Like many other Platonic dialogues, the *Timaeus* begins and ends with an invocation to the gods, or prayer:

**Socrates.**—Why don’t you make an invocation to the gods, as we customarily do?

**Timaeus.**—That I will, Socrates. Surely anyone with any sense at all will always call upon a god before setting out on any venture, whatever its importance. In our case, we are about to make speeches about the universe—whether it has an origin or even it does not—and so if we’re not to go completely astray we have no choice but to call upon the gods and goddesses, and pray that they above all will approve of all we have to say, and that in consequence we will, too. Let this, then, be our appeal to the gods; to ourselves we must appeal to make sure that you learn as easily as possible, and that I instruct you in the subject matter before us in the way that best conveys my intent.¹

In his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Proclus comments on this prayer found at the beginning of Timaeus’ speech, although his commentary stops before the end of the dialogue.²

Proclus does not mention prayer as practiced in the traditional religion of ancient Greece.³ His commentary assimilates the man who is praying, Timaeus of Locri, to the Orphic Zeus, and describes the content of the prayer by means of its definition as found in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

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² On the theory of prayer in Neoplatonism, see Esser (1967); Hoffmann (2010); Layne (2013). The article by Ph. Hoffmann was very useful. It provided a wealth of information on the texts quoted and commented in this paper.
³ On prayer in traditional Greek religion, see Rudhardt (1958), 187–201. The author deals with several types of prayer: invocation, petition, promise, consultation, expression of gratitude. And Burkert (1985), 70–75.
The Orphic Rhapsodies?

Proclus refers not to the traditional divinities, but to three Orphic divinities: Night, Kronos, and Zeus. He establishes a parallel between Timaeus of Locri, who will give an account of the fashioning of the universe, and the Orphic Zeus, who, having swallowed everything that existed before him, brings everything out in order to make our world appear. Previously, he seeks advice from his grandmother Night, who is uttering oracles, and addresses an invocation to his father Kronos, whom he has chained up beforehand:

But before dealing with the subject matter in its entirety, he turns his attention to invocations (παρακλήσεις) of the gods and prayers (καὶ εὐχὰς), imitating in this way too the maker of the universe, who before undertaking the entire creative task is said to enter the oracular shrine of Night to fill himself with divine thoughts from there, to receive the principles of the creative task and, if it is permissible to speak thus, to resolve all difficulties and above all to encourage his father to collaborate with him in the creative task.

Let us recall the episodes of the Orphic theogony to which Proclus is referring here.

Night is the mother, spouse, and daughter of Phanes, the first god. She engenders Ouranos and Gaia, who give birth to the Titans, one of whom is Kronos. Kronos is husband of Rheia, who gives him several children, including Zeus. In order to maintain his power, Kronos swallows his children, except Zeus, for whom a stone has been substituted. Night informs Zeus, when he comes to consult her, that he will be the fifth king, and instructs him in what he must do. On the occasion of a banquet organized by his wife Rheia, Kronos gets drunk. He falls into a deep sleep, and Zeus takes advantage of the opportunity to chain him up and then castrate him. Zeus frees his brothers and sisters, and seizes power. Having succeeded, thanks to the thunderbolt which the

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4 The καὶ is epexegetic.
8 OF, fr. 180 Kern [= fr. 228, 274 Bernabé].
10 OF, fr. 157 Kern [= fr. 166, 230 Bernabé].