why this idea should not carry forward into the next world, where what is good is more obvious and clear, and what is evil the same. A second principle is that, generally speaking, past offenses should be pardoned, for such action looks forward to the good rather than backward to the evil. The last and most convincing is that every man acknowledges that every other man is equal by nature. Eriugena would, no doubt, seize upon this principle to say that every man has by nature an equal and rational claim to eternal life. It would be hard to see how one could lose this claim, seeing how he shares it with all. He would have to forfeit it willingly, something that his rationality would not allow. Thus, we must conclude that the argument for salvation of the damned through any conception of natural justice is very strong.

A fourth conception of justice holds that it is simply a human contrivance. This can take many forms, such as justice laid down by a ruling authority, as in Hobbes; justice laid down by all, as in social contract theory; justice laid down by the strong, as in the Republic via Thrasymachus; or even justice laid down by the weak, as in Nietzsche. In all cases, justice is understood as a subordinate value, and therefore not essential to human nature. Justice is merely an intermediate step on the way to achieving some other good, such as pleasure or welfare, which is essential to human nature. If we could attain that essential good through a more effective means than through justice, we could dispense with justice altogether. It appears to us that all the points made in the above paragraph pertaining to the carrying-over of justice from this world to the next are equally valid. Justice as a human contrivance is all the more removed from divine justice than natural law justice, and is meant to apply only within a specific time and culture. All the more, can it not be shown herein that salvation for the damned is unjust?
Additionally, it appears that the inferential arguments in favor of salvation for the damned are even stronger. If justice is merely a subordinate value, and salvation is the highest value, then we can dispense with justice altogether. We need not even consider whether or not salvation for this or that man is just, for salvation is all that matters. Thus, in practical terms, justice conceived as a mere human convention gives us our strongest argument yet.

A fifth conception we should consider is that of distributive justice, but before doing so we note that all of these theories take as their starting point the notion that there is something that needs to be distributed. In other words, there is some desire, or perhaps a demand, that exceeds the available supply. This is not the case for the God we have presupposed for our study. Instead, the opposite is true; the supply exceeds the demand, and exceeds it in infinite measure. In short, there is no need to ration the supply. In fact, the need is to expend the supply in the most excessive manner we can. Still, we consider these briefly because of the inherent intent behind all the theories, which is to maximize human good. Egalitarianism seeks to distribute goods equally. This may include wealth, privilege, respect, education, opportunity, etc. What better way to distribute equally than to give everything to each and all? The Word accomplishes this in the raising of all. Marxism seeks to distribute according to need. It recognizes no reality beyond material reality. We do not agree, but again our purpose is not to criticize Marxism, but to show that the salvation of the damned is just within Marxism. We have posited for our study that there is reality beyond the material. If we need freedom from hunger, from the elements, from unemployment, all of which are temporary and guaranteed under Marxism, we surely need freedom from damnation, which is eternal. The Word
accomplishes this in the raising of all men. Meritocratic theories hold that justice must be distributed according to talent, hard work, or some combination of the two. This is a somewhat more difficult argument, so we make it by its counter; none are worthy of salvation on their own merit. This is somewhat problematic, for it seems to imply that on this level, damnation is at least conceptually possible. We have never claimed that damnation is impossible, just that no one is damned, because grace has saved all men from it. Viewed another way, we can agree that love can fail in some, perhaps even most relationships. Indeed, the very possibility of failure can sometimes make relationships better, and this would include friendships and even marriages. However, it cannot include the relationship of parent to child. Even if the child fails, the parent cannot fail and still be a parent. Thus, men can fail, but God cannot. This we have accepted as a presupposition. Since we have already accepted that some are saved, we can eliminate from our consideration all notions that salvation for the damned is unjust according to meritocratic theories. Allow us to return to the parable of the Prodigal Son. Neither the prodigal nor the obedient son enjoyed their son-ship due to any merit on their own parts. Eriugena would claim that it came to the former via grace and to the latter via gift.

In his famous work *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls claimed that justice should be distributed based on a total and complete system of impartiality which was directed forward (Rawls, 1989, 248-251). In it, we are asked to imagine ourselves being born outside of all society in a completely abstract and sterile environment. Then we would be randomly placed within society to live our lives. He reasoned that the society we should try to craft is one in which we would be willing to live in any one particular subset of the whole. Such a society would be supremely fair, for we could fashion it with no biases,
social standing, or privilege of any kind. Presuming that no one would elect to take their own chances, we could all expect to receive an equal share of labor, food, health care, education, entertainment, police, fire protection and everything else. In other words, we would rearrange all social and economic inequalities so as to lift our whole society to its highest good. As unattainable as this seems as a goal for justice in this world, we must admit that this scheme is exactly what Eriugena claims will happen in the next. In granting the equal resurrection to all, the Word has conveyed all for each. His distribution is equal and, furthermore, it is infinite.

Robert Nozick wrote an equally famous critique of *A Theory of Justice*, entitled *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* in which he argued that fairness had nothing to do with some ideal conception exclusive to any considerations of history (Nozick, 1989, 338-340). Rather, Nozick held that the only things that made any transaction fair were the conditions under which it was carried out. Any gain is just if it is acquired through labor on unowned things, or transferred through gift, contract, or sale. Acquisitions made in any other way, such as Rawls had advocated, would be stealing. Very few of Nozick’s claims apply here since they concern only material things. However, one important idea is worth mentioning, that of a free gift. The Word accomplishes this through the resurrection of the damned, hence it is just.

Lastly, we return to the two competing theories on punishment in recompense for wrong-doing, utilitarianism and retribution. The former holds that justice must be dispensed with so as to maximize the total welfare of all. Justice is not a virtue in itself, but only as a means to attain the highest common welfare. Individual punishments meted out to evil-doers are never good, always evil, but they are a lesser evil than letting them
go unpunished. The argument is that punishing wrong-doers protects the common welfare because it discourages lawlessness in individuals. In other words, men are not hanged for stealing horses, they are hanged so that horses will not be stolen. It is a completely forward-looking system wherein no effort is made to let the punishment suit the crime. Alarmingly, there may be some times in which it is appropriate to punish some people who have committed no crime at all under this system. The only concern is to maximize the common welfare. If the utilitarian could gain a just society by punishing no one, he would do so. Therefore, for our topic, salvation of the damned is just in the resurrection. The Word has secured the highest common welfare for eternity.

Most problematic for us is the retributive theory of justice, for it seeks to punish only in reaction to, and in accordance with, the severity of wrongful action. Under this theory, authorities do not punish in order to effect a beneficial future. They punish only against past offenses committed upon an existing commonwealth. Thus, retributive-style punishment always looks back and balances the punishment against the wrong-doing. It seems to be in accord with the common notion of justice, but utilitarians argue that it is nothing more than revenge in disguise: society upon the individual as opposed to individual upon individual (Bentham, Prin. Mor., 1967, C. 2, pt. 14, 797). We have two arguments here. The first is that all are worthy of damnation, yet some do not receive it. Thus, the salvation of some but not others seems unfair, for all rightly deserve damnation. The second, and more convincing argument, is that the punishment does not fit the crime. Damnation is eternal, therefore infinitely worse than any and all finite punishments. Therefore, it could never be considered just under retributive theory.
Modes of Punishment

Scripture is replete with references to eternal punishment, and so is the world in which we are living, so we must consider its character in the world to come. We have already noted Eriugena’s claim that God does not punish the things he has made. He merely allows them to punish themselves. So how does this notion of punishment, surely an evil thing, accord with the world to come in which all of creation is restored to a unity with God? This is the one area in our study in which we take issue with Eriugena. It appears to us that the Periphyseon is too long by about one hundred paragraphs; that the work would have been much more unified had this section been left out. Moreover, Eriugena’s claim that some men suffer eternally, if indeed that is his claim, severely undercuts his theory of apokatastasis. Eriugena’s comments on the nature and manner of eternal punishment are inconsistent and perplexing. First, before contesting this point on eternal punishment, we shall establish exactly what Eriugena’s position is.

As noted earlier, the incarnation of the Word is the point of departure, the origination of all creatures visible and invisible, according to Eriugena. It is not only the defining moment in the history of man, but the one event from which all creation springs. The first Biblical man is always understood in relation to the Word, as is every other man. “[T]he Word of God, in whom all things are created according to their causes and subsist, descended in His Divinity into the effects of the causes which subsist in Him, that is into the sensible world…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 911 D). There was only one reason for this Word to become material: so that He could recall the effects back into their primordial causes where they could live eternally and immutably. Had He not done this, had His wisdom not filtered into the effects, the primordial causes would have
perished, for no effect can subsist apart from its cause. The incarnation, in preserving the effects, also preserves the primordial causes (Eriugena, Bk. V, 913 C). Neither man, irrational beast, plant, nor inanimate object can resist their own nature, which is an image of some divine exemplar. It therefore follows that whatever evil is in them leaves them in inverse proportion as they approach that exemplar and leaves them completely as they find their rest in it. Eriugena, as always, calls upon the liberal arts, and finds a good analogy in astronomy. The sun, being many times the size of the earth, floods it with light. If the sun were infinitely large and the earth infinitely small, there would be no shadow at all (Eriugena, Bk. V, 918 A). Had Eriugena known of the phenomenon of black holes, a star whose mass is so compressed not even light can escape, he could have referenced it, for that analogy would be a fitting example in the created order to demonstrate the object’s ultimate rest. The entire point of this discussion is to highlight the question in the fullest possible way: once an object, in this case a man, has found his divinely appointed rest, why punish him? The only possible motive would seem to be that God has the attribute of vengeance, and this condition is one that neither Eriugena nor any of his sources are willing to accept.

This question represents the ultimate contest between reason and authority in all of the Periphyseon. Right reason dictates that the totality of human nature is taken up into the Word of God, and the essential capacity of resurrection does not permit anyone to perish or be eternally punished. However, the authority of the Old and New Testaments, clearly threaten eternal damnation for the devil and all his allies (Eriugena, Bk. V, 924 A). We must employ reason in the most abstract manner to study this problem. Even Holy Scripture, the highest authority known to man, derives from reason,
thus reason has priority. So first we must go back and be sure that our reasoning is correct. The divine mind of God contains all things (Eriugena, Bk. V, 925 A). Of course all of our referenced authorities are in agreement on this point. Moreover, scripture itself affirms this; “From Him and through Him and in Him and for Him are all things” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 925 A). What is meant by this, according to St. Ambrose and Dionysius, is that the Divine Mind knows all things by a wisdom that constitutes their very being. The Divine Mind knew them before they were brought into being, sustains them in being, and moves them to return to their primary causes. God does not know things as we do, by studying them after they exist, but rather they exist because He knows them (Eriugena, Bk. V, 925 D). Therefore, God knows no sin and no evil, for if He did they would have substantial existence and would have a cause. We may now conclude that God does not know evil men, demons, or even the devil. He, of course, knows them in substance, for that is the part of them that He created, the good part, but He does not know the evil part. God is completely unknowing of the accidental evil that they have taken upon themselves (Eriugena, Bk. V, 926 A).

Evil, death and unhappiness are contrary to the nature of both man and demon, for they are not created in the cause of all things, nor do they in any manner participate in it. We contrast Eriugena’s view against that of the iconic image of the demon in contemporary culture, such as The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis or “The Devil and Daniel Webster” by Stephen Vincent Benet. In these personifications, demons can be intelligent, hopeful, talented, secure in friendship, and happy. Moreover, the demons who have fallen the farthest, or taken on the most perversity, can be the happiest. They even experience joy in their very human relationships of family, and they delight in corrupting
their own family members. This arrangement simply cannot be right according to Eriugena, for the essential nature of even a demon is good. In the end, the better part of their nature, that part having its origin in the divine Word, will overcome the accidental part and they will live and be restored toward it, rather than away from it. “For the Divine Goodness shall overcome evil, eternal life shall swallow up death, blessedness shall absorb unhappiness” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 927 A). God never punishes that which He has created. Some would argue that the devil did not choose evil of his free will, but that he was created of evil substance and therefore has no inherent, essential goodness. This might be a good argument for the ancient Babylonian or Manichean, but not for Eriugena. He insists, just as Augustine did, that God made all things, and moreover that all that He made was “very good.” Therefore, the devil had to have been made good and then turned to evil of his own free volition. A wise and more subtle interpretation of this problem is to hold that even now after the corruption of so many millions of souls the universe is still ordered to the good. Thus the devil’s handiwork, though extensive, is nonetheless finite and his evil nature clearly circumscribed by his good nature. To support this theory, Eriugena references the Commentary on Luke by St. Ambrose (Eriugena, Bk. V, 928 B-C). Therein, the demons pray that they may enter the swine, and are not forced against their will. They cannot bear the brilliance of the Word and they fear their eternal destruction. Thus, they ask to enter the swine knowing full well that they will perish in their earthly lives and receive their just penalty. Appropriately, the Word grants their plea, they enter the swine, die a mortal death, and presumably are recalled into the unity of the Word just like everything else (Eriugena, Bk. V, 928 C). This is the fulfillment which is complete at the end of the world, that modes of punishment are not ends in
themselves, but rather they are the intermediaries which consume themselves. Evil vanishes, unhappiness turns into blessedness, and death dies. According to Origen, as written in his Treatise on First Principles, “the goodness of God through Christ will restore his entire creation to one end, even his enemies...” (Origen, First Prin., 1936, Bk. I, Ch. 4, 52). “The destruction of the last enemy is to be understood not in the sense that his substance which is made by God, perishes, but that the hostile intention which proceeds not from God but from himself, shall be done away with. He shall be destroyed then not in the sense that he will cease to be but that he will cease to be an enemy and death” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 930 C).

We could pause at this point and inquire concerning modes of punishment for earthly judges. Do not all jurists, school administrators, teachers, coaches, athletic referees, and anyone who metes out punishment, harsh or trivial, try to punish the wrongness of the offender, as opposed to the offender himself? Of course they punish the nature, through some assessment against the body, for in their earthly limitations that is all they can do. In this world, the evil will constrains the essential nature of us all; that is the very meaning of what it is to live in this world, for the soul has descended into the corporeal body. However, to the extent that earthly judges are able to do so, they seek to punish only the will. We note that even under the retributive mode, the punishment theory outlined above which seems to be the most severe in intention, the punishment is assigned so as not to violate the dignity of the person. The spirit of the judge who seeks justice is first and foremost one of correction, not vindictiveness. “Even worldly judges seek to punish not the nature of the criminal, but his crime. It is only because they cannot punish the crime in itself in isolation from the nature that is its subject that they
have to punish the body together with the crime” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 943 D). The best example here is the human parent, who better than any other judge, looks to the heart of the wrong-doer. In the ideal, we turn again to the father of the prodigal son, who saw that the evil will of his son was completely gone. Therefore, the just sentence, death with pigs, was pardoned and the mode of punishment altered to the extent that death became life and more than life; nakedness and hunger were turned into a fine robe and a fatted calf. Modes of punishment must always yield to modes of justice, which in the end amounts to restoration of the Word.

Yet, there is a big difference between any earthly judge and the divine judge. Whereas the earthly judge cannot confine his penalty to the evil will and must punish the nature of the criminal as part and parcel of the crime, the divine judge can. In truth, this is small work for Him; He merely shows His goodness and the rational nature of the wrong-doer leads him to choose his own punishment, submit to it, and rise above it. This is just as the evil demons looked on the brilliance of the Word and asked to enter the swine and die an earthly death. Moreover, while no earthly judge, not even the parent, can fully comprehend another’s heart, the divine judge can. This is so because in a very real sense the soul of the criminal derives its origin, its being, and its continuance from the soul of the judge. The criminal goes beyond himself in essence in the purity of what was originally intended. Moreover, the truth that binds this relationship is itself dispensed by the judge. We speculate that the very ancient relationship of king to subject, where the king was very good and the subject very loyal, probably captured this divine relationship fairly well. Today, the reality is still well manifested in the ideal of the human family, which perhaps cannot be shown to be eternal, however, it can well be shown to have
endured through recorded history and shows no sign of corruption even to this day.

