

THE REDISCOVERY OF GNOSTICISM

*Proceedings of the
International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale
New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*

VOLUME ONE

THE SCHOOL OF VALENTINUS

EDITED BY

BENTLEY LAYTON



LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1980

STUDIES
IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
(SUPPLEMENTS TO *NUMEN*)

EDITED BY

M. HEERMA VAN VOSS • E. J. SHARPE • R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY

XLI
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VOLUME ONE



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PREFACE

THIS is the first of two volumes containing papers of the International Conference on Gnosticism, held March 28-31, 1978, on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut under the sponsorship of the Yale Department of Religious Studies. In the present volume are published the plenary addresses; papers on Valentinian Gnosticism, on the Platonic tradition and Gnosticism, and on the question of Gnostic iconography; and a complete program of the conference. The second volume contains papers on Sethian Gnosticism, on early Manichaeism, and on Judaism and Gnosticism; a list of conference participants; and an index to the two volumes.

The focal points of the conference were two seminars in which invited specialists discussed research papers that had been written for the occasion and circulated in advance of the meeting. Both the seminar papers and an extensive record of their discussions are included in the present volumes. The seminar themes were Valentinian Gnosticism and Sethian Gnosticism—or as announced, “the so-called Sethian (Ophite, Barbeloite, Gnostikos, etc.) movement”—two ancient Gnostic traditions for which, it seemed, the most extensive and important new evidence now awaited interpretation and synthesis, thanks to the recent availability of the Nag Hammadi library to scholarship. That such a conference could be held only three months after the last codex of that ancient library had been published in facsimile was only possible because provisional transcriptions and translations had long been in circulation, through the characteristic generosity of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity.

Shorter papers were also solicited from scholars throughout the world—more than 2,000 persons were contacted—to permit the exchange of information on research in progress: fifty-six papers, twenty minutes in length, were accepted for delivery in parallel thematic sections. All told nearly 300 scholars officially participated as speakers, discussants, or auditors, representing twelve countries and four continents.

A broader synthesis of Gnostic studies as they related to the humanities was attempted in a series of public plenary lectures on “Gnosticism and Western Tradition,” which brought to bear four different approaches to the problem of Gnosis: ecclesiastical history,

psychology, philosophy, and criticism. In addition, coinciding with the conference there was a special exhibition at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale, "Gnosticism in Word and Image," in which most major branches of Gnosticism were represented: Jewish-Christian Gnosticism (the "Pistis Sophia" manuscript, documentary papyri from the Nag Hammadi library, some Greek "Gospel of Thomas" fragments, the leather cover of the Jung Codex, etc.), Mandaeism, Manichaeism, magic, Hermetism, alchemy, Kabbalah, psychoanalysis. Many of the items had been generously loaned by other institutions and scholars, and to them sincere appreciation must be recorded. The exhibition was supported by a Federal Indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Readers of these volumes will find especially welcome the detail in which the discussion of each of the seminar papers has been reported. Much of the discussion—conducted largely by specialists deeply involved in the study of Gnosticism—goes beyond the substance of the papers into more general, and sometimes even more significant, questions of method and perspective and avenues of future research. Discussions of the seminar on Valentinian Gnosticism have been edited by Kathryn Johnson, and those on Sethian Gnosticism by Ernest Bursey.

All the seminar papers are printed in these two volumes. But it was possible to include only a limited selection (less than half) of the short research papers; those not published here will, it is hoped, appear in the near future in various learned journals.

While the style of each contribution as printed follows the preference of its author, abbreviations of ancient works in references have been conformed to the familiar Latin abbreviations of Liddell-Scott-Jones, Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Lewis-Short, Souter's *Glossary of Later Latin*; for Philo, *Studia Philonica*; and for Coptic Gnostic works, the series Nag Hammadi Studies. Resolutions of these abbreviations, and such as had to be added to them, may also be found in the indices at the end of volume 2. Citations of the Bible, Pseudepigrapha, Apostolic Fathers, Dead Sea Scrolls, Targums, and Rabbinic literature are cited (except in non-English contributions) as in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, and in general the form of all references adheres to the style of that journal. In accordance with modern typographical preference no roman numerals have been employed; thus Plotinus *Enn.* 4.8.8, 15-16 refers to "Ennead 4, tractate 8, chap. 8, at lines 15-16 (in the Henry-Schwyzer edition)."

The conference was made possible and supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Yale Department of Religious Studies gratefully acknowledges the Endowment's interest and support. All opinions expressed in the proceedings are, of course, those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Endowment for the Humanities, nor the sponsors of the conference.

The considerable task of planning and administering the conference was shared primarily by members of the staff, who are named below, and also by others at the university. To all these persons, both named and unnamed, sincere gratitude must be expressed. In particular we acknowledge the support of President Hanna H. Gray.

My thanks are also due to those who assisted in the preparation of these two volumes: and in particular to David Rensberger for editorial assistance; also to Barbara Greten; to Professors Stanley Insler and Frederik Wisse; and to the A. Whitney Griswold Fund.

In the original call for papers it was hoped that the conference might provide an occasion "to attempt a new integration and synthesis of what has been learned, and to look for the most promising directions of future research on Gnosticism and its place in the Western Tradition." It is appropriate to recall that such an undertaking was only possible thanks to the patient labor of generations of specialists in religion, philosophy, linguistics, literature, and papyrology: a labor now so familiar and fundamentally important to the humanities that their names are known to all.

At the time of the Renaissance, scholars thought they could rediscover a *prisca theologia* from which had sprung the transcendental wisdom of the West. Indeed Plato himself had hinted playfully at its existence; and the Florentine humanists believed they had found it, and published it, in the writings of Mercurius Trismegistus. Only generations later was the Hermetic Corpus unmasked as the work of Gnosticizing Platonists, probably contemporary with Valentinus and the Sethians and themselves engaged in the self-same search that had so fascinated Ficino and his patrons; while the fraudulent Horapollo continued to exert an influence until Champollion's decipherment. Modern historical scholarship, though now critical in the chronology of its sources, continues to be fascinated by the possibility that earliest Christianity and therefore Christian culture developed under the influence of a Gnostic competitor or even precursor. At the very least, it can be said that both Catholic Christianity and Gnosticism shared

and embodied the same intellectual, literary, and social environments; and that by the mid-second century, if not before, there was a constant interchange of membership, with each social group claiming to possess the original teachings of the Christian Savior, or arguing that its *logos* had informed civilization since before the Flood.

But the coherence and seriousness with which the Gnostics had argued their case was obscured by a lack of first-hand documentation and by deliberate, if well-meaning, obfuscation on the part of their ancient opponents. Not only does the rediscovery, and now complete publication, of the Gnostic Library of Nag Hammadi go far to fulfill this lack; it also enables us to move beyond the essentially heresiological inquiry into the alleged priority or origin of Gnosticism, towards a rediscovery of its actual morphology, its development, its modes of interaction with other schools, and its place in ancient society. Although the diversity of Gnosticism was perhaps as great as that of its non-Gnostic counterpart, the evidence of Nag Hammadi strongly suggests that early Gnosticism appeared in two radically different species: one a parody or "inversion" of elements from Judaism, essentially non-Christian in character; the other an allegorical trope upon Catholicism. These two, Sethianism and Valentinianism, may have met in the historical figure of Valentinus who, according to an ancient source, was influenced by one and founded the other. The exact historical relationship of these two varieties of Gnosticism, and the dialectic of Gnosticism, Catholicism, the Marcionites, Middle Platonism, and the religion of Mani, are questions that now lie before us. The papers of this conference will lay a solid and important groundwork for that historical inquiry.

PROGRAM OF THE CONFERENCE

Tuesday, March 28

Plenary Session

Henry Chadwick, *The Domestication of Gnosis*
Jaroslav Pelikan, presiding

Wednesday, March 29

Seminar on Valentinian Gnosticism

Discussion of precirculated papers by Professors Stead, Bianchi,
Quispel, Wilson, Greer, and Whittaker
Wayne A. Meeks, chairman, presiding

Seminar on Sethian Gnosticism

Discussion of precirculated papers and abstracts by Professors Kraft,
Stone, Pearson, Nickelsburg, Colpe, Wisse, and Rudolph
George W. MacRae, chairman, presiding

Ethos and Ritual (Research Papers)

Frank Williams, *Were There 'Immoral' Forms of Gnosticism?*

Violet MacDermot, *The Status of the Human Body in Gnosticism*
J. Rebecca Lyman, *Androgyny as a Religious Symbol in Alexandrian
Christianity*

Klaus Koschorke, *Gnostic Instructions on the Organization of the
Congregation: The Tractate "The Interpretation of Knowledge"
from CG XI*

Henry Green, *Valentinian Ritual: A Sociological Perspective*

Jorunn Jacobsen, *Cult and Gnosis: A New Interpretation in the
Mandaean Masiqta Ritual*

John Gager, presiding

Philosophy and Gnosticism (Research Papers)

John Dillon, *The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic
Theory*

- Dominic J. O'Meara, *Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus*
 Tito Orlandi, *Plotinus and the Gnostics*
 William Poehlmann, *Jewish Wisdom Teaching and Christianity in the Teachings of Silvanus*
 William Schoedel, *Gnostic Monism and the Gospel of Truth*
 Michael A. Williams, *Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism*
 Karsten Harries, presiding

History of Religions (Research Papers)

- William Hallo, *Apocalyptic Origins Updated*
 Tamara M. Green, *Gnostic Traditions Among the Sabians of Harran*
 Michael Saso, *The Use of Manichee Materials in Contemporary Chinese Practice*
 Albert Henrichs, *Literary Criticism of the Cologne Mani Codex*
 Ludwig Koenen, *From Baptism to Gnosis*
 Menahem Mansoor, *Knowledge in Qumran and the New Testament is Da'ath But Not Gnosis*
 Marvin H. Pope, presiding

Varieties of Gnosticism (Research Papers)

- Gerd Lüdemann, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Rome in the Second Century*
 Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Valentinisme italien et valentinisme oriental: leurs divergences à propos de la nature du corps de Jésus*
 James F. McCue, *Conflicting Versions of Valentinianism? Irenaeus and the Excerpta ex Theodoto*
 François Bovon, *Gnostic Traditions in Certain Unpublished Fragments of the Apocryphal Acts of Philip*
 Douglas Parrott, *The Nag Hammadi Library and the Pachomian Monasteries*
 Morton Smith, *The History of the Term 'Gnostikos'*
 Deno Geanakoplos, presiding

Coptic-Gnostic Studies I (Research Papers)

- Malcolm L. Peel, *The Descensus ad Inferos in the Teachings of Silvanus*
 Jan Helderma, *Isis as Planē in the Gospel of Truth*
 Francis T. Fallon, *The Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptics: Logos 55 as a Test Case in Methodology*

Mary Ann Donovan, *The Triad Father, Son, and Church: Two Occurrences*

Michael Lattke, *The Gnostic Interpretation of the Odes of Solomon in the Pistis Sophia*

Edwin Yamauchi, *The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia, and the Jewish Roots of Gnosticism*

David M. Scholer, presiding

Plenary Session

Gilles Quispel, *Gnosis and Psychology*

James E. Dittes, presiding

Thursday, March 30

Seminar on Valentinian Gnosticism

Discussion of precirculated papers by Professors Tardieu, Koester, Pagels, Fineman, and Aland, and concluding discussion

Seminar on Sethian Gnosticism

Discussion of precirculated papers by Professors Schenke, Böhlig, and Robinson, and concluding discussion

Coptic Gnostic Studies II (Research Papers)

Stephen Gero, *Logion 27 in the Gospel of Philip: A Reconsideration*

Louis Painchaud, *Le cadre scolaire des Traités de l'Âme et le Deuxième Traité du Grand Seth (CG VII,2)*

H.J.W. Drijvers, *The Anti-Marcionite Character of the Odes of Solomon*

Jean Magne, *The Crux Atoukakia Ouen Ebol Hn Toumentatsooun (HypArch 90:15-16) and the Gnostic and Antignostic Exegesis of the Paradise Story*

Madeleine Scopello, *The Apocalypse of Zostrianos and the Book of the Secrets of Enoch*

John H. Sieber, *The Barbelo Aeon as Sophia in Zostrianos and Related Tractates*

Howard C. Kee, presiding

Modern Gnosticism (Research Papers)

- Luther H. Martin, *C.G. Jung and Gnosticism: Towards a Psychologically Informed Interpretation*
- Mary Jo Spencer, *Gnostic Symbolism and Analytical Psychology: An Illustration from Clinical Practice*
- Robert Segal, *The Inapplicability of Jung to Gnosticism*
- George T. Baker, *The Gnostic Hermeneutic of Major-General Ethan Allan Hitchcock, U.S. Army*
- Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Modern Meanings for Gnosticism: Examples From the Writings of Helena P. Blavatsky*
- Robert Galbreath, *Modern Gnosticism: The Persistence of Myth*
- Sydney E. Ahlstrom, presiding

Judaism and Gnosticism (Research Papers)

- Nils A. Dahl, *The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Tradition in Gnostic Revolt*
- Jarl Fossum, *The Origin of the Concept of the Gnostic Demiurge*
- Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, *Aher: A Gnostic*
- Reuven Kimelman, *R. Yohanan and the Minim: New Evidence For the Identification of Third-Century Minim With Gnosticizing Jewish Christians*
- Alan Segal, *The Meeting With the Self in Jewish Gnostic Texts*
- Ithamar Gruenwald, *Aspects of the Jewish-Gnostic Controversy*
- Krister Stendahl, presiding

The Fathers and Gnosticism (Research Papers)

- Luise Abramowski, *The Extent and Redactor of the Gnostic Material Peculiar to Hippolytus*
- Miroslav Marcovich, *The Naassene Psalm in Hippolytus (Refutatio 5.10.2)*
- Paul-Hubert Poirier, *Evangelium Veritatis 31:35-32:17 and Ephrem Syrus Hym. de Eccles. 24*
- Paulinus Bellet, *Bibliographical Glosses and Grammar in Ogdoad 62:33-63:11 and Authentikos Logos 24:26-33*
- André Méhat, «Vraie» et «fausse» gnose d'après Clément d'Alexandrie
- Marguerite Harl, *Les «mythes» Valentiniens de la création et de l'eschatologie dans le langage d'Origène: le mot hypothesis*
- Ramsay MacMullen, presiding

Plenary Session

Carsten Colpe, *The Challenge of Gnostic Thought for Philosophy,
Alchemy, and Literature*

Wayne A. Meeks, presiding

Friday, March 31

Gnostic Art and Archaeology (Slide Lectures)

Paul Corby Finney, *Did Gnostics Make Pictures?*

Bastiaan van Elderen, *Archaeological Research in the Area of Nag
Hammadi*

Bentley Layton, presiding

Plenary Session

Harold Bloom, *Lying Against Time: Gnosis, Poetry, Criticism*

Hans W. Frei, presiding

CONFERENCE STAFF

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AA*: *Archäologischer Anzeiger*
AB: *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964-75)
AbhAkBerlin: *Abhandlungen der deutschen (königlichen, preussischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, philosophisch-historische Klasse*
AbhAkGöttingen: *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse*
AbhAkHeid: *Abhandlungen der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse*
AbhAkMainz: *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse*
AbhAkMün: *Abhandlungen der (königlichen bayerischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse* (Munich)
AC: *Antike und Christentum*, ed. F. J. Dölger
ADAIK: *Abhandlungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*
AGJA: *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums*
AIRF: *Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae* (Helsinki)
AJP: *American Journal of Philology*
ANF: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson
AO: *Acta Orientalia*
AOHung: *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*
APF: *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete*
APOT: R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913)
ArtB: *Art Bulletin*
ARW: *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*
AttiPARA: *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*
BAG: W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
BBA: Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten
BCNH: Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section «textes»
BETL: Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh: Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BG: Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae (P. Bezae Cantabrigiae 1582)
BHT: Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BZNW: *ZNW*, Beihefte
CBCR: R. Krautheimer et al., *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1937-)
CBQ: *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCL: *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*
CG: Codex Cairensis Gnosticus (Nag Hammadi Library) = NHC
CIG: *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. A. Boeckius et al.
CIL: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin)
CivCatt: *La Civiltà Cattolica*
ConNT: *Coniectanea Neotestamentica*
CRAIBL: *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (Paris)
CSCO: *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
CSEL: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*

- DBSup*: *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*
DenkschrAkWien: *Denkschriften der (kaiserlichen, österreichischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften, philologisch-historische Klasse (Vienna)*
DJD: *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*
EnJud: *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971-72)
ErJb: *Eranos-Jahrbuch*
EvTh: *Evangelische Theologie*
 Fondation Hardt, *Entretiens*: *Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique, Entretiens*
FRLANT: *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*
GCS: *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*
GRBS: *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
HDR: *Harvard Dissertations in Religion*
 Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson): W. Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* (Engl. tr. ed. R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963-65)
HeyJ: *The Heythrop Journal*
HNT: *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*
HTR: *Harvard Theological Review*
HTS: *Harvard Theological Studies*
HSCP: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HUCA: *Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICS: *Illinois Classical Studies*
ICUR: *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, ed. G. B. de Rossi
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*
JA: *Journal asiatique*
JAC: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JBL: *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JEA: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEH: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JHS: *Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJS: *Journal of Jewish Studies*
JR: *Journal of Religion*
JSJ: *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*
JTS: *Journal of Theological Studies*
JWarb: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
KuK: *Kunst und Kirche*
LCL: *The Loeb Classical Library*
LPGP: G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961-68)
LSJ: Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*
LUÅ: *Lunds universitets årsskrift*
MDAIK: *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*: before 1956, *Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts für ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo*
MDAIR: *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung*
MGWJ: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
MonAnt: *Monumenti Antichi* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome)
MScRel: *Mélanges de science religieuse*
MUSJ: *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* (Beirut)
NachrGesGöttingen: *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse*
NHC or *NH*: *Nag Hammadi Codex* = *CG*
NHLibEng: [James M. Robinson, general ed.], *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York, etc.: Harper, 1977)
NHS: *Nag Hammadi Studies*

- NovT*: *Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup: *NovT*, Supplements
NTS: *New Testament Studies*
OLZ: *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
OrChr: *Oriens Christianus*
PG: J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca*
PGM: K. Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928-31)
PL: J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*
PTS: *Patristische Texte und Studien*
PW: Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
PWSup: *PW*, Supplement
RAC: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RB: *Revue biblique*
REAug: *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*
RevQ: *Revue de Qumran*
RevScRel: *Revue des sciences religieuses*
RevThom: *Revue Thomiste*
RGVV: *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*
RhM: *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*
RHR: *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*
RivAC: *Revista di Archeologia Cristiana*
RPh: *Revue de philologie*
RQ: *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte*
RSLR: *Revista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*
RSPT: *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
RTP: *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*
SBL: Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS: SBL Dissertation Series
SBLSP: SBL [Annual Meeting], *Seminar Papers*
SBT: *Studies in Biblical Theology*
SC: *Sources chrétiennes*
SGKA: *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums*
SD: *Studies and Documents*
SitzungsberAkBerlin: *Sitzungsberichte der deutschen (königlichen, preussischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, philologisch-historische Klasse*
SitzungsberAkHeid: *Sitzungsberichte der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse*
SJLA: *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*
SO: *Symbolae Osloenses*
SPB: *Studia Post-biblica*
SUNT: *Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments*
SVF: H. von Arnim, ed., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-24)
SymBU: *Symbolae Biblicae Upsalienses*
TAPA: *Transactions of the American Philological Association*
TDNT: G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964-76)
TextsS: *Texts and Studies*
TGF: A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (2d ed.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1889)
TLZ: *Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TP: *Theologie und Philosophie*
TRu: *Theologische Rundschau*
TU: *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*

TWNT: G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933-)

TZ: *Theologische Zeitschrift*

UALG: *Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte*

VC: *Vigiliae Christianae*

Vorsokr.: H. Diels and W. Kranz, eds., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*

VTSup: *Vetus Testamentum, Supplements*

WF: *Wege der Forschung*

WMANT: *Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament*

ZAW: *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

ZÄS: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

ZKG: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*

ZNW: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Kunde der älteren Kirche*¹

ZPE: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

ZTK: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

PART ONE

PLENARY SESSIONS:
GNOSTICISM AND WESTERN TRADITION

THE DOMESTICATION OF GNOSIS*

BY

HENRY CHADWICK

IT is, sadly, with a shamefaced confession that I begin this lecture, namely that before its composition was far advanced a title had to be offered in time for the advertisement of this Conference at Yale; and as I have contemplated its wording, my mind has been beset by its normal state of paralysed lethargy, or, as I would prefer to call it, critical scepticism. After all, an element most characteristic of gnosticism is syncretism, the assimilation of diverse beliefs, myths, cultic and ceremonial practices. Therefore to speak of 'domestication' in relation to Gnosis carries an implicit tautology, a lot less illuminating than it may at first have seemed amid the ecstasies of the English fall last year. What is gnosticism if not a reconciliation of many diverse religious and philosophical elements in a loose amalgam, that 'mystical mixing of gods', as the Neoplatonist Damascius put it (speaking of the identification of Osiris and Adonis),¹ a merging of religions where it is hard to discern much that any gnostic would regard as so wild that he would feel bound by either reason or conscience to reject it? Even if to Tertullian it looked like a jungle, in a gnostic zoo all animals are tame (provided, of course, that one is protected by the correct amulets and passwords).

The new discoveries from Nag Hammadi have taught us, among many things, that the gnostics were not such irrational and psychopathic nihilists as their ancient Christian and pagan opponents wanted us to believe. No doubt there may have been some second-century anticipations of Norman Mailer; but I seriously doubt whether a study of the causes of modern nihilism will do much to offer us a pattern of historical causation to explain the rise of gnosticism.

The central question to which I venture to invite your critical attention is this: in the light of the new finds and of all our multifarious evidence, can we see more clearly, or at least less dimly, what made reasonably ordinary, unalienated people actually wish to be

* I make no attempt in the notes to provide more than the barest essentials.

¹ Damascius, *Vita Isidori* fr. 106 Zintzen = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 242, p. 343a22.

gnostics? Where lay the attraction? Wherein can we discern the magnetic power that made people want to believe gnostic mythology? Might we even argue that, given the metaphysical and religious assumptions of the hellenistic Roman world, the gnostics are the very people who most spectacularly, reasonably, and persuasively succeed in expressing those assumptions united into a coherent world-view? It is worth asking ourselves whether or not the gnostics, far from being wild or queer or bizarre or pessimistic, far from having systems that were mere sick men's nightmares and evidence of excessive addiction to drugs or sex, were offering the most convincing, normal, sensible answer to the contemporary form of the quest for the meaning of life. For, *prima facie*, both the rational Neoplatonists and the orthodox Christian opponents of gnosticism could only oppose it at the price of some internal incoherence in their own positions.

I am not persuaded that we can lightly explain gnosticism as a minority form of religion or at least a mixture of religion and psychological depression, born of the insecurities and disillusion of the educated urban middle classes in Syria or the Nile valley—unless we attribute our gnostic texts to the urbanised middle classes in these areas, in which case our argument looks circular. Of course we can assume that to understand gnosticism we have to begin from the general religious syncretism of the hellenistic age, where the rapid coming of hellenism, of a *koine* that was expressed in far more than language, and then the extension of the Roman empire throughout the Mediterranean world, suddenly made merely local cults inadequate. Gnosticism is a special form of 'reunion all round' with the belief that all the gods are the same deities under divergent names, or local administrators and satraps acting for Zeus. The evidence of both Plotinus and the Christian Fathers shows that gnosticism was a presence in the circles attracted by their teaching. Both found that their groups were easily infiltrated by gnostic adepts.

Neither pagan Neoplatonist nor Christian militant was particularly anxious to give a fairminded and impartial view. From both pagan and Christian there come accusations of gnostic libertinism. Plotinus expressly accuses the gnostics of being unable to keep their hands off pretty boys and girls. I suppose such behaviour to have been exceptional rather than an everyday feature of most gnostic groups. Such departure from normal social prescriptions can be seen to have played no role whatever in the groups for whom or by whom the Nag Hammadi codices were composed. The dominant ethical proposition of the new

texts is strenuously ascetic and encratite. The gnostic way in these documents is to learn to suppress the evil appetites that the maleficent Creator of this material world has inserted into or attached to the bodies of the elect. Nevertheless, it is probable enough that there were from time to time isolated instances of sects where religious excitement and devotion were not associated with restraint and the 'angelic' way of life in celibacy, but went with a kind of 'religion de chair'. Clement of Alexandria offers a surely trustworthy portrait of licence among the Carpocratians (*Stromateis* 3). It is instructive that he marks a distinction between the libertinism of some contemporary followers of Basilides and the rigorous encratism of Basilides himself. Clement is as explicit as Plotinus in censuring gnostic love-feasts (*Paed.* 2.4; *Strom.* 3.10; 7.98), and attacks gnostic expositions of Plato's *Symposium* as an idealisation of erotic ecstasy being a sacred way to God (*Strom.* 2.117-18; 3.27).

There is no improbability here. The history of religion in general, even of Christianity for all its predominant ascetism, offers too many instances in virtually every century of the combination of cultic rites with sexual activities not acceptable in ordinary society. In modern times one need refer only to the French Catholic priest Boullan in late nineteenth-century Lyon who (like the rhetorician Diophanes who outraged Plotinus according to Porphyry, *Vita* 15) taught his women penitents and pupils that they could hoist themselves up a step on the ladder of spiritual perfection by sleeping with him.² Boullan even repeated some of the obscene ceremonial mingling of the eucharistic host with sperm and menstrual blood that is attributed to one gnostic group by Epiphanius (*Haer.* 26). Similarly in more recent times there are the Polish Mariavites with explicitly erotic initiations and esoteric interpretations of Bible and Zodiac.³ Both these examples happen to have emerged, like Rudolf Steiner, out of a Catholic milieu; but Protestant, and especially Pietist, instances are familiar to historians of this kind of thing. In the fourth century the Messalians of Syria and Asia Minor were accused of wild promiscuity. The charge is likely to be a generalisation from the unusual and occasional incident. But that there is something in it is as good as certain from a passage in the pseudo-Macarian Homilies warning the Messalian faithful against taking too literally the image of the soul as a bride (B 63 ed. Berthold),

² See Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870-1914* (London, 1966) chap. 7.

³ See Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Third Adam* (London, 1975).

a text which suggests that there were indeed moments when the Messalian quest for the felt excitements of palpable spiritual exaltation had carnal results. Pseudo-Macarius also had to advise his flock that before the resurrection men and women are not recommended to pray together naked.⁴ A comparable freedom was ascribed (but only by hostile evidence) to the Spanish Priscillianists of the same age.⁵

The point is that any esoteric and elitist group, with strong concerns about evil and with particular anxieties about maintaining encratite restraint in a close-knit community of both sexes, is likely to have occasional dramas. Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.30) once suggests that a specifically gnostic mark is to live in continence in the same house with a woman likewise dedicated to chastity, adding that such gnostic mortifications have been betrayed as a sham by embarrassing pregnancies. Other information, however, shows that this form of ascetic practice was quite widespread in entirely orthodox circles over many centuries in both Greek East and Latin West.⁶ Tertullian, whom none could reasonably suspect of broad-mindedness, advises upper-class Christian men to take into their houses widows of mature years as 'spiritual spouses' (*Exh. cast.* 12; *Monog.* 16). Hermas found himself, against his better judgement, spending a night sleeping in company with some beautiful and warmhearted girls who insisted 'You shall sleep with us as a brother, not as a husband: in future we are to live with you, for we greatly love you.' Hermas submitted to being kissed and to being required to dance, which, as he charmingly remarks, made him feel young again, and was then made to lie down among the girls all night 'doing nothing else but praying.' When the Shepherd came at eight o'clock next morning, Hermas could truthfully say 'I supped on the Lord's words all night' (*Sim.* 9.11). It was true; for the young women turn out to be symbols of moral virtues in Hermas's allegory. Nevertheless, there were surely occasions when symbols of virtue passed into living embodiments. Cyprian's fourth letter tells of ascetics of both sexes who were manifesting their complete possession by the Spirit and total crushing of bodily desire not merely by living together in an intimate commune but also by sleeping together in the same bed and, even so, keeping their chastity. One of the men concerned was in

⁴ *Hom.* 34.2, p. 261 ed. Kroeger.

⁵ H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila* (Oxford, 1976) 139.

⁶ See H. Achelis, *Virgines subintroductae* (Leipzig, 1902); P. de Labriolle, 'Le mariage spirituel dans l'antiquité chrétienne', *Revue historique* 46 (1921) 204-225. John 19:27 was appealed to: Epiphanius, *Haer.* 78.11.

deacon's orders. The virgins were ready to undergo medical examination to prove the falsity of malicious suspicion. To Cyprian these spectacular ascetic practices did not seem prudent. Yet of course they were only extending to unmarried ascetics that continence within marriage which widely respected and orthodox Christian teachers of that age expected of married couples who could thereby show their utter dedication to the Lord. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.100), the *Sentences of Sextus* (230, 239) and Methodius (*Symp.* 9.4.252) hold up total continence as the ideal for married couples. The desert father Amoun of Nitria spent the first night of his honeymoon expounding 1 Corinthians 7 to his bride, so that he persuaded her to live with him as a sister for many years until finally they agreed to separate each to become a hermit (Palladius, *H. Laus.* 8; Socrates 4.23). When Ambrose of Milan wants to find a striking model for his congregation to imitate in Lent, he thinks of the phoenix which reproduces itself at 500-year intervals without a partner and at the price of its own life (*Expl. Ps.* 118.19.13, CSEL 62. 428.18). At the risk of appearing provocative, I submit that the notorious logion 61 in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* concerning the sharing of Salome's bed is more likely, in the context of that highly encratite collection, to be intended of controlled chastity than of salvation by sexual liberation. But which of us can be confident of the meaning of that logion, the text of which is at fault, and which was probably unclear to the Coptic translator?

In a word, normal gnosticism did not necessarily provide a more hospitable-home for libertinism than orthodoxy. In both gnostic and orthodox communities (and naturally their membership overlapped) the general tendency was strongly towards ascetic renunciation, and this is the consistent picture offered by the Nag Hammadi texts. These include (VI,5) the excerpt from Plato's *Republic* 588-89 where human nature is compared to a combination of a many-headed beast (some heads being wild, others tame), a lion, and a human physical frame; the ethical task is to encourage the man within to domesticate the beasts, to make alliance with the lion, and to keep all three constituents in unity and harmony.

The *Sentences of Sextus* (NHC XII,1), as Dr Frederik Wisse has pointed out, are not aphorisms likely to be conducive to licence in their readers. The maxims require austerity and forbid the indulgence of any bodily appetite beyond what is necessary for life (19, 119, 276). In aphorism 230 marriage is allowed, but to give the opportunity of renouncing conjugal relations to live closer to God, or, if at all, to

provide opportunity for courage in a life of trial and difficulty. This last clause is omitted in part of the manuscript tradition; in an en-cratite milieu it would have been felt as dangerously permissive.