The discussion concerning punishment goes on for some length in Book V of the *Periphyseon*, with the Alumnus never being completely convinced that the tension between the right reason of the ultimate return and the authority of the Old and New Testament’s teaching on eternal punishment is completely resolved. “How can the torments of the damned exist without a subject to afflict?” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 940 B). The Nutritor responds that there seems to be three ways in which some punishment could be eternally suffered. Either: 1) that which has no existence in nature can be punished in itself without there being a subject to punish, 2) there is some subject in nature which undergoes punishment, or 3) that which is punished does not exist in itself but is punished in some subject which exists and is free of all punishment. We must reject the first, for a subject that does not exist cannot be punished. We reject the second for God creates in nature and does not punish that which He has created. This leaves the third possibility, the one Eriugena accepts and confusedly tries too hard to reconcile with scripture (Eriugena, Bk. V, 940 C). It seems to us that the tension is still unresolved and that therefore we need to err closer to option one, hold fast to the authority of reason so diligently manifested in option two, reject option three altogether, and look for a better interpretation of scripture. This does not seem out of line, especially considering the fact that Eriugena has all along taken extreme liberties with scripture. This seems much more appropriate for our study. In our view, the trouble with option three seems to be that Eriugena is here maintaining that the thoughts of the soul can be punished without the soul itself being punished, a most unlikely position. We hold firm to the notion that the thoughts of the soul make up the soul. “The lawless will of wicked men and angels,
smitten with the memory and conscience of its evil ways shall abide in torment…”  
(Eriugena, Bk. V, 944 D). The vain and temporal desires that the wicked long for in this work shall all perish, yet their memory will remain in their once evil minds. These evil souls, now restored to their primal condition, are haunted forever by the memory of the evil things they can no longer have. Eriugena quotes from Chapter Sixteen of the Ambigua of Maximus, who holds that the evil “… make to themselves in the affectation of their minds a substance of that which it is not, and thus become themselves in all things like the phantasies they invent” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 945 A). A phantasy is much like a theophany, however, the former can be an image of evil, whereas the latter is always an image of good. Those who invent the phantasies shall become like them, never finding truth, tormented forever in false dreams. The body of the evil man is resurrected in the Word, it loses its evil, accidental nature, yet some of it still suffers damnation. These are the most perplexing passages in the entire Periphyseon and we cannot agree with anything of the sort.

To begin with, we challenge the notion of phantasy altogether. It cannot be like the idea of a theophany, for the latter is a manifestation and an image of something, while the former, as explained, can be a manifestation and image of nothing. By our own standard, evil has no existence except as a privation of the good. Thus, a phantasy might exist in a temporal mind constrained by this world of time and space, but it could not exist in a mind restored to full rationality. Secondly, we must take issue with Maximus when he says “they make to themselves in the affectation of their minds a substance of that which is not” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 945 A). By definition, this notion is creation ex nihilo, which is the province of God alone in the first division of nature. We recall that
man is in the third division of nature and that, strictly speaking, he does not create.

Thirdly, as noted earlier, we fail to see how the soul can be tormented in its thoughts but not in its substance. This is akin to saying that a body can be tormented in its motion but not in its corporeal state. It is in the essential nature of a body to move, just as it is in the essential nature of the mind to think. Fourthly, it is the nature of the rational mind to pursue truth. Therefore, we fail to see how a mind restored to full rationality could in any way abide in “false dreams.” And finally, this idea of torment posited in this very limited text in Book V is not in keeping with the overall context of the Periphyseon.

A much simpler solution is available to us, which has been intimated in practically every parable referenced in the work. The evil is entirely dissipated in the goodness of the Word. We must remember that the truth, so clearly apparent in the seven liberal arts, is derivative of that one truth that “lighteth every man” (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. XVII, 100). Every man can rightly recognize the truth manifested through the arts in this world, thus all the more will he recognize their source in the next when his rationality is brought to completeness. The most fitting punishment counted as just under all the aforementioned schemes is for the evil man to forfeit his evil will. He wants to sin, thus the highest mode of punishment must be to take away his desire to sin, or better said, to allow him to take it away himself. This will, of course, render him happy, and through the entire process God’s justice to himself rises to infinite measure. To quote in summation, “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34, KJV). If God does not remember their sin, it seems quite unlikely that they will. To the extent that they do, it can only be remembered with respect to the present countenance of full restoration.
We wish to contrast our position with that of Donald Duclow and Paul Dietrich as laid out in a contemporary essay entitled “Hell and Damnation in Eriugena.” They note that commentators have preferred to stress the positive theme of God’s salvation for all humanity. Their intention is to “…correct this imbalance and look closely at Eriugena’s views on hell and damnation” (Duclow, Dietrich, 2002, 347). They have correctly noted that both the Treatise on Divine Predestination and the Periphyseon are remarkably similar with regard to the explanation of eternal punishment given by Eriugena. We agree that most commentators have chosen to stress the positive theme of God’s salvation for all humanity; however, in our view, they have not stressed it enough. We wish to correct this imbalance, and maintain that both works should be interpreted even more positively than they are.

Duclow and Dietrich begin their essay referencing Eriugena’s high reliance on Augustine, especially the latter’s On True Religion and On Free Choice of the Will. These works stress the ultimate simplicity of God: “…if the will of God is in God, the will of God is , therefore, God. For him there is no distinction between being and willing; rather for him being is identical with willing” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 2, pt. 1, 12). In other words, there is but one predestination, and that is to the good. All evil is nothing more than a privation of the good. “…[T]he cause of all evils is the perverse notion of a rational substance misusing the free choice of its will” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 5, pt. 5, 36). “…[E]very defect comes out of nothingness…” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 7, pt. 5, 48). We can agree that evil, insofar as we understand it, must be resolved in some way at the world’s end. It cannot be resolved in the Fourth Division of nature, because everything there initially came from the First Division. It
cannot be resolved in the Second Division for the same reason, or the Third, because that division will end. It can only abide so long as the Third Division continues, then it too must return to that from which it came: nothingness. Our objection to the contemporary article under discussion is that it treats nothingness as something.

Early in their essay, Duclow and Dietrich quote from Chapter 19 of the Treatise and claim that this quote anticipates the more thorough treatment of damnation that is given in Book V of the Periphyseon.

“The bodies of the ungodly, that is of perverse men and angels, will endure the punishments of eternal fire in such a way that the integrity of their substance will in no way perish, their beauty will in no way fail, their natural soundness will remain; finally all the good things of their nature by a wonderful ordering will shine bright for the adornment of the universe, except for that happiness of which they will be deprived, which is not from nature but from grace” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 19, pt. 3, 112).

We agree that this quotation anticipates the more complete explanation given in the Periphyseon. However, we note that in the quotation, Eriugena is talking about the “bodies of the ungodly.” They will be preserved in a most integral, beautiful, and eternal way. It is merely the evil cravings of these bodies, which are initially and essentially nothing, which will be punished. In other words, God does not punish the person, He punishes the non-being of a person. To give an example, it is well known that Beethoven was deaf in his later years. Deafness is surely a privation for a composer, even though Beethoven was able to deal with it. What is the most fitting way to punish his deafness?
We will not punish him in his substance, but only his deafness. After all, his deafness is a privation that prevented him from being a greater composer than he already was. God will take his deafness away: will he remember it? Perhaps he will, but his memory surely could not force his soul into an unhappy condition. On the contrary, it seems to us that his memory will prompt him to even higher happiness, for this restoration “… by a wonderful ordering will shine bright for the adornment of the universe….” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 19, pt. 3, 112). Will the privation of deafness be punished? Surely, and eternally, it will be punished.

Duclow and Dietrich cast their entire argument in terms of either unhappiness or ignorance for the human soul, which either suffers it or enjoys it. We will first deal with the former, and for the human soul the condition of happiness turns on the notion of phantasy as advanced by Eriugena, a term that must be explained in some detail.

Phantasies are images or appearances taken from visible or invisible forms which are presented to and impressed upon the mind (Eriugena, Per., Bk. V, 962 C). They may be true or false. A theophany, an appearance of God, is one example of a phantasy, but there are many others. All phantasies are good in themselves, for they arise out of nature, and all nature is good. False phantasies, although good in themselves, are not as good as true ones. They arise from the “… fictitious bodies of unclean spirits which become manifest to the senses of men whom they deceive and should rather be called shades than phantasies” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 963 A). All phantasies flow into the mind as two streams flow into a river. The first stream derives from sensible objects and the second from intelligible ones. It is the first stream which concerns us here, for this is where the seeds of damnation are sown, not in the human soul but rather in the will. Indeed, not the
entirety of the first stream is of a corrupting force, but only the false part, that which Eriugena refers to as “shades.” Evil has neither cause nor substance, thus it has no attractive force in itself. The only way it can seduce is to disguise itself as something good, hence the falseness of the shade (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 828 A).

Eriugena gives the example of two men, one wise and the other foolish, contemplating a beautiful golden vessel. Both men see the same object, both receive the same phantasy, and each stores that phantasy in his memory. However, the wise man, while pondering the phantasy, refers its beauty to that from which it ultimately came, namely God. For him, this is a simple mental process undiluted by the poison of lust. The foolish man is altogether different, because his contemplation of the object is not simple, but protracted. He does not refer the beauty of the object to its maker. In fact, he does not refer the beauty of the object at all because the beauty eludes him, and he is filled with avarice. “Directly, he has absorbed the phantasy of the vessel, he blazes with the fire of cupidity, he is consumed, he is poisoned, he dies…” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 828 C). Notice that for both men the phantasy is pleasant and good. However, for the foolish man, the contemplation of the phantasy, when mixed with the greed of an evil will, becomes colored and distorted. In a sense, the simple phantasy initially received in the mind of the foolish man is doubled. His selfishness was given form, for it was mixed with something good in such a way that what was completely evil, the will, appeared good (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 828 C-D).

While we agree with the isolated interpretation of this passage as presented by Duclow and Dietrich, we do not agree that they can infer eternal damnation of the human soul from it. In this example, Eriugena is talking about evil as experienced in this world,
not the next. All mortal men live presently in a continuum between good and evil, none being wholly one or the other. There are varying degrees of the wise man and the foolish man in all of us. In other words, we are all prone to irrational motion, as evidenced by the fact that we are all subject to death. Eriugena’s example is a substantive commentary on evil, not the broader implications of it, including damnation. The most that can be inferred from this example is that all mortal men who have a desire for the temporal, in other words all of us, must die. The last paragraph of his example proves this statement: “And it appears that this [irrational] notion comes not from human nature but is induced from outside…. [I]t is tinged and mingled with good so as to deceive the lustful affections of the carnal senses, and thus to destroy them by death” (Eriugena, 1 Bk. IV 829 A).

“Damnation intensifies this dialectic of cupidity and phantasy. For while in this life a lust for sensible things can occasionally be satisfied, in the eschaton it brings only torment. When all things return to their causes, the sensible world ends” (Duclow and Dietrich, 2002, 358). The writers recall the foolish, greedy man infatuated with the golden vessel. He may actually secure the vessel for himself in this life and temporarily satisfy his greed. However, in the eschaton, the fool and his desire will still exist, yet the vessel will not. Therefore, he will be eternally tormented because his lust cannot be assuaged.

“The phantasies of the damned punish them in another deeper sense as well” (Duclow and Dietrich, 2002, 359). That method of punishment is deprivation of the truth. “…[O]ur sole quest should be joy in the truth, which is Christ, and our sole dread the deprivation of it, for that is the one cause of all eternal suffering” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 989
A). Again, we agree with the statement made by Eriugena, but not with the extension of it to include the notion of damnation for the human soul. The statement is not a substantive one about punishment in the eschaton, but rather it is one concerning truth. The claim of the contemporary essay examined here is that the wicked will be just as constrained from seeing truth in the next world as they are in this one. “In fact, there is little difference between the punishments that the damned shall suffer for eternity and those they endure here and now” (Duclow and Dietrich, 2002, 360). We would agree that this claim is “distinctly modern.” We can even agree that this relatively small portion of the Periphyseon, roughly one hundred paragraphs out of four thousand, four hundred, is a fair interpretation of Eriugena’s writing. Our counter-assertion is that it is an anomaly within the Periphyseon and does not comport with the overall theme of apokatastasis, which is so otherwise apparent.

The reason, or reasons, for what seems to us to be a contextual contradiction within the Periphyseon, is beyond the scope of our study, and could be the topic of a separate dissertation. We do note that Eriugena’s own writings, considered, over time, seem to take on a softening tone toward damnation. The earlier Treatise employs the most vicious and unforgiving rhetoric. Therein, Gottschalk is accused of being a heretic and servant of the devil (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 1, pt. 4, 10), and Eriugena states that he justly deserves “to burn in oil and pitch” (Eriugena, Ch. 3, pt. 7, 23). The language of the Periphyseon is more moderate, and the articulation of hell and damnation is essentially confined to the one hundred paragraphs on which Duclow and Dietrich concentrate for their essay. The Homily is the most gracious of all in its tone and message, saying that the Word is the light and life of each and every human being. We
interpret this claim to include not only human nature in general, but every particular contained in it. The “Word [does not] wish to forsake human nature; nor will he ever forsake it” (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. XIII, 93). If our interpretation of the general intent of the Periphyseon is correct, i.e. that all are restored to happiness, then Eriugena’s teaching would have been considered somewhat controversial at the time, as indeed it still is. The medieval period is well known as a time in which controversial views were not kindly tolerated, nor those who advanced them charitably dealt with. Still, we cannot think that Eriugena was couching his work in order to avoid any punitive consequences, as he seems to have enjoyed the favor, therefore the protection, of Charles the Bald. It seems more likely to us that Eriugena is simply refining his own philosophy and constantly trying to ensure that his more general principles are consistent as they descend into particulars. Moreover, there is the continual difficulty of interpreting seemingly contradictory scriptural passages in such a way that the guiding principle of reason is not violated.

Our claim is that the specific paragraphs which pertain to hell and damnation cannot be brought into compliance with the general theme of restoration as a whole. If we are wrong, then there is really very little of Eriugena’s philosophy that is unique; indeed, his views on damnation are in the end very similar to those advanced by Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. If we are right, then there is eternal hope and assurance for man.

First, we address the issue of the restoration of human nature in the universal versus that of the individual. As we have stated and referenced above, there can be no doubt that Eriugena held that human nature as a whole is restored to happiness. Thus, the
only question to be examined is whether each man contained within human nature is so restored. For example, one attribute of the universal idea of a chair is that it is a piece of furniture that can be sat upon. Does that mean that the activity of being sat upon is realized in every individual chair? Of course the answer is no. However, let us consider the universal idea of a runner. One of the attributes of the universal idea is that a runner is one who runs. Does this mean that the activity of running is realized in every individual runner? It must be, for if a person does not run, we cannot call him a runner. Our position is that happiness is like the latter example rather than the former. Augustine, writing in the *Confessions*, holds that happiness for man is an end, as opposed to an activity. “How then do I seek the happy life? For I do not possess it until I can say, ‘Enough! It is there’” (Augustine, *Con.*, 1960, Bk. X, Ch. 20, 248). It is something that all men seek and no one can entirely will against. Moreover, unless men knew it, they would not desire it. Hence it follows that the happy life is already in the memory of man, collectively, as well as individually (Augustine, *Con.*, 1960, Bk. X, Ch. 20, 249). This idea is reinforced in Book Two of *On Free Choice of the Will*. “Insofar as all men seek the happy life, they do not err” (Augustine, *Free Choice*, 1964, Bk. II, pt. 9, 58). It is even equated with wisdom. “…[B]efore we are happy… we know confidently and say without hesitation that we wish to be happy so, before we are wise, we have an idea of wisdom in our minds” (Augustine, *Free Choice*, 1964, Bk. II, pt. 9, 58). The idea of the happy life is impressed upon the mind before one is happy. So it seems to us that the happy life is such an integral part of man that he cannot be man, certainly not restored man, without it. This is not so much a problem for Augustine because for him, man is not restored. As noted earlier, Augustine believes that many suffer eternal fire and separation. We view it as
quite a problem for Eriugena. There is, for Eriugena, a sense in which the evil will precedes the knowledge of happiness, else man would not have fallen in the first place. However, man’s love of happiness is even prior to that, for why else did he exercise his free will but to secure happiness, something already in his memory? In other words, if Eriugena holds that man is to be restored “as [he was] in the beginning” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 1004 A), that would not be his condition after he lost his memory, but before he fell. It would be his condition before he lost his memory. Of course, all these arguments are meant in a causal way, not in a temporal one. By this, we simply mean that time, for mortals, begins with the fall, not prior to it. The sequences of events outlined above are not in time, but rather in priority.

We next address the issue of whether or not man can be punished in his happiness through phantasy. Let us return to Eriugena’s example of the foolish, greedy man who covets the golden vessel in this life. Can he still desire it in the next life, knowing that it no longer exists? We do not think so. Even in this life, if the golden vessel were melted down into bars of gold, and if some vast deposit of gold were found so as to make the bars worthless, the greedy fool would be made wise. If such were to happen in this life, that would be an even more persuasive argument that he would be wise in the next. We ask our readers to consider any object that they have lustfully desired in the past which does not exist in the present. Is it still desirable? It is true that people are unhappy when they lose money in the stock market, but this is temporary unhappiness. It is true that people cry at funerals for lost loved ones. This is different though; for in this case those who suffer lamentation suffer not because they lusted in an evil way, but because they loved in a good way. In other words, the deceased person made them better, not worse.
Moreover, generally speaking, the one who grieves suffers not so much because the object of their love no longer exists, but because that object is beyond their presence. Consider the death of one of the world’s most beautiful women, Marilyn Monroe. The man who never knew her, but merely desired the seductive image of her, did not cry at her funeral. But her husband, Joe DiMaggio, cried, because she made him better.

We now turn to one of Eriugena’s own examples, that of the ten lepers (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 847 A-B). All ten are afflicted with leprosy, thus all ten are unhappy. All ten are cleansed and made well, thus all ten are restored to a happy life. It is surely true that only one really seems to appreciate his restoration, and we can reasonably conclude that he alone gains the ultimate sense of beatitude. However, all ten are redeemed as men and made happy.

A more subtle explanation to this quandary might be that there are two types of happiness: one that inheres through nature, and one that inheres through grace. Eriugena may be implying this when he says that the ungodly will be deprived of their happiness “which is not from nature but from grace” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pre., 1998, Ch. 19, pt. 3 126). An even more subtle interpretation could be that through the very act of punishment, i.e. the removal of the evil will, man is made happy. The latter seems the more fitting, and it corresponds to the character of God as Eriugena has described Him. God can have no contraries in substance. Thus, it seems somehow very appropriate that His purposes are fulfilled through evil intentions just as much as they are fulfilled through good ones. “For the Divine Goodness shall consume evil, eternal life shall swallow up death, blessedness shall absorb unhappiness” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 926 D).

Lastly, we note that although the Word is the archetype of every man, He
descended into an individual man. “[F]or the sake of humanity [he] became a human being among human beings” (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. XVI, 99). It seems to us that happiness must be restored to every man individually. “[A]s He granted to all men equally that they should be, so He shall grant to all men equally that they shall rise again and possess the likeness of the angelic nature” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 986 A). We do not see how it would be possible for someone to possess the likeness of angelic nature and to be unhappy. This mortal life, with its attending unhappiness, would not have occurred had man not fallen, for he would indeed be an angel (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 780 B) and (Moran, 1989, 200). Some would argue whether men have any likeness to angels; however, this is exactly what Eriugena maintains. Like animals, even angels are created through man.
Chapter V: The Logical Necessity of Salvation

*Extended Platonism*

Thus far, we have conducted our study in the manner of a philosopher working with an historical text. Context has been given so as to ground Eriugena within his own time and culture, as well as to establish his own philosophical background. Much of our work has been in the form of exposition, and still we continue in this mode so as to grasp one of the more difficult and complex concepts of the *Periphyseon*, which we call extended Platonism. Of course, Plato maintained that a world of forms had a reality independent of our senses. This world of pure being contained the archetypes of our sensory world of becoming. All the objects that we see here in this world, every physical thing, is but an image of that which exists in the world of pure being (Magee, 1998, 27). Thus, we could not have real knowledge of this world for it was always changing; the only way to attain certain knowledge was to study the archetypes, the forms in the ideal world. Eriugena goes a step further than Plato, for in the *Periphyseon* there is a closer connection between the forms and their images. In fairness, Plato’s connection between the forms and their images is close. However, God, the forms, and the images maintain a certain independence because in a primordial sense they are all different. As noted earlier, in the *Timaeus* God is the supreme craftsman. He fashions the world from preexisting materials according to an eternal pattern (Plato, *Tim.,* 1949, pt. 28-29, 12-13). For our philosopher, the connection is closer because, in a primordial sense, there is only God as the first division of nature. Thus the theophany has a higher ontological status for Eriugena than the image has for Plato. Yet for our philosopher, it is not as though God is the less in closely tying Him to His creation, but that He is more. In other words, in
manifesting Himself through His acts, God can be thought of as actually going beyond Himself. In the parlance of negative theology, God is said to be beyond beauty, beyond truth, beyond goodness, beyond being, etc. He is also beyond space and time. In reading Plato, one almost has the feeling that his world of being exists just beyond, perhaps higher than, our world, and merely extended in our time for perhaps another 10,000 years. For Eriugena, God is here and now, as well as beyond.

Plato reinforces these notions with long, physically enduring analogies such as the cave and the myth of Er (Plato, Rep., 1968, 614 B). To be fair again, Plato does warn that his analogies, such as the cave, are simply that and are not meant to be taken as a literal description of the intelligible (Plato, Rep., 1949, 514 A). Still, one never gets this sense of extended duration and locality from Eriugena who is always careful not to circumscribe God in space and time. As noted earlier, God is an infinite division of nature who exists in infinite dimensions, not just four (three of space, one of time). In some mystical way, placing God in the infinity beyond our world brings Him closer to it. This communion has very important implications for our study to the extent that we can actually make the argument that there is a logical necessity for the salvation of the damned.

-All men are saved.
-The damned men are men.
-Therefore the damned men are saved.

We see that this is a valid syllogism according to the science of deductive logic. Given the truth of these two premises, the conclusion follows: all the categories of the syllogism fall neatly within Aristotle’s ten. There are some Christian writers who might
doubt the minor premise, saying that human nature is now corrupted, thus less human. However, we have sufficiently dealt with this objection above. Few could doubt the minor premise, so we only concern ourselves with the major premise, “all men are saved.” Of course, we could never prove this by induction, so again we resort to deduction and the notion of extended Platonism. This mandates another investigation of Part I, God as that which creates and is not created. This first division of nature can be understood to be and yet not to be, according to all five of Eriugena’s modes of interpretation. However, the one that concerns us most at this point is the third mode: things in which the visible plenitude of this world is made up, and in their causes in the most secret folds of nature, which precede them (Eriugena, Bk. I, 444 C). God is understood as having His own being “in that first and one man whom He made in His image He established all men at the same time…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 A). This “first and one” man is the Word who precedes all effects, however He can just as well be said to be made in all men. In other words, from a completely external perspective, which of course we can never have, for we cannot circumscribe Him in time and space, God subsists in His own being. However, from the perspective of either God or man, Eriugena maintains a kind of process theology where each needs the other. The first division of nature, God as creator, is uncreated in essence, but can just as well be understood as being created and we may not casually dismiss this subtle tension.

“…[T]he motion of the Divine nature is to be understood as nothing else but the purpose of the Divine Will to establish the things that are to be made. Therefore, it is said in all things that the Divine Nature is being made…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 453 C-D). In God, desiring, willing, acting, being are all one and the same. The motion of the Divine Will
is directed to this purpose; that it leads all things calling them from nothing into something. Thus, all other things are said to be and to be good through their participation in this one truly existing, truly good source. The very definition of man, the primordial cause, seems to have some measure of dependence on man, the effect, for causes are not without effects, just as effects are not without causes. By this, we mean that the primordial cause of man resides in individual men.

“For when it [Divine Nature] is said that it creates itself the true meaning is that it is establishing the nature of things. For the creation of itself … is … the manifestation of itself in something…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 455 B). Moreover, the connection is more than a simple coupling of God and man but an interwoven lattice between the persons of the Trinity and the essentials of created things. Their nature is understood as derived from the Father, their wisdom from the Son, their life from the Holy Spirit. Like the Trinity, the creatures’ relationship to it exceeds all definition. The connection is surely not one of substantial equality, but there is indeed some measure of transitiveness, for one party finds completion in the other.

Eriugena gives some specific examples of his conception of extended Platonism in order to fully demonstrate his position that a subject and what is predicated of a subject are one, and differ in no respect. Of course, the following would not apply to descriptive predicates of a subject, such as “the apple is red.” However, it does seem to apply to predicates which are an individuation of a species. When one says that Cicero is a man, there is no difference with regard to nature between the subject and the predicate except that one is the individual and one the species. Thus, if the species is unified and one and indivisible in the individual and the individuals comprise a unity in the species, there can
be no difference with respect to nature of manliness between the subject and what is
predicated of the subject. This is even more apparent if we take an example such as art.
The artistry in each particular work of art is nothing more than what the dialecticians
term “that which is in the subject,” and is not other than art in general. In other words,
we may say that art is manifested in the “Mona Lisa”, “The Thinker”, or the Cathedral of
Notre Dame just as we may say art is made by them for who could conceive of art
without its works? (Eriugena, Bk. I, 470 D-471 B).

There are two significant elements that tend to weaken these extended Platonic
bonds uniting God and man: time and place. God is beyond time and place, and man is in
them, so Eriugena must deal with these. Perhaps this is not so much of a difficulty for the
given examples, because the given examples of Cicero and man, art and artwork, identity
and numbers all seem to be in the same realm, but God and man appear to be in different
ones. Eriugena handles this very skillfully, and shows us that although God and man
appear to be separated by time and place, they both actually exist and act in the same
world. The key to this resolution is understanding Eriugena’s very unique and bold
conception of what constitutes time and place. They are both something very different
from what we accept them to be in our experience.

Eriugena returns to the liberal arts, and grounds his theory within them. “Place is
constituted in the definition of things that can be defined. For place is nothing else but
the boundary by which each is enclosed within fixed terms” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 474 B).
Next he gives a definition for each of the seven liberal arts, and notes that each art has its
own innumerable definitions that are unique to it. They all receive their form from the
Word of God. Dialectic is the most important of the seven, for it controls all definitions
and therefore “describes the esse of the argument as a place” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475 A).

We thus conclude that place exists in the mind alone, “for if every definition is in art, and every art is in mind, every place, since place is definition, will necessarily be nowhere else but in the mind” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475 B). This is a most remarkable postulate. For Eriugena, place is something constituted wholly within the human mind. Every rational soul, and presumably irrational beasts, experience it in the same way due to the unique contribution of the Word. He establishes place in the mind, not minds in place. Of course, many people would laugh at us for asserting such nonsense. “This world is not a place?” they would mockingly ask, inculcated as we all are by Newtonian physics. Eriugena maintains that right reason laughs at them (Eriugena, Bk. I, 475 C).

Eriugena’s treatment of time is even more subtle. “For time is the exact and rational measurement of the stopping and going of mutable things” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 507 B). This definition is very much like that given by Aristotle in Book IV of the Physics. “For time is just this: The number of motion with respect to the prior and the posterior” (Aristotle, Physics, 1980, 219 B). Eriugena does not cite Aristotle here, and given his tendency to reference his sources it seems likely that his conception of time was his own. At the very least, we could say that even if many of Aristotle’s thoughts on time have been appropriated by Eriugena, the latters conception of time is slightly more nuanced. For both formulations, motion seems to have a certain priority over time, so it would seem appropriate to examine motion. Eriugena holds that motion is a “natural power hastening toward its end…a passion coming from one to another of which the end is impassibility…an active operation of which the end is self-perfection” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 515 C). Here we have a very different understanding of motion than that given in Book
III of the *Physics*, that “motion is the actuality of the potentially existing qua existing potentially.” Where Aristotle holds later in Book VIII that first motion is caused by God, Eriugena seems to be claiming that all motion is caused by God. Of course, Aquinas, following on Aristotle, says that God causes all motion for He is the first cause. However, Eriugena seems to be saying that God causes motion directly. The first case is like a ball rolling because some agent has pushed it; the second is like a piece of iron being pulled by a magnet. This is consistent with Eriugena’s position that God not only creates the world, he sustains it and this means the sustaining of motion. Eriugena quotes Maximus, “For God is the Beginning, that is, the cause of all creatures and their ends since from Him they receive their being and begin to be, and towards Him they are moved in order that they may attain in Him their rest” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 516 A). Moreover, we must consider that motion is not just the “stopping and going of mutable things” but it is a rational measurement; meaning that whatever moves, moves in place. As noted earlier, place exists only in the mind. Thus, in the final analysis, Eriugena brings many of these vastly different conceptions of time and place into one accord. In the end, by founding his theory of time on that of place and by founding place in the mind alone, time turns out to be exactly what Augustine held it to be, a distention contained in the mind. “It is in you, O my mind, that I measure time” (Augustine, *Con.*, 1960, Bk. XI, Ch. 27, 300). “The same thing holds for a man’s entire life, the parts of which are all the man’s actions. The same thing holds throughout the whole age of the sons of men, the parts of which are the lives of all men” (Augustine, *Con.*, 1960, Bk. XI, Ch. 28, 302). In other words, time, like truth, is shared by all men. The reason they share it is that the Word in His creative act has pressed it into each rational mind. So it seems to us that Aristotle, Augustine, and
Eriugena are all correct with regard to their theories on time, but from different perspectives. However, Eriugena’s conception of time seems the most subtle philosophically. We note that the concept of space is also enjoined upon irrational minds while that of time is not. All animals react in space just as humans do. They shield themselves, distance themselves, hide themselves from danger, try to find food, warmth, pleasure, etc. However, they do not experience time in the same way as humans. Many species of animals such as migratory birds, salmon, and certain insects demonstrate remarkable mastery of time despite the fact that they have no comprehension of it. We suspect that this is so, for while the concept of place can exist in any mind, the concept of time as the “exact and rational measurement” of movement and can exist only in the rational mind. We note that the sense of time in all dogs seems to be like that of the dog of Odysseus, who recognized his master when everyone else, including his wife, failed to recognize him.

The whole point of these discussions of time and place is to show that both forms are shared by God and man. We noted at the outset of this discussion that while man presently resides in a finite world bound by time and space, God exists in an infinite world beyond time and space. So long as these distinctions are maintained, we view the separation between God and man as being unbridgeable. Thus, it is important for Eriugena to show that time and place, although appearing to separate God and man, do not essentially do so. Christianity, with its doctrine of the descending Logos, has done an effective job by bringing God into man’s realm, and Eriugena acknowledges this (Eriugena, Bk. V, 912 A). However, he goes even further by lifting man into God’s realm. As noted earlier, the essence of place resides not in space, but in definition, which
is in God’s mind. Likewise, the essence of time does not reside in apparent temporality, but in the rational movement of the mind. In his essay *Time and Eternity in the* Periphyseon, Dermot Moran highlights the need for Eriugena to show how time and space are bridged. He writes, “Time and space play a crucial part in the dynamics of the divine self-articulation and recollection” (Moran, 2002, 488). They are added on to the essential nature of things as a result of the fall, thus they must be taken off in the return. In this present life, we are viewing things through the distorted lens of time and space. The return of man to his primordial causes overcomes the dimensions of time and space by bringing the body back into the mind (Moran, 2002, 492). The resurrection accomplishes this for man. As noted above, Christ’s resurrection and ascension are a preview of what is in store for everyone, and proof that the humanity of the second person of the Trinity “… cast off all spatial and temporal characteristics and returned to its timeless and eternal and wholly spiritual nature” (Moran, 2002, 492). God transcends time and space for in the creation of man he establishes them in the mind. He can be understood as moving in them, even though He is beyond all movement. He can also be understood as giving account of human history and prophesying in time, even though He is beyond all time. He shares these realms with man because he knows them, having long established them through the Logos.