Both the presence of the maxims of Sextus at Nag Hammadi and the *Teachings of Silvanus* in NHC VII show that there was a more considerable ethical concern among gnostics than their opponents wished to give them credit for. Professor Zandee's recent book plentifully illustrates the affinities of spirit between Silvanus and Clement of Alexandria. Silvanus offers a protreptikos to war against the passions, to submit to paideia (87: 4ff.), to be gentle to acquire treasure in heaven (88: 15). The ground of this spiritual ideal is self-realisation: know whence you have come (92: 10ff.); realize yourself to be a mixture of earthy body, of psyche formed at second remove in derivation from the original divine intention, and of nous with a divine ousia. As you decline from the nous-level, you cease to be wholly male and become bisexual, both male and female coexisting together, nous being male, psyche female; you may even descend wholly to the level of feminine psyche. (Such language is in origin Pythagorean; one of the Pythagorean Maxims speaks of the 'sacred marriage' of nous and psyche: no. 118).

Silvanus is largely free of gnostic jargon. There is the occasional reference to the hystereia which is the lower world, in which Christ is, even though he is also the pleroma and the all. There is an emphatic differentiation of the three constituents of human nature; but Silvanus (like Poimandres) seems to accept that the best possible state for humanity is to be bisexual, i.e., nous and psyche in harmony, with the earthy body set aside. There is no question of the Creator of this world being other than the supreme God (116: 5-9), which in itself takes this book decisively outside the usual criteria for classifying a book as 'gnostic'. Silvanus has one very Origenist passage about the many forms Christ assumed in his descent through the spheres, first to the human level as man, then to Hades to liberate the dead and to harrow hell (103: 31ff.; cf. 110: 14ff.). But this theme is well known in gnostic texts such as *GPh* 26 or *ApocryJn* 21: 4ff., as also in texts not specifically gnostic such as the tenth chapter of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (pp. 72ff. ed. Charles), a work which does not really betray heretical features unless we are to count among such the doctrine that the birth of Jesus was unaccompanied by pain for the Blessed Virgin (11.7-11). Certainly the *Ascension of Isaiah* was a popular text among gnostics, as for the Archontics of Palestine and the followers of Hierakas in

Egypt (Epiphanius, *Haer.* 40.2). And the stress on Mary's virginity until death also appears prominently in the Nag Hammadi *Testimony of Truth* (45). The notion, however, was surely as loved in orthodox as in heretical circles.

The Redeemer's assuming of forms appropriate to the spheres through which he is passing is obviously congenial in gnosticism, as in the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (56) where the Logos changes shape as he comes down, and plays a considerable role in the world-view of Origen. But the idea also underlies the ultra-orthodox formula that whatever in our tripartite humanity of body, soul, and spirit the Logos did not assume is thereby left unredeemed. This principle's first extant enunciation expressis verbis is found in Origen's *Discussion with Heraclides* (6-7, p. 137 Scherer). But it is evidently implicit already in Irenaeus's doctrines that Christ gave his soul to redeem our souls, his body for our bodies (*Haer.* 5.1.1); that the whole man, not just part of man, was made in God's image (5.6.1); that if the flesh were intended to be saved, the Word would not have been made flesh (5.14.1). There is no reason to think that any gnostic would have found difficulty with the axiom that the unassumed is unredeemed. It is self-evident for the Valentinian Christology expounded by Irenaeus (1.6.1), and it is an open possibility that the axiom (probably in the reverse order) was originally of gnostic coinage (cf. *Exc. Thdot.* 58.1, Christ 'raised and saved what he had received and what through them was consubstantial').

In regard to the incarnation Silvanus's language is indistinguishable from orthodoxy. Only, near the end (117: 25), his exhortation is to take care in doctrinal matters, the danger, however, being not that you might accept too much without due scrutiny, but rather that, without testing it, you might reject it. Silvanus, like Priscillian of Avila, is wide open to the possibility of truth in all manner of places and authors, but expects his readers to be less liberal than himself. There is an analogy with Clement's exhortation that we should heed what is said, not who says it, and consider that when Satan is speaking in his role as an angel of light, what he says will in fact be true (*Strom.* 6.66). Origen likewise tells the congregation listening to his exposition of Exodus: 'If ever we find something wisely said by the pagans, we should not scorn it with the name of the author... but as the apostle says, "Test all things, holding fast what is good"' (*Hom. in Ex.* 6.6). The principle was long familiar from Plato's *Charmides* 161C: 'The crux is not who said the words, but whether or not they are true.'

The passionately encratite demands of the gnostics from whom the Nag Hammadi texts come are so evident that citations are virtually superfluous. They are in disagreement not about the requirement of celibacy but on the grounds offered in justification. In Silvanus and in the *Authoritative Teaching* there is no disparagement of the God of the Old Testament. On the other hand, the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3) not only includes a vigorous attack on the envy, ignorance, and slanderous character of the God portrayed in Genesis, but even argues that by commanding man to reproduce himself the Mosaic law is ipso facto discredited as a way of ethical purification. Here the Baptism of Jesus in Jordan signifies the end of carnal begetting: the water of Jordan (presumably because it means the river that 'goes down') is the very symbol of sexual desire; hence John the Baptist's feeling that it would be inappropriate for Jesus to be baptized in it.

The interpretation of Jordan in this text is worth a brief digression. Hippolytus says that the Naassenes taught the Jordan to symbolise that downward torrent which prevents the children of Israel making their exodus from Egypt; that is, sexual intercourse imprisons mankind in the body. This is the river which Joshua/Jesus made to run upstream (*Haer.* 5.7.41). This exegesis of Jordan as sexual desire is partly paralleled in Origen's commentary on St John (6.42.217ff.) where Jordan means 'their descent', cognate with Enoch's father Jared, which means descending, and is symbolic of the lust of the Giants for the daughters of men which in turn (according to certain exegetes) signifies the descent of souls into bodies. The reference is no doubt to Philo, *Gig.* 13, who expounds Genesis 6 to say that the falling souls descend into the body 'as into a river', this last phrase being a reminiscence of Plato's *Timaeus* 43A. In *Leg. All.* 2.89 Philo interprets the Jordan, which Jacob crossed, as 'the inferior, earthy, corruptible nature to which belongs all that is done in vice and passion.' Accordingly, the gnostic exegesis of Jesus' baptism in Jordan as signifying the overthrow of the reproductive cycle for all elect and spiritual persons is only pushing a little a symbolism already found in Philo with the encouragement of a Platonic tag.

The encratite theme can be found in almost any type of gnosticism, and it would be a hasty judgement to think that the demand for celibacy is a specifically Christian contribution. The *Book of Zostrianos* cannot be seen to have Christian features unless perhaps the baptisms that Zostrianos undergoes during his ascent through the heavens. It concludes with an exhortation addressed to those who have persevered

to the end of their abstruse wanderings to 'flee femininity as a danger to the soul: choose to yourselves the salvation of masculinity.' Of course this is not the same as the instruction in the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (III, 5) to say your prayers where there is no woman to distract you (144 : 15). To 'flee femininity' is to shuffle off that mortal coil of the dyad and to return to a unisex unity, as in logion 22 of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*. The theme has strong Neopythagorean and Philonic associations.

In the case of one gnostic sect accused of libertinism by both pagan and Christian critics, namely the Manichees, our evidence allows us the chance of verification. The charge appears first in Diocletian's edict at the end of the third (or possibly early fourth) century, and is a regular feature of hostile characterisations of Manichee ethic. Ambrosiaster reports that the Manichees say one thing in public, another in private; they forbid marriage while privately indulging in vice; they get hold of women and persuade them to do foul and illicit things (*In 2 Tim.* 3.6-7, *PL* 17. 493). For his contemporary Ambrose (*Ep.* 50.14), the Manichees combine sacrilege with obscenity (*turpitudō*). Yet when we go to Augustine to ask what evidence he produces of Manichee enormity, we are surprised and shocked to discover him wilfully distorting the truth by generalising from the occasional corrupt incident and by dredging up gossipy stories of relentless triviality (*Mor. Manich.* 2.67-75; *Haer.* 46). One nasty reference (*Nat. bon.* 47) is confessedly based on a report, from a prejudiced and distant witness, of confessions extracted under fierce torture, and must be deemed valueless.

Accordingly, my provisional view at present is that there were occasional gnostic groups which mingled erotic elements in their cult; but they were neither typical nor representative. I fear I owe my audience some apology for having made gnosticism more credible but the subject duller.

The historian trying to explain the phenomenon of gnosticism has to say why men wanted to blend Jewish mystical speculations with a Platonic framework and some quite substantial ingredients from hellenised forms of missionary Zoroastrianism. The Jewish components and the Platonic metaphysical framework seem nearly ubiquitous. Clement of Alexandria expressly says that the Valentinians appealed to Plato's *Republic* (III 415A) to find support for their threefold division of everything. Certainly he was the most obviously Platonic

of all known gnostics; but the Platonic framework is widely diffused in most of the other systems.

Plotinus objected to the gnostic innovations on the Plato to whom they were indebted but whom they misunderstood and about whom they were unpardonably rude. From the Platonic doctrine of ideas Plotinus thought they had populated the intelligible world with a vast plurality of entities; whereas for Plotinus a principle akin to 'Ockham's Razor' (not that Ockham himself so formulated it) seems to have been axiomatic: the number of such entities should be reduced to the minimum. The gnostics, he grumbles, take a pessimistic view of the world, with continual complaints against providence concerning faults in the world's design (*Enn.* 2.9.8). These faults include the inequalities of wealth, and the domination of passion over reason throughout humanity (2.9.9). Above all they ascribe an inferior character to the World-Soul, and hold that the creation of the visible material world is a consequence of the fall of the World-Soul (2.9.4). They disparage the glorious celestial lights of the Planets and speak of the 'tragic dramas' of the cosmic spheres, of the tyranny of the stars over our lives (2.9.13). They use not only astrology but magic spells, and exorcise diseases which they treat as being of demonic origin, not from natural physical causes (2.9.14).

Yet Plotinus, who hates the gnostic infiltration into his lecture-room and writes against them with rare passion, has to concede that there is that in Plato to which the gnostics can legitimately appeal. The optimism of the *Timaeus* stands in notorious contrast to the pessimism about this world reflected in the language of the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*, a contrast which in 4.8 Plotinus expressly examines. Like any Platonist, he fully accepts the threefold division of the cosmos into nous, psyche, and matter. The soul's fall into this lower material world is both a punishment for its audacity and sin, expiated by metempsychosis and demonic chastisement, and also a mission to redeem the inferior realm (4.8.5). With an argument that Irenaeus might have been glad to make his own, Plotinus insists that the unfolding of the hierarchy of being must go on to the limit of possibility, and cannot therefore suffer arrest at the second level of psyche: it includes the material realm (4.8.6). Therefore it is good for the soul to descend to learn good and evil (4.8.7; cf. 3.2.5). This last principle could be exploited by any libertine gnostic.

Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and Plotinus's own testimony in the *Enneads* agree that his circle of pupils included some who were

gnostics. But then Platonists a century before his time had already travelled a long way towards preparing for gnosticism. Plutarch had interpreted the myth of Isis and Osiris as teaching the dualism of Zoroaster (as Plutarch understood it), and had significantly exploited Plato's reference in the *Laws* to evil in the World-Soul itself. Celsus, whom Origen refuted, likewise had something to say about the way in which a variety of diverse myths converge in symbolic representation of the cosmic conflict between good and evil. Numenius of Apamea, whom Plotinus was suspected of plagiarising, is simply to be reckoned among pagan gnostics. He had special interest in both Judaism and Christianity as myths to be stirred into the heady mixture of his syncretistic pot. Apuleius of Madaura, expert in magic arts as well as in the philosophy of Plato, explains that according to Plato all nature is divided into three; and that correspondingly there are three grades or levels of deities: (a) the immortal and celestial known only by the mind; (b) the immortal and celestial visible to the naked eye, viz., sun, moon, planets, etc.; (c) the daemons in a midway position who preside over magic and divination, thunderstorms, etc. Because the daemons are capable of suffering passions, local cults are many and diverse (*De deo Socratis* 1-6). In his *Apology* Apuleius further explains that he has been initiated into the Greek mysteries and has participated in a great variety of cults (*Apol.* 55). Wherever he journeyed, he took with him the image of a god packed away with his travelling library of books, and would pray to the god on feast days (63). His armoury of cult-statues included a wooden figure inscribed Basileus, King, in token of his Platonic worship of the supreme king of all (64-65). One feels that gnosticism would have exercised powerful attractions over such a man, with his strong interests in religion, sex and magic.

In short, if you are a second century person anxious to fit all the diverse local cults of the empire into a single religious view, to set it in a framework of Platonic metaphysics, and also to allow for an interest in that most intractable, unassimilable of ancient religions, Judaism, whose god was nevertheless so potent, then you could be very likely to end up as some sort of gnostic, whether a member of an esoteric sect in Egypt attached to Hermes Trismegistus or a Palestinian or Syrian sect given to cabbalistic speculations about evil archons and planetary fate. On the other hand, Christianity in its orthodox form suffered the demerit of apparently involving the supreme God in matter, or at least in change; could one keep the

symbols of Christianity, with their incomparable power to express the glory and the misery of man, but reinterpret them as a psychological myth that might provide some generous key to the meaninglessness of life?

The gnostics who incorporated many Christian elements in their systems could still make redemption through the Cross central, precisely because it trumpeted forth a negative evaluation of the created, natural order. No text of St Paul was more congenial to the gnostics than his saying that the world is crucified to him and he to the world.⁷ This consideration helps to explain why the Church felt gnosis to be a *Doppelgänger*, a rival with the additional danger of teaching that orthodox faith and practice was a perfectly acceptable inferior level of spiritual aspiration, certainly not false, but a lower grade beyond which one might seek to rise with gnostic help.

To the late John Barns we owe the discovery that the papyri used to strengthen the binding of Codex I of Nag Hammadi included pieces written in the Pachomian monastery not far from the spot where the codices are said to have been found.⁸ We cannot be sure whether the collection was made (as Barns thought) for heresiological purposes or whether it was a cache made by a monk of the monastery who came to feel that the documents were too hot to hold. Professor Torgny Sāve-Söderbergh has suggested a few reasons for thinking a heresiological purpose more likely.⁹ On the other hand, there are also grounds that favour a cache. That prior to the year 367 a great number of apocryphal documents were being widely read in Egypt even in 'orthodox' circles is a manifest deduction from the Paschal Epistle written by Athanasius of Alexandria for that year, in which he prescribes a detailed list of the biblical canon.¹⁰ The Coptic Lives of Pachomius and his disciple Theodore attest the impact that this Letter had upon the Pachomian houses. Unlike the Greek Lives, the Coptic material is explicit about the circulation of apocrypha among the monks (see Lefort's translation, pp. 334, 363, 369-70). Pachomian

⁷ Celsus (in Origen, *Cels.* 5.65) says it was a favourite quotation among gnostics (and no doubt also more orthodox Christians) when they seemed to him impervious to rational criticism.

⁸ John Barns, 'Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices: A Preliminary Report,' *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib* (ed. M. Krause; NHS 6; Leiden, 1975), 9-18.

⁹ See his paper in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (ed. J.-E. Ménard; NHS 7; Leiden, 1975) 3-14.

¹⁰ The letter survives as a whole only in versions, but the list of canonical books was preserved in Greek through its incorporation in Greek canon-collections.

spirituality did not commend a higher grade of the religious life, akin to gnosticism. But Pachomius certainly laid claim to visions of heavenly mysteries (hence his troubles with the synod of Latopolis),¹¹ and in corresponding with the superiors of his monastic houses he used an alphabetic cryptography which the recent discoveries of Dr Quecke have much illuminated, while still leaving the cipher unbroken.¹² The cipher is partly paralleled by the alchemist Zosimus who entitled each of the 28 books of his magnum opus with a letter of the Greek alphabet plus four Coptic letters, each letter representing a god. The parallel with Pachomius was already evident to Reitzenstein (*Poimandres*, 266-67). So the hypothesis of a gnostic sympathiser among Pachomius's monks is not ridiculous. It is worth recalling a papyrus fragment from the Oxford collection published in 1939 by Dr C. H. Roberts in the memorial volume for Carl Schmidt (*ZNW* 37 for 1938). The fragment, dated by Dr Roberts early in the fourth century, is a catalogue of a Christian library, including Biblical books, a 'great book' which is evidently a Gospel-book, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, two works of Origen, and one by 'Father Val...' (Απα Βαλ...) which suggests Valentinus.

For heretical penetration into orthodox monasteries we have plentiful evidence during the Origenist controversies in Egypt and during the long struggles to contain Messalianism in Asia Minor. Texts of Origen could be brought into a monastery near Gaza, about 530 A.D. and prompted some risky speculations that caused anxiety.¹³ In a word, the bizarre nature of Pachomius's cryptographic letters, the proximity of the Nag Hammadi find to a great Pachomian monastery together with the now demonstrated connection of the codices with the nearby Pachomian house, and the sudden clamp-down on apocryphal texts resulting from Athanasius's Paschal Letter for 367 (which may be the cause of the cache), add up to make it probable enough that until 367 gnostic material was easily infiltrated into the monastic houses of Pachomius's foundation. One would not, of course, expect those gnostic texts that could be studied at Chenoboskion with reasonable impunity to be likely to favour libertinism, and therefore the picture of gnostic ethics to be obtained from the Nag Hammadi codices might be thought only to represent the nonlibertine stand-

¹¹ *Vita Prima Graeca* 112 (ed. Halkin, 1932).

¹² H. Quecke, *Die Briefe Pachoms* (Regensburg, 1975).

¹³ See the *Erotapokriseis of Barsanuphius and John* 599 (p. 283 ed. Schoinas [Volos, 1960]).

point. Nevertheless, it is at least fair to conclude that our new documents must have been regarded by their monkish readers as edifying stuff, perhaps too esoteric to be allowed loose among the generality in the monastery, but certainly not obviously abhorrent, and unlikely to encourage abnormal behaviour.

GNOSIS AND PSYCHOLOGY

BY

GILLES QUISPÉL

DURING the war we had plenty of time: you could not go out, or eat, or resist, or participate in public life. It so happened that I was a teacher of Greek and Latin in a small provincial town of the Netherlands and was working on my dissertation. For this I had to read Christian Fathers of the second century, heresy hunters like Irenaeus and Tertullian. And then, in the particular constellation of that time and that moment in my life, I found that the heretics were right. Especially the poetic imagery of a certain Valentinus, a second-century Gnostic, the greatest Gnostic that ever lived, made a deep and lasting impression upon me. Only a few fragments of his writings remained, but the reports about the views of his pupils were so numerous that it was tantalizing to try and reconstruct the original doctrine of the Master himself. This I did from 1941 till 1945—I told you I had nothing to do—and after the war I published an article about it. You know what happens in such circumstances. You are young; when you have laid an egg, you think it is the world egg, in short I sent an offprint of this article to Aldous Huxley in California, Karl Barth in Basel and Carl Gustav Jung in Zürich. At that time I was disappointed that the first two mentioned did not answer; now I am rather astonished that Jung, at that time already a world celebrity of seventy-one, replied with a personal and encouraging letter. This led to an invitation for a conference in Ascona, Switzerland, one of the so-called Eranos Conferences, which Jung and his followers used to visit every year. Of course I lectured about my Valentinus, Jung said a few words of appreciation and then everybody liked me. This was in 1947.

Soon afterwards the news spread that Gnostic manuscripts in Coptic had been discovered in Egypt. It was said that among them there was the so-called *Gospel of Truth* which according to a Father of the Church was in use among the Valentinians. And there was more.

One day the French professor Henri-Charles Puech, when sitting in the underground railway of Paris, was turning over the leaves of transcriptions from Nag Hammadi which a young Frenchman, Jean Doresse, had given to him. His attention was drawn to the beginning

of one writing, which runs as follows: "These are the secret words which the Living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote."

In a flash it occurred to him that he had read that before. When the train stopped, he ran home and took a book from the shelf of his bookcase. It was so: the famous fragments of the sayings of Jesus in Greek, found at Oxyrhynchus in 1897 and 1903, began with the same words and turned out to belong to one specific writing, the *Gospel of Thomas*. For the first time in history a collection of sayings of our Lord, independent of the New Testament and in some cases completely new, had come to light. Puech had discovered this. And he had no possibility to get access to the manuscript. He wrote to me, I wrote to Jung, and in 1951 we had the opportunity to discuss certain matters in Ascona with Jung and his associate C.A. Meier. Why was this?

At that time the whole collection of Coptic writings known as the Nag Hammadi Library and discovered in 1945 could have been published completely. The Director of Egyptian Antiquities, the French priest Etienne Drioton, would have surveyed the whole enterprise and distributed the writings to French scholars exclusively. A start had already been made: Jean Doresse and Pahor Labib made an edition and translation of the very important *Apocryphon of John*, printed at the Imprimerie Nationale of Paris, which I have seen with my own eyes, but which was never published. But there occurred a revolution in Egypt, Drioton had to leave the country, Doresse could no longer get a passport, not even from his own government, and this precious treasure of mankind fell into the hands of a people not really interested in it. The legal owner of most of these manuscripts was persuaded to bring them to a place and later to the Coptic Museum for expertise, where they were seized (the reason for which remains unknown) and left in Tano's suitcase, where I found them in 1955. No contacts with other scholars were made; at a later date it was even stipulated that the greatest experts, Puech and Walter Till, were not to participate in the edition, for reasons unknown. How little some people cared is obvious from the fact that the whole file with correspondence on Nag Hammadi had gotten lost in the Coptic Museum. And yet experts urged the authorities to proceed. Prominent scholars of Harvard, among them Arthur Darby Nock, wrote in this sense to Mustafâ Amr, the successor to Drioton, unselfishly adding that they themselves did not know Coptic. In these circumstances Jung and Meier have rendered an invaluable service to impatient students of Gnosticism. The old man had considered what he could do and had

come to the conclusion that he would help these manuscripts to be put at the disposal of the qualified scholars who had already waited so long (in his own words: "den zuständigen Gelehrten zur Verfügung gestellt werden sollten"). Therefore one codex which had left Egypt was to be acquired and after publication given back to the Egyptian government on the condition that the other manuscripts would be released for serious study. So I acquired the Jung Codex on May 10, 1952. Now imagine what it is for a scholar to study Valentinus during a whole war and afterwards to acquire a whole manuscript with five authentic and completely new writings of Valentinus and his school. Is not that an act of God?

So in 1955 the lacking pages of the Jung Codex were found in the Coptic Museum and an arrangement was made which was accepted at a meeting of an international committee in Cairo in 1956: (1) The Jung Codex was to return to Egypt and an international committee of experts was to publish all the writings of Nag Hammadi; (2) the firm Brill at Leiden (and not the French Institute at Cairo) was to publish them; (3) the Rask Oersted Foundation at Copenhagen was to finance the photographic edition of the manuscripts; (4) the Bollingen Foundation at New York was to pay all the expenses of the committee, including the travel of some Egyptian members to Paris. Of course, everybody concerned signed the convention that only members of the committee would have access to the manuscripts. This solemn pledge was broken and pirated editions were published in Germany.

And then the decline of classical studies became only too obvious. All these writings have been translated into Coptic from the Greek. Knowledge of Greek is a must for everybody who wants to study these documents, if only because so many Greek words still occur in the text. The mistakes made against the Greek in these pirated editions are appalling. In these texts the spouse of God, a female symbol of wholeness, is sometimes called Metro-pator, Motherfather, because she has synthesized the male and the female principle. This extremely profound imagery is completely obscured by the unspeakable translation: "Grandfather" ("Grannie is now in heaven"). Moreover, these editors proved too prudish for Gnosis; they translated *métrá* as "mother," and *physis* as "nature," whereas it means in this context "uterus."

And even those who translated the Coptic correctly did not establish and fix a text, but printed manuscripts, sometimes even three. There has been, however, since antiquity, a technique of edition. The first

rule of it is that you have to establish a text of your own choice, based upon the manuscripts available, but with the necessary conjectures and emendations, of which account is given in the critical apparatus under the text. I'm sorry to say that quite a few editions are completely deficient in these respects. Therefore it was right that Antoine Guillaumont, of the Collège de France in Paris, urged UNESCO to publish photographic editions. This desire has been implemented at last. Moreover, we may trust that our American friends, under the inspiring leadership of James Robinson, will see to it that the Coptic, the Greek, and the art of editing will be adequately dealt with in their future editions. It will be only then that Jung's wish that these texts might be put at the disposal of the qualified scholars available will be realized.

What was the reason that Jung, already an old man, had a hunch of the importance of this discovery, whereas so many prominent theologians and philosophers at that time disparaged the perennial religion of Gnosis as "nihilism" and "metaphysical anti-Semitism"? That was because Jung was one of the few outsiders who had really read the fragments of this faith forgotten and was keenly aware of its relevance for scholarship. He had written his doctoral dissertation "On the Psychology of So-called Occult Phenomena" (1902): in this he had interpreted the fancies of a medium, who was none other than his niece Helly Preiswerk, and had rightly called them Gnostic. And yet the youth and mentality of the patient precluded the possibility that she knew the reports of the anti-heretical Church Fathers. Hence the conclusion arises that Gnosis lives unconsciously in the soul even of a modern woman.

Jung was already on the right track at that time, but the rising sun of the "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule" helped him to continue in the right direction. German theology at that period was dominated by the political theology of Ritschl and Harnack, who were very much against Rome, mysticism, and pietism, and all for Luther, justification by faith alone, and the nation. Jung, the doubting son of a clergyman, was as a student already an outspoken opponent of Ritschl.

On the contrary, people like Herman Usener, Albrecht Dieterich, and Wilhelm Bousset loved popular religion, mysteries, syncretism, and Gnosis. They found that God very often had been experienced as a Woman, Mother Earth, that "rebirth" is found also in the Hellenistic cults of the beginning of our era, etc. Dieterich even wrote a book about a cosmic God of good and evil, represented as an officer with the head of a cock and serpentine legs, called Abraxas. They

explored what they called "die Grundformen religiösen Denkens," the fundamental patterns (or archetypes) of religious thought. Jung knew this literature. It should be observed that at that time studies had already been made of symbols that were held to be typically Aryan or Indo-Germanic. And others already divided humanity into classes with different patterns of thought. Against these, men like Dieterich found basic forms of religious symbolism that are characteristic for all human beings. The implications of their work are thoroughly liberal and humanistic.

When working in an asylum, Jung one day was told by a patient that the sun had a tail, which caused the wind. Later on he read in a book by Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, that a magical papyrus of antiquity contained the same view. The hallucinations of a mad clerk in Zürich showed affinity with Gnostic lore. This fact led Jung to suppose that our collective unconscious contains basic patterns which he called archetypes.

Jung studied the then available Gnostic literature, especially after his rupture with Freud, when he had terrible experiences and the Gnostics were his only friends. He even made a Gnostic painting reflecting his own state of mind. The stream of Eros starts with dark Abraxas, a world creator of contradictory nature, and leads up to the figure of a youth within a winged egg, called Phanes and symbolising rebirth and the true Self. At the same time he wrote a Gnostic apocryphon called *The Seven Sermons to the Dead by Basilides of Alexandria*, in which he proclaimed a new God beyond good and evil, called Abraxas. The German author Herman Hesse took over these ideas in his book *Demian*. As a matter of fact, the impressive image of individuation, the young bird who picks its way out of the eggshell, comes from Jung. So a whole generation in Europe found the expression of its deepest aspirations in a Gnostic symbol. As Fred Haynes remarked, Jung had renewed and revitalized Gnosticism in Europe after the First World War. And Jung really thought that familiarity with Gnostic imagery and Gnostic experiences helped uprooted modern man to solve his psychological problems. Starting from his own experiences and their parallels in ancient lore Jung tried during a long life to prove that these patterns were to be found in all religions and recur in dreams of modern men (in fact, his theory is also liberal and humanistic). He considered the archetypes as the language of life itself, universal symbols of all men, black, white, yellow, or red, and of all times. He discovered sense in nonsense and thought he could perceive

in the soul an inbuilt tendency toward self-realization, the process of individuation.

When man comes to himself, he is, according to Jung, in the first place faced with his shadow of deficiency; then he starts to explore his female side, the *anima*, often accompanied by the wise old man, who incarnates the cumulative wisdom of mankind, until the Self announces itself in dreams and visions, symbolized by the child or the square, heralding the healing of the split between reason and instincts. All these archetypes are and were already then to be found in Gnostic texts: the demiurge as shadow, Sophia as *anima*, Simon Magus as the wise old man, the Logos as child, the *tetraktys* or four fundamental aeons as *quaternio*.

It did not take long for students of Gnosis to realize that this theory and this terminology were useful tools for the interpretation of Gnostic texts. Especially Henri-Charles Puech, once a teacher of Simone Weil, later professor at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, pointed out that the center of every Gnostic myth is man, not God. These confused and confusing images of monstrous and terrifying beings should be explained according to Puech in terms of the predicament of man in search of himself. The discovery of the Self is the core of both Gnosticism and Manicheism. Even before Nag Hammadi this psychological approach was already a necessary supplement to the purely historical or unilaterally existentialistic interpretation of Gnosis which prevailed in other quarters. There is no question that psychology in general is of great help, an auxiliary science, for history in general, which otherwise tends to become arid and pedantic. And more specifically the Jungian approach to Gnosticism, once decried as a soul-shaking spectacle concocted by decadent psychologists and vain students of Judaic mysticism, turned out to be adequate when the *Gospel of Truth* was discovered. For then it became clear to everybody that Gnosis is an experience, inspired by vivid and profound emotions, that in short Gnosis is the mythic expression of Self experience.

This is the state of unconscious man without Gnosis :

Thus men were in ignorance concerning the Father, Him Whom they saw not. When [this ignorance] inspired them fear and confusion, left them uncertain and hesitant, divided and torn into shreds, there were many vain illusions and empty and absurd fictions which tormented them, like sleepers who are a prey to nightmares. One flees one knows not where or one remains at the same spot when endeavoring to go forward, in the pursuit of one knows not whom. One is in a battle, one gives blows, one

receives blows. Or one falls from a great height or one flies through the air without having wings. At other times it is as if one met death at the hands of an invisible murderer, without being pursued by anyone. Or it seems as if one were murdering one's neighbors: one's hands are full of blood. Down to the moment when those who have passed through all this wake up. Then they see nothing, those who have passed through all this, for all those dreams were... nought. Thus they have cast their ignorance far away from them, like the dream which they account as nought.

And this is how man discovers his unconscious Self:

Therefore he who knows is a being from above. When he is called, he hears; he answers; he directs himself to Him Who calls him and returns to Him; he apprehends how he is called. By possessing Gnosis, he carries out the will of Him Who called him and seeks to do what pleases Him. He receives the repose.... He who thus possesses knowledge knows whence he comes and whither he goes. He understands as someone who makes himself free and awakes from the drunkenness wherein he lived and returns to himself.