Thus, to conclude this section on what we have termed extended Platonism, God needs man more than Plato’s world of being needs the world of becoming. In truth, He needs man infinitely for the very reason that He has created Him. In a practical sense, God creates freely; but in an essential sense, He requires Himself to create. Of course, this is not to say that this requirement is imposed by any external source. Rather it is to
say that He creates out of goodness in accordance with His nature. Eriugena calls this a
“relation of Middle, which appears to observers under a double mode, first when the
Divine Nature is seen to be created and to create- for it is created by itself in the
primordial causes, and, therefore creates itself, that is, allows itself to appear in
theopanies…” (Eriugena, Bk. III, 689 A-B). We raise the analogy of the artist and his
works. The artist surely does not need his works of art for his own subsistence. Yet,
could he even be an artist without his art? One could answer that we surely do need some
of his works in order to call him an artist. This is true enough, for the works are
accidental to the artist and the two exist in different realms. However, once the artist
makes the art “in his image” he brings it into the same realm in which he exists. His
work is no longer accidental as to that it is, but only as to what it is. Some of his
paintings may be black, some white, big, small, good, bad, accepting of his greatness,
non-accepting of it. However, every work of art in his image must bear his personal
guarantee through the very creation of it. “…[I]f the Word of God took human nature
upon Him, it was not a part of it… but the whole of it universally. And if He took upon
Himself the whole of our nature, then clearly it is the whole of it which is restored in
Him…. No part of that humanity which was wholly assumed by Him is abandoned to the
eternal punishments…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 923 C).

Completeness for God

As noted earlier, Eriugena maintains that the completeness of God is understood
in the resolved tension of gift vs. grace. Gift is a *datum*, grace is a *donum* (Eriugena, Bk.
V, 905 A). Both words carry the idea of something freely bestowed; however, there is a
significant difference. A *datum* is something called forth out of nothingness and common to all, a basis or standard by which all is measured. A *donum* implies something high and superlative rather than standard. It is the root of our word donation, or large gift. A *donum* goes beyond itself, and in our case it brings what is common to nature beyond mere existence and into God. Sometime after completing the *Periphyseon*, circa 867, Eriugena wrote a *Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of John*. This work, much more mystical than the speculative *Periphyseon*, was to become a classic in medieval Spiritual literature and was widely disseminated (Moran, 1990, 79). In the *Homily*, Eriugena writes with even more clarity on this idea of completion for God through this resolution of gift into grace. “In the beginning was the Word” (Eriugena, *Hom. St. John*, 2000, Ch. 6, 78). Beginning here, Eriugena means to signify substantial priority rather than temporal. “All things were made through Him” (Eriugena, *Hom. St. John*, 2000, Ch. 7, 80). This is the downward manifestation of gift into the primordial causes, then the discernible effects. Eriugena holds that to consider that anything came into existence in any other way would be unreasonable, for all things are brought into being by the Word. And lest we be tempted to doubt this truth in any manner, the evangelist quickly adds “And without Him was not anything made” (Eriugena, *Hom. St. John*, 2000, Ch. 8, 82). Therefore, nothing made can be co-essential, co-substantial or co-eternal with Him. This concept is something that we must not only believe but understand. The Father speaks, the Word acts, the effects begin their existence and all this happens once and eternally, as opposed to historically and temporally. Moreover, all that the Word makes, He makes in truth and wisdom; in His creation there can be no falsehood and no foolishness. The idea is very similar to Plato’s overflow of goodness. God, being infinite, cannot contain His
truth, beauty, goodness or being, and this is the gift of created nature. However, this gift is only half the narrative. It is akin to the artist who brings his work to the canvas and then is forever separated from it through the corporeal nature of our world. The Word is not constrained. He not only brings it to the medium, He sustains it thereon and recalls it back into Himself when the medium fails. This is the restoration of all things through the Word, the fulfillment of the gift through grace. In Eriugena’s philosophy, one cannot be understood without the other. “And the life was the light of human beings” (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. 2, 88). The evangelist makes a subtle shift here and what was previously called the Word, or Logos, is now life and light. This shift is not without meaning, for we are now to understand that this Logos descended and has commonality with all life. This light illuminates itself as it goes forth revealing itself to all men. This is why Eriugena claimed that all creatures are created in man, even angels and demons, because the light of life is first and foremost to humanity. Thus, we are forced to conclude that this incarnation of the Logos unfolded according to a plan, and that the plan was a perfect one. Eriugena maintains that “full of grace and truth” signifies that the Logos brought this plan to fulfillment. Grace refers to the deification of humanity, truth, the manifestation of the divine (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. 23, 112).

First, we address the notion of the plan itself. Does it seem logical to save the damned? Again we hearken back to our earlier claim and argue that the damned are saved because all are saved. Is it logically necessary to save all? Let us place ourselves in God’s mind here. Of course, we do not know God’s mind directly, but we do kow our own mind, which must be less. This seems to be a reasonable approach since our minds are illuminated by the very mind of the Logos. What plan would we formulate? The best
approach, perhaps the only one, is to envision ourselves as artists. Of course, we cannot create from nothing as God does, but this should not be a limitation to our method of speculation. Indeed let us imagine that we can. We have all had the experience of drawing a picture, writing a story, or composing a song. Let us examine our experience and project it by way of what we know with certainty. We can extend our talents far beyond our corporeal limits and even imagine that we are creating great works of art out of nothing. We must also remember that there are no other artists in the world, indeed there is no world at all until we make it. We are all there is, we are before all that we make, we are “in the beginning.” There is no room for smallness here, for we will only make the beautiful, the wise, and the good. In fact everything that we make will be such that after it is made we will say it is good, it is good…it is very good. There is nothing bad about our efforts. Indeed we are even incapable of making anything bad. Furthermore, let us suppose that one of our works is very special to us and we love it more than any of the others, to the extent that we make all the others through it. Our final gift, other than loving this one thing forever, is to give it something of our very selves, an attribute of ours that we vest in no other creature. We give it our image. We will call this thing Adam and vest him with the very immortality that we have. Could we ever let Adam perish in torment? Of course we will not. Adam may be permitted to go his own way for say seventy years, but at the end of that time we will bring his wisdom to a near equality with our own and let him see where he came from. He must turn to us, for the wisdom he has is the very same that we gave him. Lacking any of the above, our plan is an imperfect one. We must admit that God’s plan was a perfect one and that the perfect plan warrants perfect redemption.
Next we must examine the motive of our love for Adam. We can do this without any regard whatsoever of Adam’s love for us. Love is a “certain unitive and continuative power which moves the higher things to provide for the lower…” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 519 C). By our love we will care for Adam, sustain him, and draw him back toward us when he tries to turn away. We may allow him some freedom because this benefits us in the long run for when he turns back to us he will be less likely to turn away again. The key question is what degree of freedom to allow. Suffice to say, we will allow him to be any kind of man he wants. However, the crucial point is that he must be a man. We will permit him to be a bad man, but we will not permit him to be a horse. We know that Adam is a rational man because we have given him a share of our own rationality. Thus, we can be assured that he will eventually come home to us. We are more in him than he is in him, for we are the very cause of what he is. Moreover, we love Adam to such measure that we cannot be happy without him. We are incomplete if our relationship with him is in disarray. The very love that is us, is our will, and his cause is no less after he is made than before and suffers no diminution when he turns away from us. Indeed, he really cannot turn away from us for we are everywhere. By this we mean that we press our thoughts to him from every space, time, situation, and relationship, especially in his own family members. Adam cannot even turn inward into his own soul for we are there before he is there. We will forgive anything he does because that is the nature of what we are. Even if, in his insolence, Adam tries to become “as one of us,” we in our infinite wisdom understand that he is trying to accomplish, albeit on his own, what we all along had hoped he would try to accomplish, indeed created him to try to accomplish. Such is the uniting bond that connects us. We fashion him in such a way that the more he turns
to us the closer we draw him, and paradoxically the more he turns away the closer we
draw him as well. To think that Adam might follow his own destiny into eternity is to
view him from his own narrow perspective. We love him to such an extent that we have
created in him a pathway to fulfillment that is our destiny alone. Ultimately, Adam must
choose to follow it, and from his perspective he must do so freely and rationally. We
provide for him and call him back into that relationship for which we made him in the
first place. Through the resolution of this grace our love for Adam is made complete.

We turn briefly to the highest theophany that is concretely discernible in this
world, that of the human family, or more particularly, the vertical dimension of it.
Aristotle called it the greatest friendship, and we go even further and call it the
intelligible manifestation of God’s relationship to man. The ideal of the human family
seems to be constant across all of history and all cultures. No human family is all that it
should be; however, it is the one and only ideal which comes closest to manifesting
divine grace. We would all choose to have a different house or automobile, providing that
the new house or automobile would be better, yet very few of us would choose to have a
different parent or child, even if the parent or child were better. As such, the family has a
unique excellence in that we perfectly understand its ideal form and can come very close
to actualizing it. This is not unlike the form of a circle in that the mathematician
understands it perfectly, and although he cannot draw a perfect circle, he can come close.
The family itself is essentially prior to its members, thus the members bear no inherent
relationship to one another. It is only by virtue of the relationship of the parent to the
family and the child to the family that the child is related to the parent, and even the
parent to the child. Thus the parent can be understood to make himself in the making of
the child. The parent needs the child in order to be who he is. Essentially, this is the very same notion that Eriugena talks about when writing about theophanies. God, the uncreated, can be understood as being created through His creative acts, and His essence is one and the same (Eriugena, Bk. I, 453 D-C). Thus, there is a certain dependence of God upon His creation. Substantially, God is independent because He exists in and of Himself. Yet by virtue of the truth that God created Adam, He needs Adam. Perhaps we may once again call upon the analogy of the artist. The artist exists substantially as a man, thus he is not dependent on his art. However, as an artist, he exists only by virtue of his art and is very dependent on it. The difference between an artist and God is that the artist exists substantially as a man and as an artist. God has no such two-fold substantiality. His substance as God and His substance as creator are one and the same.

We turn next to the incarnation of the Word as the completion of God’s redemptive work. The Logos descended into humanity to save the effects of the causes, which He already possesses, immutably and eternally. He loves the particular effects, and the only way for these effects to be preserved eternally is for them to be mystically called back into their primordial causes. This is perhaps the one place in the Periphyseon that, more than any other, establishes a kind of dependence between God and man. God is the cause, man is the effect, and each must be understood in terms of the other. They came into being together, and they perish or subsist together. There can be no cause without effect, and no effect without cause (Eriugena, Bk. V, 912 B). “Therefore, in the only-begotten Word of God, incarnate and made man the whole world is restored even now according to its species, but at the end of the world will return universally and into its genus” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 912 B). “For the incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ,
received the fullness of grace according to his humanity, since he is the head of the church and the firstborn of universal creation – that is, of the totality of universal humanity, which is in him and through him healed and restored” (Eriugena, Hom. St. John, 2000, Ch. 23, 112). By this, Eriugena means that the work of the Logos was eternally completed in the creation before it temporally began. Our argument here is this: since we know that the redemptive work of the Word has already been completed, we are not permitted to act as if it had not. If Christ has already paid the price in full, what part of the debt remains to be paid? Moreover, since He has done His part already, who else could possibly do it? To insist, as many do, that we must somehow activate our end of the bargain is to misunderstand the reality of the completed relationship. It is not a bargain to be contracted; rather, it is a promise already fulfilled. Strictly speaking, we participate in God, He does not participate in us. Over the centuries, this insistence of an overt actualization by us in our salvation has taken various forms. One must pay a certain indulgence, perform a certain good work, be baptized in a particular manner, make an active acceptance of Jesus Christ as one’s savior, etc. All of these, no matter how well-intended, place the key to the gate of paradise in the hand of he who is saved, not He who does the saving. The Word became flesh in order to save the world; thus grace extends in equal fashion to every man. In other words, no one can reasonably claim that Christ came to save some men and not others. All too commonly the question turns on the details of what each individual man must do. In some denominations, man must do a great deal; in others, very little, perhaps as little as saying “I believe.” Yet, all of these conditions, no matter how trivial they might seem, limit the grace offered by the Word. The truth of the matter is that the statement of faith “I believe,” which seems to be a slight inconvenience
for some, is actually a matter of grave consequence for others. Millions of people are constrained by their traditions, culture, or upbringing from accepting the truth of our presuppositions. Many die without ever hearing about it. Others do not have the intellectual capacity to understand it. Our point here is that under any system whereby man must in some way actualize his own salvation, not all men have an equal chance, and some have no chance at all. If one were to go into the county jail, unlock the door, and offer freedom to all within, some will choose to stay. Offer life or death to a large sample of humanity, and some would choose not to live. None make these choices freely. They are bound by demons of some kind to live in darkness, turning away from rational goodness. God must find some way to reconcile all of these souls; not just some, or the majority, or even most of them, but everyone.

The notion that man must actualize his own salvation is akin to receiving a new credit card in the mail. The credit card company says, “Here is your new credit card. You may use it at any time and can begin enjoying numerous benefits, as well as the renewed financial security and flexibility that is yours. For security reasons please call this toll free number to activate your account.” This is a small inconvenience, for who of us has not made the call? Still, we insist that the entire transaction has now been reduced to one of contract. As has been stated, the work of the Logos in descending into His created effects is not the work of a party under contract. It is not even the work of a party who offers a free contract in return for some act, admission, or confession. Rather, it is the work of a unity freely pledged under promise that cannot be violated, because the unity and the promise are one and the same. We must remember that in the work of salvation, the one to whom the covenant is given is in the divine image of He who gives it. This is
not the same case as the credit card company, for you are not an image of it, although your money is.

Moreover, the notion that one must actualize his own salvation is to presuppose that God lives and acts in time just as we mortals do. To claim that the Word descended circa 4 B.C. but that His work is made manifest today is synonymous with saying that He is alive today, not that He is alive eternally. Similarly to say that His work will be completed when time ends is to say that He lives endlessly as opposed to eternally. To live eternally is to have the simultaneous and whole possession of endless time. To insist that one must today acknowledge the truth of a particular event that happened 2,000 years ago, and thereby gain eternal life through that confession is to claim that the mission was unaccomplished at that time. And even if we could somehow be convinced of this, what of the poor unfortunates who died prior to 30 A.D.? How can they acknowledge the truth of an event that has yet to take place? Thus, we would have to concede the absurd position that Jeremiah (circa 626-586 B.C.), the very prophet through whom the covenant was spoken, was not sealed by it. We must, therefore, insist that the mission of the Word was completed, 2,000 years ago and that the promise is an eternal one in keeping with the life of Him who guaranteed it.

In summation of this idea of completeness for God, we quote the Periphyseon:

“For man was created for the contemplation of his creator…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 941 D). If so, then every man, not a few, or some, or most, or even all save one, but rather all men, must be restored in order for that contemplation to be complete.
Completion for Creation

We now examine how the salvation of the damned can be understood to complete the world. Compared to our last section, Completion for God, we can be more objective here, for man has an end. He is not eternal in the same sense that God is eternal, for man is dependent on some other entity for his creation and being. We must show that the salvation of every damned soul can be understood to complete man in his own right, not simply God’s. It is bold to say herein that under any metaphysical system imaginable the restoration of every soul could be understood to complete it. Even under such conceptions of nothingness, as some modern philosophers have posited, it would be hard to see how the obliteration of even one soul could not be understood to render creation incomplete. Next, we address the traditional mindset of hell, that of eternal torment. Jesus said that hell was very hot, Norse mythology very cold, Dante wrote that it was a place without hope. We question how torment of any kind could be eternal when the very definition of it seems to imply temporality. Of course it might be never-ending, however, this posits the mere extension of time. Our definition of eternity is the simultaneously whole possession of endless time. Given our definition, we hold that it would be easy enough for someone in hell simply to call back in memory an instant in which he was cool, was warm, or had hope and reside eternally there. Of course, the notions of hell that we have enumerated are all corporeal, as most formulations of hell are in religion, myth, and literature. One could ask if memories of goodness in any form could make hell worse. We do not think so, and have previously explained why: that good memories make men better, not worse. There are indeed a host of ontological questions with regard to the notion of either hell or nothingness.
However, we turn to the positive and begin with Eriugena’s definition of love:

“Love is the end and quiet resting place of the natural motion of all things that are in motion, beyond which no motion of the creature extends” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 519 B). This formulation is given in Book I and concerns that nature which is uncreated and creates. Perhaps we should explain why love is an activity, a rest, and a goal all at once. This is easily explained when we remember that in Plato’s *Symposium*, Socrates suggests that the lover wants the beloved as well as the continued love of his beloved (Plato, *Sym*, 200d, 2000). Thus, love can be all of the above. In Book II, we saw that love was a primordial cause, and in Book III that it manifested itself downward into the discernable particulars of creation. In the culmination of that which is uncreated and does not create, Books IV and V, love is not just an activity but a goal in itself, for the things in motion turn back and are resolved in that from which they came. God is not just love; He is super love for He is the cause of all love, therefore man ultimately becomes one with God. This definition of love encompasses the entire created realm, everything that moves. This includes the so called “damned” for they too move, love and eventually find their rest. Thus, it seems that the idea of eternity must include a rest from motion. This too seems to preclude eternal punishment for those who are under torment are in motion. This principle applies not only to all men, but angels, demons, irrational beasts, and inanimate objects as well.

Eriugena begins the discussion on the return of all created nature to God by some speculation relating to the world we live in and experience. There is some very convincing evidence that suggests that the return of all nature is highly probable. Calling upon the art of astronomy, he notes that the sun revolves around the earth every twenty
four hours, the moon completes its orbit every twenty seven plus days, the stars return to
their positions every day, the planets all have their appointed courses. Moreover, the
earth displays remarkably consistent growing seasons, tides, and climate cycles.

Eriugena claims that these local and temporal returns point toward some mystical
meaning. “For it is my opinion that there is no visible or corporeal thing which is not the
symbol of something incorporeal and intelligible” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 866 A). The apostle
Paul says that “the figure of the world shall pass away” and Augustine interprets this to
mean that there is a distinction between figure and essence. For the figure is not the same
as the essence, and this essence must turn back to that from which it originated and be
forever preserved there. Created nature is brought forth according to the wisdom of the
Logos in space and time, however it is created unalterable. Temporally the world
becomes the nucleus of all other accidents and at some point in scientific time it will
perish. To perish sensibly is to return mystically, and this return is precisely what is
signified in the visible working of the ordered cosmos (Eriugena, Bk. V, 867 C).

“…[A]mong the Greeks ‘beginning’ is called telos which really means ‘end’: They name
both beginning and end telos without distinction- what but the return of our nature to its
beginning, out of which it was made, and in which and through which it moves and
towards which its tendency is always to return” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 867 B). The tendency
of all nature is to return to its beginning.

This notion applies especially to man. As was noted earlier, every other creature
is brought into the sensible realm through man. Man is the pivotal point for all nature. In
a very real sense, man is not in the world; rather, the world is in man. Eriugena refers to
scripture to emphasize this point: “Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall
not pass away” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 890 D). In this quotation, “My words” refers to the second person of the Trinity. In the sense of space and time, the world will perish. However, in the sense that the world is not a place, but an idea or primordial definition, it will endure. In other words, the apparent chaos in the world is the work of man, whereas the discernible order is the divine manifestation of the Word. “The heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 891 A).

Unequivocally, the local and temporal nature of the world is accidental; it is man giving corporeal and temporal interpretation to the primordial causes. “They shall perish” means that man’s sense of space and time will come to an end. “Thou remainest” means that man, to the extent that he is an image, will not. When man makes his return through the Logos, the world and everything in it returns with him. Also, all men are the same with regard to their nature, for they all desire to return. “For all men in general, whether perfect or imperfect, chaste or defiled, redeemed through knowledge of truth in Christ, or lingering in the darkness of ignorance… have one and the same natural yearning after being and well-being and being forever…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 867 C). This desire stems from their creation through the Logos, the one who is, is well, and is forever. In truth, the Logos is more than being, being well and being forever, for He is the cause of this desire in every other creature. No creature desires not to be. Ultimately, all “will be free from death and unhappiness. For being and living and immortality will be common to all, good and evil alike” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 868 C). Examples from the world of intelligibles that most appropriately demonstrate this are those sciences which the philosophers call the liberal arts, for their ultimate end is to liberate the soul.

Given that the human soul is immortal, we address the question of whether or not
the soul can be complete if it fails to secure happiness. Aristotle can be of great help in this effort. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he held that happiness is the end of all human activity (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1097 B). We never seek to be happy so that we are healthy, respected, wealthy, etc. Rather, we seek those things so that we may be happy. Of course, Aristotle considered happiness to be the paramount goal of man in this life. However, we see no reason why this goal cannot be extended into eternity. The majority of the *Nicomachean Ethics* deals with the practical attainment of happiness, but it seems to us that the underlying premise that man always seeks to be happy is a universal truth about man. Eriugena claims that man is composed of body and soul in this life, and spiritual body and soul in the life to come. The spiritual body is different from the corporeal one in that it is not composed of the four elements. However, it would have to be the same insofar as it desires happiness. So it seems that this notion of happiness can be extended infinitely into eternity. Our definition of eternity as the perfect, and simultaneously, whole possession of endless time seems to include it, for how could life be perfect if one is not happy? For Aristotle, the happy man is the completed man. Moreover, no man can be said to be complete without happiness. It is the virtue for which he aims, and works the hardest to secure. “No happy man can become miserable; for he will never do the acts which are hateful and mean. For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the changes of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances” (Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1992, 1101 A). Just as any good artisan, such as a physician healing the body or a general commanding an army, the happy man does the best with what he has been provided. Benjamin Rush is perhaps our country’s most complete physician despite the fact that he could not cure the daughter of John Adams.
Robert E. Lee is most likely our country’s greatest general, even though he lost at Gettysburg. The happy man can be thought to complete himself in his activity of seeking happiness, for that is his ultimate goal. It then seems only right that all men seek what it is in their nature to seek, which is the infinite movement of the soul toward God, which brought it into being. The soul ultimately takes its rest there, “free from death and unhappiness” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 868 B).

We have considered the notion of completion of man in himself, and turn now to the problem of the completion of man in others. Aristotle addressed this question in the Ethics, namely whether or not a man could be happy in the next life if someone he loves is unhappy in this one (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1100 A). There is no sure answer, but the implication seems to be in the negative. We go further, and say that the answer is no. No man can be complete if someone he loves is unhappy. We know this full well from our experiences with the temporary misfortunes of our lives. When we hurt, those who love us hurt as well; conversely, when those we love hurt, we hurt as well. By extension, if those we love hurt eternally, so would our hurt be eternal. Man cannot be complete with respect to others unless all others are eventually reconciled with him. This idea of completeness for man through the redemption of others is derivative of the idea of completeness for God through the redemption of all. Man, in desiring the salvation of his fellows, is simply reflecting the essence of what the Word has already accomplished.

Reconciliation of Completion for God and Justice for Man

We now come to the pivotal point in our study, the resolution of the tension that seems to exist between the idea of completion for God versus that of justice for man.
God must restore the totality of His creation for it is of Him and from Him, yet God must dispense justice to that creation in accordance with His divine law, for it is of and from Him as well. We have noted that the history and tradition of the Christian church, at least in the West and since the era of Augustine, has tended to resolve this tension in favor of the latter principle. Eriugena suggests that the tension should be resolved in favor of the former principle. This is the idea of apokatastasis, taught mostly by the eastern fathers of the church since antiquity. As noted above, Origen advanced this idea as early as the third century in Alexandria. It has had limited acceptance in western Christianity. However, both the Old and New Testaments contain numerous accounts, parables, and in some cases explicit statements on the theme. These pertain to apokatastasis on both an individual and a societal level. They seem to imply that there is nothing which is beyond God’s redemptive will and power. One of the more striking examples is given by Isaiah to the people of Israel, using the parent-child analogy that we have constantly emphasized. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee” (Isaiah 49:15, KJV). This emphasizes the notion that no mother, as a mother, could leave her child unredeemed. Although an individual mother could forget her child, God cannot forget that which He has created. Another passage which Eriugena references in Book V, 1004 A, “… Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former estate… [just as you and your] daughters shall return to your former estate” (Ezekiel, 16:55, KJV). Here we note that even the vilest city, one that was physically destroyed by God, ultimately gains its spiritual restoration. Moreover, we interpret the word ‘daughters’ to mean all the citizens of Sodom; thus, everyone from the city is redeemed. The gentiles enjoy the same
restoration as the Israelites, and the gentile cities the same as Jerusalem.

Thomas O’Laughlin examines this restoration of humanity in an essay entitled “Imagery of the New Jerusalem in the Periphyseon and Eriugena’s Irish Background.” He maintains that whenever Eriugena refers to Jerusalem, he means more than the historical city in Palestine. For Eriugena, Jerusalem is a vision of peace and a symbol of a higher reality. In other words, Eriugena is employing the same imagery as Ezekiel. Jerusalem is the final city for man; a spiritual paradise. Before man fell, he was secure in his citizenship; however, man went out from there and went down to Jericho. Eriugena uses the image of the New Jerusalem more frequently in Book V when he discusses man’s final restoration. “Everything… that is part of the history of Jerusalem is sacramental of the Jerusalem above… which is to come” (O’Laughlin, 2002, 245-247). Since every individual in the human race left to begin with, then everyone must return. We are not “prevented from believing that the whole human race is redeemed in Christ and shall return into the heavenly Jerusalem” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 1007 C). Moreover, it seems that as this apokatastasis is accomplished, man returns not only to his original spiritual city, but he returns to it in a higher spiritual disposition. If it were otherwise, he would be liable to fall again, and this condition would not be contained within Eriugena’s fourth division of nature.

Returning to our immediate topic of reconciliation of completion for God and justice for man, the philosopher Thomas Talbott, of Willamette University, formulated this problem rather neatly. He stated three propositions all of which are apparently Biblical, yet only two which can be true. They are:

1. God is omnipotent- He directs all creatures to restoration in Him.
2. God is omni-benevolent- He cares equally for all of His creatures.

3. Some creatures are damned (Talbott, 1999, 43-45).

Those in the Arminian tradition deny the first. Those in the Calvinist tradition deny the second. We deny the third. However, we are not affirming universal salvation in the sense that no one has freedom of choice, for we still maintain that every rational soul has, and must have, this gift. Some hold, quite illogically, that if all are saved, then there can be no such thing as freedom of choice. Two years ago our country elected a new president in keeping with our system of majority rule. Had every person in the country voted for Barrack Obama that does not mean they did not have a choice. It simply means that everyone chose President Obama. This is our position, that all truth is derivative of the incarnation of the Word. Rational beings are created such that they ultimately choose truth. Therefore, all men will ultimately recognize the truth of the incarnation of the Word, accept this truth and gain salvation. Hence, we must deny the third proposition and hold that all men are saved. We accept proposition one, that God is omnipotent, and proposition two, that God is omni-benevolent. As an aside, we claim that this problem can be immediately solved by relying on the principle of Occam’s Razor, entities are not to be posited unnecessarily, or perhaps better said, always choose the simplest explanation, but not too simple. To choose a solution that denies either proposition one or two involves us in enumerable difficulties and contradictions.

As detailed in earlier paragraphs, completion for God means salvation for every one of His creatures, and justice for man can mean any number of things depending upon which conception of justice one holds. However, under all conceptions the plan for achieving justice abides in some adherence to the concept of law. The spirit of law may
or may not be codified into some formal system. It could be as simple as a set of principles which abide in the conscience. However, the attainment of justice must in some way coincide with the notion of law; conversely that of injustice must in some way violate that notion of law. We see this clearly by referring to the Biblical passage in Genesis on Cain and Abel. Whether one views this passage historically or allegorically, one must recognize that Cain has violated no codified law. Yet he surely violated the divine law. Thus, we conclude that law is the very plan of justice, the method or perhaps device, through which justice is attained.

Similarly, grace is the plan through which salvation is attained. Grace is unmerited favor, the receipt of some benefit by someone who was in no way deserving of that benefit. As before, we allude to the parable of the Prodigal Son. He was in no way deserving or even worthy of the grace that his father showered upon him. We further conclude that even the obedient son who was deserving and worthy received his father’s grace, i.e., “all that I have is yours,” not because he was worthy but rather because he was a son. It only stands to reason that had both sons been prodigal, or even a multitude of sons been prodigal, they all would have been blessed with the same homecoming. It is true that the prodigal son returned in a penitent manner. We maintain that grace aided in his penitence. It should be noted that this parable, in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, is preceded by two others that have abstracted all notions of penitence or free will.

We attack the problem of the reconciliation of completion for God vs. justice for man, not through themselves but through their respective blueprints of grace versus law. Eriugena has taught often throughout the Periphyseon that the downward manifestation of God’s goodness is gift, the upward return is grace. The first is datum, the second
*donum*. The second is the completion of the first. Although both are interdependent, *donum* has priority. The downward gift is only manifested to the extent that the upward grace resolves back into its creator in a stronger, more sanctified, higher state of communion. It is the same with law versus grace. Law is a *datum*, grace is a *donum*. Law is a downward manifestation of God’s goodness; grace (as used herein, the term is much narrower) is the upward resolution. To phrase it in practical terms, the two are always in conflict. Just as there can be no redemption without creation, there can be no grace without law. The two are interdependent, yet grace has priority, for there can be no law that is not fulfilled, made right, or overcome without grace.

The first consideration here should be a discussion of law. Aquinas gave perhaps one of the best formulations of it, so it would seem reasonable to begin our comments there. “It belongs to law to command and to forbid. But it belongs to reason to command… therefore law is something pertaining to reason” (Aquinas, *Summ. Theo.*, 1948, Q XC, Art. 1, 610). Law is the rule and measure which directs action to a prescribed end. Hence, according to both of these rationales, law is a downward manifestation; a gift, or *datum*. Law sets all men under it. The ultimate purpose of the law is to direct all men toward God, thus everyone is subject to it, just as every man is subject to reason. The greatness of King David was never more manifest than when he realized that, even though he was the writer of the law, he was still subject to the law. Technically, David did not violate the law, because he was the law. Inherently, he admitted to himself and to everyone else that he had transgressed upon the spirit of the law that subordinated every rational being. Next, it should be noted that law is always directed toward the common good. This common good is happiness, as conceptualized by Aristotle. This further
supports the idea that law is a gift, something manifested with man in creation (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., 1948, Q XC, Art 2, 612).

Aquinas discourses on three types of law. The first is eternal law. He shares much in common with Eriugena here, for Aquinas holds that eternal law is a unity contained within the divine exemplar of wisdom. “…[J]ust as the exemplar of the divine wisdom, inasmuch as all things are created by it, has the character of an art,… so the exemplar of divine wisdom, as moving all things to their due end, bears the character of law” (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., 1948, Q XCIII, Art. 1, 629). All men know eternal law to some degree, just as all men know truth to some degree (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., 1948, Q XCIII, Art. 3, 631). All other laws proceed downward from eternal law. The second type of law is natural law. Natural law is the manifestation of eternal law into first principles. There are, for rational creatures, several natural inclinations which form the precepts of natural law. These laws are common to all men everywhere, and are in accord with the human inclinations of self-preservation, reproduction, education of offspring, etc. The virtuous acts are all subject to natural law, which is immutable. “The natural law dates from the creation of the rational creature. It does not vary but remains unchangeable” (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., 1948, Q XCV, Art. 5, 643). The third type of law is human law, but it is of little relevance to our study here. Suffice to say that human law is that law which is enacted by man for human convenience.

We now turn to the Thomistic conception of grace in order to contrast it with that of Eriugena. For Aquinas, man, by his own intellect, can know some truth. “…[H]uman understanding has a form, viz., intelligible light itself, which of itself is sufficient for we know certain intelligible truths viz., those we can know through sensible things. Higher
intelligible truths the human intellect cannot know, unless it be perfected by a stronger light… which is called the light of grace…” (Aquinas, *Summ. Theol.*, 1948, Q XCIX, Art. 1, 653). As we have seen, Eriugena holds that man cannot know truth without grace. There may appear to be some contradiction here, for we stated earlier that the liberal arts, through which man knows truth, are a downward procession from God, which would be law or gift as opposed to grace. However, although the arts themselves are a gift, the employment of them is through grace. As we noted in Chapter One, to contemplate the arts is to converse with the very mind of Christ, which is imparted through grace. Man must first be granted grace in order to know truth in any form. This is so for two reasons. First, the Word in His descent into human nature brought the liberal arts with Him, and these are the seven pillars of truth. The arts inform the rational mind, so without them there is no mind with which to know. Second, we have noted that for Eriugena, time, place, intervals, and corporeal objects are all man-made things. Thus, without the mind informing those things, there are no things to know. To take one common example, Aquinas would say that a man can know what a horse is without grace, because a horse is a sensible object, and that the intellect of man by the “proportion of its own proper endowment” (Aquinas, *Summ. Theol.*, 1948, Q XCIX, Art. 1, 653) can comprehend it. For Eriugena, the tangible horse is merely that which has descended through man in the creation of man. To know what the sensible horse is requires knowing what the idea of a horse is in God’s mind. In other words, Secretariat is not a horse because he looks like Man-of-War, or Traveler. Rather, they are all horses because they conform in some way to the idea of a horse as it is defined eternally in the mind of God. Hence, grace is needed for man to comprehend that idea. Furthermore, the knowledge of what a horse is, since it
derives from the one truth of the incarnation, is actually a more sophisticated and difficult
cognition than that of the incarnation itself. For Eriugena, if human nature can rise to
comprehend a complex truth in this world, such as what a horse is, all the more will it rise
to comprehend a simple truth, namely what the Word is in the next. Thus, grace has a
certain ontological priority, which completely subsumes law, as well as many other
intermediate goods.