How gratifying it was to visit the old man in his lonely tower at the border of the lake, where he had cooked the meal himself, and to read these and similar passages from the newly discovered codex which was to be named after him Codex Jung. He is quoted as having said on this occasion: "All my life I have been working and studying to find these things, and these people knew already." And it is true that the best confirmation of a Jungian interpretation of Gnosis is the Codex Jung. On the other hand, Jungian psychology makes us understand that Gnostic imagery is not nonsensical nor a purely historical phenomenon, but is ever recurrent in history—in Manicheism, in Medieval Catharism, in the theosophy of Jacob Boehme and the poetry of William Blake—because it is deeply rooted in the soul of man.

So Jungian psychology has already had a considerable impact on Gnostic research. The term Self is used by practically everyone; the insight that Gnosis in the last analysis expresses the union of the conscious Ego and the unconscious Self is commonly accepted; nobody, not even the fiercest existentialist, can deny that Jung is helpful in discerning the real meaning of myth.

But students of Gnosis seem not to have observed that among the Jungians certain new views have been formulated which are relevant for our field. That is, the concept of synchronicity. Because these developments are not generally known, some examples should be given in this context.

Adolf Portmann is a famous biologist and a reputed humanist, who

lectured every year at the Eranos Conferences which took place in Ascona in Italian Switzerland. He always extemporized, but, of course, prepared his talks. Once upon a time he had in mind to end his lecture with a story about the praying mantis, not only because it was important for his scholarly aims, but also because it sounded so well in a peroration. Just when he had in mind to broach this subject and felt somehow moved by the insect's beautiful name, *Gottesambeterin*, through the open window of the lecture hall a praying mantis flew into the room, made a numinous and ominous circle around the head of the professor, then sat down upon the lectern just under the lamp which threw its light upon the lecturer's notes, to the effect that two enormous dark wings, the arms of a praying man, were projected upon the white wall behind Portmann.

Sheer coincidence, of course, and it would be blasphemous and magical to suppose that the state of mind of the lecturer provoked the insect. Such a causal connection is absolutely impossible. But it is true that it would cost the famous biologist several weeks to find a praying mantis in Italian Switzerland. In fact he had never seen one there, though he came there every year. In any case, it is remarkable that the mantis appeared at the moment that the man was emotionally involved in the insect with the telling name. Such happenings Jung calls "synchronicity."

In his old age Jung was fascinated by the symbolism of the fish. He held that mankind was passing in our days from a period of dualism, characterized by the constellation of Pisces, to a long period of unification, indicated by Aquarius. This is what he wrote in his notebook on April 1, 1949:

Today is Friday. We ate fish for lunch. Somebody casually makes a remark about the April-fish. In the morning I noted an inscription: Est homo totus medius piscis ab imo. In the afternoon a former patient shows me some very impressive paintings of fishes which she made herself. In the evening I am shown an embroidery of fish monsters. In the early morning a former patient tells me a dream of her standing on the beach of the sea and a *big fish* landing at her feet.

When some months later he wrote this down again, he found before his house a foot-long fish on the wall of the lake. There certainly is something fishy about this. These coincidences receive a religious dimension when we remember that the fish is the symbol of Christ. *Ichthus* in Greek stands for: Jesus Christ Son of God Savior. But the whole story became uncanny after the publication of the *Gospel of*

Thomas found at Nag Hammadi. There we find a very peculiar parable attributed to Jesus:

And he said: Man is like a wise fisherman, who cast his net into the sea. He drew it up from the sea full of small fish: among them he found a *large* and good fish. that wise fisherman, he threw all the small fish down into the sea. He chose the large fish without regret.

Compare this with a dream of a modern man, written down long before the publication of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

I came to the bank of a broad streaming river. At first I could not see very much, only water, earth and rock. I threw the page with my notes into the water and felt that I had given back something to the water. Immediately afterwards I had a fishing rod in my hand. I sat down upon the rock and started fishing. Still I do not see anything but water, earth and rock. All of a sudden I get a rise and have a bite: *a large fish* got hooked. He had a silver belly and a golden back. When I drew the fish ashore, the whole landscape was illuminated.

This dream should be interpreted in terms of self-realization. Without knowing it, that man had a bite, a manifestation from the deepest Self, the very center of his personality: he is developing in the right direction, and this is not possible without religious experience. But what really matters about this is that obviously the outside world is in full sympathy with our inner emotions, without any causal connections. Obviously the rationalistic approach towards reality is one-sided: the principles of time, space, and causality should be supplemented by the principle of synchronicity. And this means that both the absurd world of the unconscious within and the absurd nonsense of the world outside is pervaded by a mysterious and awe-inspiring Sense. Old-fashioned people would call it the hand of God.

Jung had collected such stories of meaningful nonsense⁶ during a long life. And it seems that synchronistic happenings do occur very often in the life of medical doctors. But he never dared to publish his views, until an American, J. B. Rhine, had proved him to be right by complicated statistics and impressive calculations. And even then Jung found the courage to make his views known only when his friend Pauli, the Nobel prize-winner for theoretical physics, had consented to publish a study about the mechanization of our world picture in the same book. A preview was given by Jung in Ascona in 1951, in the same place and year that it was decided to acquire the Coptic Gnostic codex.

One cannot imagine what impression this lecture made upon his followers. And even Jung himself seemed quite relieved and unusually good humored. All his life he had rummaged in the collective unconscious, but now he had forced a breakthrough from the soul to the cosmos. He beamed when he told me: "Es geht um die Erfahrung der Fülle des Seins"; it is the experience of the fullness, the pleroma, of Being that matters. And he said to me on another occasion that now the concept of projection should be revised completely. Up till that moment Jung had simply taken over from Freud the naive and unphilosophical view of projection, that man is just projecting his own illusions on the patient screen of eternity. Freud in his turn had borrowed it from Feuerbach, and it is already there in the Latin poem of Lucretius. That solution is so simple that it cannot be true.

It is, however, the main associates of Jung who have drawn the consequences from "synchronicity" and who have thoroughly modified the old-time view of projection. Among those present at the conference of 1951 in Ascona, where Jung launched his theory of synchronicity, Erich Neumann, the well-known author of *The Origins of Consciousness* and *The Great Mother*, was most deeply moved. He had returned to the land promised to his fathers, but could not come to terms with the God of his people. Erich Neumann was a sweet soul, but he had a ruthless mind. His logic was as prosaic and rectilinear as a certain Berlin avenue called the "Kurfürstendam": the world is a projection, your wife is a projection, the neighbor is a projection, God is a projection. And now Jung left the limitations of the psyche and found in the cosmos meaningful correspondences, which made sense and seemed to convey a message. This played havoc with Erich's views. And perhaps he had premonitions of his premature death which was to follow soon afterwards. He became more open to reality and disciplined the fancies of his reason. With great emotional relief he told a fascinated audience in 1952 that there was a "Self field" outside the psyche, which created and directed the world and the psyche, and manifests itself to the Ego in the shape of the Self. And this Self in man is the image of the creator. Erich Neumann had found peace with himself, with the world, and with God.

C. A. Meier, Jung's associate and successor, the same who did so much to acquire the Codex, went a different way. He always had had his doubts about the vulgar concept of projection and focused his special attention on Eros, a specifically Jungian theme, ever since the rupture with Freud caused by a different concept of libido. In

fact, from the very beginning Jung had conceived this in a sense that was broader than the merely sexual, as a vital energy which can take different forms. And Jung had seen long before the war that his ideas on the subject agreed with the Orphic and Neoplatonic lore on Eros.

Meier has amplified this theory. In his recent book *Personality*, the fourth volume of a systematic textbook on psychology, he conceives Eros as a more than personal force, a stream of love that is a principle of wholeness which reconciles creatively all opposites and tensions. In this Meier claims to agree with one of the greatest men of the Italian Renaissance, which was not an anticipation of pragmatism and positivism but in reality the revival and discovery of Jewish Gnosis. Meier quotes extensively the *Dialogues on Love* of Leone Ebreo, a Portuguese doctor living in Italy, who taught his gentile fellows about Cabbalism and androgynous Adam. This man wrote about the circle of Love which originates in God, pervades the universe and descends to matter and Chaos, but returns in human Eros to its source. Meier agrees, and observes: "This renaissance-platonic imagery leads us far from the soul into the cosmos, and yet we would rather not call this a simple projection, but an authentic symbol." And obviously this symbol manifests the truth about reality. Symbolic, imaginative thinking can be true. And Leone Ebreo, who found this key symbol, was right.

I always wonder how it happens that so often Jews are the ones who show us the truth of the image. In our century it was Henri Bergson who warned us that reason is a useful instrument for making tools and machines and cars, but that discursive, intellectual reasoning is neither meant nor authorized to uncover the truth: he thought that truth could only be grasped by intuition and only expressed by poetical images. Ernst Cassirer, so influential in the United States, differed from him insofar as he preferred mathematical, conceptual symbols to imaginative, mythological symbols; but he brought home the unfamiliar truth that both intellect and intuition produce symbols, and he certainly took myth very seriously. In this general perspective of European Judaism Wolfgang Pauli certainly was no exception to the rule, but it made all the difference that he was a nuclear physicist, and secondly that he was thoroughly familiar with Jungian psychology.

What a man!

Bald, fat, ironic, with bulging eyes. As a student he already frequented nightclubs, then studied, slept the whole morning and arrived towards midday at the seminar. A typical metropolitan, born in Vienna

in 1900, known to all as the man of the Pauli embargo, a man who created embarrassment around him wherever he went. He and his friends Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg are the founding fathers of our modern world picture and our atomic age. And this man was passionately interested in everything religious and Gnostic. He could listen attentively to a lecture about the *memoria* in St. Augustine. And when on November 15, 1953, the discovery of the Jung Codex was made public, he was among the audience. I will never forget what he then said to me: "This negative theology, that is what we need. As Schopenhauer said, he cannot be personal, for then he could not bear the suffering of mankind. This is it, the Unknown God of Gnosis."

He was interested in this material, because the difference between conceptual, analytic, discursive thinking and magical, symbolic, mythical thinking to him was a vexing problem. In his book on Kepler of 1952 he studied the transition from the earlier magical-symbolic description of nature to the modern, quantitative, mathematical description of nature. A representative of the former organic view is the alchemist Robert Fludd (1547-1637), a representative of the latter is Isaac Newton. Kepler (1571-1630) is just in between. Of course, Pauli does not deny that this development was necessary. But he deplors that in the course of this evolution the sense of the whole got lost. And he underlines that the analytical, quantitative approach is not the only true method, but needs to be supplemented by symbolic, intuitive thinking. Newton was right, but Fludd too.

Pauli says,

Modern quantum physics again stresses the factor of the disturbance of phenomena through measurement, and modern psychology again utilizes symbolical images as raw material (especially those that have originated spontaneously in dreams and fantasies) in order to recognize processes in the collective ("objective") psyche. Thus physics and psychology reflect again for modern man the old contrast between the quantitative and the qualitative. Since the time of Kepler and Fludd, however, the possibility of bridging these antithetical poles has become less remote. On the one hand, the idea of complementarity in modern physics has demonstrated to us, in a new kind of synthesis, that the contradiction in the applications of old contrasting conceptions (such as particle and wave) is only apparent; on the other hand, the employability of old alchemical ideas in the psychology of Jung points to a deeper unity of psychical and physical occurrences. To us, unlike Kepler and Fludd, the only acceptable point of view appears to be the one that recognizes *both* sides of reality—the quantitative and the qualitative, the physical and the psychical—as compatible with each other, and can embrace them simultaneously.... Among

scientists in particular, the universal desire for a greater unification of our world view is greatly intensified by the fact that, though we now have natural sciences, we no longer have a total scientific picture of the world. Since the discovery of the quantum of action, physics has gradually been forced to relinquish its proud claim to be able to understand, in principle, the *whole* world. This very circumstance, however, as a correction of earlier one-sidedness, could contain the germ of progress toward a unified conception of the entire cosmos of which the natural sciences are only a part.¹

When I consider these theories of Pauli I think it is permitted to summarize his views in the following parable: An authentic symbol is like a pane of glass, a millinery shop window in one of our big cities. Sometimes it mirrors your own image, sometimes it gives you an insight into the display behind the glass. It all depends upon your own point of view.

In the newly discovered writings of Nag Hammadi, it is said again and again that the world and man are projections. The first Idea, God's Wisdom, looks down on the Chaos below, and the primeval waters mirror her shadowy image: that is the demiurge who orders unorganized matter. So the world originates from the projecting activity of the great Goddess Barbelo. Even today we find the same among the Mandaean, the only Gnostics in this world who can boast an uninterrupted continuity of the ancient Gnostics; according to them the Holy Spirit (Ruha d'Qodša) produces a dragon, Light (Ur, from Hebrew 'ôr = "light") from the black water of Chaos. According to another version, at the commandment of God ("Life") the heavenly weighmaster, Abatur, looks down from above into that black water; at the same moment his image was formed in the black water, the demiurge, Gabriel or Ptahil, took shape and ascended to the borderland (on high near heaven, near the realm of light).

Or, again, this holy Motherfather reveals herself to the demonic powers of this world through her luminous image in the primordial waters: then these archons, rulers, create a "golem," a robot, the material frame of man, Adam, according to that image. And so, in a way, man too is a projection of Barbelo.

If we could trace the origin of this fascinating and appalling poetry, then the much-debated origins of Gnosticism would be discovered.

¹ W. Pauli, "The Influence of Archetypal Ideas on Kepler's Theories," *The Interpretation of Nature and Psyche* (London, 1955) 207-208 and 209.

And I think this possible, if only you allow me to tell a few stories which you may know, but perhaps not precisely:

1. There was a beautiful youth in Greece, called Narcissus, who scorned love and so offended the god Eros. One day he fell in love with his own image, mirrored in the water when he looked down. He saw his *eidolon*, his reflection, hovering on the water. Therefore he faded away or, according to another tradition, drowned in the water. The story goes to show that the beauty of the body is not real. If you are engrossed in it, you are like this man, who wanted to seize his own reflection upon the water, dived into the deep, and drowned. So your soul dives into the abyss, where you live blind with the phantoms of Hell. Or again in another version: They tell that he, when looking in the water, saw his own shadow, fell in love with it, jumped into the water to embrace his own shadow and so was suffocated. *This is not true* (cf. the *Apocryphon of John*: "not as Moses said"). For he was not suffocated in the water, but he contemplated the transient and passing nature of his material body, namely life in the body, which is the basest *eidolon* of the real soul. Desiring to embrace this, he became enamored with life according to that shadow. Therefore he drowned and was suffocated, as it were perverting his own soul and a really decent life. Therefore the proverb says, "Fear your own shadow." This story teaches you to fear the inclination to prize inferior things as the highest, because that leads man to the loss of his soul and the annihilation of the true Gnosis of reality.

2. The young god Dionysus was set upon a throne as soon as he had been born in a cave on the isle of Crete. But titanic monsters, who wanted to kill the child, gave him a mirror to distract his attention; and while the child gazed in the mirror and was fascinated by his own image, the Titans tore the child into pieces and devoured him. Only the heart of the god was saved. This means that Dionysus, when he saw his *eidolon*, his reflection in the mirror, in a sense was duplicated and vanished into the mirror and so was dispersed in the universe. But Apollo gathers him and brings him back to the spiritual world above, truly the savior of Dionysus. According to the Orphic sages, this means that the world-soul is divided and dispersed through matter. But the world-spirit remains undivided and pure from every contact with matter.

3. About this distinction between the soul and its image, its *eidolon*, which makes contact with matter, there is still another story. Helen is said to have eloped with Paris and to have been the cause of the war

between Greeks and Trojans. But it is not true that Helen was ever in Troy: she remained in Egypt and the Greeks and Trojans fought only about her idol, a "doll" which resembled her. The Pythagoreans say that this refers to the soul, which does not become incarnate in the body proper, but makes contact with it through its *eidolon*, its lower part, properly speaking its image reflected in a mirror or in water, but here meant to indicate the subtle or astral body.

It was after the pattern of these stories that the oldest Gnostics known to us, Simon Magus of Samaria and his followers, told that the tragic fate of divine Wisdom, raped by hostile powers and at last saved from dispersion, was symbolized by the myth of Helen of Troy and her *eidolon*. And this, I think, throws an unexpected light upon Gnostic origins.

But more important, these myths enabled the Gnostics to give a new and original solution to a vexed problem. They knew that such a thing as projection exists. In fact projection is the literal and adequate translation of the Gnostic technical term *probolé*. But they did not agree that God is a projection of man. They rather expressed in their imaginative thinking that the world and man are a projection of God.

It all depends on whether you agree that a window can have a double function: from a certain angle you see yourself in it, from a different angle you can also look through it and see reality and the truth. For the ancients a mirror is more mysterious than it is for us. You could see your own reflection in it. But when you used it for "katoptromancy," i.e., for magic soothsaying, then the gods would manifest themselves in the mirror and the future could be discerned in it. The mirror could be a magic mirror, reflecting darkly the outlines of your face on its bronze surface and yet allowing an insight into an unknown dimension, which later on will be seen clearly. "Now we see only through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face, eye to eye," says Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.

I suggest that this is a correct definition of the truth of imaginative thinking as revealed by the Gnostic symbols. The world and man are a projection of God. And the consummation of the historical process will consist in this: that man and the universe are taken back and reintegrated into their divine origin. That is eternal life; that is the Kingdom of God. Certainly this is a plausible, spirited, and provocative hypothesis concerning the nature and end of the psyche, the universe, and ultimate reality.

THE CHALLENGE OF GNOSTIC THOUGHT
FOR PHILOSOPHY, ALCHEMY, AND LITERATURE*

BY

CARSTEN COLPE

*Dedicated to Hans Jonas for his
seventy-fifth birthday with
deep reverence and appreciation*

It is a great privilege for me to deliver one of the plenary addresses of this International Conference on Gnosticism, a series that represents four approaches to the topic of Gnosticism and Western tradition: ecclesiastical history, psychology of religion, philosophy, and criticism. The great honor of being asked to join the other major speakers recalls vividly the wonderful hospitality which I enjoyed at this university fourteen years ago: as a visiting professor in 1963-64, I spent here one of the best years of my life. I made friendships here which have lasted to the present day, one of which laid groundwork for the continuation of that year, not less amazing, at the University of Chicago in 1974 and 1975. I feel the genuine necessity to thank my American colleagues for their noble invitations and their continuous support in scholarly as well as personal matters.

Not being an original and inventive philosopher like Hans Jonas, I had to go beyond the specifications of the philosophic approach to include two additional topics: alchemy and literature. Though philosophy remains my primary concern for reasons of both chronology and real importance, the inclusion of these other two subjects serves the common goal: the developing of a *weltgeschichte* of Gnosticism. Investigations into Eastern, Western, and even ethnic traditions have resulted in their rightly being recognized as contributing to the universal historical framework of a history of Gnosticism and Gnosis

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proper. Out of these a spiritual history—which is not the history of Gnosticism itself but is a concomitant of it—makes its appearance. It is a history of challenge and response, which is in some respects more significant for our modern self-understanding than is Gnosticism in the strictest sense. As such, its contributions should not only be remembered, but also be positively stressed.

A challenge does not always come from an external source; it can also arise from within. In this latter case a society, community, way of thought, or belief, can so alienate itself from itself that the result is comparable, in terms of force and dynamics, to that situation in which the challenge comes from without. And this is why I prefer to speak of Gnostic thought rather than of Gnosticism; for, in the terms of the final document of Messina (1966), Gnosticism should be a clearly defined, circumscribable movement, wherever its origins are detected. The term "Gnostic thought," however, may be used to mean not only the main element in the thinking of Gnosticism, but also that alienating element, arising from within a tradition that is not originally Gnostic, which poses a self-challenge and demands a self-response.

I do not propose in every case to differentiate between a thinking which reflects an internal process of self-alienation and a thinking which defends itself against a foreign challenge. The response in each case—in terms of its tendency and contents—fulfills the same basic function and comes to rest more or less monistically within itself. This fact relieves us of the task of discussing the origins of Gnostic thought and of Gnosticism. It relieves us all the more since the solution to the historical problem almost inevitably involves the dialectics of the two possibilities: on the one hand, the rise of a movement, spirit, or tendency which happens somewhere and then diffuses and exerts influences; on the other hand, the interior metamorphosis of parts of a given religion or philosophy into a Gnostic one. We see evidence of these dialectics in the controversy regarding whether Gnosticism is itself a philosophy¹ or whether, in the process of partly repelling and partly assimilating an oriental mythology, a philosophy becomes Gnostic.

¹ This view asserts that Gnosticism was produced by people who wanted to create an apostolic doctrine of faith and a Christian theology. Because of these people, "sects inevitably came to exist, not at all on account of factions and love of strife, but because several learned men made a serious attempt to understand (deeper) the doctrines of Christianity" (Origen, *Cels.* 3.12, p. 136 tr. Chadwick).

The complex subject of "Gnosis and philosophy" can conventionally be dealt with in four ways:

(a) "Gnosis" can be regarded as a philosophy in itself on the basis of its cognitional constituent. Here the history to which we refer can be extended to include theosophic sects in southern France (Bishop Sophronius of Béziers, modern Albigenses), the harmonizing view of a unity of science, art, and religion in the luciferic theosophy of Rudolph Steiner, and also the new realization of mysteriosophy and a magical condition of life such as found in the German paleontologist Edgar Dacqué.

(b) The gnoseological element which has to overcome the anticomic dualism in unequivocally Gnostic systems also operates in monistic systems as the homeopathic factor which helps to defend Jewish and Christian Gnosticism against those formulations which were to become heretical. This is the fundamental basis of a truly constructive religious philosophy, i.e., one that constructs a system of thought which theoretically would harmonize so-called intellectual and religious elements (even if such a religion never empirically existed), as opposed to a philosophy which presupposes an empirical religion and proceeds to investigate it according to certain principles of analytic or synthetic reasoning. Pioneers in this area are the great Alexandrians, perhaps already Philo (depending upon the definition of Gnosis), and certainly Clement and Origen. The latest representatives of this view would be, among others, certain nineteenth-century Russian philosophers from Ivan V. Kireyevsky to Dmitri S. Merezhkovsky.

(c) "Gnosis" can be interpreted as being each moment in that type of metaphysics in which God and world, spirit and matter, the absolute and the finite must be reconciled, and in which the course of the world must be understood as a sequence of moments through which the absolute spirit makes itself objective and mediates itself to itself. Within this broader sense of Gnosis fall the following: the system of St. Augustine; the scholasticism of the Middle Ages down to the seventeenth century; that aspect of Reformation theology which wants to explain the Bible rationally, to prove the dogmas of theology ideally, and to rely in an exclusive and antinomian way upon grace and foreign salvation; the theosophy of Boehme; the natural philosophy of Schelling; the doctrinal theology of Schleiermacher; the religious philosophy of Hegel. The history of this type of metaphysics has been written by Ferdinand Christian Baur.

(d) The fourth way of dealing with our subject is represented in the

theories of cognition and perception in which, generally speaking, like is recognized by like. This approach sometimes gives rise to a mystical or notional identification of subject and subject or subject and object. We cite here the monistic aspect of the history of Platonism including Neo-Platonism, the dualistic aspect of which belongs to the first of our categories and is presupposed in the second and third. It comes to an end with Kant's critical philosophy and modern mathematics, but includes also Goethe. Most recently it has been incorporated into the magnificent exposition of the problem of cognition in modern times by Ernst Cassirer, to whom this university granted his last academic home.

What is represented here are, of course, simply four ideal types; they can easily be otherwise conceived, or occasionally their constituents might be recategorized. The importance of the four categories for our purposes, however, is what they share in common: they do not precisely represent responses to challenges of Gnostic thought. They are rather continuations of Gnostic or Catholic Gnosis, or synopses which depend on the investigator's application of other specifications of fideistic or ontological recognition. It is possible to identify in these instances a Gnostic challenge; but the degree of introspection required here would obliterate the possibility of distinguishing it from any subjective intellectual motive. These categories must be established, nevertheless, not only for reasons of clarification, but also so that various thinkers will be familiar to us when we meet them again in the latter part of this paper.

Identification of a real challenge requires finding a motive which not only is inwardly subjective but also permits extrapolation. The critical analyst of thought must substantiate merely this; the historian may find additional reasons which permit him to speak of a real basis to which the possibility of extrapolation is due. There have been named two beginnings of the *weltgeschichte* of Gnosis which occur, probably not accidentally, at roughly the same time in Greece and in India. In the context of our discussion, they fit precisely the thesis which we are advancing: we can speak of an Orphic and a Upanishadic aspect within Greek and Indian thinking, or we can speak of an Orphic and a Upanishadic movement which influenced Greek and Indian philosophy from without. For our purposes, we can leave this alternative unresolved. But we shall note the Orphic and Upanishadic challenges and selectively trace the history of their responses to very divergent present positions.

There are Greek texts of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., generally called Orphic—though they often can only be extrapolated from Pythagorean and Empedoclean thinking—nearly forming a veritable Gnostic scenario: the soul in the prison of the body;² the daemonic soul in exile, thrown into the world consequent to a fault, and clothed in the “foreign garment of the flesh;” the divine *synergia* of the soul; its wandering through several bodies; dualistic abstemiousness; final reintegration among the gods or as a god. There is, besides that, not only a parallel to but perhaps also a preparation for Gnostic phenomena in the parasitic attitude towards the contemporary religious milieu. Here I have in mind the thievish use of pseudepigraphy in literature; the inclination to produce fantastic and complex cosmogonic and theogonic speculations;³ the maintenance of a coexistence of philosophic and magic tendencies, of ingenious symbolism and mythological crudities, of spiritual profundity and charlatanism; the presence of elitist and esoteric sensibility on the one hand, and vagabondish life in anarchic communities interested in revelations, purifications, and prodigies on the other.

This type of probable Greek presupposition can be enlarged to include that which distinguishes Prometheus from the higher Greek gods and the abilities given by him from the wisdom given by them. Prometheus is the rival of the highest god. Having characteristics of the trickster-demiurge, he creates by deceit and craft or redirects the creative process, claiming boastfully and grandiloquently the mere half-truth that he possesses the character of the self-created. He establishes certain—often disagreeable—aspects of life, civilization, and human destiny, e.g., death. He can be aggressive and lascivious; as an artificer of man he can deflect the creative process from the course intended by Zeus, shaping man in the internal contradiction that though he is formed in the image of the gods, he differs from them in having a beastly soul. Likewise, he can fashion woman in order to punish man. His manufacturing of valuable things can be perverted into very dangerous gifts. His gifts of skill, hope, and prudence are ambivalent—he can even boast that hope is blind; but nothing can alter the fact that it is he who makes man the *homo faber*.⁴

There are obvious parallels here with the Gnostic demiurge, especially

² Fr. 8 and 238, pp. 80f. and 250f. Kern.

³ Cf. Kern, index III sub *Erebos*, *Nyx*, *Chaos*, *Okeanos*, etc.

⁴ Cf. Aeschylus, *Pr.* 250, 442-506; following U. Bianchi, “Problème,” 164-68.

under the name of Yaldabaoth, whom—better than from Irenaeus, Origen, and the *Pistis Sophia*—we now know from the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World* (CG II,5), the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, and the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (not to mention the many new references to Saklas). Yaldabaoth boasts that no god is beyond him. He can be characterized as a merely psychic (not noetic) being, who is moved by envy, irascibility, and lust for power; he is the head not only of the culture of the world but also of the cosmos as a whole by virtue of his imperfect act of creation, the destiny of which is determined by the stars. Some Gnostics go farther than the Greeks ever did with Prometheus to call Yaldabaoth a “cursed god.”

Though there may be historical relations between Orphism and Gnosticism, Prometheus and Yaldabaoth, in not discussing questions of origin here we can confine ourselves to the attractive structural resemblances. If there should be more than that, the axioms of poly-genetic explanation are fulfilled by the fact that there are no obvious intersections of Orphic and Promethean tradition. It is interesting, however, that Hippolytus, making Marcion the plagiarist of Empedocles, interprets the furious folly of Discord (Neikos) as the demiurge. In the former, the daemonic soul has believed and therefore is exiled far from the blessed and thrown among the cosmic elements which hate it and pass it among one another. Hippolytus notes the similarities between Discord and the demiurge, who shapes the souls by tearing them away from the original One and dipping them into the ocean, i.e., into the waters of the lower world. Perhaps here the Orphic and the Gnostic-demiurgic positions are not correctly analyzed and distinguished;⁵ but our source has been able, at least, to assert that they are one.

To come now to the question of challenge, Empedoclean, Pythagorean, and Platonic philosophy can be reviewed to see whether and to what extent they reflect Orphic and (in fewer instances) Promethean thinking, though this is even more evident in nonphilosophic literature. If we confine our attention to classical antiquity our investigation can best be undertaken from a point of view which lies somewhere between the following two extremes of interpretation. At one end of the spectrum is the position of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff

⁵ Cf. J. Bollack, *Empédocle* 1. 153 n. 6; 155 n. 3, n. 6; 284 n. 4; 289 n. 1; 2. 53 fr. 110; 3/1. 64; 147f.; 154 n. 1; 183-86; 3/2. 576-85.

who, in his immense knowledge of Greek literature, clearly saw the presence of Orphic tones throughout, though he explained away every piece of evidence and thereby denied the existence of Orphism in the sense of a movement. At the other extreme are the British and American classicists belonging to the several generations who worked toward the productive interaction of philology and anthropology. Their ancestors are Johann Jakob Bachofen and James G. Frazer. But we do not intend here to examine their picture of a clearly circumscribable and diffusing Orphism—though this can be done by extrapolation from Greek philosophic literature; nor do we intend an analogous undertaking with regard to Christian Gnosticism and the philosophy of the Church Fathers. Rather we want to indicate a quite modern analogy.

It is well known that Eric Voegelin and Ernst Topitsch employ the notion of Gnosis to criticize various world-views and ideologies. They label as Gnostic everything that is guilty of offence against the order of being. The definition of the latter concept has been lastingly formulated for the past two thousand years in "Mediterranean" thinking and acting; that is, its contents are exhausted by Platonic and Aristotelian thought as well as the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which is itself most stable in synthesis with Platonism and Aristotelianism. In conformity with what lies outside these traditions, the range of what is Gnostic is predictably huge. Voegelin vindicates the existence of a Gnostic kernel in Christian heresies (including the Reformation and Puritanism), in political movements such as Communism and Nazism, and in philosophical and psychological schools such as liberalism, existentialism, and psychoanalysis. Topitsch finds especially in Hegel's teleologic conception of history a Gnostic, i.e., prescientific, origin; in Marxism he finds a secularization of the Gnostic salvation myth into the dialectical process of the loss and regaining of man.

We shall disregard the obvious intention of these thinkers to establish a theoretical foundation of anticommunism, though they do not deserve this oversight. Our concern here is simply to try to annul the violence inflicted upon the notion of Gnosis. As we have seen, Gnosis has at least structurally something to do with other challenges, and these can help to identify possible provocations of what is postulated as a timeless, i.e., eternal, order of being. For example, Puritanism and psychoanalysis are rather Orphic, Communism and Marxism have the flavor of the Promethean, Nazism leans toward the Yaldabaothic, and per-

haps only Hegelianism and existentialism are Gnostic in distinctly different, though clearly defensible, senses.