This second idea of grace as end has the support of Aristotle, Plato, Aquinas, and
Eriugena. Aquinas writes, “Now eternal life is an end exceeding the proportion of human
nature. Hence man by his natural powers cannot produce meritorious works proportioned
to eternal life; but for this a higher power is needed, the power of grace. And thus,
without grace, man cannot merit eternal life” (Aquinas, Summ. Theo., 1948, Q XCIX,
Art. 5, 660). Eriugena would clearly agree and add that without grace, man cannot live
at all.

The Christological tradition of Latin theology has essentially held that the
redeeming grace of God was completed through His suffering and crucifixion (Bett,
1964, 105). This follows closely on the Old Testament prophecy, “But he was wounded
for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: …and with his stripes we are
healed” (Isaiah 53:5, KJV). Eriugena offers a more subtle interpretation, one in keeping
with the eastern Christological tradition. The crucifixion was but one part of God’s
redemptive purpose. The birth of Christ, His life, mission, obedience, spirit, etc., are all
part of God’s redemptive plan completed through the incarnation (Bett, 1964, 105).
“Therefore, in the Only-Begotten Word of God, incarnate and made man, the whole
world is restored…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 912 B). We affirm the latter and ask, where is the
inherent justice in any situation in which one pays the debts of another? In other words, assume the usual instance of creditor, and debtor. The debtor pays the just amount, the creditor receives it, all are made whole and justice is served. Now enter a third party, a payer. The payer steps into an obligation not his own and pays the stated amount. Where is the justice? Only the creditor is made whole. The debtor is advantaged, the payer disadvantaged. There could be only one way for this arrangement to be thought of as just, and this is if the debt owed is somehow the debt of both debtor and payer. This, we see, as the mystery and paradox of grace. The Word in His descent into the created realm, not only assumed that debt, but He incurred it as well. As stated before, the human family is the highest theophany of this God-man relationship. The family is grace on earth, and has unity above all others. It is not perfect, but it is as close as we humans can come. This reach has extended from the ancient dynasties, through the era of nobility, and into the modern democratic age. It has transcended the antique empires, feudalism, capitalism, even crime. There is quite simply no other human relationship like it. In procreating we not only assume the debts of our children, we incur them as well. And we do it joyfully, for somehow we know their debts are our debts, because we are them. Of course, the words ‘we are,’ the copula of the above argument, are not meant in a literal sense. We mean that the relationship of parent to child is of such a unique character that all normal human dynamics are transcended, and grace is manifested on earth.

As stated earlier, law and grace are always in opposition when viewed from a human perspective. Therefore there can be no reconciliation in logic. There can only be three possible outcomes:
1. Grace is completely subordinated to law.

2. Law and grace are always in tension.

3. Law is completely subordinated by grace.

Our presuppositions will not admit of proposition one. Most have traditionally chosen proposition two in one of its numerous interpretations. Eriugena chooses proposition three. Grace, as a *donum*, perfects the law, a *datum*. In the final analysis, grace subsumes law just as light overcomes darkness.
Chapter VI: Implication for Contemporary Theology

Justification

The common traditional view in western Christianity holds that all men were created in perfect condition, all brought damnation upon themselves, and some are restored. Some might claim that this incomplete restoration of only some men leads to a higher perfection. Our claim is that a partial restoration leads only to a partially better condition. Indeed, the less complete the restoration, the less complete will be the perfection. Eriugena maintains that all are restored. If he is correct, then the implications of his claim need to be addressed. We have chosen to examine four key areas of the Christian experience, two of them quite contentious, two of them not so. It is our view that the acceptance of this philosophy of restoration for all can bring much clarity and needed unity to the church universal. We do not intend for this chapter to be considered as a defense of Christianity. It is offered only to show that a broad, serious consideration of Eriugena’s teaching on the question of salvation for the damned could be beneficial for all.

We begin with the concept of justification, for no other debate has produced such discord within Christendom. In fact the word “discord” is mild, for in centuries past this conflict has led to ex-communication, persecution, and death. Political and social considerations aside, divergent views on the concept of justification led to the Protestant Reformation and the ensuing inquisitions of the sixteenth century. Justification means the act or perhaps the declaration, for this is the heart of the debate, which renders the sinner worthy before God. The concept is discussed in several books of the Old and New Testaments. The books of the Old Testament, most notably Leviticus, always stress the
need for both external and internal piety. The external piety was perfected through overt acts of charity, obedience, courage, etc. Yet the prophets of the Old Testament set a standard so high that no one could possibly reach it through external acts alone. Thus they also stressed a need for inward cleansing that was symbolized by outward signs, such as baptism and sacrifice. The earliest Christians tended to see the inward piety as being completed through the suffering of the Word. This forces us to ask the question “Why does Christ not suffer eternally?” In other words, if He paid the debt in full and there is nothing left to pay, He paid it all for men in all times and forever. Why does He suffer for three days only? The only answer seems to be that in some mysterious way He lives in every man and every man lives in Him, for all time. In other words, three seconds would have been enough. The traditional mindset with regard to justification presumes time in a mechanistic, temporal way, thus external works are very important. This theme is quite apparent when reading the Epistle of James which has a practical approach to such virtues as charity. “You see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only” (James 2: 24,KJV). And “Even so faith, if it has not works is dead, being alone” (James 2:17, KJV). In other words if you see someone naked and starving and you say “Have faith, go your way, be clothed and fed,” what good have you done?

Contrary to this, the reformers claimed to take as their authority the writings of St. Paul, primarily the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. “Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans, 3:28, KJV). Paul is always careful to present Christ as the completion of Adam. The first man brings death and division, the second man brings life and unity. So of the Protestants we ask, why did Christ have to suffer at all? The only answer, once again a profound mystery, seems to
be that through His earthly life He lives in all men and all men live in Him. Absent His downward manifestation into the created realm, no one would know Him. Somehow in making Himself known in the temporal order, He made Himself known to all men in all time, although not explicitly. The incarnation is, therefore, a mystery of metaphysics, the resurrection a mystery of epistemology. In order to authenticate His mission He had to somehow demonstrate that He had sovereignty over the corporeal realm. He accomplished this through a long list of demonstrated miracles, all of which rose above created nature. The resurrection was the final demonstration of this. Eriugena says that He gave us a forward look of what was in store for all of us (Eriugena, Bk. V, 894 A). So the question of exactly what justification is turns on one’s conception of time; or better said, it turns on one’s conjecture of how mortal time is transferred into the eternal. As we say in the previous chapter, Eriugena holds, similar to Augustine, that time is in the mind. Therefore, there need be no difficulties as to whether justification is a process perfected by God in the individual over time or whether it is an event conferred by God in an instant. They are both the same when considered from the perspective of the eternal.

Historically, this controversy concerning justification had developed early in the fifth century. Pelagius (circa 354-420), a British monk, had insisted that human freedom and responsibility played an integral part, in fact the key part, in God’s redemptive action. A duty presupposed an ability to do the right thing, thus Pelagius maintained that the final test of one’s salvation was his merit manifested through benevolent and charitable works. Consequently, God’s saving grace became superfluous under this formulation. Moreover, Pelagianism tended to wrest sovereignty from God, making Him a mere dispenser of justice rather than the author of it. This was an idea to which
Augustine was strongly opposed. He spent the latter part of his life attacking this notion, primarily in *A Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelegians*, circa 420 AD. Augustine was largely successful in his efforts, for Pelagian doctrine was condemned as heretical by the Council of Ephesus in 431 (Augustine, *Ret.*, 1964, Note prior to Art. 1, 151). The authority of this council was precisely where Martin Luther appealed in his famous “habo augustinum,” in which he claimed that the Papacy had abandoned the condemnation of Pelagianism. According to Luther, the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the central article of Christianity to such an extent that the church universal would rise or fall with it (Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, 1961, 106). Justification was the theme around which all other doctrines were founded. This mindset was taken up by John Calvin, who extended sound reasoning into particulars that divided the reformers even among themselves. Salvation came after justification which was “by grace alone, through faith alone” in the righteousness of Christ alone.

This discussion concerning justification is mainly apparent in the western tradition. This is so because, doctrinally, both Roman Catholics and Protestants tend to view the sin and guilt of Adam as being genetically transferred to his offspring. As evidence of this, we cite the Catholic decree concerning original sin of the Fifth Session of the Council of Trent in 1546 (Leith, 1963, 405), as well as the Lutheran Augsburg Confession, Article II [Original Sin] in 1530 (Leith, 1963, 30). Both of these stress that the sin and guilt of Adam entered the human race as a result of his fall. However, the Catholic and Protestant response as to exactly how God overcomes this sin and guilt is quite different; hence, justification has become, and still remains, an issue. Both denominations recognize the essential importance of grace. However, the Protestant
claim “through faith alone” is at variance with Catholic insistence that faith is not the only virtue, hence faith cannot, by itself, be sufficient. For entirely different reasons, explained below, justification tends to be a nonissue in the eastern tradition. Eriugena, despite his sensitivity toward the west, is more aligned philosophically with the eastern tradition. Therefore, he sees no need to address the issue of justification, and writes on it only incidentally. Generally speaking, the position of Eastern Orthodoxy concerning justification cannot be reconciled with Protestantism, but is not fundamentally at variance with the doctrine of the Roman Church. This is partly because the eastern tradition is understood as having a more nuanced conception of original sin than the western tradition. Theologians in the west tend to view the sin and guilt of Adam as genetically transferred to his offspring, while those in the east end to see this as a genetic transfer of sin but not of guilt (Kelly, 1958, 349). We can see this easier by the analogy of an inherited defect or disease. The defect is passed on; however, there is no sense of blame. Thus, there is no need of forensic or legal justification. Furthermore, while the Reformation and the extended schisms within Protestantism can be seen as driving the issue to a polarized, irreconcilable end, the eastern and western churches had already long since separated themselves. Orthodoxy tends to see salvation as a process in which one is restored in Christ, and where the goodness of God is reproduced in him.

Although Eriugena often shows inclination to Protestantism on many issues, justification is one issue where he would side with the eastern tradition. We tend to agree, and we maintain that perhaps all of us initiated in western theology would be better served by the same. Generally, the reformers held that justification was an action, not a process. We allow them to define it however they choose and then raise issue within their
own parlance. They maintain that justification is a declaration or pronouncement on the part of God that renders the individual just. Taking their authority from St. Paul, who wrote, “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3, KJV), they hold that justification is simply God calling someone just when he is not. We ask, what is just or truthful about this? It can only be just and truthful if the Word, by descending, is obliged to pay our debt even before we are able to incur it, just as parents are obliged to pay the debts of their children. The Word must be prior to all He justifies, including Abraham, who never knew Him. Thus, justification must be eternal. The Protestant makes a complete separation between justification and sanctification. For the Catholic, they are part of the same process. However, there is an even greater problem with the reformers, who view justification as an event or declaration. When does God make this declaration? If He makes it in time, then it would seem that His pronouncement is dependent on something else. God’s decision would be contingent, and this cannot be so. If the declaration is made in eternity, then it would have to justify some men, or all men. If it justifies only some men, then we have arrived at John Calvin’s doctrine of limited atonement. This will be addressed more thoroughly in the next section, but for now suffice it to say that it is a most unsatisfying solution, for it necessitates that Christ did not suffer for all of humanity, but only for a part of it. If He suffered for all men, then our problem is solved, for this is the very topic of this dissertation.

First, all of the camps discussed above are in agreement that justification is a consequence of divine grace. Grace, the cause of justification, is eternal, therefore justification must be eternal. A logician might say that this argument is invalid, for a certain cause does not always produce a certain effect. We would normally agree, but not
in this specific case. Eriugena speaks directly to this in Book IV: “For the image is not in a part of man’s nature nor grace in any one of those considered to have grace, but… the whole genus equally” (Eriugena, Per., Bk. IV, 797 B). For Eriugena, in this case, a cause cannot be without its effect. Otherwise the effect is less than the cause. Second, justification as an imminent act of God must be from eternity just as God is from eternity. Opponents might say that this proves too much, for by this logic we could also say that creation is eternal. Eriugena would answer this by saying that creation is *a fortiori* eternal, which has been shown above.

*Predestination*

We now turn to one of the thorniest problems to beset Christianity. Despite this, it is not so grave an issue in consequence as that of justification, for it does not divide as deeply. In our view, an analytical discussion of predestination must be preceded by an understanding of the nature of time. This prerequisite seems to be lacking in all of the controversies that have arisen since Augustine. Moreover, the discussions become more convoluted following the rise of Newtonian mechanics, because now many of us are inclined to view time as a continuum of intervals. While Augustine was attempting to define time for everyone, Newton was essentially postulating it as a medium for classical mechanics. He conceived of time as a continuum, extending endlessly backward and forward with no transcendental connection from one instant to the next (Callender, Edny, 2005, 18-19). This conception is convenient; it works for mechanical and practical purposes, but it does not work for some sciences like astronomy, and there is no reason to think it would work for philosophy or theology. Thus, we cannot even debate the question of predestination without acknowledging that we are predisposed to thinking
that time is Newtonian. We introduce this distinction here because any study on the topic of predestination would surely turn on God’s understanding of time, as opposed to Newton’s understanding of time. Eriugena gave his own formulation of time, as we have discussed earlier in Chapter Five. As we said above, Newton’s conception of time can be described as the medium of classical mechanics. In other words, it is the ground on which mutable things operate. In his article *Time and Eternity*, Dermot Moran has noted that this cannot be “…the whole Christian story; since a more positive view of time is required for the unrolling of God’s plan for the salvation of humans and the cosmos…” (Moran, 2002, 489).

The groundwork for predestination is clearly laid in the New Testament (KJV).

1. Romans 8: 29-30: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

2. John 15: 16: “You did not choose me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in my name He may give to you.”

3. Ephesians 1: 4-6: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the pleasure of his will, to the
praise of the glory in his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the
beloved.”

The teaching of predestination has traditionally taken one of two forms: single
predestination or double predestination.

Single predestination is the more moderate form, and it stresses God’s abiding
presence and love within us. We experience this love through no right of our own. It is
granted to us by God’s grace and no action on our part can merit it. This love was set
aside for us before the world was formed, and we experience it directly whenever we
claim it as our freely given birthright.

Double predestination is the more severe form, and it is the more troubling of the
two. This form is a logical extension of single predestination and a natural consequence
of it. If some are predestined to receive God’s favor, then all others are predestined not to
receive it. There can be no middle ground, for we are either saved or we are not. This
would seem to run counter to human reason, and even counter to the teaching of Christ
and the apostles. If one thing is sure, it is that we will be held accountable for our actions.
Indeed, why do we have a conscience at all, and why should we try to follow the
righteous course? Double predestination presents us with a problem that seems to have no
solution. Thus, many theologians and philosophers have tended to discount it.