In relation to these identifications, Voegelin's and Topitsch's vindications make sense, whether or not we find their formulations attractive. As other philosophies, alchemy, and literature demonstrate, more progressive responses are possible. But ignoring this fact, the formulations of Voegelin and Topitsch are interesting insofar as they belong to a type which can be defined by our intended analogy. The former, fastening his valuational scholarship upon a Christianized ontology, responds to his adversaries and counterparts as the Church Fathers did to Valentinians, Ophites, and Marcionites, and as Plotinus responded to Numenians. Topitsch, employing the perspective of the neopositivistic theory of science, responds by striving for the goal of retracting alienation just as the Promethean prudence, which is mere practice and versatility, should be, according to Plato's *Protagoras* (327d), replaced by the higher gift of political wisdom which is given at the instigation of Zeus.

Let us now turn to the Indian challenge. Focusing on the notions of *brahman* and *ātman*, we should briefly recall the well-known development from the Rigveda via the Brāhmanas to the Upanishads. In the Rigveda *brahman* is the mystical power which makes the holy word efficacious. In the Brāhmanas it appears as the impersonal correspondent of the personal Prajāpati; the two together constitute the universe. In the Upanishads, however, *brahman* has become the creative and ultimate ground of being.

That, verily, whence beings here are born, that by which when born they live, that into which on deceasing they enter—that be desirous of understanding. That is Brahma. . . . Brahma is understanding (*vijñāna*). For truly, indeed, beings here are born from understanding, when born they live by understanding, on deceasing they enter into understanding.⁶

Ātman, which in the Rigveda is "breath" or "life," has in the Upanishads come to be the self or the soul as the fundamental ground of the function of the senses.

Him[*ātman*] they see not, for [as seen] he is incomplete. When breathing, he becomes breath (*prāṇa*) by name; when speaking, voice; when seeing, the eye; when hearing, the ear; when thinking, the mind: these are merely the names of his acts. Whoever worships one or another of these—he

⁶ Taittirīya Upanishad 3.1, 5; tr. Hume, 290f.

knows not; for he is incomplete with one or another of these. One should worship with the thought that he is just one's self (*ātman*), for therein all these become one.⁷

The *brahman-ātman* speculation can otherwise be understood as a line of thought which is asserted to have been continuous from the Samhitās and Brāhmanas—of which many Upanishads still form a part—to the later Sūtras. This strand of thought is characterized by the withdrawal from sacrifice and by new interpretations of being which were no longer influenced by sacrifice. Alternatively, it can be seen as grounded in a movement in the newly colonized East surrounding the courtly nobility which reacted against the ritualistic pretensions of the omnipotent Brahmins. Be that as it may, once substantially established, the *brahman-ātman* speculation was a challenge which remained a constitutive factor not only throughout the history of Indian philosophy, but also, as we shall see, for the West.

In the famous sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upanishad, a man named Uddālaka Āruni instructs his son Śvetaketu about being (*sat*). It is a subtle unperceivable substance—e.g., in the fruit of a tree or in salty water—the highest divinity, the essence of the universe, the truth, the self. It is explained in nine trains of thought, and every time the last sentence is: “That which is the finest essence—this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality (*satya*). That is Ātman (Soul). That art thou, Śvetaketu.”⁸ The Vedantists have practiced and explained the validity and function of the statement *tat tvam asi*, proclaiming it as one of the “Great Sentences” of their philosophy. *Tat* means the singularly real, purely spiritual *brahman*; *tvam* is the individual soul. The sentence operates as an invocation, a call. When it is heard rightly, it evokes an awakening from the sleep of ignorance, an awakening to the awareness that one is nothing other than *brahman*.

This offers a striking parallel to the Western Gnostic formulas of identity. Other Upanishadic references speak of the world and man as darkness and death and, therefore, as complete contrasts to *brahman* and *ātman* which dwell within them. By becoming aware of the *brahman-ātman* identity, man will be called out of darkness and led to light and immortality. A possible distinction between this Eastern philosophy and Western Gnosticism should, however, be noted. Gen-

⁷ Brihadāranyaka Upanishad I.4, 7; tr. Hume, 82f.

⁸ Chāndogya Upanishad, chaps. 6, 8.7, 9.4, 10.3, 11.3, 12.3, 13.3, 14.3, 15.3, 16.3; tr. Hume, 246-50.

erally speaking, the Gnostic savior himself reveals in the first person the true identity which is sought after. Transferred into Upanishadic language the Gnostic savior would say: "I am the *ātman* (thou), and thou art I (*brahman*)." This seems to imply a stronger conception of external revelation than is actually present in the Upanishads where the *tat tvam asi* tends more toward a cognitional monism and serves a purely intellectual function of self-salvation.

The *tat tvam asi* philosophy was part of the Persian translation of certain Upanishads by Dārā Shikoh in 1657. The object of this effort was to legitimate his mystical and pantheistic humanism, which served as the basis of his blending of Hinduism and Islam. The result was the *Oupnek'hat*, which Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron brought from India and rendered into Latin (published 1801-02). His translation became the stirring spark which filled Arthur Schopenhauer with enthusiasm for Indian thinking.

Schopenhauer provided the main philosophic response to the challenge of Indian Gnostic thought and served as the instigator of some after-responses of great consequence. He did not, however, perceive the *upnek'hat* as definitely Hindu; rather, he synthesized it with the pessimistic aspects of Buddhism with which he had become acquainted through other means. Directed against Hegel and others like him, Schopenhauer contended that this world was the worst of all possible worlds and, moreover, that it was merely an idea inferred from, and thereby dependent upon, the imagining subject. On this point his thinking converged with the universal *māyā* illusionism of Buddhism, a doctrine which influenced Hinduism as well through the philosophy of Śankara (seventh or eighth century). Schopenhauer's answer to man's need for salvation from this bad and illusory world was twofold: man must achieve the enlightenment of the Upanishadic *tat tvam asi*; he must also engage himself in a metaphysical flight from the world (Schopenhauer's occidental understanding of nirvana).

In this connection, we should not fail to mention the German composer Wagner to whom, acquainted as he and his friends were with Indian things, nirvana was a kind of heroic extinction. This understanding quite often shines through his interpretation of Germanic sagas; he had even planned to compose an opera *Jina* ("the victor") by whom he meant not Mahāvīra but Gautama Buddha. Schopenhauer and Wagner were to become of great importance for Nietzsche and, together with him, for Thomas Mann, who not only saw—as did many others since romanticism—convergences among

certain Hindu and Buddhist schools, but also recognized strands of these in German Idealism.

As a representative of German Idealism, Schopenhauer responded to the *tat tvam asi* challenge in a way that indicated his primary concern for the ethical dimension of existence. For him the *tat* was not the spiritual *brahman*, but the metaphysical will. The attainment of the universal One by this ethical identification served as the prototype of any self-identification with any other "one," and was thereby the theoretical foundation of the ethics of compassion. The principle of "neminem laede" was the inevitable consequence of the will to live by which the suffering of the creature was necessarily established.

Here, however, Schopenhauer had mistaken his volitional for the cognitional monism of the Vedantists who had banished all willing and doing from the proper domain of that which is truly being. But curiously enough, Schopenhauer's views later became integrated into the Indian position by way of two developmental responses to his thinking. One of these came from the German philosopher Paul Deussen and the other from some Hindu modernists.

Deussen, a genuine Indologist as well as a pupil and glowing admirer of Schopenhauer, tried to verify the latter's interpretation of the *tat tvam asi* philosophy, as he thought it a suitable bridge between the metaphysics of the Vedanta school and the ethics of Christianity. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who heard Deussen lecturing in Bombay in February, 1893, and Swami Vivekananda, who visited Deussen in Kiel in September, 1896, introduced this new pseudo-Vedantic ethic into Neo-Hinduism. There it was further developed by the Ramakrishna Mission, by S. Radhakrishnan, and even by Mahatma Gandhi, in whose principle of *ahimsa* Schopenhauer's "neminem laede" reappears.⁹

Although this important development belongs to a much broader context—i.e., the Neo-Hindu theories of the equality of all religions, of *dharma*, of society in interaction with European philosophies and ideologies—there can hardly be more convincing evidence of the degree to which responses and after-responses addressed to Eastern Gnostic challenges match those addressed to Western ones.

To clarify and broaden our thesis, I should now like to introduce the often-forgotten challenge with which Gnostic thought confronted

⁹ Following P. Hacker.

alchemy, though our treatment of this subject here may not do justice to the importance of its influence in comparison with that of philosophy and literature. To be more exact, alchemy in a narrowly defined sense was not that entity which had already been exposed to this challenge; rather, it was the result of a change which a certain study of nature underwent by a temporary Gnosticization.

This study of nature shared the heritage of the magical-chemical technology of the ancient Orient. Beginning about 200 B.C. with Bolus of Mendes, it arose in Hellenistic Egypt and is represented thereafter for nearly a thousand years by a continuous line of authors throughout the Mediterranean area. They wanted to detect and authenticate the secret and miraculous powers, the essences and occult qualities, of all objects in the sphere of organic and inorganic nature. Secondly, they sought to understand and explicate, on the basis of these essences, the swaying of sympathy and antipathy in the various realms of nature.

The so-called *physika* literature was the result of this endeavor. These writings were characterized by a lack of difference in principle between "dead" and "living" things. Men, animals, and plants on the one hand, minerals and metals in the earth and in the stars on the other, were pervaded by the same mysterious sympathetic and antipathetic powers. These powers were at the same time functions of souls having the same substance regardless of whether they swayed human or metallic bodies. The soul was not in substance different from the bodies, but merely thinner. Expressed anachronistically with the Later Latin translation of the Aristotelian *prōtē hylē*, it was the *prima materia* within universal matter and, as such, it was especially common to all metals. Matter was everywhere one in substance; the world was unitary and not broken up dualistically. The essence of matter did not consist in its composition from certain elements or atoms, but in its color. In distinguishing between various colors, one could thereby differentiate between various forms of matter. Consequently, it was believed that if one succeeded in changing this quality, for example re-dying a metal and thereby its *prima materia*, one had transmuted one metal into another.

There are two presuppositions for alchemy which have developed from this more archaic understanding of nature and from the symbolism of color. The conviction that earth has to be reconciled magically when its metals are snatched away developed into the doctrine that matter suffers and has to be brought back into a new condition. The

symbolism of colors developed into a hierarchy in which black symbolized death, white life, yellow a further renewal, and gold-varnish immortality. The later alchemist, then, made matter die by restoring it to its former black state which was capable of all transmutations. Then he tinged it white and yellow, that is, transmuted it via silver to raw gold, and finally refined it to glittering gold.

The fact that for the alchemist the first stage is death, the second and the third induced and full resurrection, and the fourth salvation, indicates that the two presuppositions mentioned above conform directly to the origination of a dualistic Gnostic view of the world. Here for the third time we confront the dialectical phenomenon that Gnostic thought seems to arise from within a tradition and at the same time to influence it from without. Within the spiritualized magical view of the world which, like Hermetism, would remain monistic until Renaissance times, the Greek consubstantiality of cosmic-telluric and human soul is split into two substantial spheres. The higher of these spheres, despite the relation of its substance to that of the lower, is nevertheless absolutely transcendent and divine. It is a question of historical psychology whether the suffering of matter implied by this view is a projection of the deeply felt suffering of the individual soul, or whether the wickedness of the world was experienced so universally that within anticosmic dualism the world-soul, whose existence was unquestioned, could not be conceived to exist other than as suffering by its very nature. The latter is more probable and also makes sense of the connection between this pessimistic world-view and astrology, which knew of seven evil planets. The emission of the seven metals—gold, silver, iron, electrum, tin, copper, lead—from the seven planets—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn—could allegorically be explained as referring to the transmutation of metals, be it towards the good side or towards the bad. Therefore, in the artificial language of alchemy names of planets, names of metals, and ethico-psychological notions can replace each other symbolically.

The dialectical phenomenon of origination analyzed above becomes concrete in Judaeo-Christians of the second and third centuries A.D. Of these we have some names, which were probably pseudonyms: Maria, Cleopatra, Crates, Theophilus, Agathodaemon, and some others. The people behind these names may have been physicists, physiologists, physicians who defended magical-chemical technology against Gnostic deterioration by developing the symbolic notions included in the language of the recipes. They also may have been people

who either felt tempted by or converted from Gnosticism and who changed the Gnostic conviction, that salvation is performed by a foreign heavenly being upon itself in cosmic and human soul, in macrocosm and microcosm, into the anthropocentric certitude of the possibility for self-salvation. This is precisely the point at which alchemy in the narrower sense arises. The conviction of the unity of the world is respected again; the savior from the yonder world can no longer be obtained only by entreaty; rather, by means of one's own soul, he is at one's disposal in the world; the *prima materia* is experienced as bound to the universal matter so solidly and immovably that it is possible by means of the universal to operate on primeval matter, especially on the metals of which the earth and the stars consist. The alchemist is not content with the salvation of his own and the world's soul. Through the accomplishment of his own soul's rebirth he aims at bringing about the rebirth of metals. To this end he makes use of the transmitted magical-chemical technology as much as possible, speaking of his own body as of an apparatus of distillation and vice versa. In reading particularly the Greek alchemists as edited by Berthelot, but also their Arabic, Medieval, and Renaissance successors, one becomes aware that the alchemist establishes a fascinating linguistic, psychological, metallurgic, and astrologic amphibology.

So the admirable interpretations of alchemy from the point of view of the history of religions as expounded by Eliade and from the psychological point of view of Jung (discussed yesterday by Professor Quispel) can be supplemented by the observation that alchemy as a whole makes sense as a great response to a Gnostic challenge. Let me add the point of Ernst Bloch, who deduced that alchemy is the ground of not only cosmic and personal but also political freedom. For example, Tommaso Campanella refers onesidedly to the component of astrology, making it the basic science of his *Civitas Solis* (1623), which would have become totalitarian after it had been carried through against the inequality of his time. However, in More's *Utopia* (1516), which maintains alchemy as the basic science, the *Plumbei*, i.e., those who have already developed lead (= mind), remain capable of constituting a society in which man can live in freedom according to his own abilities.

It would be a mistake to apply to literature the same heuristic principles which may have helped to locate in philosophy or alchemy the type of response we are seeking. Rather we should look to writings where the experience of decay—comparable to that of late antiquity—

has been carried through to its logical conclusion rather than to a precocious restoration of values. Among the wide range of literature which fulfills this criterion, four great novels can be distinguished as having affinities to Gnosis that are more response than after-effect. In regard to one of these it has been explicitly stated that in it our century expresses itself. This comment is clearly valid for the other three as well.

In reading Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (in 15 volumes, 1913-1927), one asks oneself, Who is sensitive enough to recognize and to experience the situations and circumstances in which events of the past are not simply remembered but literally brought into the present? It is an erotic fear which prevents most people from keeping this sensitivity alive even where life itself is at stake. This erotic fear is one of being cheated out of the sweetness of ecstasy by vivid and harsh comparisons between a past experience of a lover and that which is present. Whoever does not learn to bear this pain, however, will be open to seduction and misuse. He who can allow the past to end in himself and to dissolve his old self will remain the master of this time and not overstrain himself. He who takes refuge in time past or elsewhere in the face of it, will not. Is this not analogous to the experience of time in late antiquity? That experience was ambivalent. At the point where the short circuit with the preceding manifestation of the prodigious occurred, the experiencing self either could be torn to pieces or could mystically rest precisely at that point.

Thus there are passages according to which "it is the reliving of a past moment that is significant, not that moment itself."¹⁰ At these points of reliving, which cause "a 'renewal' and a liberation, past and present met with such a sense of actuality that Proust had difficulty in knowing which he was living in."¹¹ These sentences sound like a secularized version of the encounter between the transcendent self, represented in a savior of the past, and the mundane self which is struck by the call of that savior. What was understood as immortality in those days is for Proust exemption from time. As the concrete man in Gnosticism is depersonalized by being generalized into the type of self which, fallen, became pitiable in all individuals, it is sometimes "not at all clear whether it is Proust himself who is expe-

¹⁰ R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism* 56, slightly altered.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, slightly altered.

riencing those blessed moments or another being which temporarily displaces him."¹²

In truth [Proust writes] the being which was then tasting this impression in me tasted it in what was common between a day long past and now, in what was outside time: and this being would only appear at a time when, through one of these identities between the present and the past, it could exist in the only atmosphere in which it could live and enjoy the essence of things, that is to say outside time. That explained why my preoccupation with death should have ceased at the moment when, unconsciously, I recognized the taste of the little bun; for at that moment the being that I had been was an extra-temporal being and therefore careless of the vicissitudes of the future. This being had never come to me, had never revealed itself except as outside action and immediate sensations of enjoyment, every time that the miracle of an analogy had enabled me to escape from the present.¹³

And similar to the ancient Gnostic who discovered that within his vital soul a higher self lay dormant, Proust could "distinguish two 'selves',—one the ordinary, everyday self which somehow is thrust aside during these brief moments of ecstasy, and the other, the 'self' which he refers to as 'cet être', this being, the real self which normally seems dead, but which is brought to life in these unaccountable visitations of the infinite."¹⁴

The being [writes Proust] that had been reborn in me when, with so great a quiver of happiness, I heard a noise that was common both to a spoon touching a plate and to a hammer striking against a wheel, to the unevenness, perceptible to the feet, both of the Guermentes quadrangle and the baptistery of St. Mark's etc.,—that being feeds on nothing but the essence of things, in them alone it finds its subsistence and its delight.... It suffices that a sound once heard before, or a scent once breathed in, should be heard and breathed again, simultaneously in the present and the past, real without being actual, ideal without being abstract; then, immediately, the permanent essence of things which is usually hidden, is set free, and our real self, which often had seemed dead for a long time yet was not dead altogether, awakes and comes to life as it receives the heavenly food now proffered to it. One minute delivered from the order of time creates in us, that we may enjoy it, the man delivered from the order of time: How easy to understand that this man should be confident in his joy, even if the mere taste of a bun may not seem, logically, to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., n. 2. The passage is a translation of Proust, *A la recherche*, 3. 871.

¹⁴ Zaehner, 57.

contain within itself the reasons for that joy. It is understandable that the word "death" can have no meaning for him: situated, as he is, outside time, what could he fear from the future?¹⁵

Proust's secularized Gnostic experiences demonstrate how a world must behave which, on the one hand, has to desist from simply consuming its heritage, and which, on the other hand, happens to find present in itself a past which is devoid of any sense and reason.

Among the manifold interpretations of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the historian of religion tends to prefer that which places Joyce more or less in line with allegorizations of Homer by Stoics and Neo-Platonists, Christian Apologists, Gnostics, the Church Fathers, and the Humanists. But this line is discontinuous, for Joyce diverges from and goes farther than all his "predecessors." There is just one analogy, and this brings the great novel under the themes we are pursuing here. The Apologists and the Church Fathers made Ulysses' wanderings an allegory of the wandering, endangered, seducible soul in the sense of Catholic, as opposed to dualistic, Gnosis. Likewise, Joyce makes the wandering of Leopold Bloom through Dublin on that one day, Thursday, June 16, 1904, a demonstration of finding sweet fulfilment of life in the everyday experience as over against the Gnostic and Christian bliss of the soul on the yonder side. Therefore, such different things as the *Odyssey* and the Eucharist must be parodied together. In fact, both parodies are interwoven; interweavings like this are quite familiar to the reader of Gnostic texts. On the one hand there is that of the *Odyssey*, from the Telemachus episode (at the tower, eight o'clock in the morning) to the Penelope episode (in bed, two o'clock at night). On the other hand there is that of the Eucharist from Mulligan's *Introitus* to Marion's last Gospel (here the *Gospel of the Earth*). For Joyce both show and symbolize at the same time how colossal and enormous the ordinary day is.

The whole is an epic in which a life and a world are traversed without claiming necessity for any single component. Unlike Catholicism, which perceived a mandate left by outgoing antiquity and fulfilled it, nothing here is compulsory: neither the importance of the determining places, every one with its special genius, nor the behavior worth imitation of the deciding actions which all can be ritualized individually, nor the gestation with fate of the human encounters in

¹⁵ Ibid., n. 1. The passage is a translation of Proust, 3. 872-73.

which the partners are typified. Rather, it is all being travestied, including this Christian fulfilment. A dozen styles are being tested self-destructively, as in the syncretistic exchangeability of notions and images, and as in the to-and-fro translatability of what should be said from one language into another. Likewise in the greater dimension, besides the long Odyssean day and the ritual order, another monstrous way and another diabolic service pervert the progress and the liturgy into their contraries, as formerly in the Witches' Sabbath and the Black Mass. But no matter how intertwined these corresponding forms are, they are far from exhausting the symbolism of the opus. Joyce himself establishes connections not only with the *Odyssey* and the Eucharist, but also with the Bible, the Talmud, and perhaps even the Kabbalah.

The preparation of breakfast (burnt offering): intestinal congestion and premeditative defecation (holy of holies): the bath (rite of John): the funeral (rite of Samuel): the advertisement of Alexander Keyes (Urim and Thummim): the unsubstantial lunch (rite of Melchizedek): the visit to museum and national library (holy place): the bookhunt along Bedford row, Merchants' Arch, Wellington Quay (Simchath Torah): the music in the Ormond Hotel (Shira Shirim): the altercation with a truculent troglodyte in Bernard Kiernan's premises (holocaust): a blank period of time including a cardrive, a visit to a house of mourning, a leavetaking (wilderness): the eroticism produced by feminine exhibitionism (rite of Onan): the prolonged delivery of Mrs Mina Purefoy (heave offering): the visit to the disorderly house of Mrs Bella Cohen, 82 Tyrone street, lower, and subsequent brawl and chance medley in Beaver street (Armageddon): nocturnal perambulation to and from the cabman's shelter, Butt Bridge (atonement).¹⁶

The famous final chapter, Penelope's desireful expectation of the returned husband (= Marion's *Gospel of the Earth*), dissolves the *Odyssey* into space and into dream; and also styles, events, images, and everything that appears again out of the whole of the epic are dissolved—and intermingled. So the end of the story remains open, but its materials are still extant. There is no definite conclusion to be drawn. The state of decomposition can last, but it can also be, as can be the solution of a crystal, the preparation for a new heterogram of an apocatastasis.

Robert Musil wrote about this great novel, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (3 vols., 1931-43), "The Man Without Qualities," when he

¹⁶ Joyce, *Ulysses*, 728f.

was asked to describe it himself: "It is not a confession but a satire," and at the same time: "It is not a satire but a positive construction." And indeed, what Musil calls a parallel plot—in fact, the plan according to which the contents of the whole book are arranged—gains its satiric tone by its organization into a system of coordinates. And it is precisely this system which makes all parallelizations satirical from that of the parallelized jubilees of the Austrian and German emperors to all smaller ones.

The secondary plot is constructed mathematically parallel to the primary, and is in its parallelism a satire not in the mind of the actors but in that of the observer. Does it not bring to mind a world of secondary importance, constructed in all details according to a world of primary importance, such as we have in the most developed and elaborate Gnostic systems? It is, of course, only this principle of parallel construction which points to this connection; but in this construction there is included a relation between essential and imaginary levels of events which lacks only dualism to be an analogy to the Gnostic distance from a monistic system of allegories. So it turns out that it is mathematical-technical intelligence—for which number and not any attribute is the key which unlocks the world—that comprehends human actions and deeds in such a manner that some of them remain as mere parallels of others. In Gnostic systems, concrete fleshly entities act parallel to what was performed for them by pleromatic or diabolic hypostases.

But satire now takes the place of the former devaluation, and contrafact replaces devolution: and so new criteria become available to discern what is true and what is false. Therefore the many hysterics and false prophets of the book can serve as a foil for the endeavor of the main hero Ulrich to design a utopia of the right life. Paradoxically, it seems, those matters which obviously were destined to make the wrong beautiful, collapse; but what is true, because it is calculated, develops, as in baroque architecture and music, an abundance of forms which does not bewilder but rather makes happy. This is a new legitimation of Pythagoreanism: feeling is nothing vague and hazy, but grows purest out of symmetry. This can be taken as a message: a world in which more and more and finally everything must be calculated should remain susceptible to this kind of Pythagoreanism.

In Thomas Mann's novel *Joseph and His Brothers* and its preparatory and theoretical subsidiary works, we must distinguish, of course,

between Gnosis as a historical phenomenon and as a rudimentary disposition of the kind of Gnostic system adopted from Bachofen and Merezhkovsky. Gnosis as a historical phenomenon can be defined from the salvation concept central to which is the consubstantiality and personal distinction between the savior and the saved. But in the Gnostically inspired thinking of Bachofen, Merezhkovsky, and Thomas Mann this notion of Gnosis is not reproduced but is rather represented in analogy. This analogy exists between the systematic places from which are made considerable syncretistic rejections of younger interpretations into older traditions. This indeed is also what ancient Gnosticism did, and in this it has simply been followed by the authors mentioned. This fact is connected with their dependence upon ancient Christian and Middle Platonic writers which were our main sources before the Nag Hammadi texts were discovered and edited. The thinking of those writers was so thoroughly made fundamental in the *Philosophy of Mythology* of Schelling that it would have required a heterogeneous theoretical impulse to shatter Schelling's fundamental principles to allow historical differentiations. But such impulse was not important for Mann and his authorities. The authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, differ from the ancient Gnostics in that unlike the Gnostics they do not want to prove by factual reprojecting that their own myth is an original and primary revelation. Nevertheless, they cannot escape the connection of their own educational tradition to the Hellenistic syntheses of the preceding classical inheritances. This explains why they saw the classical and the Hellenistic-Gnostic tradition as a unit.

Mann's background material was predominantly mediated to him by Christian tradition, including Christian theology. The question is how far the interpretations of these backgrounds remained bound to this instance of mediation, and how far they shifted away from it by direct reception of the Dionysiac. We cannot answer or even discuss this question here. But in any case, it has been shown that the comprehension of the Dionysiac by Nietzsche is repeated and accentuated by Mann. This is true for the motifs of the tragic, passion, and sacrifice as well as for the reverberations of the ideas of judgment and reconciliation in both authors. The phenomenological relations to Christian thinking which appear here are of quite a different kind than those which guided the attitude towards Dionysus in the ancient church. These new relations make the Dionysiac appear not as a *praeparatio evangelica*, but certainly as manifestations of world and of

soul in which God can reveal himself. But it can only be ironically confirmed that these manifestations are doubtful localities of divine apparitions, and this is quite a legitimate theological acknowledgment in the irony of Mann. Therefore it is wrong to label Mann's solution to his conflict of orientation between Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Richard Wagner as non-Christian.

But inside the clasp of irony, not only can the mythological connection between Christ and Dionysus be taken for granted, but also that between these and the other suffering gods Tammuz and Osiris, and even the by no means suffering but deceitful Hermes—a syncretistic contamination which was half insinuated and half imposed upon Th. Mann by Karl Kerényi. Under these headings, Bachofen and Daqué provide diametrically opposed mythological reflections upon Schopenhauer's immanentism in the sight of Thomas Mann in which this appears as a proper dialectical interrelation between "God is light, spirit, transcendence" on the one hand and "God is sensual desire, being, immanence" on the other. Merezhkovsky renders it feasible for Mann to correct Nietzsche in a Christian sense: "Dionysus not 'or' but 'against' the Crucified." In this context it becomes clear how Gnostic and mystic structures of thinking actually participate in what, after the romantic mediation and the reception by the inspirers of Mann, expressed analytically, must be denoted as an amalgam of conceptions of the world and of life. This is the context within which belong Mann's daring rejections into the time of the Old Testament patriarchs. It is this framework which permits him to quote, while dealing with Baal, El, Elohim, God of the Fathers, Yahweh, parallels to theocrasies between all of them from later Mediterranean antiquity. Within these parallels, moreover, he must see Adonis, Attis, Osiris through a half Pan-Babylonian and half Pan-Egyptian pattern.

These are interpretative differences which we establish ourselves but which are leveled in the literary work. With this reservation in mind, we can relate them to a fundamental difference in that circle of myths which Mann approaches. Here I refer to the distinction between on the one hand ancient Egyptian, ancient Mesopotamian, and Canaanite mythology—of course in that form developed by the history of research through which it was mediated to Mann—and on the other hand its Hellenistic and Gnostic transformation. This transformed, syncretistic stage of the so-called oriental myth replaced its archaic predecessors through its reprojection by Mann. An example of this is the fact that the Manichaean system—of course not called "Manichaean" and

without the Manichaean proper names—is made out to be the archaic oriental myth of Primeval Man in the prelude of the novels (as it was, by the way, in the scholarly *religionsgeschichtliche* catechism of the Bultmann school). In the history of education, the foundations of this coercion towards reprojectation have been uncovered; they were laid primarily by Bachofen, Merezhkovsky, and Dacqué. With their reprojecting syntheses go, as we should not forget, some astrological patterns of Pan-Babylonianism.

But the syntheses as performed then by Mann have themselves had their models and stimulations. Different models were provided by Goethe and Schleiermacher, both with reference to Spinoza. The stimulation came from the understanding of pantheism and mysticism which Paul Tillich developed in the tradition of Schleiermacher's thought. We focus upon this preliminarily—though not being obliged to deal with the tradition represented by these four great names as such—by demonstrating what the most fundamental assumption of such syntheses, i.e., synthetic myth, demands from us. After that, we can come to a final focus.

Three notions of myth have to be distinguished, and this results in three meanings of the demythologization that is demanded. First, we have that grade of reflection in which the human recognizes itself only in the mirror of the divine; here demythologization leads the human back upon itself. Second, there is the mythical approach according to which the divine appears only interwoven into wordly relations; here demythologization produces an opposition between the divine and the human world (Bultmann's position). Third, we have the metamorphosis of the divine into the human and vice versa; here, demythologization does away with the basis of these metamorphoses so that theology as well as anthropology can be set free. This is the level on which Mann operates; though it is important to note that his narrations go only halfway towards the resulting theology and anthropology. This can be demonstrated easily, of course, with the Hermes theme as well as with that of Tammuz, but more profoundly with those narratives which mythicize biographies and family histories.

For our final focus it is important to observe how the taking of the patriarchal histories as models of each other is constituted and performed anew in the tetralogy. Modern decisionism is accustomed to assuming credit for a neat preparation of acutely decisive situations from among the field of recurring occasions, as they also occur in the repetitions of those biographies and histories. And through this self-

pride it happens to create totalitarian circumstances. This decisionism is being undermined by basic human data which Mann evaluates in his work. But how, within the frame of these human basic data, is the decision in favor of habituation prevented, and with it a perversity and wrongness which for thousands of years has crept in? Again, it is prevented by irony; for, by merely stating the approved, irony makes dubious its appearance of being normal. Irony is the modern legitimate heir of the antique self-demythologizing and must no longer have the correlate of massive remythologization. This irony includes within itself the tendency to keep as many homeopathic doses of myth, or at least mythology, as are needed so that no essentially new myths can arise—myths which must necessarily become dogmatic or mendacious.

We may take these political implications in Thomas Mann's works as the last hint as to how the critical approach to syntheses—including synthetic myths, which by their very nature are always in danger of becoming ideological—can help to gain a position of democratic responsibility in the handling of a great heritage which laid itself open to, and was established by, the challenge of Gnostic thought.

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LYING AGAINST TIME: GNOSIS, POETRY, CRITICISM

BY

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VALENTINUS, whose fragments show a mythopoeic power beyond that evidenced in any complete Gnostic text we possess, wrote this in a letter, as reported by Clement of Alexandria:

Even as fear fell upon the angels in the presence of Adam when he uttered greater sounds than his status in the creation justified, sounds caused by the one who invisibly had deposited in Adam seed of celestial substance so that Adam expressed himself freely, so also among the generations of men of our world, the works of men become objects of fear to their own makers, as in the instances of statues, images and everything which hands fashion in the name of a "god." For Adam, being fashioned in the name of "man," inspired angelic fear of the preexistent man because preexistent man was in Adam. They, the angels, were terrified and quickly concealed or ruined their work.

An exegesis of the literary strength of this magnificent fragment is the starting point for my attempt to expound part of the "meaning" of Gnosis. My way into Gnosis is not psychological, philosophical, or historical, and may or may not be "religious." Within the necessary limitation of my own misreading of Gnosis, I would want to call it a Gnostic way, because I have found that my mode of interpreting literary texts can be described more accurately as a Valentinian and Lurianic approach than as being Freudian, Nietzschean, or Viconian. A Valentinian and Lurianic stance makes possible, at least for me, an "antithetical" and revisionist way of reading Wordsworth and Shelley, Emerson and Whitman, Yeats and Stevens. Perhaps a kind of literary criticism opened up by Gnostic and Kabbalistic dialectic can be turned back upon Gnostic texts, so as to see what the Valentinians and Lurianics read like when they are read as Emerson or Yeats can be read.

What is the fear that falls upon sculptor and poet, according to Valentinus, when they behold the statues and images that they have fashioned in the name of a "god"? We might think of the dramatic speaker of Blake's *Tyger*, who fears what turns out to be an image he himself has framed, except that Blake himself is hardly one with that

frightened speaker. What is it in an artist that can look upon his own handiwork and find it frightening? For "a god" here we can read "the daemonic" or in our Age of Freud "the uncanny" (*unheimlich*). Valentinus gives us two clues for interpretation, both analogical. Adam frightened the angels because his voice reverberated with the power of a preexistent Man, a Primal or Divine Anthropos or Adam Kadmon, in whose name Adam had been fashioned. The angels were terrified because they realized that a greater power or freedom of expression than they enjoyed thus belonged to Adam, who by sharing in the name of preexistent Anthropos stood over them in hierarchical rank and stood before them in priority of genesis. In their terror, the angels rapidly hid or botched their work, which can only have been the cosmos, the world into which Adam has been thrown, but which would have been inferior to Adam (and to us) even if the demiurgical angels had not lost their nerve.

Our exegesis hardly has begun to open up the splendors of this Valentinian fragment. Even the two analogical clues—the angels' fear of Adam, and their ruining of their work—are at once oddly alike and different, in that the angels' fear of Adam is their fear of a name, just as the human artist's fear is of a daemonic name, but the angels' botching of creation comes rather from their lacking a name greater than their own in which their creation can share, unlike the frightened human artist who does not conceal or ruin his work, despite his terror. To understand these diverse analogical hints, I suggest that we read Valentinus's brief text antithetically, which is precisely how that text itself interprets the texts having priority over it, Genesis and Plato's *Timaeus*, and perhaps, more subtly, the Gospel of John. Valentinus is troping upon and indeed against these precursor authorities, and the purpose and effect of his troping is to reverse his relationship to the Bible and to Plato, by joining himself to an asserted earlier truth that they supposedly have distorted. The greater sounds uttered in his letter testify to the belatedness of the Bible and of Plato, who like the terrified angels have concealed or ruined their creation.

Valentinus, as we would expect of him, does not distinguish between Creation and Fall in regard to the cosmos, the work of the angels. His attitude to art is rather Paterian, in that the statue or poem exceeds in power what it represents, exceeds and surprises the artists' expectations, because sculptor and poet do not know that they work in the name of a "god." The cosmic Creation falls below angelic

design, but the human creation rises above artistic design, because it sounds in the name of preexistence. What seems the kernel of Valentinus's myth making here is this formula: *to fashion in the name of a being more Sublime*, that is a being higher in an agonistic hierarchy of measurement. The angels are ignorant, artists are ignorant, and Adam is evidently ignorant also. The preexistent Man is not ignorant, because presumably to be a God-Man *is to be the Gnosis, is to be free.*

Does Valentinus's fragment imply that artistic fear is the *consequence* of angelic fear, or that it is only the analogy of the earlier terror? I come forward eighteen centuries from the Valentinian myth to its parodistic and ironic equivalent in Thomas Mann's "Descent into Hell" that is the "Prelude" to his Joseph-tetralogy. Mann calls Gnosticism "man's truest knowledge of himself," and celebrates what he calls

... the figure of the first or first completely human man, the Hebraic *Adam qadmon*; conceived as a youthful being made out of pure light, formed before the beginning of the world as prototype and abstract of humanity.

Mann describes the Gnostic and Manichean vision, which he compounds, as a "narcissistic picture, so full of tragic charm," and he names the Gnostic quest pattern as "the romance of the soul." Erich Heller, commenting on the Joseph saga, makes the Mannian judgment that the "Gnostic tradition is the exact theological version of Schopenhauer's metaphysics." I think that this should be modified from "exact" to "approximate," except in regard to that part of Schopenhauer's metaphysics which constitutes his aesthetic of the Sublime, as Schopenhauer's Sublime does seem to me exactly Gnostic.

Heller speaks of Mann's theology as being "the theology of irony," and I will suggest later that irony is, in the rhetoric of Gnosis, only a preparatory trope. Mann therefore, in his playfulness, does not seem to me a Gnostic writer, as compared to Kafka, Rilke, and Yeats in our century, or in the nineteenth century, Emerson and Melville, Balzac and Victor Hugo, Novalis and Nerval, among others. Mann indeed seems hardly Gnostic compared to such genuinely mixed cases as Carlyle, Gnostic in his view of man but not in his vision of nature, or Blake, wholly Gnostic in his stance towards nature, but opposing the Gnosis in his vision of man.

Mann plays at Gnosticism precisely because it gives him a model

for his own perhaps equivocal Modernism, and that is why Mann can be useful in answering our interpretative question about Valentinus's fragment. The Modernist or mock-Gnostic would attribute artistic anxiety and fear of the created work to an angelic or daemonic fear or loss of nerve, but the truly Gnostic interpreter would find artistic anxieties-of-representation to be only analogous to the angelic failure of courage. The analogy touches its limit where Valentinian Gnosis properly begins, which is in a liberating knowledge that excludes all aesthetic irony, precisely because the inaugurating realization in such knowledge makes of all Creation and all Fall one unified event, and sees that event as belonging altogether to the inner life of God, and not to the life of man, except insofar as man is *Anthropos* or pre-existent Adam, that is, not part of the Creation.

A Gnostic aesthetic would say that works of artists become objects of fear, even to those artists, because the statues or poems are works of true knowledge. Yeats remarked, at the end of his life, that man could embody the truth, but could not know it, which is an inverted Gnostic formulation. Friedrich Schlegel said that the true aesthetic was the Kabbalah, an insight partly worked out in our time very seriously by Walter Benjamin, a true Gnostic, and parodistically by Borges, like Mann a Modernist pretending to a Gnosticism. I would revise Schlegel by asserting that the truest aesthetic is the Valentinian Gnosis, and its surprisingly close descendant in the Lurianic or regressive Kabbalah, and I return now to Valentinus's fragment to begin a sketch of this truest aesthetic.

The Adamic "greater sounds" that frighten the angels are necessarily poems. To ask how poems can be the Gnosis is to ask what is it that poems know, which in turn is to ask what is it that we can come to know when we read poems? But to make the question itself Gnostic we need to cast away nearly the entire philosophical tradition of knowledge. I say "nearly" because of my respect for and debt to Hans Jonas, whose work has demonstrated the authentic resemblances between Gnosticism and the Heideggerian revision of ontology and epistemology. But the Heideggerian revision, in its aesthetic implications, has fostered the capable critical school of Deconstruction, which has touched its limit precisely in the tracing of any poem's genuinely epistemological or negative moments. To get beyond that critical dilemma or *aporia* or limit of interpretability, I suggest that we abandon Heidegger for Valentinus and Luria. "Poetic knowledge" may be an oxymoron, but it has more in common with Gnosis than it

does with philosophy. Both are modes of *antithetical* knowledge, which means of knowledge both negative and evasive, or knowledge not acceptable as such to epistemologists of any school.

“Knowing,” as an English word, goes back to the root *gno*, and one of its most frequent current usages is not far from Gnosis: “To perceive directly whether with mind or with the sense; to apprehend clearly and certainly.” We need amend this only by asking: *what* does the Gnostic perceive directly with his mind, *what* does he apprehend clearly and certainly? Jonas answers: “The ‘what’ of the knowledge contains the explanation of its own origin, communication, and promised effect.” Jonas’s language here is the language of the poetic Sublime, rather than of philosophy, and Jonas is centered even more firmly in literary tradition when he wisely goes on to describe the typology of Gnosis in terms of its imagination and mood as well as its thought. A knowledge that is at once “secret, revealed and saving” is indeed the language of a “transcendental genesis.” Like Milton’s Satan in his fall from the Godhead, a fall that opens up a new, Sublime, Negative creation in the abyss, so the Valentinian creation/fall brings about a Sublime and Negative cosmos, with the difference that the Gnostic fall is *within* the Godhead, and not just *from* it. Jonas sets the Valentinian cosmos as being a “stratification along a vertical axis, on the antithesis of the heights and the depths.”

In this cosmos, a negative movement of knowledge ensues, from divine loss of knowledge to demiurgical lack of knowledge to human want of knowledge until at last the dialectic of negation brings about a human restoration of knowledge as the vehicle of salvation. Jonas’s commentary again is far closer to a poetic than philosophical vision of time.

This progressive movement constitutes the *time* axis of the Gnostic world, as the vertical order of aeons and spheres constitutes its space axis. Time, in other words, is actuated by the onward thrust of a mental life.... It is a metaphysic of pure movement and event.

Jonas packs in so much here that it wrongs him to analyze only the time-element in his remarks. But time is the puzzle that Gnosis and modern poetry meet in sharing. By “modern poetry” here I now mean the Renaissance and later, down to our various contemporary modernisms. Puech and other scholars have emphasized the Gnostic hatred for time, but only Jonas has caught the precise accent of belatedness that characterizes what is unique to Gnosis. Comparing

Valentinus and the early Heidegger, Jonas brings them together in their abolishment of the present moment, in their destruction of the temporal aspect of metaphorical presence. Valentinianism, Jonas observes,

makes no provision for a *present* on whose content knowledge may dwell and, in beholding, stay the forward thrust. There is past and future, where we come from and where we speed to, and the present is only the moment of *gnosis* itself, the peripety from the one to the other in the supreme crisis of the eschatological *now*.

Jonas is unsurpassed in his rapid characterization of what he calls Heidegger's "breathless dynamism," with its precise analogues to the Valentinian *Augenblick*:

... 'facticity,' necessity, having become, having been thrown, guilt, are existential modes of the past; 'existence,' being ahead of one's present, anticipation of death, care, and resolve, are existential modes of the future. No present remains for genuine existence to repose in....

I follow Jonas then in reading the Gnostic temporal dilemma as being caught at the crisis-point between past and future, a dilemma perhaps more Kafkan even than it is Heideggerian. But here I come to the darkest puzzle that Gnosis and belated poetry share: what is it that can be known when there is no present moment in which a knowing can take place? I take it that this is why a Gnostic never *learns* anything, because learning is a process *in time*. I think that the poet in a poet, the strong poetic self, also cannot learn anything. The thought-form of the Hebrew Bible depends upon a movement in the fullness of time, a movement in which moral learning can take place, which is another reason why both Gnosis and belated poetry are so remote both from Hebrew ideas of reality, and from the Hebraic mode of listening to the voicing of the Word. Belatedness sees a writing in space; it cannot hear a voicing in time. What is known through seeing a writing is more problematic than the urgency of an oral revelation, the urgency of a time always open to redemption.

What a Gnostic or a strong poet knows is what only a strong reading of a belated poem or lie-against-time teaches: a freedom compounded of three elements, and these are: negation, evasion, extravagance. It is the mutual audacity of belated religion or Gnosis, and of belated poetry or Petrarch and after, to create a freedom out of and by catastrophe. I will examine first the dialectic of negation, evasion,

and extravagance in Valentinianism, and then suggest a version of the same dialectic in the history of poetry.

Negation in Gnosis needs to be distinguished from negation in Hegelian philosophy and from what Freud calls negation, though the distance from psychoanalysis is not nearly so great as it is from philosophy. If philosophy is, as Novalis said, the desire to be at home everywhere, then Gnosis is closer to what Nietzsche thought the motive of art: the desire to be elsewhere, the desire to be different. Jonas illuminatingly contrasts Gnosis to its own contemporary philosophic rival:

... Gnostic emanationism, unlike the harmonistic one of the Neoplatonists, has a catastrophic character. The form of its progress is *crisis*....

... For tragedy and drama, crisis and fall, require concrete and personal agents, individual divinities—.... The Plotinean descensus of Being, in some respects an analogy to the gnostic one, proceeds through the autonomous movement of impersonal concept, by an inner necessity that is its own justification. The gnostic descensus cannot do without the contingency of subjective affect and will....

Following Jonas, I turn to Gnostic negation as the first movement of that affect and will. Whereas Hegelian negation also insists that true knowledge begins when philosophy destroys the experience of daily life, such destruction is a phase on the way to a universal, and so Hegelian truth finally negates both the *per se* existence of the object and the individual ego. But Gnosticism would not accept this shifting of the truth to a universal. The warrant for the truth remains personal, indeed *is* the true personal, the *pneuma* of the Gnostic, his self as opposed to his mere *psyche* or soul. Shall we say, against the philosophers, that Gnosis is the rapid, impatient labor of the Negative?

Freudian negation, perhaps because of its hidden root in Schopenhauer's concept of the Sublime, has one revelatory resemblance to Gnostic Negation. In the Freudian *Verneinung*, a previously repressed thought, feeling or desire enters consciousness only by being disowned. A kind of truth is thus acknowledged intellectually, even as it is given no emotional acceptance. This psychical duplicity or metapsychological dualism empties out the presence of the present moment just as the Hegelian negative does, but it carries also the implicit "thesis that there is sense in everything, which in turn implies that everything is past and there is nothing new," to quote J. H. Van den Berg's critique

of Freud. What Freud calls the bodily ego's Negation by a mingled act of projection and introjection is very close to the Gnostic Negation of Time and of the Creation. But here I enter again upon the Gnostic vision of time, which is the ultimate form of Gnostic Negation, and I will discuss this darkest of visions in some detail.

The Hermetic *Asclepius* sets all time into the context of the lie by its declaration that "where things are discerned at intervals of time, there are falsehoods; and where things have an origin in time, there errors arise." Much fiercer is the vision given to us of Ialdabaoth the Demiurge in the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*, where that deluded creator is said to have "bound the gods of the heavens, the angels, the demons, and men in measure, duration, and time, in order to subject them to the chain of destiny." *Heimarmene*, cosmic fate, is our sleep, our exile, our anxiety, and above all our ignorance. Time is thus the supreme negation, because it parodies the truth of Gnosis.

Time in Gnosis is what Shelley called "an envious shadow," and aesthetically is an acute withdrawal or contraction of *meaning*. In strictly poetic terms, the time of the Gnostics is any poem's fiction of duration, that is, its way of figurating the illusion of a temporal sequence. Mallarmé may seem more a Hegelian than a Gnostic in his negative moments, but his tropes of duration and visions of the void are thoroughly Gnostic. When the serene irony of the eternal blue stuns the poet in what he called a sterile desert of sorrows, and what the Gnostics called the Kenoma, then he inhabits the cosmos of Valentinus and not of Hegel. It is a cosmos of mirrors that mirror only nothing or the void, in a fall in which we never stop falling, hence the terrible Mandaean formula: "How long I have endured already and how long I have been dwelling in this world."

This demonic temporality becomes necessarily the most extreme mode of negative theology ever known, far surpassing the Christian negative theology that was to stem from the Neoplatonic temporal vision of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. A God who transcends the principles both of deity and goodness of course transcends all temporality also; there is nothing left of the Hebraic hearing of the dynamic motion of God in time, in the vision of the pseudo-Dionysius, which is really a belated exercise in Platonic theology, and yet became a permanent element in Christianity. But Gnostic negative theology is yet more drastic because Gnostic transcendence really needs a word beyond transcendence to designate so hyperbolic a sense of being above the world, "that world," our mere universe of death.

Gnostic metaphor depends therefore upon the most outrageous dualism that our traditions ever have known. In a Gnostic metaphor, the "inside" term or *pneuma* and the "outside" cosmic term are so separated that every such figuration becomes a catachresis, an extension or abuse of metaphor. Metaphors of time become particularly abused, as in the Valentinian parody of Plato's *Timaeus*, where I again follow Jonas's path-breaking work.

Freud says that "negation, the derivative of expulsion, belongs to the instinct of destruction." Developing Freud's remark in his book *Allegory*, Angus Fletcher points to the near-identity between a kind of satire and Gnosticism:

In a way Freud's term "negation" names the process by which, unconsciously, the mind selects terms to express its ambivalence. Extreme dualism must cause symbolic antiphrases. One gets the impression sometimes that the most powerful satirists are dualists, users of "negation," to the point that they become naïve gnostics. They, like Gnostics, hover on an edge of extreme asceticism which can drop off absolutely into an extreme libertinism....

Something of the destructive, ambivalent satire that Fletcher describes can be seen in the sophisticated Gnosticism of the Valentinians when they directly parody Plato. Something indeed of the violence of the Gnostic satire of Plato can be surmised by the counter-violence of the ordinarily gentle Plotinus, when he writes: "Against the Gnostics; or Against Those that Affirm the Creator of the Cosmos and the Cosmos Itself to be Evil":

Misunderstanding their text [Plato's *Timaeus*]... in every way they misrepresent Plato's theory as to the method of creation as in many other respects they dishonor his teaching....

What exercised Plotinus (as Jonas and others have shown) was the Gnostic misprision of that beautiful passage in the *Timaeus* (73c ff.) where Plato makes the best case he can for time. For Plato, time's positive and formal aspect is that it reflects and imitates its original, eternity, but its negative and qualitative aspect is that the mimesis is necessarily imperfect:

When the father and creator saw the creature which he had made moving and living, the created image of the eternal gods, he rejoiced, and in his joy determined to make the copy still more like the original, and as this was an eternal living being, he sought to make the universe eternal, so far as might be. Now the nature of the ideal being was everlasting, but to bestow this attribute in its fullness upon a creature was impossible. Where-

fore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity, and this image we call time.

What Plato gives here has been a kind of analogical model for literary criticism from second century B.C. Alexandria down to the orthodox academic present. Indeed, this appears to be the ultimate model for the benign notion of literary influence as a positive transmission from source to later text, and from writer to reader, throughout Western history. Though there is some loss acknowledged and regretted by Plato in this passage, the loss is a necessity of demiurgical creativity, and the clear implication is that every subsequent and even more belated poet *must* imitate the Demiurge. Alexandrian or analogical literary criticism, from Aristarchus to modern American Formalism or New Criticism, assumes the image of a verbally represented temporality as a fit mimesis for a fullness somehow present beyond time. The analogists of Alexandria followed Plato and Aristotle in being able to assume that literary texts were analogous to their interpretations, and since the Greek "analogy" means an "equality of ratios," such an assumption allowed a literary text the status of a unity that might have a fixed meaning. Opposed to the Library of Alexandria in the second century B.C. was the Library of Pergamon, as headed by Crates of Mallos. Crates set the Stoic concept "anomaly" or "disproportion of ratios" against the Platonic-Aristotelian "analogy." To apply a Stoic anomalistic or allegorical reading to a literary text is indeed to see it not as a unity but as an interplay of disproportionate ratios or differences. A meaning rising out of such ratios will not be fixed but wavering, or as we say these days, "intertextual." Valentinus, beginning again in Alexandria four centuries after Aristarchus, accepts the Stoic system of interpretation by anomaly and applies it to Plato, much to the dismay both of Neoplatonists and of the Great Church. For here is the Valentinian reading of the Platonic "moving image of eternity":

When the Demiurge further wanted to imitate also the boundless, eternal, infinite and timeless nature of [the original eight Aeons in the Pleroma], but could not express their immutable eternity, being as he was a fruit of defect, he embodied their eternity in times, epochs, and great numbers of years, under the delusion that by the quantity of times he could represent their infinity. Thus truth escaped him and he followed the lie. Therefore he shall pass away when the times are fulfilled.

The Stoic mode of allegory or irony as produced through the

operation of anomaly, or disproportion of revisionary ratios, makes this Valentinian parody also an allegory of reading, and again an allegory of misprision. By misprision I mean literary influence viewed not as benign transmission but as deliberately perverse misreading, whose purpose is to clear away the precursor so as to open a space for oneself. For Plato, the Demiurge is a valiant though finally inadequate yet faithful copyist. For Valentinus, the Demiurge is a liar, whose lie is both *about* Eternity and also *against* Eternity. Valentinus, in opposition, also lies, but his lie is not *about* time, but rather *against* time. This is a remarkably Nietzschean lie or parody or anti-theoretical fiction, for as a lie it expresses the will's resentment against time, and even more against time's cruel statement: "It *was*." Valentinian Negation is thus the opening movement in a poetic dialectic, and so is remarkably akin to its collateral descendant in the Lurianic *zimzum*, or creative contraction of the Divine, upon which Gershom Scholem has been the definitive and invaluable commentator. Both mythopoeic motions fall away from time by a catastrophic account of origins.

Lying against time, despite Plotinus's attack on the Gnostics, is as much a Neoplatonic as it is a Gnostic starting point. Jonas, in one of his later essays, on "The Soul in Gnosticism and Plotinus," notes that at the "critical point—when the question is: why there should be this lower world at all outside the Intelligible—Plotinus cannot make do without the same language of apostasy and fall for which he takes the Gnostics so severely to task." Jonas's acuity can be evidenced by contrasting Plotinus's mockery of the Gnostic myth of the soul's fall, with Plotinus's own gnosticizing account of the origin of time. Here is Plotinus against the Gnostics:

To those who assert that creation is the work of the Soul "after the failing of its wings," we answer that no such disgrace could overtake the Soul of the All. If they tell us of its falling, they must tell us also what caused the fall. And when did it take place? If from eternity, then the Soul must be essentially a fallen thing: if at some one moment, why not before that?

Yet here is Plotinus himself, on "Time and Eternity":

Time was not yet there, or was not for those intelligible beings... But there was there a nature which was forward and wished to own and rule itself and had chosen to strive for more than it had present to it. Thus it started to move, and along with it also moved time... the Soul first of all temporalized herself, generating time as a substitute for eternity.

Jonas comments that this Neoplatonic myth: "tells of forwardness and unrest, of an unquiet force, of unwillingness or inability to remain in concentrated wholeness, of a power that is thus at the same time an impotence, of a desire to be selfsubsistent and separate." I would add to Jonas's commentary only the observation that such a myth of negation, at the origins, is a necessity for any poetic of belatedness, and Neoplatonism, despite itself, is in the same cultural stance of belatedness as is Gnosticism, Kabbalah or post-Miltonic poetry. I think that this shared problematic of belatedness accounts for why Kabbalah was able to merge two such incompatible visions as those of Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and also for why poetic mythology from the Renaissance to the present day has been able to blend together so easily all three of these different esotericisms, as well as other *arcana*.

The stance of belatedness, as a cultural manifestation, has been studied hardly at all, partly because belatedness is invariably adept at disguising itself either as one Modernism or another. The English word "late" goes back to an Indo-European root meaning "to let go" or "to slacken," and thus there is a sense of weariness and entropy held back even in the prehistory of the word. Valentinian Gnosis, like literary Modernism, is an Alexandrian invention, and I think we can speculate that belatedness, as a cultural stance, is uniquely the product of Alexandria in its six great centuries, from the mid-third century B.C. through the mid-third century A.D. Belatedness is a highly dialectical notion, and so by no means wholly a negative one, even if its cutting edge or initial trope is negation. F. E. Peters, in his massive history, *The Harvest of Hellenism*, credits the later Hellenes of Alexandria with taking the creative insights of the Greeks from Homer to Aristotle and distilling them "into principles and norms which could be *taught* rather than merely transmitted." The monuments of Hellenistic Alexandria, as Peters summarizes them, are "gnosticism, the university, the cataphetical school, pastoral poetry, monasticism, the romance, grammar, lexicography, city planning, theology, canon law, heresy and scholasticism." Peters seems to me to be definitive in this catalog of belatedness, and I like his putting Gnosticism first on his list, because we can call Gnosticism the essence of belatedness, and Valentinianism the purest version of that essence.

Belatedness is perhaps best defined by the traditionalists who cannot bear it, in every major sense of the verb "bear." Here is Charles Williams, one of the neo-Christian Inklings of the C. S. Lewis-Tolkien-

Eliot-Auden school, rather unhappily characterizing Gnosticism in his celebrated book, *The Descent of the Dove*, subtitled *The History of the Holy Spirit in the Church*. Williams calls Gnosticism a Christian “grand intellectual Romantic movement ... almost a literary movement” and he adds that in an age of printing, Gnosticism would have been a literary movement, though a deadly one. In fairness, I quote Williams again, though I have not encountered a more misleading description of Gnosticism than this:

The lost or pseudo-Romantic, in all times and places, has the same marks, and he had them in the early centuries of the Faith. He was then called a Gnostic.... The Gnostic view left little room for the *illuminati* to practise love on this earth.... The Church anathematized the pseudo-Romantic heresies; there could be no superiority except in morals, in labor, in love. *See, understand, enjoy*, said the Gnostic; *repent, believe, love*, said the Church...

Williams is not very interesting when he identifies true Romanticism with the Church and false Romanticism with Gnosticism. Such identification makes Eliot and Auden truly Romantic, while Yeats somehow is not. But Williams is interesting and valuable for the understanding of Gnosticism if we read him with an eye to his anxieties and to the defenses his anxieties spur. The peculiar mark of his neo-Christianity is his obsessive concern with the idea of *substitution*, an idea which in the Gnostic dialectic is usurped by the idea of *evasion*. Substitution, Williams implies in his “Postscript,” is the truly Christian idea of order, giving a properly rhetorical meaning to the doctrine of co-inherence, the “taking of the Manhood into God.” Now substitution, whether in erotic, religious, or literary contexts, is always the doctrine of the Second Chance. Gnosticism evades, rather than substitutes, because like every mode that battles its own belatedness, Gnosticism insists upon the First Chance alone. Hating time, Gnosticism insists upon evading time rather than fulfilling time in an apocalyptic climax, or living in time through substitution. It is a familiar formula to say that failed prophecy becomes apocalyptic, and that failed apocalyptic becomes Gnosticism. If we were to ask: “What does failed Gnosticism become?” we would have to answer that Gnosticism never fails, which is both its strength (through intensity) and its weakness (through incompleteness). A vision whose fulfillment, by definition, must be always *beyond* the cosmos, cannot in its own terms be said to fail *within* our cosmos.

How can evasion be an idea of order? Only by identifying itself

with an elitism, is probably the only answer, whether one thinks of evasion in erotic, religious, or literary terms. Evasion is in flight from or represses fate, and again, whether erotic, religious, or literary, the principle of evasion denies that existence is an historical existence.

Without evasion or the lying against time that brings back the First Chance, no mythology is possible, and Gnosticism brought mythology back to monotheism. Evasion, on the rhetorical level, is always misinterpretation or misreading, and in such revisionary hermeneutic, Gnosticism was a great innovator. Irenaeus, furious at the capture of the Pauline term the Pleroma or "fullness" by Valentinus, says that Valentinianism "strives ... to adapt the good terms of revelation to [its] own wicked inventions." Certainly, it is one of the achievements of Valentinus that Paul's term is now forever the mythological possession of Gnosticism. Evasion, in poetry, can be manifested only as the faculty of invention, and invention in turn depends always upon strong interpretation of prior texts. Jonas summarizes "the speculative principle of Valentinianism" as being a knowledge that "affects not only the knower but the known itself; that by every 'private' act of knowledge the objective ground of being is moved and modified." To which I would add that such motion and modification textually must be misprision or creative misreading. Hence Jonas's observation that "the speculative principle of Valentinianism actually invited independent development of the basic ideas by its adherents," and hence the complaint of Irenaeus that Jonas cites: "Every day every one of them invents something new, and none of them is considered perfect unless he is productive in this way." Nothing like that freedom of invention was to be seen again in the psychopoetics of theology until the disciples of Isaac Luria began to elaborate upon him, some fourteen hundred years later.

So far in this account of Valentinian dialectic I have shown negation taking the place of fate, and evasion substituting itself for the logos or freedom of meaning. The third term of the triad is extravagance, the restitution of power by a mode of figuration that moves from the symbolic or synecdochic through the Sublime or hyperbolic and that ends in an acosmic, antitemporal trope that reverses the Alexandrian predicament of belatedness. This final Extravagance is the earliest instance I know of the rhetoric of transumption, which is the ultimate modal resource of post-Miltonic poetry, and which projects lateness and introjects earliness, but always at the expense of presence, by the emptying out of the living moment.

Near the close of *The Gospel of Truth*, Valentinus (or his disciple) bids farewell to us, with a graciousness that only the conviction of an achieved earliness is likely to permit in an heresiarch.

Such is the place of the blessed; this is their place. As for the others, then, may they know, in their place, that it does not suit me, after having been in the place of rest to say anything more.

Such majestic certitude reflects earlier celebratory statements in this text, that "each one will speak concerning the place from which he has come forth" and that for each: "his own place of rest is his pleroma." I shall conclude by bringing together these Valentinian assurances with the fundamental concerns of our own belatedness when we study poetry and its criticism. Walter Benjamin beautifully remarked of his favorite writer that "Kafka listened to tradition, and he who listens hard does not see." When I reflect upon Benjamin's aphorism, I recall that from Akiba until now, the rabbinical tradition insists that the authority of Torah as Yahweh's Word is absorbed *by listening*. Hence the rabbinical tradition *did not see*, which made room for the oxymoron of a Jewish Gnosis in the Lurianic Kabbalah. Poetry and criticism, after Milton in our language, are attempts to see, in frequent contradistinction to the main Protestant tradition of listening to the Word. But they are attempts to *see earliest*, as though no one had seen before us. Is this not the mark of Gnosis, that seeing is the peculiar attribute of certain spiritualized intellectuals, Faustian or favored ones, whose particular knowledge *is itself the highest power*? When you have the Gnosis, when you see truly, then you are in the place of rest, you are in your own internalized pleroma.