Traditionally, the doctrine of double predestination (hereinafter referred to as
predestination), has been advanced by several well-respected scholars and theologians.
The first and most influential was Augustine. In his theology, the incarnation of Christ
had two main purposes: to provide mankind with inspiration to live righteously through
the perfect example of the life of Jesus, and to raise the believers to the glory of heaven
through His death on the cross and His victory through resurrection (Augustine, *Con.*
1960, Bk. X, Ch. 43, 274). He held that God was not the direct cause of evil and that evil
was not a positive, or negative, force unto itself. Augustine saw evil as the privation of
God’s goodness. He also believed, as we noted in Chapter One, that most of mankind
was predestined to remain unredeemed. God, being the creator and master of time, could
surely see through it and know who would be saved and who would not be saved. Could
this mean that God’s foreknowledge could preclude His will that all be saved? According
to Augustine it did not, because Christ is both the redeemer and the judge of all mankind.
As the redeemer, His sacrifice on the cross heals all those who accept Him, but as a
judge, He separates the wheat from the chaff. His foreknowledge certainly does not cause
us to make the choices that our minds make. Indeed, our mind’s choices are some of the
infinite things that God foreknows (Augustine, *Con.*, 1964, Bk. IV, Ch. 2, 94). It must be
remembered that the main thrust of Augustine’s writing was aimed to combat the heresy
of Pelagianism. Moreover, the teaching of Augustine with regard to predestination was
conceived after the development of his most subtle formulation concerning the nature of
time.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) developed his theory on predestination primarily as a
safeguard against the paying of indulgences. He taught the single predestination theory of
salvation. Luther writes in his essay “Preface to Romans” that it is through eternal
providence that God decided “… who should and who should not have faith; who should
conquer sin and who should not be able to do so” (Luther, *Preface to Romans*, 1961, 32).
Yet in a very perplexing way he maintains that although one’s salvation is beyond his
own control and strictly in God’s, one’s damnation is his own. In the end, one has to have
faith in God’s abiding justice, for it is beyond all reason. Luther admits that God’s condemnation, or more accurate, His refrain from salvation, seems unjust. Yet, “[I]f His justice were such as could be adjudged by human reckoning it clearly would not be divine; it would in no way differ from human justice” (Luther, Bondage of the Will, 1961, Ch. 19, 200). Luther’s On the Bondage of the Will was published in 1525 as a response to Erasmus’ treatise On Free Will, published in 1524.

With the teaching of John Calvin (1509-1564), predestination reached its most radical form. Calvin believed that God foreknows and ordains all things, not just man’s eternal destiny. The promises that God has made to man since antiquity and has fulfilled through the ages were preordained. One cannot abstract the doctrine of predestination from the promises; rather, the promises were, in part, a consequence of predestination. Calvin held that acceptance of this doctrine is needed, and that the denial of it could and would lead to great harm (Calvin, Com., 1958, Bk. VII, pt. 2, 302-312). Much of what Calvin taught on predestination was directed against the idea of justification as held by the Catholic Church. Of course, ‘justification by faith’ means more than ‘justification by faith alone,’ because the Catholic Church taught that works were needed as well. Works oftentimes meant the payment of indulgences. This latter disagreement was largely what the Reformation was all about. Protestants were summarily excommunicated and persecuted, so Calvinism was an understandable encouragement to them. They were the ‘elect,’ and the suffering inflicted upon them could be viewed as a necessary part of the completion of God’s holy plan. Many of the negative commentaries that have criticized predestination can be judged in some measure as being directed against Calvin himself, rather than his theology. Certainly, Calvin was a most immoderate man, at times tending
toward fanaticism. Michael Servetus, the discoverer of pulmonary blood circulation, himself a Protestant, was accused of heresy by Calvin when he sought asylum in Switzerland. Servetus was tried, found guilty, and burned at the stake in Geneva in 1553. It seems easy enough to condemn one to death given that God has already condemned him to endless damnation.

Calvin’s theology can be conveniently summarized in the acronym TULIP:

T= Total depravity. People are incapable of coming to God on their own.

U= Unconditional election. God chooses to save or damn people with no regard to merit.

L= Limited atonement. The suffering of Christ covers only the elect.

I= Irresistible grace. When God elects to save someone, the person will respond positively.

P= Preservation of saints. The elect cannot lose their salvation.

We must note at the outset that such a formulation considers the downward creation of humanity as only a gift, or *datum*, not as grace, or *donum*. Basically, we can subscribe to the Calvinist position in every article except for one: the notion of limited atonement. Given that every man is an image of God, and that every image is the effect, with God as the cause, it seems inconceivable that He became incarnate to redeem some effects and not others.

Eriugena himself entered this controversy prior to writing the *Periphyses*. His *Treatise on Divine Predestination* was primarily a refutation of Gottschalk’s theory of double predestination. Gottschalk was a Saxon monk of noble lineage born circa 800 AD. He was orphaned in early childhood, and was raised and educated in the monastery of
Fulda. Unjustly deprived of his land and inheritance by the church, he waged a continual, though unsuccessful, struggle to regain them. A committed maverick all his life, Gottschalk found lasting distinction in the history of medieval thought by being branded a heretic. He claimed to espouse Augustine’s teaching on predestination by interpreting it in extreme double fashion (Nigg, 1962, 144-145). He stated, “[a]s immutable God before the creation of the world by his grace immutably predestined all his elect to eternal life, so he also equally predestined all the wicked, upon whom on the Day of Judgement the divine punishment will be visited for their evil ways to their merited eternal death” (Nigg, 1962, 146). Christ had been made incarnate and sacrificed for only the elect, according to Gottschalk, and God’s will was eternally fixed before time began. Of course, this is not close to what Augustine said, but it is very close to what John Calvin would say. We view Gottschalk’s arguments as invalid, due to his misuse of the word ‘eternal’ in this quotation. He views eternity as mechanical time extended rather than unbounded, simultaneous, and whole. Augustine’s formulation of time and eternity is very different from Gottschalk’s.

Given Eriugena’s inclination to apokatastasis, the invitation to write such a treatise would have been a welcome one. He openly displays his enthusiasm in the preface, thankful to be recognized as one “… having some ability to defend the salvation of all…” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Preface, 3). Essentially, it seems to us that Eriugena is advancing a scheme very close to the one outlined above. Appropriately adjusting the Augustinian model to rule out the possibility that anyone is non-elected, he begins the work by stating his method of study. As always, there is a dialectical approach, circumscribed by the liberal arts. He stresses that in God there is absolute unity. Hence,
there can be no difference between what God wants and what He is. “For him there is no distinction between being and willing; rather for him being is identical with willing” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 2, pt. 1, 12). Furthermore, there is an intimate, unbreakable connection between God and the human soul, because the good aspects of it are particular manifestations of His will. “The virtues of the soul are really nothing other than the effects of the one great cause of all things itself, namely the divine will” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 2, pt. 1, 13). The human soul and God are of one nature and the soul always abides in a common truthfulness with God. Any turning away from this unity must, therefore, be temporal. In eternity, the ultimate domain of the soul, the unity is restored and held secure. This is even more apparent when one considers what man is. The definition of man stated earlier in this study is “a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the mind of God” (Eriugena, Bk. IV, 768 B). The outward gift cannot be discarded because it is eternally bound to restorative grace. For God to “…predestine is nothing else than to predefine…” (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 18, pt. 4, 119). The accidental part of man’s nature is defined by man; however, the essential part has nothing to do with him, it is defined by God. Thus, man controls only the accidental attributes of his own self, and retains no control over the essential.

All of the above demonstrates that predestination has a remarkable independence from time as it is experienced. We need not consider it when discussing the question. This we view as the fatal wrench which has corrupted most discussions of predestination since the fourth century. If time is contingent, then it has no influence on the necessary.

Strictly speaking, predestination does not have anything to do with man, other than that he is the object of it. It has everything to do with God. In Aristotelian terms, it
would be the formal cause of humanity, the plan through which man is brought to completion. In essence, predestination is the completion of the Genesis account of creation because it is the plan of fulfillment for that creation. In Eriugena’s parlance, it would be the plan through which grace operates to restore humanity. The authenticating seal of predestination would be the multiple covenants of the Word which received validation through the incarnation. There can be no mistake about the direction of those covenants, for the One who pledges to them is without any contradiction of parts. He is one, supremely whole and simple. Indeed, as per the method of negative theology, He is even beyond unity, for He is the cause of it in all particulars.

We could even speak of predestination as being a divine exemplar within Eriugena’s second division of nature, for it is the perfect ideal of redemption. It must be one and unified within itself, just like all other primordial causes. It would make no sense to think that there are two of them, one for salvation, one for damnation. For if we could grant two, then we could grant three, four, or any multitude. In this respect, predestination has the same self unity as all the other divine exemplars. Reason cannot allow that the uncreated, creating first cause has contained within it any primordial cause which is multiple. In other words, we cannot allow two wisdoms, two truths, two eternities, two beings, or two loves within the divine mind. Likewise we cannot allow two predestinations (Eriugena, Treat. Div. Pred., 1998, Ch. 2, pt. 6, 15). Luther, Aquinas, and others taught that there is only one predestination, and that it is a call to the good. We can allow this only if this call to the good does not exclude anyone. What we cannot support is any system that calls one image to restoration and does not call another, for this would mean there are two predestinations. The final cause for any uncalled man
under any such scheme is damnation, just as it is under any system that calls one directly to damnation. We may be grateful to Calvin for pointing this out to us, not so much because of his theology but because of his logic. Any form of predestination that does not include a universal call to every man is merely a semantic denial of double predestination.

God’s church on earth is a human institution, and as such it is just as corruptible as any other. These two issues of justification and predestination, or rather the various doctrines formulated to describe them and the extreme measures executed to establish those doctrines, have corrupted the church as no others have done. No reasonable Christian could deny the extensive suffering that attended the various inquisitions subsequent to the Protestant Reformation. Since the Reformation, there have been countless other schisms. None have been as horrific as the first, however many have been fraught with wretched excess to some degree. We note that every one of these divisions took place after the ninth century, when the Periphyseon was written and ask the same meaningful question: could wide acceptance of the idea of apokatastasis, as advanced by Eriugena, have made any difference? It could have, especially with regard to the issue of justification. In other words, if all men are justified eternally in Christ’s incarnation, and if this truth would have gained universal acceptance, who would have ever heard of Martin Luther? His rallying cry of ‘sola fide’ would have fallen on deaf ears. Moreover, he would never have needed to utter it, because it was a cry against the common practice of paying for indulgences. The whole idea was that some of the saints were so good that they had gotten into heaven with grace to spare. Therefore, they could afford to be ‘indulged’ and divested of some of their grace and still not lose their saintly salvation.
For a stipulated payment made by a living person, this excess grace could be transferred to a departed loved one, thereby securing their salvation. A worse hoax has never been perpetrated on the theophany of the family, and the fact that it was successful is evidence that the love of one family member for another transcends this world. In other words, had the clergy of the day universally accepted the idea that justification is eternal in the incarnation of the Word, there could have been no dispute.

In a similar vein of reasoning, the issue of predestination, though not as tragic in its consequences as justification, could never have arisen. If it could have been granted that there was only one predestination to the good and, further, that all men are eternally called to it through the incarnation of the Word, who would ever have heard of Jacob Arminius, or his counterpart John Calvin? They both could have turned their considerable talents to building up the churches in Holland and Switzerland. Instead, we now have discord throughout Christendom. If predestination is an eternal call which none can rationally resist, then there is no need to posit that God’s atonement is limited. We have instead a unifying ideal that could strive toward that of the human family.

Fellowship

The previous two issues were chosen to illustrate how the failure to adopt this conception of *apokatastasis* has made the church worse. We now turn to issues chosen to show how adoption of it could make the church better. The first of these is fellowship. Our view is that factionalism within the church has taken a terrible toll on the gift of fellowship. The ultimate cause of factionalism turns on the opinion of some person or group of people that those who are away from the community of fellowship are ‘outside the faith,’ ‘not saved,’ not baptized,’ ‘damned,’ or some other exclusionary statement.
With the common adoption of the idea that no one is damned, as advanced by Eriugena, all preclusions to fellowship are empty. The believer can rest secure in the knowledge that all of his friends and family members are eternally with him. We have continually stressed that the human family is the earthly manifestation of grace. In this formulation, we go beyond the traditional family and include all loved ones, friends, and even enemies. This subjective commitment to fellowship is not unlike that exercised by Coach Tomlin of the Pittsburgh Steelers in stating that Ben Roethlisberger would be his starting quarterback. Now Roethlisberger, for all his athletic skills, is only human and on any given day someone else might perform better. Yet the coach knows that any indecision on his part might hurt the performance of the quarterback, as well as any backups, and that this would hurt the entire team effort. At some point, the coach and the other team members must subjectively commit to the coach’s decision in filling this critical position. Fellowship is teamwork of the highest sort, and it can only benefit from the security of knowing that everyone will ultimately choose to play the game.

The need for fellowship is as old as man. Essentially, it is nothing more than friendship. Once again we turn to Aristotle, who says that friendship is “… most necessary with a view to living. For without friends, no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods” (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1155a). We all value this mutual communion very highly, and we surely love those with whom we share it. There are three types of friendship: friendship based on pleasure, friendship based on utility, and friendship based on goodness. The first two tend to be transient, but the last one is long-lived, and in people of good virtue it lasts until death. Friendships based on goodness are both pleasant and useful, but the key to the relationship is the inherent goodness of the
friends. Ideally, Christian fellowship is like the highest form of friendship and even more so, for Aristotle in his *Ethics* was studying only earthly happiness. By positing the soul as eternal, friendship takes onto itself the dimension of eternity. Thus, Christian fellowship has no end in death, and what we enjoy now is just a taste of what is to come.

There is much support in both the Old and the New Testament which commands this idea of fellowship. A few of the more prominent verses are as follows (KJV):

**Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10:** “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them fails, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.”

**Acts 2: 46-47:** “Every day they continued to meet together… praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”

**I Corinthians 12: 12-13:** “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we are all made to drink of one Spirit.”

**I John 1: 13:** “What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Historically, the manifestations of fellowship have taken on varied interpretations with the growth of Christianity. Generally speaking, the need for a higher amount and a better quality of fellowship has coincided with the eras of greatest threat to the life of the
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church-universal. Before the incarnation of the Word, a time we refer to here as the
Prophetic Era, the people of Israel could be understood as being unified as to culture and
purpose, and fellowship came naturally. During the first four centuries, a time when the
church was growing exponentially, the need for fellowship was great. During this era of
martyrdom, the external threat to the early church was very grave, thus the earliest
Christians needed the security, edification and confidence of their fellows. From about
the fourth century to the sixteenth, Christendom gained certain geographic strongholds,
and the greatest threats were the rise of Islam, the eastern nomadic hordes, and the Viking
marauders. This is the period in which Eriugena is writing. He rarely discusses the notion
of fellowship, however, the Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John does
display the importance of it. Moreover, the Periphyseon can be viewed as the highest
manifestation of catholic fellowship, two friends earnestly seeking to understand God’s
truth. The era of Reformation in the sixteenth century, which brought on the various
inquisitions and counter-inquisitions, strikes us as the greatest internal threat that the
church has ever, indeed will ever, face. This is also the era in which the believers in
Christ violated the principle of universal fellowship to the highest degree. For this
reason, the localized need for it was perhaps the greatest. We tend to view this era as a
time of relatively high need for fellowship. The persecution has mostly ended in our
time, at least in certain countries. However, we do live in a time of multiple cultures,
ethnicities, and religions. All over the globe people of one faith live side by side with
people of another. Hence, the need for the security of being able to trust in one’s own is
still needed. The technology of mass media has not helped fellowship at all, and has
most likely hurt it. The transfer of information may be instantaneous, but real
communication lags far behind and fellowship further still. The transience of modern life has taken its toll as well. Aristotle says that friends must often spend time together, and this is likely what is most difficult today.

As we can see by the scripture passages referenced above, we are commanded to fellowship. Fellowship is more than just being pleasant, useful, or even uplifting; it is sustaining and necessary. The first passage from Ecclesiastes shows the utility of it, the second from Acts shows the pleasure of it, and the fourth from I John shows the goodness of it. All of this we can understand in Aristotelian terms. The third passage from I Corinthians speaks directly to a higher realm and a higher basis for fellowship that surpasses anything that we read in the Ethics. St. Paul seems to be saying that all fellowship is grounded in the incarnation of the Logos. Aristotle claims that the basis of all good friendship is the love of self, for a friend is one who wishes good for his friend for his friend’s sake, one who wishes for his friend to live, one who lives with, one who grieves and rejoices with his friend. Now, all of these are true of a man’s relation to himself, for he wishes all these things for himself just as he would wish them for his friend. A man must abide within himself, care, provide, and educate himself. Moreover, no good and virtuous man would exchange himself for another for “no man chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become someone else” (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1166 A). We can agree with Aristotle so long as it is on the condition that happiness and friendship is limited to this world. However, we have presupposed the immortality of the soul, so we cannot ground fellowship of any good kind in limited consciousness, and even a soul that lives endlessly in the Newtonian time of classical mechanics is limited. We must ground fellowship in that part of the soul that is immortal, or better said, in the
very cause that grants the soul immortality. This cause is the Word incarnate, hence, fellowship in all its forms is a theophany of God. Since fellowship and friendship are one and the same, all friendship is likewise a theophany. This theophany may be slightly good or very good, depending on how well it makes visible God’s gift and God’s grace, however it is always good to some degree and never evil.