The modern study of Gnosticism begins with Mosheim in 1739, in the Age of Sensibility during which the Enlightenment waned rapidly. This was no more accidental than was the onrush of studies in Gnosticism in the High Romantic period, with Horn in 1805, Lewald in 1818, and Matter in 1828. In poetry, a "place" is *where* something is *known*, but a figure or trope is *when* something is willed or desired. A Classical or Enlightenment "commonplace" is where something is already known, but a Romantic or Post-Enlightenment "place" is a *more inventive* and indeed a Gnostic "knowing," a knowing in which one *sees* what Walter Benjamin called the *aura*. In the *aura* what is known knows the knower, what is seen sees the seer, but the *aura* is principally visible in its disintegration, its Gnostic disappearance at the moment of acosmic, atemporal shock.

A Gnostic "place," like the classical *topos* or "commonplace," is always a name, but the anomaly or difference of the Gnostic name is best conveyed by the notion of name as an "image of voice" as *The Gospel of Truth* once calls it. Such a Gnostic or Romantic name comes by negation; an un-naming yields a name. A written space has been voided of its writing, so that the Gnostic place displaces a prior place. This is why the best model for Post-Romantic poetic place or image of voice is the Valentinian *pleroma* or its curiously similar analogue in the Lurianic *tehiru*. The *pleroma* or *tehiru*, like the Romantic and Modern poetic place, is both a fullness and an emptiness.

Any new poetic place, or image of voice, empties out a previous place *in the same spot*. Into this emptiness, a new fullness is placed, but a revisionary fullness, one that postpones or defers the future. Walter Benjamin says of Kafka's stories that in them "narrative art regains the significance it had in the mouth of Scheherazade: to postpone the future." Gnosticism would go further and banish the future altogether, until that acosmic, atemporal restoration to the *Pleroma* takes place of all pneumatics simultaneously. Perhaps this is the ultimate difference between orthodoxy and the Gnosis. The rabbis said of God that "he is the place of the world, but the world is not his place." With the second half of this topological aphorism, the Gnostics were in agreement, but they dissented altogether from the first half. This dissent implicitly commits Gnosticism to an aesthetic that is neither mimetic, like Greek aesthetic from Plato to Plotinus, nor antimimetic, like Hebraism from the Bible to Jacques Derrida. Gnostic writing, when strong, is strong because it is supermimetic, because it confronts and seeks to overthrow the very strongest of all texts, the Jewish Bible. That supermimesis is an intolerable burden, whether for literature or for the fallen poetry of theology. But out of the titanic efforts to bear that burden have come the equivocal triumphs of the Romantic tradition, in poetry, in criticism, and in theology as well. Valentinus, who taught us what Hans Jonas eloquently calls "the self-motivation of divine degradation," is the truest precursor of our own divinely degraded visions of belatedness.

PART TWO

SEMINAR ON VALENTINIAN GNOSTICISM

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IN SEARCH OF VALENTINUS

BY

G. C. STEAD

THE researches of the past thirty years have yielded some valuable new insights into the theology of the Valentinians, but have done little to relieve the obscurity which surrounds Valentinus himself. The outlines of the problem are familiar enough. We possess only a few fragments of Valentinus's own writings, transmitted by Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and Marcellus of Ancyra,¹ together with a few biographical details. On the other hand there are complex and circumstantial accounts of the Valentinian system, provided by Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and others, which agree in broad outline despite many differences of detail. To these can be added a collection of fragments ascribed to Theodotus, made and annotated by Clement, and the fragments of Heracleon, mostly drawn from Origen's *Commentary on St. John*, collected by A. E. Brooke in 1891.

The problem is that the fragments of Valentinus, taken by themselves, would give no ground for supposing anything but a Platonizing² biblical theologian of some originality, whose work hardly strayed beyond the still undefined limits of Christian orthodoxy; and this squares with the report³ that Valentinus had hopes of being made Bishop of Rome, but was passed over, despite his acknowledged talents, not, we are told, on the ground of unorthodoxy, but in favour of a candidate who obtained the post *ex martyrii praerogativa*, in recognition of his status as a confessor. On the other hand Irenaeus and Hippolytus present us with a highly complex and manifestly heretical mythology, in which an elaborate system of heavenly powers is propounded and the Jesus of the Gospels is fragmented and displaced. Half a century ago E. de Faye⁴ could argue that the contrast between

¹ The short work *De sancta ecclesia* long attributed to Anthimus of Nicomedia is now assigned to Marcellus; see M. Richard, *MScRel* 6 (1949) 5-28. M. Simonetti (*RSLR* 9 [1973] 313ff.), who is critical of other attributions to Marcellus, accepts this.

² Cf. Tertullian, *Carn.* 20; *Praescr.* 30.

³ Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 4; cf. A. Hilgenfeld, *Die Keizergeschichte des Urchristentums Urkundlich Dargestellt* (Leipzig, 1884) 284-87.

⁴ *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme* (Paris, 1913).

these two modes of thought is so extreme that the developed Valentinian system must be sharply distinguished from the teaching of Valentinus himself, and that reliable information about this latter can only be gathered from the fragments. More recently critical opinion has tended to follow F. Sagnard, who showed that the various reports of Valentinian teaching, though daunting in their complexity, do manifest a very large measure of overall agreement; and clearly the simplest way of explaining this agreement is to postulate that at least the main elements in the system can be traced back to Valentinus himself.

Very shortly after the publication of two important works by Sagnard⁵ the contents of the Nag Hammadi library became available in some degree to specialists, and reports of them began to reach the general public. Some of the newly found works were quickly recognized as Valentinian;⁶ and this recognition encouraged scholars to compare them with the accounts of the fully developed Valentinian system preserved by the ecclesiastical writers; at this point they were influenced partly by a perfectly proper desire for economy in hypotheses, partly by the then prevailing trend of scholarship—in which of course the distinguished French scholar I have mentioned was joined by other notable authorities. This development, as it seems to me, has led to an overconfident assimilation of the new sources to the old, in which points of agreement have been emphasized and elaborated, while inconsistencies and omissions in the evidence have been, not indeed ignored, but underrated. Thus the magnificent edition of the *Tripartite Tractate* devotes a great deal of space in the notes to quoting Irenaeus and Hippolytus on various details of the Valentinian system; it does not stress the possibility that this particular author may be using a different and possibly simpler set of ideas. And in other documents the literary character of the work is invoked, perhaps rightly, to explain why no detailed agreement can be expected.

Two other complicating factors may be mentioned. First, there are problems of dating, often discussed in the context of the question whether there was a pre-Christian gnosticism. It might seem that a highly elaborate system, such as that which Irenaeus ascribes to Ptolemaeus, could not be in any way convincing unless large elements

⁵ *La Gnose Valentinienne et le témoignage de Saint Irénée* (Paris, 1947); *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Theodote* (SC 23; Paris, 1948).

⁶ Especially the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Treatise on Resurrection*, and the *Gospel of Philip*; possibly others; see R. Kasser et al. (ed.), *Tractatus Tripartitus* (Bern, 1973) 1. 311.

of it were already familiar; and more generally, that the complex gnostic mythologies presuppose a process of development extending over several generations. But the time interval between Valentinus and Ptolemaeus seems too short to accommodate such a development, unless one postulates some further factor; thus the Valentinian system may have borrowed some elements from an already complicated mythology such as that found in the *Apocryphon of John*. But if Valentinus adopted this material, why does it leave so little trace in the fragments? If some later writer, how did it come to influence so many different exponents of Valentinian ideas?

Secondly, it is of course oversimple to picture the history of gnostic thought as a one-way process of complication and accretion. This has to some extent been recognized; thus in some of the newly discovered works, where details of the fully developed Valentinian system seem to be presupposed but are not elaborated, and at the same time ideas characteristic of orthodox Christianity are introduced which the fully developed systems either ignore or preclude, such cases have been sometimes explained as representing a 'primitive' or 'original' phase of gnosticism, and so as antedating the full development, sometimes in terms of 'rechristianization',⁷ as if a writer who makes rather slight and incidental allusions to gnostic ideas must himself at some time have accepted the developed system in all its complexity, and later have partly discarded it in the light of a growing sympathy with orthodox churchmen. Such a process is of course perfectly possible; but to assume it may be a sign of undue reliance on genetic explanations. It seems to me that there is very little necessary connexion between complexity and date, and that more allowance needs to be made for differences in education, background, and temperament between different writers. Those writers who had an uninhibited liking for complex and pretentious mythology could construct a very elaborate system in a few years at most, given that the fashion was established; the longer version of the *Apocryphon of John* might serve as an example. Others, of a somewhat more critical turn of mind, may have formulated complex systems as a result of a scholastic attempt to remove contradictions by a synthesizing process; Ptolemaeus, for instance, in the system reported by Irenaeus, shows such traits, as I have suggested elsewhere.⁸ Once again, a writer may be prepared to

⁷ See M.L. Peel (ed.), *The Epistle to Rhegimos [= Treatise on Resurrection]* (London, 1969) 179-80, and Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 314.

⁸ 'The Valentinian Myth of Sophia', *JTS N.S.* 20 (1969) 89-90.

profess allegiance to a system in a particular work for a particular purpose without committing himself to it as a permanence; the writings of Philo and Plutarch abound with such cases, and it is more than possible that Valentinus adopted a similar attitude towards gnostic mythology; he may have both promoted and stood aloof from a complex theology which was already in being.

Failing some totally unforeseen further discovery, there will be no quick solution to these problems; but we may try to throw light on them by enquiry from two directions. First, can anything fresh be said about the Valentinus fragments in the light of our increased understanding of the philosophy, and especially the Platonism, of the second century A.D.? Secondly, what light do the new sources provide if we are open to the possibility that the Valentinian movement may have been a good deal less homogeneous and more flexible than some recent critics have suggested? Is it possible to close the gap between Valentinus and the developed systems in the light of our new discoveries?

Our best information about Valentinus comes from the six fragments quoted by Clement, together with his introductory and supplementary comments. In fragments 1, 2, and 4-6⁹ he professes to quote Valentinus's exact words; and it seems not improbable that he is using two written sources. Nos. 1-3 are each drawn from a letter, though only no. 3 gives the lemma, 'Letter to Agathopus'; nos. 4 and 6 specify a homily, and no. 5 follows so closely after no. 4 in Clement's text that despite a certain change of subject it may well come from the same source.

Such scanty material, of course, can easily be overworked and suggest ill-founded conclusions; but some facts about Valentinus seem reasonably well established. I have called him a biblical Platonist. The use of a Greek Genesis in fr. 1 is obvious enough, though of course this text was used by gnostics of many different schools. But St. Matthew's Gospel seems to appear in fr. 2; there is a suggestion of 19:17 in εἷς δὲ ἔστιν ὁ ἀγαθός, of 5:8 in the concluding declaration that the pure in heart shall see God, and of 12:45 in the image of the human heart invaded by many devils. These parallels have been duly noted by Stählin and Völker. More tentatively we might suggest that the 'docetic' description of Jesus absorbing all his food without remainder

⁹ I follow W. Völker's numeration (*Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis*; Tübingen, 1932). Hilgenfeld's is the same for nos. 1-4, usefully includes Clement's comments in no. 5, gives the same no. 6 but a different 7, from Eulogius, which Völker omits; thus V. 7, 8, = H. 8, 9, while V. 9 is not in H.

could be based on an eccentric reading of Matt 7:19, or perhaps on a derived text in which this phrase was taken out of context, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα. Jesus did not simply declare that all food was clean (a literal-minded exegete could draw bizarre conclusions from this interpretation, since any educated Greek would know about omnivorous tribesmen, and about philosophical apologists for cannibalism!);¹⁰ Jesus purified and so digested all that he ate, and formed an exception to the rule stated in Matt 7:19a. Presumably also fr. 6 intends some allusion to a written collection of scriptures current in the Church, though the immediate contrast is that between secular writings and the law which is metaphorically inscribed on the heart; there may be faint echoes here of Rom 2:15 and of Hos 2:25, which is quoted at Rom 9:25.

As for Valentinus's Platonism, we must of course note the comparative depreciation of the visible world, which is contrasted with the 'living aeon' in fr. 5, and which the 'children of life' must annul or dissolve (fr. 4); this general notion is once again hardly distinctive, and it is pointed up by the biblically based suggestion that the creation or moulding (πλασισ) even of the first man was in itself defective and had to be supplemented by the power of the divine Name (fr. 5). A much more definite indication of Platonic influence would appear if we could trust the reference to 'appendages' (προσαρτήματα) in Clement's introduction to fr. 2 as indicating that Valentinus actually used this word; for it is clearly a term of philosophic stamp, having close parallels in Marcus Aurelius (τὰ προσηρητημένα, 12.3.4) and Plotinus (σώματι προσηρητημένῳ, *Enn.* 1.4.4; cf. συνηρητημένα, *Enn.* 1.1.9; and προσφῦναι in Albinus 16 [p. 172.9, 15], cf. Plato *R.* 10, 611d), and seems to look back to Plato's description of the soul as like the sea god Glaucus whom 'the clinging overgrowth of weed and rock and shell has made more like a monster than his natural self (loc. cit., cf. 519ab).¹¹ Unfortunately this deduction is unreliable, since a reference to προσαρτήματα is first made in connexion with the school of Basilides, and indeed a fragment attributed to his son Isidore argues that such a theory of wrongdoing may diminish man's sense of responsibility by allowing him to claim that compulsive temptations come from an outside source. The passage which Clement

¹⁰ *SVF* I. 254, 3. 746-50.

¹¹ Cf. also *Phdr.* 250c, which explains the sudden introduction of the phrase ὄστρεώδη σώματα in Iamblichus, *De Anima*, in Stobaeus, 1.378 W.; see A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (EBib; Paris, 1953) 3. 218 n. 2.

then quotes from Valentinus deals with the subject of temptations and impurities in the soul, but in distinctly different terms and with a different objective; he speaks of evil spirits invading the heart, as Jesus speaks in the New Testament, rather than of accretions or incrustations; and his main theme is not the need for responsible self-direction, but rather the impossibility of man's unaided effort to expel the demons; purity can only be achieved through the providence or visitation of the one good Father 'whose outspoken word (*parrhêsia*) is the manifestation through the Son'. This suggests that some caution is needed in accepting Clement's accusation that Valentinus teaches that there is a race of men who are 'saved by nature'; he puts forward this charge, in *Str.* 2.115, only by asking the unanswerable question why God's providence does not operate continuously to prevent all wrongdoing.

What impression do the fragments convey of the heavenly hierarchy? The most important sources here are fr. 1, 2, and 5, while something may also be learnt from the explanation which Hippolytus attaches to fr. 8. Certain features can be seen at once. The highest place is occupied by the One who is good, the only good Father, 'whose declaration is the manifestation through the Son', to give a simpler rendering of *parrhêsia*. It is not at once clear whether the Son is to be identified with the divine Logos, unless we trust fr. 9 (Ps.-Anthimus = Marcellus) more literally than I am inclined to do; the reference might be simply to the divine power in Jesus (fr. 3). At a lower level we have the divine Sophia, according to Clement's explanation of fr. 5; and the Demiurge, although he is 'the image of the true God' (*ibid.*), and is called God and Father, no doubt ranks below her, since he is her *plasma*, is 'moulded' by her (*Str.* 4.90.2). This of course agrees with numerous accounts of Valentinian doctrine, including Hippolytus's explanation of fr. 8 (*Haer.* 6.37), which compares the Valentinian psalm he quotes with the three orders of beings set out in the second Platonic *Epistle* (312e), though Valentinus, says Hippolytus, begins from below. Even so, the psalm itself hardly confirms the triadic pattern which Hippolytus professes to find in it; its order is flesh, soul, air, ether, and the fruits which proceed from the abyss (*bythos*), followed by a puzzling reference to an infant (*brephos*). Hippolytus equates 'flesh' with matter, 'soul' with the Demiurge, 'air' with 'the spirit which is outside the Pleroma', and this again with 'the external (or excluded?) Sophia', and 'ether' with 'Sophia within the Limit (*Horos*) and all the Pleroma', which is presumably identical with 'the whole emission

of the Aeons from the Father', while the concluding reference to the infant remains obscure; it is of course tempting to connect it with fr. 7, also from Hippolytus, where Valentinus is said to have claimed a vision of an infant child (*paida népion*) who declared himself to be the Logos—which could suggest that Valentinus placed the Logos next to the Father, and above the other 'fruits' or Aeons. The mention of two Wisdoms has no parallel in the fragments transmitted by Clement, though it is commonplace in the developed system; but Hippolytus does not suggest that the higher Sophia is also involved in error and confusion, as with Ptolemaeus. He knows this doctrine, of course, in view of his earlier account; but in 6.37 he is clearly adding matter derived from a separate source.

For what it is worth, then, Hippolytus does claim that Valentinus distinguished three levels of reality; and not, in this case, the usual triad of spirit, soul, and matter. I think that in 6.37.5 the emendation Σιγήν (for MS πᾶσι γῆν) must be wrong, since it leaves the following genitive unexplained; I prefer Hilgenfeld's πιγήν; we then have a triad of the Father, the Aeons, and the cosmos, which is roughly comparable to the familiar middle-Platonic triad of God, the Ideas, and matter.

But perhaps a little more may be deduced from frs. 1, 2, and 5. Fr. 1 clearly depends on well-known extrabiblical traditions about the creation of Adam, set going no doubt by attempts to account for the plural verb 'let us make', Gen 1:26, in the light of Plato's assistant creators in the *Timaeus* (41a-c, 42de;¹² cf. Philo, *Op.* 72ff., *Conf.* 168ff., *Fuga* 68ff.), and introducing angels (and often a lower Demiurge) as responsible for his moulding (see, e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24 = Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.28 [Saturninus], Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.7.6 [Naassenes], and among the new texts *ApocryIn* BG 48: 10 = CG II 15: 1, *ApocAd* CG V 64: 15). In Valentinus fr. 1 the angels are afraid 'when he spoke too boldly for a moulded creature' (or perhaps 'uttered loftier words than' such a being, ὅτε μείζονα ἐφθέγξατο τῆς πλάσεως) 'on account of Him who had given in him (Adam) a seed of the heavenly being and spoken boldly'. Adam's lofty speech is a puzzle which I do not remember having seen explained; I would be inclined to refer it to Gen 2:19, noting the importance which Philo attaches to the giving of names in the tradition of Plato's *Cratylus* (*Op.* 148-50; *Leg. All.* 2.15, *Mut.* 63, *Quaes. Gen.* 1.20-21); a gnostic

¹² See *inter alia* P. Boyancé, 'Dieu cosmique et dualisme: les archontes de Platon', *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo* (ed. U. Bianchi; Leiden, 1967) 340-56.

writer would no doubt assume that the Demiurge did not know the right names, an interpretation which Philo mentions and rejects at *Op.* 149, *Quaes. Gen.* 1.21.¹³

Who then is the preexistent man? Hilgenfeld (*Ketzergeschichte*, 294) and Förster (*Von Valentin zu Herakleon*, 92) assume that he is the Father, referring us to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30, where the Sethians are said to give the name Man to 'the God of all', the 'first God'. This may perhaps be right; there are indeed other gnostic sects which make the same equation, for instance the Naassenes (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.6.4-5, cf. 10.9.1), Monoimus (ibid. 8.12.2, etc.) and some Valentinians (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.12.4); and the word 'preexistent' (προόντος)—if this reading is sound—also occurs in Hippolytus's account of the Naassenes as a designation of the supreme being (5.7.9; 9.1, cf. Epiphanius, *Haer.* 31.5.6). But I think there is something to be said for the view that Valentinus, like Philo, interpreted the creation account of Genesis 1 as referring to the ideal man and equated him with the divine Logos. For the implanting of a heavenly seed—presumably a parallel to the biblical in-breathing of the breath of life, Gen 2:7—is accompanied by 'bold speaking', παρρησιαζόμενον, on the part of the invisible 'seed-giver' also; and this naturally suggests the παρρησία predicated of the Son in fr. 2. In Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 2.1 it is certainly the Logos who implants a male seed in the sleeping soul. Further, it would be natural within a Platonic framework to think of the ideal man as 'established' (καθεστῶτος) within the natural man; but would the supreme God be so described? And is παρρησιάζω a natural word to use of the Almighty, who has no one even theoretically capable of opposing or threatening him?¹⁴ I am not sure whether these are points of substance; but if accepted, they would show that Valentinus gave a prominence to the Logos which is obscured in the developed systems, and would help to explain fr. 7 (his alleged vision of the Logos), and even fr. 9, his alleged Trinity of three natures or hypostases.

There is, moreover, an allusion to the creation—though an oblique one—in fr. 5. We may render: 'Concerning this God (viz., the world-creating God who is responsible for death) he intimates (αἰνίττεται) the following—I quote verbatim—: "Just as the image is something

¹³ Cf. *On the Origin of the World*, CG II 120:17-26, where Adam's naming of the animals is given some prominence.

¹⁴ Cf. however Ps 11:6 (12:5) quoted at *1 Clem.* 15.7, which W. Bauer's *Lexicon* notes as unique.

less than the living face, so equally the cosmos is something less than the living Aeon. What then is the reason for the image? The greatness of that face which has provided the likeness for the painter, so that he may be honoured through his name; for the form (of God?) was not found in full reality, but the name filled up what was lacking in the moulded creature. And the invisible (nature) of God worked with it (Him?) to produce faith in (?) the moulded being.”¹⁵ This recalls fr. 1 in its suggestion that the creature had limited capacities which were supplemented by a higher power. And the continuation, obscure though it is, implies that there are two beings who cooperate (*synergein*), one being the Name, and the other ‘the invisible’, *to aoraton*, of God. But ‘the Name’ is now widely recognized as a christological title, following (e.g.) Quispel’s discussion of its use in the *Gospel of Truth*.¹⁵

Hilgenfeld (299-300) interpreted this phrase quite differently; following Grabe, he took ‘the Name’ as part of the metaphor, as meaning the title under a portrait, which reveals an identity which the picture does not fully disclose. Hilgenfeld also assumed that Clement, though better informed than we are, made a gross error in identifying the portrait-painter as Sophia. Sagnard, on the other hand, maintains that the passage alludes to numerous details of the fully developed ‘Ptolemaean’ system; but he offers no opinion as to whether Clement is right in understanding Valentinus to see Sophia as the portrait-painter, and if so, what his meaning might be. Here, it seems to me, there is scope for further investigation.

Plato, as is well known, makes numerous attempts to explain the relationship between the ideal world and the ordinary world; at some stage he perhaps came to see that it can only be expressed in metaphorical terms, since it is bound to be *sui generis* (so, perhaps, *Prm.* 131). But he often speaks of an imitation and the reality corresponding to it; and quite often of a *visible* likeness, a drawing or painting. The word *Zωγράφος* and its cognates occur about forty times in Plato’s dialogues, sometimes without any great philosophical resonance, as in *R.* 2, 373c, where paintings are mentioned simply as an example of luxurious furniture; sometimes in the context of a theory of names or theory of knowledge, as in *Cra.* 430b; sometimes in that of psychology, as *Phlb.* 39b; or of ethics, as *R.* 6, 500e; and sometimes of the theory of Ideas, as *R.* 10, 596eff. I would pick out

¹⁵ See esp. 37: 37ff., translated and discussed in F. L. Cross (ed.), *The Jung Codex* (London, 1955) 69-76; cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London, Chicago: 1964) 147-63; Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 86.2; 26.1, discussed *ibid.* 153.

eight passages as especially significant, namely, *Cra.* 430bff.; *Sph.* 236b; *Phlb.* 39b; *Phdr.* 275d; *R.* 5, 472d; *ibid.* 6, 500eff.; *ibid.* 10, 596aff.; and *Ep.* 7, 342. It should be noted that several of these passages would be known to ancient readers who depended on anthologies which, as so often in the postclassical period, emphasized the ethical and theological sides of Plato's thought while neglecting the epistemological and the political. Thus *R.* 6, 500cd, is (with *Thi.* 176b) a *locus classicus* for the thought that likeness to God is the goal of human endeavour; *Phlb.* 39, as we shall see, speaks of 'the good man loved by the gods'; and *R.* 10, 597b is the sole proof text for the important doctrine that God makes the Ideas. It would be easy to suppose that the fragment of the *Republic* which is found in a Coptic version in Nag Hammadi Codex VI, i.e., 588b-589b, derives from a translation which originally continued to this point.

Moreover, although the word *Zωγράφος* itself has proved enigmatic to some interpreters of gnosticism, it is used by Plato in association with other terms which reappear either in postclassical summaries of Platonism, or in gnostic documents, or in both. The painter is a craftsman, *dēmiourgos* (*Phlb.* 39b, *R.* 10, 596e). He is, or is compared to, a maker or poet, *poiētēs*, *R.* 596d, 597d. His productions are imitations or images, *mimēmata*, *eikones*, *eidōla*, *phantasmata*, *Cra.* 430b,e, 431c; *Sph.* 236b,c; *Phlb.* 39b,c, 40a; *Phdr.* 276a; *R.* 598b. A significant passage in the *Phaedrus* (275e-276d) compares paintings to 'dumb' (i.e., written) words who need their 'father' to defend them, and contrasts these with another 'word' which is 'written with intelligence in the mind of the hearer, and is powerful in its own defence'; this may well form part of the tradition underlying Heb 4:12. In *Phlb.* 39bff. we find a discussion of memory and imagination, memory being compared to a clerk (*grammatistēs*) who records and repeats the facts, whereas there is in our souls 'another *dēmiourgos*', a painter, who makes images, both memories of the past and hopes for the future (39e); the good man loved by the gods has pleasures and hopes that are true. For the Platonist, of course, the memory of our heavenly origin is equivalent to a knowledge of heavenly realities (see, e.g., *Phd.* 72eff., esp. 75c, 76de); and knowledge of our origin is one of the basic ideas of gnosticism (see esp. Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 78.2). In a rather different vein, we find Sophia creating κατὰ τὴν μνήμην τῶν κρείττωνων (Irenaeus 1.11.1, *lect. pot.*).

In *R.* 10, 596ff., Plato discusses the relation of common objects to the ideal forms; the craftsman who makes those objects has the

form before his eyes, but does not make it; however there is a kind of craftsman who makes imitations or representations of things, namely, the painter. Plato then suggests that common objects are related to their ideal forms in much the same way as paintings to the objects they represent; thus there are three orders of things, forms, objects, and their imitations, and three kinds of craftsmen, named at 597b as 'painter, bedstead-maker and god'. This text, we have noted, was important to later Platonists as their authority for the doctrine that God makes the forms. But by the first century A.D. we already see the beginnings of a movement to emphasize the transcendence of the source of all being by attributing the making of the world to a secondary power, the divine Logos. Philo, though understandably cautious in this respect, is already willing to refer to the Logos as 'second cause' (*Quaes. Gen.* 3.34) and 'second God' (in Eusebius, *P.E.* 7.13.1), and as the God of the unenlightened (*Leg. All.* 3.207, *Somm.* 1.238), though he commonly also pictures him in impersonal terms as the instrument *by which* God made the world. But by the second century the word τεχνίτης has become appropriated to this power in Platonist circles, and δημιουργός can be used of the Logos by the Christian apologist Tatian (*Orat.* 7); while among the gnostics, quite apart from its well-known pejorative application to the God of the Old Testament, we find the title 'First Demiurge' assigned to the Saviour in Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 47.1.

It is therefore a perfectly natural extension of this usage to the next member of Plato's hierarchy if 'the painter' stands for the divine Wisdom, understood as a cosmic power junior to the Logos, and as responsible for the perceptible world, a representation of the ideal world whose beauty it dimly reflects. This latter notion is certainly found in Valentinian texts (*GTr* 17: 19-20, *TriTrac* 79: 10, which may be compared with Philo, *Op.* 139, Albinus 10.3 (p. 165.3) and Numenius fr. 16. A triad of God, Craftsman and Painter could easily be developed in connexion with the well-known triad of God, the Ideas, and Matter, which we have already noted in connexion with Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.37.

Of course we do not find the Logos named as a bedstead-maker! But the word is not essential to Plato's argument; even in the *Republic* passage it alternates with τέκτων; but in either case motives of reverence would discourage its use in theology. Philo mentions carpentry as a banal occupation (*Leg. All.* 1.57), though he does use the more dignified word ἀρχιτέκτων in connexion with the making

of the ideal world (*Op.* 24), and at *Mut.* 29-31 it is linked with ποιητής, δημιουργός and τεχνίτης. Philo reserves these terms for the Father, we should note; but besides these, the only common-life occupations which he applies by metaphor to God are (by Leisegang's index) ἡνίοχος (Platonic) and κυβερνήτης (cf. *Plt.* 273e), together with δαδοῦχος and φυτουργός, once each.

Does Valentinus, like his followers, give the name Demiurge to an inferior deity, the offspring or product of Sophia? Clement certainly tells us, when introducing fr. 5, that death is to be destroyed, and that it is the work of the being who created the world; and this is reasonably well confirmed by the quotation, where the 'image' is said to be 'inferior to the living face' and its existence needs to be explained; clearly the term 'image' has been reapplied, in a manner comparable to Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 7.5.

The gnostic conception presumably has its main roots outside Platonism, in an adverse judgement on the Old Testament creator-god, and cannot easily be fitted into the scheme which we earlier outlined. Nevertheless an ingenious Platonist might appeal to *R.* 598bc, where the painter is said to paint other workmen, and a good painter could depict a carpenter (γράφας ἂν τέκτονα) whom children and simple-minded people would take for a (or 'the'?) real carpenter. This offers a possible parallel to Clement's comment on fr. 5, where he says that the Demiurge is the image of the true God, according to Valentinus, and is the moulded work (*plasma*) of the painter, Sophia; and we may again compare the *Excerpta*, 47.1-2, where the Saviour is said to be the first and universal *dēmiourgos*, and Sophia the second; her first work is the putting-forth (προβάλλεται) of an image of the Father, a god through whom she (*sic*) made heaven and earth. And I may perhaps be forgiven for adding one further reference to the *Cratylus*, 431de, where Socrates is arguing that some images, i.e., names, are good and some are not; his inference is, 'Perhaps, then, one craftsman of names will be good, and the other bad?'—and continues with a sentence which could easily be rendered, 'And so the name of *the latter* was the Lawgiver'!

I have spent a good deal of time on a possibly speculative pursuit of Platonic parallels; but before we leave this field, there are two other points at which I think Plato's influence can be certified. The first concerns the use of the term 'image', *eikon*. In the great majority of cases this implies something derived or copied from a corresponding reality, and thus necessarily inferior to it (see esp. *Cra.* 432d). But

in *Sph.* 236b the contrast is drawn between the *eikon*, as the true image, which genuinely resembles the reality, and the *phantasma*, which merely appears to do so. This shows us the term *eikon* closely approaching the sense of 'genuine reality' itself; and this approach seems to be completed in Philo's usage. Sometimes, of course, the common Platonic sense of 'imitation' is to the fore; but in *Leg. All.* 1.43 the 'man' of Gen 2:8 is interpreted to mean heavenly Wisdom, which Moses called 'the beginning and the image and the vision of God' (ἀρχὴν καὶ εἰκόνα καὶ ὄρασιν θεοῦ); this clearly indicates at least a genuine image. But further, in *Somn.* 1.79 'incorporeal images' appear to be the same as 'most holy Ideas', and these are undoubtedly to be understood in a realist, Platonic sense, as transcendent *realities*, even if their function is also to reproduce 'the form of God' (Gen 32:31, cited in the text). Once again, in *Spec. Leg.* 1.171 Philo interprets the smoke of the sacrificial incense as a thank-offering for 'the rational spirit within us, which was shaped according to the original Idea of the divine image' (πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον ἰδέαν εἰκόνοσ θείας). Clearly 'image' here is equivalent to 'idea', or at least not inferior to it; and the passage connects with others in which the divine Logos is identified with the Man κατ' εἰκόνα, at the 'iconic' or ideal level, as contrasted with the man καθ' ὁμοίωσιν.¹⁶

This usage of *eikon* no doubt helps to explain the contrast between 'image' and 'shadow' in Heb 10:1; but further, I believe it provides the clue to a most puzzling passage in the *Gospel of Thomas*, 84: 'Jesus said: When you see your likeness, you rejoice. But when you see your images (εἰκῶν) which came into existence before you, which neither die nor are manifested, how much will you bear!' The contrast of image and likeness suggests Gen 1:26, but in this case the images are superior to the likeness, in contrast to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.5.5; Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 50.1; 54.2.¹⁷ Such preexistent immortal images can be explained as our true selves, or as the guardian angels which the Valentinians pictured as our heavenly bridegrooms; but the term εἰκῶν becomes easier to understand if one notes that it is a possible term for the

¹⁶ This use of εἰκῶν reappears in some philosophical texts, e.g., Timaeus Locrus 99d (cited in *LSJ*) and Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, pp. 83.16 and 771.24-772.7 Hayduck. In the first passage εἰκῶν and παράδειγμα are used as synonyms, although clearly distinguished in the preceding lines. The second passage shows that εἰκῶν was used as an equivalent of παράδειγμα by Pythagoreans.

¹⁷ The exposition of Gen 1:26 cited in Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.14.5-6 from the *Apophasis Megale* perhaps takes a high view of the 'image', though the 'likeness' is not explained.

Platonic Idea, and that some Platonists at least taught that there were Ideas corresponding to individual human selves.

Suppose that Valentinus was a Platonist, as we have argued hitherto; and that he did indeed accept a complex myth akin to that of the *Apocryphon of John*; and that we discard forced explanations, such as that of a sudden change of mind: we then have to ask ourselves whether a Platonist could have accepted a hierarchy of Aeons as a possible representation of the Platonic theory of Ideas. It is clearly impossible that anyone could have retained both systems, regarding them as simply unconnected; for both alike profess to disclose the structure of the unseen world and its relation to the source of all being. We have therefore to look for trends of opinion within the Platonic schools which saw the Ideas as comparable to living and personal beings, including but not limited to the individual beings who live human lives.

For this purpose the definition of Platonism need not be too narrowly restricted. A philosopher such as Plutarch, who was clearly recognized as belonging within the school tradition, could make sympathetic use of Eastern mythology in his work *On Isis and Osiris*. In another direction, Platonists could extend their range by borrowing from the Stoics; a syncretism of this kind can be detected in Philo; again, a little later than Valentinus, the *Chaldaean Oracles* show what inventive complexity of cosmological teaching can be constructed on a broadly Platonic basis. In fr. 37 Ideas 'whizz out' and 'leap out' from the Father's mind and burst like waves upon the rocks of the material world; while a Stoic motif appears in the use of fire imagery for their source (lines 4, 14). Stoic influence may also help to explain the fact that the Valentinians on the whole prefer the more Stoic and biblical-sounding term $\piνεῦμα$ to the Platonic $νοῦς$ to express the highest element in human life, the element which unites some men at least to the celestial world.

A well-known sentence in Tertullian¹⁸ relates that Valentinus himself conceived the Aeons simply as attributes of the Father, and that it was Ptolemaeus who distinguished them as *personales substantias*. Of course the contrast may be too sharply drawn; it might be better to think of a difference in emphasis.¹⁹ Certainly in the Church Fathers' reports their status seems to be ambiguous; and this with some good

¹⁸ *Adv. Val.* 4.

¹⁹ Cf. my paper 'The Valentinian Myth of Sophia', *JTS* N.S. 20 (1969) 87-88.

reason, for one should not assume that human language and human imagery does justice to the highest realities either by stating a series of predicates or by picturing a chain of genetic descent. The formation of the Aeons is commonly described as 'emission', *προβολή*; the verb *προβάλλεσθαι* can suggest either physical growth and extension²⁰ or the exercise of mental powers;²¹ but this function is often performed by Aeons acting in pairs, as if it were the begetting of a human offspring. It is commonly felt, and indeed Irenaeus observed,²² that something akin to individual human existence is first clearly demanded when we reach the figure of the erring Sophia; indeed it is part of the tradition that her error was prompted by the desire to act independently and to assert her individual being.²³

How would a second-century Platonist approach this position? Most probably, with two complexes of problems in mind: first, the generation of numbers from the One; and secondly, the notion of the Ideas as thoughts of God, the two problems being linked by the enigmatic doctrines attributed to Xenocrates, that the soul is a self-moving number, and that the Ideas themselves are numbers. Some light may be thrown on these dark sayings if we remember that Pythagorean and Platonic tradition associated numbers with geometrical figures, and that Plato himself had connected the series of extensions (point, line, plane, solid) with the cognitive processes, mind, knowledge, opinion, sensation; noticing also that the development of spatial dimensions is associated with a decline towards less perfect forms of cognition.²⁴ Aristotle also reports what is probably Xenocrates' view, that the numbers *desire* unity²⁵—perhaps because it is the ideal form of the order which they impose on indefinite quantities?—from which von Arnim and Krämer²⁶ conclude that Xenocrates thought of the numbers as living beings.

Considering the Ideas as thoughts of God, a Platonist who was even mildly pessimistic about the material world would not represent it as an original and primary purpose of the ultimate power, any more than

²⁰ See e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.17, discussed in my *Divine Substance* (Oxford, 1977) 195-9.

²¹ See, e.g., Porphyry, *Sent.* 29, p. 13.10 M.; Iamblichus, *De Anima*, in Stobaeus, 1.370 W.

²² Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.12.2; 2.17.10.

²³ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.2.2; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.30.7.

²⁴ Aristotle, *De An.* 1.2, 404b22-24.

²⁵ Aristotle, *EE* 1.8, 1218a24-26.

²⁶ H. J. Krämer, *Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam, 1964) 62-63, 162.

the Christian Origen did. He would not therefore think of the Ideas as archetypes (παραδείγματα) of species or objects in this world, as they are often represented by Philo; they would rather be archetypes of ideal existence in the intelligible world; they would be characters or roles which the Father in some way assumes or projects and so brings into distinct existence. Since he is the source of all these, no one of them singly could represent or comprehend his mysterious being. Platonic Ideas of virtues would approximate to this picture; it would be easy to reflect that an ideal form of virtue can only exist in a context which allows of life and decision; and traditional personifications of virtues would make this transition seem natural. But the Platonic tradition did in fact develop a concept of the Ideas as being not only intelligible but themselves intelligent. Plotinus is the best-known exponent of this tradition,²⁷ but it is clearly represented in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, especially in fr. 37 mentioned above, where dynamic physical imagery is used to convey the vigour of what are more properly described as mental acts:

Νοῦς πατρός ἐρροΐζησε νοήσας ἀκμάδι βουλῆ
 καμμόρφους ἰδέας, πηγῆς δὲ μιᾶς ἀπο πᾶσαι
 ἐξέθορον· πατρόθεν γὰρ ἔην βούλη τε τέλος τε.
 Ἄλλ' ἐμερίσθησαν νοερῶ πυρὶ μοιραθεῖσαι
 εἰς ἄλλας νοεράς· κόσμῳ γὰρ ἀναξ πολυμόρφῳ
 προὔθηκεν νοερὸν τύπον ἄφθιτον...
 ἔννοιαι νοεραὶ πηγῆς πατρικῆς ἀπο ...

It should not be thought that νοερός is used here simply as a substitute for νοητός, *metri gratia*; this may be shown from fr. 81, which has the same combination of physical and psychological imagery:

τοῖς δὲ πυρὸς νοεροῦ νοεροῖς πρηστῆσιν ἅπαντα
 εἴκαθε δουλεύοντα πατρός πειθηνίδι βουλῆ.

We may think the author's use of philosophical and religious tradition irresponsible; but he is surely right on one major point, that analogies drawn from human experience cannot provide any really adequate description of the highest realities.

The *Tripartite Tractate* enables us to see how the same problem is handled by the Valentinian school, in an imperfectly translated text, it is true, but one which is not fogged by the insensitive reporting of the Church Fathers. In this document the Aeons are infinite in

²⁷ See P. Hadot, 'Etre, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin', *Les Sources de Plotin* (Fondation Hardt, Entretiens 5; Vandœuvres-Geneva, 1960) 107-41.

number (59:7-8, 28; 67:20, 23) and except for a primary and Christian-sounding triad of Father, Son and Ecclesia they are not named. They are exhibited initially as God's thoughts (60:3), and do not serve as paradigms for the physical world, but are representations of his own nature (61:37). They are beings *sui generis*, and normal language has to be strained to describe them; note for example the conjunction 'seeds (?), thoughts, roots, offspring, minds' at 64:1-6, which compares closely with the Αἰῶνας καὶ λόγους καὶ ῥίζας καὶ σπέρματα καὶ πληρώματα καὶ καρπούς attributed to Marcus in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.14.2. The author clearly pictures an evolution or creation by stages, which is not unambiguously either a progress or a decline,²⁸ but from which independent personalities result. Whence then do these originate? The question is not quite easy to answer because of the, possibly intrusive, presence of Ecclesia (57:34-59:16), which suggests a company of preexistent personalities; otherwise one might think simply of the Father's thoughts or designs. Initially they were hidden in the mysterious being of the Father, known indeed to him but unknown to themselves (60:16-29); but the Father gave them existence for themselves (61:4-7, 33) and knowledge of Himself (61:12; 62:2; 63:10-11). Initially unconscious like unborn children (61:18-24) they receive knowledge and virtue (62:12-14) and praise Him (63:27); thus they become minds (64:6), able to wish and think and speak (64:15-17) and to gain knowledge of the Father through the divine Logos (65:6-31); lastly they obtain free will (69:28). The author lays some stress on the successive stages of this development, explaining more than once that it has to wait for a suitable moment (62:18-22, 30; 64:33-65:1; 67:34-35); not of course because the Father is ungenerous (a well-known Platonic theme appearing also in *GTr* 18:36-40), but to discourage premature confidence (62:21-25), to avoid the annihilating effect of a sudden revelation (64:33-37) and to discourage one-sided presentations (68:17-28), since it is only in mutual agreement and cooperation that they are able to comprehend their source (*ibid.*). Their free will, however, has the result that these wise provisions are in some measure frustrated, a theme which we need not now pursue in detail.

²⁸ It has to be remembered that Platonists tended to associate multiplication and growth with a loss of purity and concentration; Speusippus occupies a somewhat isolated position in holding that evolution is productive of good, though admittedly there are traces of his influence in our period, e.g., Philo, *Op.* 67-68, cf. *Sacr.* 14-16.

This author thinks of the heavenly powers as infinite in number. The Valentinian systems reported by the Church Fathers appear to fix the number of Aeons at thirty or some other prescribed limit,²⁹ which makes it difficult to understand another feature of their doctrine, namely that the elect not only have heavenly counterparts or bridegrooms but will themselves be united with these and enter the *pleroma* 'becoming themselves intelligible Aeons', *Exc. Thdot.* 64.1, cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.1. How does this doctrine of a common nature and common destiny for the spirituals and the Aeons themselves appear in relation to the Platonic tradition?

Some Platonists, as we have observed, taught that there are Ideas, and thus eternal existences, of individuals. This doctrine sometimes takes the markedly optimistic form of asserting the affinity of *souls* as such with the ideas. The main authority for this view will have been the *Phaedo*, especially 79c-80b, noting that it is possible to infer from this passage that the soul is not only *like* the highest realities but belongs to their number, being *συγγενής* (79d). Again, both Speusippus and Posidonius appear to have defined the soul as 'the Form of universal extension', *ἰδέα τοῦ πάντη διαστατοῦ*,³⁰ and whatever this phrase may originally have meant, it is clear that some Platonists took it to mean that the soul is an Idea, an opinion which Plutarch understandably disowns. We may notice also the view of Numenius³¹ that the soul contains all the higher realities, 'the intelligible world, gods, demons, and the good', which might possibly be compared with the Valentinian picture of the Aeons as interpenetrating each other.

A better-known strand in the Platonic tradition teaches that only the rational element, and not the soul as such, is akin to the intelligible world; it also distinguishes three classes of men such that only the highest and best is dominated by the reason, and sometimes represents the soul as intermediate between heavenly and earthly things.³² This provides an obvious point of departure for the doctrine that the intermediate class of men are those dominated by the soul, i.e., the psychics; and generally this opinion is closer to the Valentinian position, where indeed the Platonic term *νοῦς* sometimes takes the place of the more familiar *πνεῦμα* to denote the highest element. But

²⁹ E.g., Epiphanius, *Haer.* 31.6.

³⁰ Plutarch *An. procr.* 22; Iamblichus in Stobaeus, 1.364 W.

³¹ Fr. 41 des Places = Test. 33 Leemans.

³² Plutarch, *An. procr.* 22.

it may still be useful to review some varieties of Platonic teaching on the relationship between the soul and the ideal world as a possible setting for the Valentinian conceptions of the Aeons and the spiritual men.

Calvisius Taurus, if we can trust Iamblichus's report of him (in Stobaeus 1.378 W.) seems to have taken a markedly optimistic view: 'the souls are sent by the gods to earth either ... in order that there may be as many living beings in the cosmos as there are in the intelligible realm; or ... to present a manifestation of the divine life ... for the gods become evident and manifest themselves through the pure and un sullied life of the souls'. The first alternative suggests that the souls have their counterparts in the ideal world, like the Valentinian 'bridegrooms'; and presumably as *individual* ideas; for if 'as many living beings' were taken to mean 'as many *kinds* of living beings' only one human soul would be needed.³³

The gnostic Basilides also presents a radically optimistic view. He takes over a Platonic myth of a choice of lives by three classes of rational beings, which can also be found in Philo. In the usual form of the myth, the three classes are distinguished by the varying degrees in which they yield to the attractions of the body and of earthly things, and the lowest class is represented as entirely given over to bodily concerns, like the *hylikoî* in Valentinian anthropology. In Basilides' version, however, the highest class of the three reverts immediately to the heavenly world (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.22.8) and the second follows with some difficulty, aided by the Holy Spirit (ibid. 9-16); it is only the third class that remains within the germinating lower world, and even this apparently has the respectable motive of 'conferring and receiving benefits' (ibid. 16, cf. 10-11). All these classes indeed share the dignity of 'sonship', υἱότης, which is withheld even from the Holy Spirit (ibid. 12-13).

Philo reproduces the same myth in a less optimistic and more typical form. The version given in *Gig.* 12-15 has some features in common with Basilides. All three classes share the common denominator of souls, but those of the first class refuse all dealings with the earth, and are appointed to wait upon their creator. A second group emerge with difficulty from the whirlpool of bodily passions and return to their source; these are the souls of genuine philosophers who follow

³³ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 12.3, 1070a18; if Aristotle's ὅποσα φύσει means 'as many *kinds* of natural being', this interpretation could easily be missed.

Plato's advice by meditating upon death (*Phd.* 64a, 67e, 81a, often quoted by Philo and the Fathers). The third class are completely overwhelmed by the body and worldly concerns. Philo remarks in conclusion that souls, demons, and angels are one and the same. Some features of this account reappear in *Plant.* 14, though here Philo begins with two classes of souls, some of which enter into bodies at certain appointed times, but others remain aloft, while the purest of these inhabit the ether, and are called heroes by the Greeks but angels by Moses. This version resembles Basilides in entirely disregarding unworthy motives for incarnation. In *Somn.* 1.138 the picture is slightly more complex: the lowest class of souls become bound to mortal bodies, but a higher class leave them and ascend; some then return to mortal life, but others disdain it and are raised to the ethereal region. Others again, the purest and best, have no desire for earthly things, but attend the great king; and these are called demons by the philosophers, but angels by the sacred Word. In all these passages, therefore, angels are identified with virtuous souls in a Platonic context; but in other places the angels are identified with λόγοι and δυνάμεις, and these again with ἰδέαι. There is in fact a complex overlapping of the terms ἄγγελοι, δυνάμεις, ψυχαί, λόγοι, ἀρεταί, ἰδέαι, and εἰκόνες, together with σφραγίδες and παραδείγματα; and this seems to me to show that Philo had access to a Platonic tradition in which the Ideas were regarded as personal beings, possibly even with varying moral destinies; since if he had merely wished to find a philosophical justification for the Hebrew doctrine of angels, the ἥρωες and the δαίμονες would have satisfied his needs.

Another school of gnostics having several features in common with the Valentinians, and also indebted to Platonism, regarded souls as a debased form of the Ideas. These are the Docetists reported by Hippolytus. For them the Ideas appear to correspond to the 'characters' in which the self-knowledge of the Aeons expresses itself; they compose a νοητὴ φύσις but have also a cosmic function (*Haer.* 8.9.3); but on 'cooling down' and losing the heavenly light they turn into souls (ψυχαὶ γὰρ αἱ ἰδέαι καλοῦνται, ὅτι ἀποψυγεῖσαι τῶν ἄνω ἐν σκότει διατελοῦσι, *ibid.* 10.1), and enter into successive bodies, until at the coming of the Saviour their *metensomatosis* comes to an end. Another passage, 8.10.9, brings out the contrast between the celestial origin of the Ideas and their limited existence as souls on earth.

In the light of these Platonic parallels it becomes at last possible to understand a feature of Valentinianism which the *Tripartite Tractate*

has brought into prominence; namely, that there is no sharp line to be drawn between the divine imagination projecting new forms of its own perfection and the divine creativity producing perfect offspring who may live a human life but are destined for incorporation into the *pleroma*, the grand consummation of the divine self-realization and self-giving.

DISCUSSION³⁴

G. C. STEAD: ANY effort to give a credible picture of Valentinus encounters an immediate difficulty: as de Faye noted, there is a sharp contrast between the fragments from his own writings preserved by Clement and the complex cosmic myth known from the heresiologists' accounts of the Valentinians. Even the discovery of new Valentinian texts from Nag Hammadi has not made clear how we are to understand the fragments, which could have been written simply by a Biblical Platonist not far from Christian orthodoxy. I have asked, then, if exploration of the philosophical context can help us imagine how the fragments' author could lend his authority to a movement with an elaborate mythology.

First, I sought to explicate how the fragments describe the heavenly hierarchy; I suggested there may be some evidence for the assertion of a Christian Trinity. Then I proceeded to a speculative pursuit of the figure of the cosmic painter. Though there is little evidence, it is possible that the Platonic texts were read as indicating a third power in the cosmos in addition to the God who creates all and the secondary power who contains and coordinates the Ideas. In embodying the Ideas in matter, this tertiary power would necessarily introduce some imperfection, perhaps even *πλάνη*, into the material representation of the heavenly world.

I also looked for Platonic approaches to the scheme of aeons. If any Platonist were to accept such a scheme, he would need to relate it to his theory of the number and structure of Ideas. I have asked, then, how contemporary Platonists explained the relation of Ideas to the soul and how far they understood the Ideas as themselves akin to personal beings, as intelligent as well as intelligible.

³⁴ Discussions of the Seminar on Valentinian Gnosticism have been edited by Kathryn Johnson, secretary of the Seminar.

I would observe that these discussions appear unsatisfactory for us, since later Platonists were able to examine the nature of the soul without being clear about whether they meant the individual or the cosmic soul or both. We can, however, find indications that there was at the time a view of the Ideas as minds, as living beings, which was mixed with a conception of them as mathematical realities. Such positions must be relevant to the Valentinian account of the aeons. Finally, I looked for belief in Ideas of individual personalities, which could provide a link with the Valentinian doctrine of true selves or guardian angels.

WAYNE MEEKS: A general question arises here: if Valentinus were simply a Platonist, why the myth?

HANS JONAS: Provided that he was primarily a Platonist! How good is the evidence? With so little said in the fragments about the details of Valentinus's doctrine, we cannot be sure that he did not hold features of the myth merely because they are not mentioned in the scant evidence.

STEAD: The evidence for his Platonism is admittedly thin, but not nonexistent. First, Clement gives a few quotations which seem to come from two books of Valentinus known to him, although he could have relied on books of extracts. Second, Hippolytus represents Valentinus and his school as dependent on the Pythagoreans, who were close to the Platonists in their general assumptions.

JOHN WHITTAKER: We also have Tertullian's charge that Valentinus was a Platonist. But are we to make this accusation the basis of our understanding of Valentinus and then look for supporting evidence? I am not convinced that the fragments show Valentinus as a Platonist in a deep way. We have only indications of a watered-down Biblical Platonism, and any second-century intellectual could be made to look like some sort of Platonist.

STEAD: Tertullian would not; he was a Stoic and was rude about the Platonists.

WHITTAKER: At that time, the line between Stoicism and Platonism was a fine one.

STEAD: Still, there were differences in the combinations of ingredients from these traditions. Tertullian, for example, was more of an anti-Platonist, while Philo was more a Platonist under strong Stoic influence.

WHITTAKER: In making Platonism his charge, Tertullian could just as well have condemned Justin Martyr as Valentinus.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: When we ask whether Valentinus was an orthodox Platonist, we must recognize how difficult it is to say what orthodox Platonism was in the second century. For example, this was the time of Numenius, with his discussions of Moses, and already there was the interest in the exotic which would mark Neoplatonism. Certainly, there were levels of Platonism, with some of them part of a popular culture which could have influenced Valentinus, as it did even Tertullian.

We must also investigate the diachronic dimension in the relation of Valentinianism and Platonism. Later Valentinian texts can be placed in relation to the issues of technical philosophy. The *Tripartite Tractate*, for example, shows more awareness of these questions than does Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*.

STEAD: Yes, the *Tripartite Tractate* is certainly to be distinguished from other texts. Its editors have been perhaps too conscientious in noting parallels with known Valentinian systems, even when these are quite thin, while they rather neglect the parallels with the philosophers.

GILLES QUISPÉL: At the time, it was necessary to insist on the links with Western Valentinianism because some did not recognize that the *Tripartite Tractate* is a document of this school.

BARBARA ALAND: What is the heart of Platonism? Is it to be found in Valentinian texts?

STEAD: Of course, second-century Platonism was such a varied thing, with so many internal disagreements, that it is virtually impossible to say what it was. Still, we can point to several principles. First, there was a view that reality is on two levels, that the world contains both heaven and earth. Second, there was a belief that there are three kinds of persons or three levels of reality. Here an important Platonic tenet can be compared with the Valentinian distinctions of πνεῦμα, ψυχή,

and ὕλη. Third, some Platonic schools had a numerological doctrine to describe the derivation of plurality and structure from simple unity. This looks a little like the procession of aeons from an original principle that can be described only as βυθός. There are, of course, other aspects of second-century Platonism; I have chosen ones favorable to my case! On these points, Christians felt an alliance with the Platonic tradition as they did not with the Epicureans or even the Stoics, because they recognized in it an earnestness for the transcendent world, for eternal things, and for the soul.

JONAS: It is a truism that Platonism must be distinguished from Plato. I doubt that the Gnostics of the second century seriously studied Plato's writings. Unlike Philo and Plotinus, they show no signs of a thorough reading of the *Republic*, *Sophist*, *Theatetus*, or *Parmenides*. It is more likely that they were acquainted with a popularized Platonism, from which they could derive structures of tripartition, a distinction of a higher and a lower world, and a figure of the demiurge.

If this is so, then the important question is not if they used Platonic ideas but rather what sort of use they made of the free-floating Platonic *topoi*. At this time, a process of mythologizing was under way which put a different complexion on the sophisticated Platonic scheme and allowed it bold and provocative twists. Behind the Gnostic treatment of the demiurge, for example, clearly lies the account of the *Timaeus*, but the figure is very much changed.

STEAD: Still, I think there are aspects of the second-century situation which allow us to envisage Valentinus as a Platonist of moderate culture. First, the use of handbooks and anthologies provides an intermediate position between Platonic gossip on the one side and a scholarly reading of texts on the other. These books allowed portions of original writings to be available even to those of slight culture. Such an extract from the *Republic* has been found in the Nag Hammadi library.

Second, the mythologizing process can itself be viewed in light of Platonic tradition. It was Plato who invented the technique of philosophical myth. While creative mythmaking then disappeared in Aristotle and is little known for a time in the schools, it later reappeared. The kind of sympathy a technically qualified Platonist could have for myths, both original and borrowed, is evident in Plutarch, who made

them the vehicles of philosophical meaning. It is possible, then, that Valentinus as a Platonist was attracted to take over a scheme like that of the *Apocryphon of John* as a usable mythological representation of the system of Platonic Ideas.

Moreover, if Valentinus indeed used the term *προσαρτήματα*, this points to a familiarity with the vocabulary of school Platonism. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure that Clement meant to attribute the word to Valentinus rather than to Basilides.

QUIPSEL: We must recognize that all that is interesting or beautiful is not necessarily orthodox. The *Gospel of Truth* and the *Treatise on Resurrection* suffered attempts to read them as orthodox documents; similarly, de Faye overstated the orthodox character of Valentinus's fragments. Professor Stead, for all his competence, is in de Faye's tradition of domesticated Platonic Gnostics. Orbe, however, has given a profound interpretation which fits the fragments into the Valentinian mythological system.

(To Stead) To be sure, there were influences from Middle Platonism on Valentinianism. You refer, for example, to the symbol of a painter; this is found in the Platonic letters of Seneca. Still, a Middle Platonist like Albinus usually seems pious, dull, and pedantic. The tone is not like the wild, unorthodox imagination of Valentinus as he is described in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11, and there is no proof that this is not an adequate account of the views of Valentinus himself.

STEAD: I would like to reply to several points. First, I did not discuss the painter in Seneca's *Epistle 58* because it is not clearly a cosmic figure. Second, Albinus is not the most representative Middle Platonist; he was influenced by the Aristotelian tradition. If we are looking for parallels with Valentinus, Numenius would be a better example.

Finally, I respect your view of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11. Of course, this account credits Valentinus with a doctrine of thirty aeons, and I confess I find this puzzling. The infinite aeons of the *Tripartite Tractate* seem a more likely view for a Platonist to take, for then the aeons could correspond to every *πνευματικός*. Still, a limited number of primary aeons would be a possible view for a Platonist with Pythagorean sympathies.

QUIPSEL: Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11 also says that God and the devil are twins, brought forth from Sophia. Again, this is not orthodox Platonism!

STEAD: Yes, I am puzzled by this as well. It is an unsolved problem for me.

RAOUL MORTLEY: I would like to speak about the background of the demiurge. The passage in the *Timaeus* which discusses it is called a "probable account"; it is not clear if it was intended literally. Thus, two lines of interpretation were possible. The Gnostics moved in a mythologizing direction; the figure was hypostatized and personified. School Middle Platonism, on the other hand, demythologized it; it was made into the world soul, a less personal, more metaphysical figure.

Another point—I see a danger of overstating the differences between "school" and "vulgar" or "lay" Platonism. There were no accredited academies of Platonists at this time. How, then, was the school of Valentinus really different from the school of Plotinus? It seems to me that the key point lies not in the lay character of the Platonism of the period but rather in its eclecticism. It was this uncontrolled syncretism which Plotinus feared in the Gnostics, as did the church fathers; they perceived in it a lack of authority in the use of writings.

HELMUT KOESTER: I also find the important point not in the degree of dependence on some sort of Platonism but rather in the concern for authority which marked the second century. On one hand, Platonists were trying to return to Plato; this was the "orthodox Platonism" of the time. On the other hand, Justin, for example, found philosophy insufficient and was trying to return to a still more ancient and more dignified authority. For him, as for many Gnostics, this involved a return to the Old Testament. Here, then, there was a turn from philosophy to mythology. Noting this movement can help answer the question, "Why the myth?" in Valentinianism. Within this negative attitude to philosophy, there is not so much difference between Justin's assertion that demons have distorted the interpretation of the old scriptures and the assertion that an evil or inferior god produced them.

MEEKS: (*To Stead*) How important is the first word of your description of Valentinus as a Biblical Platonist?

STEAD: I have cited the few obvious Biblical allusions in the fragments, including references to what we call the New Testament.

KOESTER: Yes, Matthew seems to be really referred to as a writing. If we date Valentinus to the early middle of the second century, it is striking that he quotes both Old and New Testament passages. Before him, only Justin had done this.

STEAD: What of Clement of Rome?

KOESTER: Clement does not have quotations which refer to books from both testaments as written works which are related to each other.

STEAD: Of course, the Gnostics were the first commentators on Paul.

MEEKS: And on John.

JONAS: Are there references to Paul in Valentinus's fragments?

STEAD: There is no clear evidence that Valentinus referred to Paul, unless the *Gospel of Truth* is considered.

MICHEL TARDIEU: (*To Stead*) I have a question about your translation of the key terms εἰκών, τύπος, and μορφή. In the passage about the cosmic painter from Fragment 5, you have translated εἰκών as "image," τύπος as "likeness," and μορφή as "form" of God. I would rather understand εἰκών as the painting made by the demiurgical painter from a live or intelligible reality, τύπος as the live or intelligible reality from which the demiurgical painter paints an εἰκών, and μορφή as the live or intelligible reality in so far as transcendence intransmissible by the demiurgical painter. The increase of Valentinus's dialectic clearly moves from bottom to top—from the εἰκών, the sensible world, to the τύπος, the intelligible world, and from the τύπος to the μορφή, the *essentia essendi*. I conclude, then, that Valentinus kept a dialectic movement but denied a continuous gradation.

STEAD: This may well be the sense of the words in this passage, but we cannot be sure that Valentinus used these terms more consistently than did, for example, Philo of Alexandria. It seems to me that some things are explained if εἰκών, surprisingly, is allowed in certain contexts to refer to the transcendent reality as well as to the image.

JONAS: In the Manichaean *Kephalaia*. (chap. 5, p. 29 Po.; also Manichaean *Psalmbook* Ps. 223, p. 11 Allb.) the Greek word ζωγραφεῖν is used in the Coptic text to denote the shaping or building of the eschatological “last statue” (ἀνδριᾶς). It is said that at the consummation, the final ἀνδριᾶς will be revealed as something completed—surely no longer a mere substituting image.

ATTRIDGE: Terms like εἰκών, of course, have a tradition of interpretation in Hellenistic Judaism—for example, in Philo on Gen 1:26. Generally, in Valentinian texts it is an ambiguous term. In Ptolemy, for instance, it is never used for the reality but always for some level of the world of image. In the *Tripartite Tractate*, it is used especially for spiritual copies of the transcendent world.