St. Paul speaks to the subject: “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many are one body, so also is Christ” (I Corinthians 12: 12-14, KJV). Christ is first, the pattern and cause of every man, thus every man is dependent on Him. However, there is more than just this, for according to our hypothesis on extended realism, or extended Platonism, Christ is understood to be made in every man; thus He is also dependent on every man, not for his existence but for his essence. If Christ is in every man, it seems that, in a very real sense, every man must be in Him. In other words, He cannot be who He is if any of His images are lost. Since these are one and the same, we can say in one sense that every man is Him, or better said, part of Him “as one body.” There are no constituent parts here, for there is no man that can be said to belong to some other body other than Christ. Throughout our study, we have stressed the priority of nature that is found in the human family. It is a macrocosm of the family that is established in the “one body” of Christ. We are told in the Old and New Testaments that the church is God’s structure here on earth through which His people are sheltered and nurtured (Acts 2:42, KJV). We are also told that all governmental authority has its basis in divine authority (Romans 13:1, KJV). If this is so, then all the more is the human family a divine idea, for it precedes both church and government. It derives from some divine exemplar. Moreover, we claim that the
manifestation of the family here on earth is perhaps one of the highest derivations conceivable in that it closely approximates the divine exemplar. Allowing for this priority, which has shown and continues to show longevity over all recorded history, we claim that the primordial cause from which the human family takes its existence is the one that the Apostle Paul is referring to above. Both conceptions describe a relationship without constituent parts. Just as an eye cannot be taken from one body and placed in another (at least not in Paul’s day), a child cannot be taken from one family and placed in another. The special case of adoption, universally recognized in its basic intention, does not negate our argument, and in fact it reinforces it. In a metaphysical sense, the adoption of a child is not an addition to the family; rather it is a reconstruction of the family. Similarly, a man cannot be taken from Christ’s body and placed in another without violating the unity of the relationship. This is exactly as we would expect after some subtle reasoning. Throughout the Old and New Testaments there are numerous examples given in which an offence against one man is considered an offence against God. Similarly, a good deed done for one man is considered a good deed done for God. How else can this guilt of offence or the blessing of good be justly transferred unless the victim or benefactor is somehow part of God? Outside of this vestment of God, the recompense for doing wrong or the blessing for doing good would only seem just between criminal and victim or benefactor and beneficiary. Incidentally, this is one reason, perhaps the major one, for rejecting any theology that claims there are those who are elect and those who are non-elect, such as Calvinism. It is election and only election that conveys value, hence, under any scheme, to kill one who is non-elect is to do no harm.

As stated earlier, Eriugena had taught that no one can see God directly for He
delves in inaccessible light. However, He can be intuited through His theophanies, which
are made in us and in our world by Him. Of this multiplicity of theophanies, fellowship
is perhaps the greatest. We do not condemn the attempt to reach for God through the
contemplative gazing on mountains, oceans or stars, in fact we commend it. However,
this should never be a substitute for the higher avenue of knowing, that of fellowship.
According to Eriugena, the mountain and the friend are both theopanies of God;
however, the friend is a direct image of God and the mountain is not. We, therefore, tend
to be skeptical of any type of religious practice, such as certain types of extreme
monasticism, that removes fellowship from man for extreme periods of time. It seems to
us that fellowship is the natural course of man and should not be permanently abridged.

The theophany of fellowship takes on three forms, and each shall be addressed
proceeding from highest to lowest. The highest is the fellowship of one family member to
another. Above all, every family member needs to be able to know, believe, and rest
secure in the promise that his fellow family members will abide with him eternally.
Eriugena, in the Periphyseon, can be a great source of comfort in this area. God does not
condemn that which He has made. We have all witnessed the lamentation within the
human family when one member dies. This grief is only assuaged by the knowledge that
a joyous reunion will happen in due course. This type of sadness rises to the level of
tragedy with the death of a child because the time until the reunion becomes longer, a
length of time we feel we cannot endure. The greater the pain, the higher the theophany
must have been, else we would not feel the pain so keenly. We have seen family
members embrace other religions and other philosophies. This turning away is only
temporary, for they will return. The non-belief of a family member is not to be feared.
One must trust in the words of St. Ambrose, as spoken to St. Monica, “Do not trouble me, for it is impossible that the Son of Tears should perish” (Augustine, Con., 1960, Bk. III, Ch. 12, 92).

The second type of fellowship is that of believer to believer. This is perhaps what usually comes to mind when we ponder fellowship. It is a relationship of equality born out of mutual goodness. This is what Aristotle had in mind when he held that only good men could be good friends (Aristotle, Ethics, 1992, 1156 B). It was even more eloquently said by Rudyard Kipling in his poem, “The Thousandth Man.” Your true friend is one who stays with you “until the gallows foot, and after” (Kipling, 1956, 430).

The last type of fellowship is that of the non-believer to the believer. Some might self-righteously say that this is not fellowship at all. Eriugena would claim the contrary. Calling on his definition of love as that which tends to move the beloved toward the lover, he claims this is what calls the non-believer to faith. The believer must know and rest secure in the truth that his fellowship with his friend will at some future time reach its highest fulfillment. God never condemns what He has created; He restores it. This type of fellowship, through an overflow of goodness in the heart of the believer, leads to our final issue.

**Evangelism**

The first three issues discussed, justification, predestination, and fellowship, were all non-temporal. We have demonstrated that there is one eternal justification, one eternal predestination, and one eternal fellowship. Evangelism is different in that it involves a temporal activity within the church. For this reason, we view the adoption of a mindset toward the eternal salvation of all to have the greatest practical significance for
evangelism. Some would hold to the opposite view, that a mindset toward eternal salvation for all cancels out the need for evangelism. Moreover, some may ask what the purpose of believers amounts to if all men are eternally saved. These points need to be addressed, for they seem to be reasonable objections. When viewed from the perspective that eternity amounts only to the endless succession of Newtonian, mechanical time, the questions are well-founded. All evangelism is pointless because, eventually, everyone is saved. Our best evangelistic efforts have no significance, because, at the end, everyone will be resurrected in Christ. Indeed, they would be right, if one is constrained by his thinking to believe that eternity is time extended. But eternity is not time extended; it is the simultaneous and whole possession of unlimited time. The former mindset posits no connection over the intervals of time, while the latter maintains an infinite connection from before the first moment of mechanical time to after the last moment of it.

Paradoxically, we insist that when one considers that there is one eternal justification, one eternal predestination, and one eternal fellowship, a call to evangelism takes on an even greater importance.

Christianity is an evangelical religion in that it actively seeks converts into its fellowship. The basis for the Christian call to evangelism is revealed in the New Testament, as these examples show (KJV):

Matthew 28: 19-20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things as I have commanded you….”

Mark 16: 15: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be
These two passages constitute what is commonly called the Great Commission. This can be interpreted in a number of ways. However, we see it as a summons for every Christian to share in the duty, as well as the privileges, of increasing the earthly fellowship of believers in Christ. In the hands of the modern technology, the general principles outlined in the Great Commission have descended into the most excessive details imaginable. For over nineteen centuries, the universal church seemed to hold true to the spirit of the directive. The Catholic Church especially can be praised for the outreach of establishing missions, schools, and parishes in all nations. This is certainly in keeping with the ministry of Jesus and His apostles in the first century. While this is still happening today in various quarters of Christianity, it is not the norm. The early twentieth century has seen the advent of mass-marketing, targeted advertising, bulk mailing, etc. These, combined with the modern advances in information technology, have given the overzealous evangelist the ability to intrude into people’s lives, even at times to exploit personal situations. Moreover, the world has grown smaller to the extent that the gospel has already been proclaimed to the vast majority of it. The focus should now be on that small minority who have not heard it, rather than the masses that have. Evangelism is now an industry rather than a calling, employing various means such as rock concerts, movies, dramas, and studio recordings. This industry is not ‘going into all the world,’ it is merely entertaining with the same message to those who want to hear it again, and intruding upon those who do not. The end result of all of this has been a false glory, and in some cases vast wealth, for the evangelist, and little for anybody else. There is always the ubiquitous altar-call, which generally accomplishes nothing. Those who respond
positively are not saved; rather they are ‘saved’ again and again.

We note that the emphasis of the Great Commission is not on converting, but on teaching. The reasonable interpretation here is that if one is taught, he will be naturally inclined to lay claim to an inheritance that is already his. Plato holds in the Meno (Plato, Meno, 2002, 86 B), and Augustine affirms in On the Teacher (Augustine, Teacher, 1938, Ch. 11, 46), that teaching is not the acquisition of new knowledge, it is simply awakening one to knowledge that he already holds within his soul. We must agree with Plato and Augustine here, for Eriugena maintains that the knowledge of Christ is already present in the soul. Thus, all evangelistic efforts should be geared toward this objective. Moreover, we note that the Great Commission does not say that anyone will be damned. Indeed, it points to the higher truth that no one will be, otherwise Christ would be issuing a command that could not be fulfilled. The church should not be trying to save as many as it can, but rather it should be trying to teach people that everyone is already saved. It should be noted that Eriugena’s fifth mode of knowing and unknowing is a matter of understanding, not a declaration of non-existence. Things are said not to be if Christ has yet to enlighten them (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 C). Thus, the focus of evangelism should be to enlighten them. The incarnation of Christ is the summation of all truth. Hence, anyone who knows any truth in any manner already knows this. The church makes its own mission more difficult by presupposing that the unsaved do not already know it.

The most problematic aspect of evangelism as it has evolved over the last century is that it stresses the temporal over the eternal. No matter how much eloquence attends the presentation, the question, “will you take Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior” turns into “will you take Him as your Lord and Savior now. Time is short, for no one knows
when the world will end. Tomorrow may be too late. You had better be ready, so you must accept Him now.” All of this misses the intent of the Great Commission. It takes what is eternal (justification, predestination, and fellowship) and seeks to make those things temporal. The importance of true confession is done away with, only to be replaced by urgency. We must stress importance over urgency, for the former is long-lived and valuable, while the latter is momentary and costly. Eriugena would contend that there is an eternity of time available for this commitment. Not that we should take that time if we do not need it, for every moment in darkness is one in which we can be understood not to be. However, we do not “begin to live” until the “grace of the only-begotten Son of God” brings us to it (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 C). In other words, one should allow this eternal call to be born in him as quickly as possible, but not too quickly.

Modern evangelism is too quick. The apostle Paul was always careful not to offend others. “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all…” (I Corinthians 9:19, KJV). Evangelism in its standard modern form is offensive, for it seeks to make all men servants to the temporal.

There is another troubling aspect of modern evangelism, in that it seeks first to get men to turn away from evil rather than turning toward God. The focus is always on avoiding damnation first, and turning to God second. In truth, the former cannot be done, only the latter. Evil has no substance, thus it cannot be turned away from. We can only turn toward God or away from Him. This is a technical parsing of words, perhaps, but it is still a significant point. We do not turn darkness on or off when we enter a room; we turn light on or off. We often say that temptation should be turned away from. A more correct way of speaking is to say that God should be turned to, for in Him there is no
In order to highlight the temporal nature of modern evangelism, we posit the following counterfactual problem. Suppose that we proceed according to this system, and with all the tools of modern technology, combined with polished rhetoric, we are completely successful. In other words, we are able to make every person on this earth a Christian, and there is no one left to convert. However, nothing has been achieved, for if each soul in the world has freely chosen to accept Christ and be saved, then each one can now reject Him and be damned. Alas, we must begin again, because all could fall from grace. This might seem like an ideal situation for an evangelist; however, the philosopher will immediately recognize that evangelism has now become an end in itself. The cycle would repeat endlessly, and God is no longer its final rest. Therefore, we maintain that any true evangelism must be ordered to eternal importance rather than temporal urgency.
Summary

To conclude our study, we refer back to the opening lines of this text. Our intention was to investigate an historical work in the critical and discerning manner of a contemporary philosopher to determine whether a scholar working nearly twelve centuries ago could impart any wisdom to modern times. Our study has been aided, and in some cases hindered, by the thoroughly Christian perspective of Eriugena. We have accepted certain presuppositions and founded our work upon them. Some of those presuppositions can only be allowed by those of the Christian faith, but our hope is that the study will be of interest to everyone, for the ultimate question of salvation concerns everyone. For Eriugena, faith has an exceedingly non-theological definition which is based solely in wisdom. It is that “… a certain principle from which knowledge of the Creator begins to emerge in the rational nature” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 516 C). This seems to be a definition which most men would be willing to accept. Hopefully, we have been able to stay on the philosophical side of the very fine line which separates philosophy and theology, excepting this last chapter, which is intended to be an exploration of the implications of this topic for those of the Christian faith.

We hinted at the beginning of this dissertation that Eriugena may not have gone far enough. By this we mean that his writing sometimes gives the impression that he might hold that one can be completely restored to his original, pristine condition as a creature of God, and yet remain unhappy. As was discussed in Chapter Four, Eriugena seems to say this. We consider his comments here, roughly one hundred paragraphs out of four thousand four hundred, to be an anomaly within the Periphyseon, which simply does violence to the overarching theme of apokatastasis.
Willemien Otten has written a book entitled The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena, in which she forwards the claim that the Periphyseon is primarily a work which tries to understand that part of the vast universe of nature which is uniquely man. Eriugena studies all nature, with man as its central player. True to the title, Otten interprets the word anthropology to mean Eriugena’s “… view[s] of man in the context of how natura unfolds” (Otten, 199, 125). This is what seems to distinguish Eriugena from his patristic predecessors. Man holds the central, leading role in the universe; however, his role is not so much one of dominance but one of responsibility. Man is charged with leading nature back to God (Otten, 1991, 5). This central theme is one which is revealed gradually throughout the Periphyseon. We must agree with Otten here, for as we reflect on the Periphyseon from beginning to end, we are forced to concede this subtle but always emerging character of man which integrates all nature. This is even more reason to conclude that man’s own end is the key to any broad conception of reality. It seems to us that man must be unified with God before he can lead the rest of nature into unification with God. Moreover, man must be happy, for that was his original condition. Our argument is that man is always unified with God, even if he does not realize it.

Otten holds that Eriugena must explain how sin is abolished, for it “… impinges on the integrity of human nature…” (Otten, 1991, 123), and thus threatens all nature. Sin essentially gives direction to the circular dialectic of procession and return by prompting man to move upward toward God, always striving and ultimately attaining the fourth division of nature, that which neither is created nor creates. We have suggested that sin is easily overcome by the return, simply on account of the non-essence of sin itself. Sin is not merely wrong-doing, nor even the will toward wrong-doing; it abides primordially in
man’s fractured relationship with God. Moreover, we have continually advanced the theme that the human family is our surest earthly guarantee that sin is easily overcome. The father of the Prodigal Son did not care that his son had taken his inheritance, lost it, and lived an evil life. He only cared that his son was not with him. The son’s return overwhelmed all sin. We cannot see how the son could return to his father yet remain unhappy.

Otten writes that “… Eriugena’s concern was never with a schematic layout of the metaphysical universe, but always with the overall development of *natura* towards its final unity with God” (Otten, 1991, 128). We confess that an ulterior aim of our study, perhaps thinly veiled, is to demonstrate that rational man cannot, in the end, deny God, who vests him with rationality. A study of the *Periphyseon* seems to be an appropriate setting for this demonstration. Recall that the Fifth Mode of being or non-being, unique to human nature, concerns those who are not “… reborn in Christ” (Eriugena, Bk. I, 445 D). Those who accept the fact that they are an image are said to be; those who do not are said not to be. In the Eschaton, man cannot simply fail to be.

We conclude with a quotation from Book Five of the *Periphyseon* which best summarizes our entire study. “He sacrificed and surrendered for the purification and the redemption of the whole human race without any exception. For as there was nothing of that nature, save sin, which He did not receive, so there is nothing of that nature which He shall not redeem, and by redeeming shall not save and sanctify. For He is the Redemption and Salvation, the Purification and Illumination and Perfection, of the whole human nature collectively and individually…” (Eriugena, Bk. V, 981 D).
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