STEAD: The interpretation I am proposing would be an exceptional use.

QUISPÉL: The demiurge is only the image of the real God.

STEAD: This is clearly the usual meaning. We do, however, have one example from Hippolytus which may bear a higher interpretation. And there is the tantalizing remark in *Gospel of Thomas* 84 about seeing your εἰκών. Since in Plato’s *Sophist*, εἰκών is once contrasted with φαντασία, which is clearly the imitation, I suspect that there could be a Platonic background for an exceptional higher exegesis of εἰκών.

RELIGIO-HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS ON VALENTINIANISM

BY

UGO BIANCHI

I

THE distinction made by the Yale Seminars between a Valentinian and a "Sethian" gnosticism seems to me very meaningful. Nay, at this particular stage of research, it may be preferred to the other, widely accepted distinction between "Syro-Egyptian" and "Iranian." Naturally enough, gnostic thinkers may have been interested in dualistic patterns "in the Iranian style" (the idea of two absolutely primordial, opposed realms of Light and Darkness): suffice it to mention Basilides' attribution of a dualistic doctrine to the "barbarians."¹ But neither is there any doubt that "Iranian" dualistic forms and mythical characters (those serpentine, aggressive beings that recall the Mazdean figures of Az, Jeh, Azhi Dahaka, etc.) are peripheral in the wide ambit of the gnostic schools of the second and the third centuries A.D. In fact, they are confined to Manichaeism and to Mandaeanism, though not completely alien to some of the demonic imagery of the Demiurge in the Coptic tractates.

On the other side we have the always growing number of schools, systems, and tractates of "Western" gnosticism. It is here, it seems, that we can observe the gnostic phenomenon *in statu nascendi*, as well as the origins of those divarications and autonomous developments which characterize that articulated set of *genomena* and *phainomena* we call "gnosticism." Moreover, it is here that a radical distinction between a Valentinian, "Egyptian" gnosticism and a "Syro-Palestinian" one (the Simonian tradition, with Saturninus) seems appropriate, if, on the basis of Jonas's concept of "devolution" of heavenly hypostases, we are to contrast the respective opposed dynamisms as expressed in the relevant cosmogonies.

A basic theme in the Valentinian system is that of the desires, the curiosity, the errors of a heavenly, pleromatic entity Sophia, whose weakness starts a process that will culminate in the creation of the

¹ Völker, *Quellen*, 39.

world and of man. Sophia, though a pleromatic entity, is peripheral in the system of the aeons, consubstantial but also "liminary" to these, therefore ontologically and psychologically subject to unbalancing influences. Manifesting themselves in the passions of Sophia, these are so to speak inscribed in her nature, therefore intrinsic to the very structure of the Valentinian pleroma. This structure, monistically conceived (on the basis of the consubstantiality of the aeons), is basically dualistic too—firmly grounded in ineffable stability at its center and fatally instable at its periphery. At the same time, there is a dynamism in this structure, a dynamism oriented towards a modification of the internal equilibrium of the whole complex. The instability of Sophia the last of the aeons, manifested in her faulty desires, causes her to be temporarily expelled from the pleroma towards a lower world which, simply nonexistent prior to the fall of that feminine entity, comes into existence as a consequence of Sophia's vicissitudes and contrasting impressions.² Thus, the fall of Sophia, a real "previous sin," as well as her "conversion" are cosmogonic, though in a basically anticomic context (an anticomicism that, as we shall see, needs qualifications as far as the above mentioned "shifting" down of the dualistic focus in the pleroma is concerned).

As we have seen, a real tension, firstly potential and then actual, is intrinsic to the Valentinian pleroma, as consisting of the Divine at its best, the plenitude of the Father, and of a Divine which is feminine and marginal, and thus open to devolution, Sophia. This Valentinian

² This Valentinian doctrine is clearly expressed, as to its metaphysical foundations, in the letter of Ptolemaeus *To Flora*. According to him, the Valentinian *mysterium* consists precisely in "how from one first principle of all, simple ... ungenerated and incorruptible and good, were constituted these natures of corruption and the Middle, which are of different substances, although it is characteristic of the good to generate and produce things which are like itself and have the same substance" (Völker, *Quellen*, 92f. transl. by R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism, A Source Book*, 190). On the other hand, the criticism addressed by Plotinus to some unnamed, but certainly Valentinian, gnostics (*Enn.* 2.9.4) is understandable. What Plotinus is not able to accept is, *inter alia*, their doctrine that a downwards inclination of the soul (conceived here as a heavenly hypostasis) may cause the (lower) world to come into existence. In fact, Plotinus argues (ch. 12, in the context of a polemic interpretation of the gnostic *sophia*), if the soul produced matter by inclining herself, then that inclination was due to a necessity preceding matter and the very nature of the soul is the very cause of that inclination. Thus, since they affirm that matter was the origin of evil, it would follow that the responsibility for evil belongs eventually to the first hypostases (ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ ἢ αἰτία). True, the concept of a *tolma* of the Nous (as well as of the descending souls) is proper to Plotinus's cosmogonical doctrine (*Enn.* 6.9.1); thus the real point where Plotinus and the gnostics disagree is the evaluation—cosmosophical or anticomic—of the ontological inferiority of this world.

pleroma is a novelty and a complication, if compared to the dualistic schema of the Platonic ontology, in the sense that the Platonic opposition between an inferior realm (of mutability, sensation, and *genesis*) and a superior realm (that of eternity and stability) is shifted up by Valentinus into the very interior of the pleroma, whose periphery, as expressed by the hypostasis Sophia, is open to crisis and alienation—with the consequence that the Valentinian cosmos is only an epiphenomenon where those intra-pleromatic tensions are so to speak finally discharged. In these conditions, the only doctrinal element which *directly* links Valentinianism to Platonism (apart from the occasional assertion that the realities of below are images of higher realities) is the concept of the vicissitude (fall and reintegration) of a heavenly soul (or alternatively, of the pneumatic element in man), a vicissitude starting in a kind of “prologue in heaven.” On the other side, the Valentinian conception of the cosmogonic fall of a hypostasis like Sophia, though partially comparable to the Plotinian concept of the *tolma* of the Nous, could not escape meeting serious opposition on the part of Plotinus,³ since it led to the aberrant conclusion that the world is bad and the creator of the world is bad, and that the cause of evil in this world lies in the primal entities of above (ἐπὶ τὰ πρῶτα ἢ αἰτία), while in the Platonic view the Deity is characteristically *amaitiōs* in relation to the existence of evil. True, the Plotinian conception of the *tolma* of such an important hypostasis as Nous is ambiguous too in this same connection; but it does not abolish the fundamentally procosmic attitude of the Neoplatonist. Moreover, this concept of the *tolma* of the Nous is an inevitable consequence of the fact that, though remaining true to the general context of Platonic dialectic of the two irreducible realms of immutability and of *genesis*, Plotinus replaces the static Platonic concept of a fashioning of the cosmic image by a divine Demiurge contemplating the ideal model with a dynamic interpretation of cosmogony where those dialectics between model and image, still in existence, are complicated by a downward process of becoming which necessarily implies a crisis in the (lower) Divine. As for the Valentinian conception, it is specific, frankly anticosmic, though of a qualified anticosmicism.

II

We come now to the other question concerning Valentinianism,

³ See n. 2.

namely that of the Demiurge and the material world being *epiphenomena* of the story of the fallen aeon. In the Valentinian doctrine, particularly in "Western" Valentinianism, the destiny of those *epiphenomena* is consistent with their metaphysical antecedents. Whilst the material world is destined to a final annihilation, the psychic realm of the *mesotes*, to which the Demiurge and the psychics belong, will be finally assumed into the Ogdoad, immediately before the door of the "bridal room," the pleroma, to which only the pneumatics belong. This is quite understandable, since those psychic entities owe their origin to the conversion of the fallen Sophia. Thus, the psychic (not the material) *epiphenomena* of her fall are at the same time "reduced" and perpetuated; the ontological weakness that affected primordially that lowest sphere of the pleroma, where the drama of the split within the Divine could take place, is at the same time purged from the pleroma, purified, and transferred into a kind of external appendix of the same. This reification *ad infra* (or *ad extra*) of the inborn weakness of a pleromatic essence looks like a final reassessment, at a lower level and thus in a more stable equilibrium, of the dualistic element present in the monistic system of the eternal aeons.

But this specificity of the Valentinian ontology results more clearly if compared to the Simonian-Saturninian speculation (what we call the "Syro-Palestinian" gnosticism).

The systematic presuppositions of this speculation (according to the notices given by Justin and Irenaeus) are partially different from those of the Valentinian doctrine. The dualism of the realms, that of the Father and that of the angels-archons, is here a precondition to the whole drama—not in the "Iranian" sense, that the archons and the inferior realm are coeternal with a Supreme Deity, but in the sense that the initiative which leads to the dangerous situation of mixture between the two substances or realms comes *from below*, where the lower powers are agitating themselves. This cannot be obliterated by the fact that according to Saturninus an "image" of the Supreme Being had manifested itself to the archons, who were incapable of retaining it, and that according to the Simonians the female, divine hypostasis Ennoia had come down in order to create the angels and was retained and defiled by them.⁴ It is clear that in a gnostic context the initiative of manifestation belongs to the pneumatic element.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.1; 23.2.

But let us concentrate on the doctrine of Saturninus according to the notice of Irenaeus. No doubt, a common ontology underlies the two positions, that of Valentinus and that of Saturninus, founded as they are on the concepts of an unfortunate mixture of substances and of a distinction of realms which is at the same time uncompromisingly rigid and pervious to those downward and onward movements of that pneumatic element which is the protagonist of the dramatic vicissitude of *descensus* and reintegration. This common ontology expresses itself in a constellation whose constituent elements, both in Saturninus and in Valentinus, are in function one with the other. They are: a) a lower realm of deficiency, b) a superior realm of plenitude, c) the docetic nature of a Savior who (though not completely alien to the intermediate psychic element, according to a Valentinian formulation) belongs to the superior realm but manifests himself in the lower world. But the differences cannot be overlooked as well: the respective movements, upward according to Saturninus (the envious attitude of the angels, though brought into effect by the manifestation of light), downward according to Valentinus (the inborn, onward curiosity of Sophia), though confusedly mixed in some gnostic systems and tractates, are to be carefully distinguished. Paradoxically enough, it is precisely the "upward" curiosity of Sophia that causes her "downward evolution" ("devolution"), while the "downward" manifestation of the light in the Saturninian system (or the *descensus* of Ennoia in Simonianism) is structurally connected with the "onward" aggressiveness of the angels. More particularly, the Simonian speculation "anticipates" the Saturninian position, insofar as the violent initiative of the angels is concerned, but it anticipates also the Valentinian conception of the sufferings of a personified, female heavenly hypostasis.

From the point of view under consideration, the main difference between the Saturninian-Simonian and the Valentinian system lies in the fact that Saturninus is nearer to a gnostic Judaizing conception of the angels-archons as created by the Supreme Deity (according to Simon they are the offspring of Ennoia) but concerned with a demiurgic activity and an administration of the world which share in the derogatory aspects which are proper to themselves, prone as they are to violence and rivalry, mutual and against the Father. No unitary and intermediate Demiurge is present here; such a Demiurge is better understood as particular to Valentinianism and a specific religio-historical problem.

In all probability the particular figure of the Valentinian Demiurge

cannot be understood simply as a debased Biblical Yahwe. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, as we have seen he is in mutual function with the Valentinian fallen hypostasis Sophia. He is her offspring, though of a different, inferior nature, and it is through him that the *pneuma*—the essence of Sophia—comes into man. Thus he is both a symptom and a consequence of that “downward” shifting of the crisis level in the Divine of which we have been speaking. Secondly, a symptomatic tendency to articulate the figure of the Demiurge is also characteristically Valentinian. We can observe it in the tractates (as well as in the Basilidian speculation): Ialdabaoth, relegated to Tartaros, is contrasted with a psychic but reasonable and informed Sabaoth, as an alternative to the more specific Valentinian conception of a Demiurge who is destined to the Ogdoad, though he is god of the *hylikoi* too before their final annihilation. Thirdly, in non-Valentinian gnosticism, more precisely, in Saturninus, the Biblical God though sharply distinguished from the Supreme Deity is but one among the angels, the most powerful and effective of them.

There is also a fourth reason for affirming the novelty of the Valentinian Demiurge: the very fact that he—inferior in essence—is in mutual function with a docetically conceived, pneumatic Savior. Now, it seems to me that since the Valentinian Demiurge’s inferiority is inversely proportional to the exaltation of a Savior who, contrary to him, is the most authorized emanation of the pleromatic essence, this speaks against any attempts to trace directly the Valentinian Demiurge to a debased Biblical God. Proof for this is constituted by precisely those Judaic sectarian or speculative conceptions which—paradoxically—are frequently evoked as instances of a gnosticizing Judaism: I mean those Jewish conceptions of a *deuteros theos* or of the angels as cooperators (not as rivals!) of God in the creation of the world or of man. Now, all these conceptions (the utilization by Philo⁵ of the Platonic *neoi theoi* cooperating with the Great Demiurge, as in the *Timaeus*, where they are entrusted with the creation of the inferior levels of human soul and of the body; the Maghariyya quoted by Quispel; the Jewish sectarians mentioned by Justin,⁶ by the Ps.-Clementine *Recognitions*,⁷ and by the *Tripartite Tractate* in the Codex Jung)⁸ are inspired, each according to its own style, by a

⁵ See the discussion by P. Boyancé in *Le origini dello gnosticismo* (ed. U. Bianchi; 2d ed.; Leiden, 1970) 342 ff.

⁶ *Dial.* 62.

⁷ 2.39 and 2.57.

⁸ 112: 19-113: 5.

typically Platonic concern to liberate the Deity, who is the God of the Bible, from contiguity with evil and from responsibility for the creation of that ground, the human nature as a whole, wherefrom the wicked flowers of evil can indifferently grow up, as well as those of good. Now, this is precisely the *opposite* of the gnostic attitude concerning the God of the Bible, though a common concern for the "innocence" of God (to put it in Platonic terminology) on one part, and an equally Platonic tendency to the dualism of the ontological realms (which somehow become "principles," *archai*) on the other, is active in both cases, that of gnosticism and that of the Judaic speculations mentioned above.

All in all, the Valentinian and generally speaking the gnostic Demiurge is a *metabasis eis allo genos*. The intermediate angels or the "second god" of those Judaic speculations are quite different (even if materially connected with them, via Plato) from the archons of gnosticism or that realm of the *mesotes* to which the Valentinian Demiurge belongs. This holds particularly true for this last personage.

III

Let us come once again to the mutually functioning roles of the Valentinian Demiurge and of a docetically conceived Savior. It seems to me that this particular aspect of the Valentinian doctrine, with the others enumerated above, should necessarily imply a unitary lower Demiurge, more properly fit for those dialectical roles than the rebellious angels of the Simonian-Saturninian speculation were. This implied also, on the part of the Valentinian doctors, an identification of this Demiurge with the Biblical God, and at the same time it could allow a relatively more positive consideration of him, in contradistinction to that at least partially anarchic collectivity.

But a more fundamental question imposes itself here. Which were the religio-historical preconditions—further, which were the religio-historical reasons—that caused the gnostics, as far as the God of the Bible was concerned, to enter a path so qualitatively different from that of the Judaic speculations mentioned above?

We have to distinguish here between preconditions and reasons.

As for the preconditions: the debasement of the God of the Bible (whether in the form of a unitary Demiurge or of the most powerful of the angels) could only take place where the concept of a heavenly Savior had become strong enough to let people interested in the God

of the Bible (racially Jew or racially gentile, religiously committed or predominantly given to the intellectual adventure) both to envisage and to survive the terrible shock of the relativization of an old Absolute (and such an Absolute!), the creator God Yahwe. Now, this "where" could be located in the concept of a new *oikonomia*, that of Christianity—nay, in the interpretation given to it by a marginal Christianity, a more or less loosely speculative and adventurous Christianity, not by the *sensus Ecclesiae* and the inherited doctrine.

So much for the "preconditions" of the relativization of the God of the Old Testament. As for the "causes"—particularly in relation to Valentinianism, but also to the other gnostic trends—we must dwell on the fact that the core of gnostic experience shares in those conceptions of the crisis and the fall of a divine or heavenly soul which are characteristic of the Greek mysteriosophical tradition,⁹ from Orphism down to Platonism in all its variants. The vicissitude of that divine element between the two ontological realms, that of eternity and that of *genesis*, is common to all these systems, the gnostic included, with the important difference that gnosticism was predominantly anticomic, while Platonism was cosmosophic in character, conceiving the lower world as an image of an ideal model, or as a staircase for the ascending soul rather than as a prison for her.

Taking into consideration these religio-historical motivations, as well as that Neoplatonic tendency to connect dynamically the cosmogony with a devolution of heavenly essences (though not in the sense of gnostic anticomicism: see *supra*), we are led to the conclusion that the main tenet of gnosticism, that of the fall of a divine, pneumatic element into an earthly condition of unnatural mixture, is typically Greek and mysteriosophical in character. True, the anticomic overtones are a novelty in relation to Greece, particularly to Plato and Platonism, though not an absolute one. This we affirm on the basis of two observations. First, that anti-cosmic overtones are not lacking in the Orphic tradition (cf. Empedocles), even if they occur within a broader context of ontological dialecticism (the splitting within the One and the dialectic Oneness/Multiplicity according to Orphic metaphysical speculations, more or less connected with pre-Socratic metaphysical argumentation: the two paths, upward and downward, of Heraclitus). Second, that the gnostic anticomicism is a qualified one. I have

⁹ As for the meaning we give here to the term "mysteriosophy," see, e.g., *Le origini dello gnosticismo*, 10ff.

already mentioned the distinctions that the Valentinian trends were prepared to introduce in their evaluation of the Demiurge and his *mesotes*. The conceptions of speculative Ophitism and of the *Apophysis Megale* could also be quoted as instances of a thought not exclusively anticosmic but also "cosmosophic" in character (I mean the dialectics between the two fires and between *dynamis* and *energeia* in the *Apophysis* and the descending/ascending Serpent-Logos in speculative, triadic Ophitism).¹⁰ A long series of interreligious interferences in the field of late-antique mystic and mysteriosophic trends (Orphic, Mithraic, gnostic, magic, Neoplatonic) could be evoked here, all implying cosmosophical speculation not precisely in the sense of a schematic anticosmicism. But this would lead us beyond the scope of the present article.

DISCUSSION

(In the absence of Ugo Bianchi, the chairman asked the secretary of the seminar to present a summary of Bianchi's paper.)

KATHRYN JOHNSON: PROFESSOR Bianchi has sought to clarify the distinction between Valentinian and Sethian Gnosticism in the dynamics of their cosmogonies. While neither school displays the strong dualism of the later Manichaeans and Mandaeans, each form contains a measure of dualism; it is by comparing the extent and function of these dualistic elements that Bianchi begins.

A key difference between the two forms of myth appears in the location of the initiative for the mixture of realms. In the Valentinian system, there is a tension latent in the Pleroma itself which comes to actuality in the fall of Sophia—a cosmogonic event thus understood in an anti-cosmic way. While the consubstantiality of the aeons expresses a monistic conception of a system fundamentally stable, the inclusion of a feminine, liminal, unstable entity within the Pleroma introduces also a measure of dualism. From this combination arises a dynamism in the structure of things which tends toward a modification of its equilibrium. This understanding of the Pleroma is a Valentinian innovation. While the Platonic ontology opposes mutability and eternal stability as two realms, this Gnostic view transfers the opposition up into the higher realm itself. For the Valentinians,

¹⁰ Cf. also the panpsychism of the Naassene sermon, Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.7.7 (Völker, *Quellen*, 12).

then, the demiurge and the material world are only epiphenomena of the fallen aeon, the product of a downward shifting of a basically divine tension. The destiny of the psychic realm, i.e. inclusion in the Ogdoad at the edge of the Pleroma, describes a more stable re-arrangement of the dualistic element present in the fundamentally monistic system of the aeons.

On the other hand, the Simonian-Saturninian system begins from a measure of dualism between the Father and the angel-archons: the initiative belongs to the lower beings. This school begins from an upward-directed movement from below, while the Valentinians begin from the downward movement of Sophia out from the Pleroma. While the Valentinians have a single intermediate demiurge, the Simonian-Saturninian view of the archons stresses their chaotic rivalry, an activity not derived from their ultimate origin but proper to themselves.

The origin of the distinctively Valentinian portrayal of the demiurge requires further study. It is unlikely that the highly articulated figure arose simply as a debased Biblical Yahweh. The purposes of Valentinian language about the demiurge were much different from the motives of that Jewish speculation which spoke of intermediate angels or a second God in order to protect the supreme being, the Biblical God, from contact with evil. In the Gnostic systems, it is the Savior who has the role of the authoritative emanation from the world above, and the demiurge's inferiority is a reflection of his honor.

The departure from the Jewish speculation on mediatorial figures toward a Gnostic view of the Biblical God thus involved an understanding of the Savior which would allow Yahweh, the former Absolute, to be demoted to a lower position—a condition which could have been provided by speculative circles of Christianity. For the causes of this relativization, Bianchi looks to the Greek mysteriosophical tradition. While the Gnostics went further than this tradition in a negative view of the cosmos, they shared with this heritage a dialectic between anticosmic attitudes and the qualification of these attitudes in cosmosophical speculation.

G. C. STEAD: Professor Bianchi designated the introduction of mutability into the eternal realm as a Valentinian novelty. I think that there are Platonic traditions allied to this notion. For example, the procession of the dyad from the monad was held by Platonists to be an introduction of instability into the ideal world, and there were

discussions of the place of $\tau\acute{o}\lambda\mu\alpha$ in this procession. Moreover, there is in Plato's language some warrant for belief in Ideas even of bad states.

MICHEL TARDIEU: Professor Bianchi's paper offers little for the study of Gnostic texts. By mixing psychological, philosophical and phenomenological approaches to religion, he has produced a confused work which shows no development of his ideas since the Messina conference. I have three major objections. First, his interpretations are beside the point as they are beside the texts. In the Gnostic evidence, he sees an ideal, universal pattern which is outside the context of history. Second, despite the works of Krāmer, Gaiser, and Wyller, he repeats the idea of a Platonic dualism of the hidden and the real world, of $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ and $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$. Third, his reading of the heresiologists is uncritical. What is the Simonian-Saturninian Gnosticism he speaks of?

HANS JONAS: In a fair balance, there are also good words to be said for Bianchi! The study of Gnosticism faces a methodological choice which poses unanswerable questions. We note, for example, that there are striking similarities between the phenomenon of second-century Gnosticism and the much later *Zohar* or other documents of the Kabbalah. Now the question of the relation between them can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, we can approach it as a question of historical determinants. On the other, we can look instead for general schemata of intellectual and spiritual representation. We can ask if there may be timeless, universal "forms" which recur not because of direct historical influence but because, probably under the impulse of somewhat analogous historical circumstances, something is at work which leads to parallel patterns of thought. In my own reflection, I have never fully decided which approach to prefer; indeed, I suspect that no final decision is possible.

In his appeal to insights from anthropology to elucidate Gnosticism, Bianchi uses a scheme of explanation which does not depend on the individual historical locus of his subject but which claims some universal significance. In a similar way, Professor Quispel's work recurs to Jung and his "archetypes." While perhaps not helpful in interpreting the Gnostics as children of their time, such a method may yet contribute to our understanding of the Gnostic phenomenon as a whole. Bianchi is not to be blamed for his choice of approach!

ELAINE PAGELS: I also have difficulties with Bianchi's characterizations—with his account of the Valentiniāns, for example, as anti-

cosmic and dualistic. This is a view which reflects the confusion of this theology with that of other groups which is found in the church fathers. In fact, Valentinian doctrines allow an interpretation much different from Bianchi's. The Valentinian demiurge, for example, is not a ludicrous figure; he is the image of the invisible Father, the creation and instrument of wisdom who forms and administers the cosmic system created for the sake of salvation. As for the Valentinian universe, which Bianchi calls an "epiphenomenon of the fallen aeon," it is better described as permeated with the divine. Surely, this system is not more anticosmic than that of the Kabbalah, which also traces the origin of the universe to divine devolution.

JONAS: Yes, but in the Kabbalah too there are some levels so far removed from the divine origin that there comes to be some sort of qualitative opposition.

PAGELS: Still, while Valentinianism does not fully agree with orthodox Jewish or Christian affirmations of the world, it does not deserve Bianchi's characterizations.

HELMUT KOESTER: We now have a unique chance to discover what the Gnostics read and knew, to put new texts into their relationships with others. This now is our task, not the discussion of general possibilities for the human mind. For this reason, I also found Bianchi's paper disturbing.

JONAS: (*To Koester*) Your description of the task represents a decision; you haven't settled the more general questions. Still, I also feel that the task now is chiefly historical, and so I declined to deliver a plenary address at this conference.

ROBERT McL. WILSON: One can approach phenomena, as Bianchi does, by elucidating resemblances. Still, "all is not gold that glisters"; the noting of these similarities does not establish historical connection. Nag Hammadi provides us with specific documents which allow a historical approach to locate them precisely. I agree with Professor Koester that this is the task now.

JOEL FINEMAN: When do you know that you have enough data to allow treatment of the larger questions?

WILSON: These questions never disappear, but we gradually build up competence to deal with them as we concentrate on historical issues.

JONAS: The decision of method is also a matter of temperament. It involves the unanswerable choice between the universal and the unique in time and space. Some overboldness in the universal direction, while it has its risks, is also to the good.

WAYNE MEEKS: If the broader questions haven't been asked, we also have the problem of knowing what data count.

FINEMAN: I would call this the problem of knowing when there are too many data. Historical method requires selections and assumptions; information cannot be organized without hypothesizing.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: Still, not enough work has been done in tracing the historical continuities of this type of speculation. Before—or at least as—one leaps to conclusions about general patterns of thought, it would also be useful to examine such *nachleben* of Gnosticism as the Albigenses and the *Zohar*. Even the Kabbalah had roots in a tradition of esoteric speculation, which can be studied historically. It is, after all, interesting that Gnosticism is not a universal phenomenon but a Western one. There is, for example, no Chinese Gnosticism—at least, none with its roots in Chinese culture.

JONAS: By “universal,” I tacitly meant “Western.”

PAGELS: The large questions are always exciting, and Professor Jonas's work has been very helpful in asking them. At this point, however, there must be caution; we must attempt to use the new evidence to move beyond the stereotypes which have been so deeply impressed on us by the heresiologists that they are difficult to escape.

[Although Professor Bianchi was unable to attend the session at which his paper was discussed, he afterwards contributed this postscript for inclusion in the volume.]

UGO BIANCHI: As for Professor Stead's observation, there were certainly before Plato conceptions concerning splits and tensions in the divine: think, e.g., of Empedocles and the daimon's fall. They are a presupposition of my own genetic explanation of Gnosticism. As for Ideas “of bad states,” they seem to me less important from the religio-historical point of view; in fact they would seem to be in relation to the “Socratic,” gnoseological understanding of the Idea as a basis for “concept.”

I am unable to understand Professor Tardieu's objections. One of

them seems to be, in a sense, opposite to Professor Stead's. Tardieu seems to emphasize a Platonic doctrine of oneness. However, this doctrine (as with the Neoplatonic one) does not contradict a basic Platonic dualism: it is rather a question of an oscillation between a "static" dualism—the eternal, exemplary Idea versus its "temporal" copy or reflection—and its interpretation within the context of a dynamic process, starting from the One but confirming nevertheless the dualism of the original reference. Moreover, I did not describe the Platonic dualism properly as a dualism between the "hidden" and the "real."

Further in relation to Tardieu's points, everyone who is familiar with my work in the history of religions should know that I am *against* the use, in this kind of research, of psychological, philosophical, and phenomenological approaches superseding the historical (idiographic and post-hoc, historical-comparative) approach. For this reason, I am far from seeing in the Gnostic or specifically Valentinian evidence an "ideal, universal pattern" which would be cut off from the context of history. The contrary is true. My constant attempt has been to study "*historical* typologies" as emerging from the "basis" of the historical concretes, in constant continuity with these. As for my "Simonian-Saturninian" (or "Syro-Palestinian") Gnosticism, it is intended—in harmony with the methodological principles mentioned in this note—as a historical-typological category, emerging a posteriori from positive research, of the same type as Professor Jonas's "Syrian-Egyptian" Gnosticism (as contrasted to the "Iranian" Gnosticism), or as the Valentinian Gnosticism of the Yale Seminar if contrasted (at least implicitly) to a "Sethian" Gnosticism. In particular, a "Simonian-Saturninian" Gnosticism (or a "Syrian-Palestinian" one), in the terminology proposed in my paper, is characterized by the notion of aggressive archons whose activity takes place in the lower spheres and is directed onward (contrary to the downward movement in the Valentinian system).

As for the remarks of Professor Jonas, who is more committed to methodological reflection: in principle, a tension could exist between the idiographic and the categorical. But my point was quite another. I properly intended to treat the historical problematic concerning Gnosticism in the second and third centuries A.D. In other words I intended to avoid those theoretical and abstract alternatives such as "idiographic" and "categorical or universal," and this by means of a *historical* typology. So, there is no need to jump immediately to the

Zohar before setting forth the problem of a typological-historical categorization of the Gnostic movements of the second and third centuries. True, even a *Weltgeschichte* of Gnostic positions—where “Gnostic” is understood in the sense of a vicissitude of the divine element in the world of bodies—was also considered in Messina. But this was without prejudice of the more specific question concerning late antiquity (which incidentally was not unanimously Gnostic, but also Neoplatonic, etc.). Thus, it is not a question of “timeless, universal phenomena” (note Professor Jonas’s qualification: universal, Western). Rather, it is an alternative (rightly understood by Jonas) between historical diffusion (i.e., objective interdependence) and interdependent development of the Gnostic trends in those centuries (i.e., not on the basis of direct historical influence, but, as Jonas put it, of the impulse of somewhat analogous historical circumstances which can lead to parallel patterns of thought). Now, it is important to realize that this second alternative—particularly if circumscribed from the point of view of historical-cultural localization (e.g., late antiquity)—is *historical too*; in other words, the study and the discovering of those “analogous historical circumstances” is itself no less an object of properly historical concern than are the historical influences of one Gnostic school upon another. It follows that the aforesaid alternative is not a matter of metahistorical (or even temperamental) option. Of course, personal propensities can de facto be at work here, even legitimately, provided a working hypothesis is perceived as such: but what is primarily at stake is not to reduce the scope of historical research, as well as not to widen phenomenology beyond the limits of historical authentication and of comparative-historical study.

As for Professor Pagels’s points, it should emerge from my work that I am far from reducing the Valentinian demiurge to mere negativity (see *Le origini dello gnosticismo*, 18f., on the two demiurges; also *Numen* 1965, 170f., and my contribution to the Jonas Festschrift.)]

VALENTINIAN GNOSIS AND THE APOCRYPHON OF JOHN

BY

GILLES QUISPÉL

I

GNOSTICISM is the “acute,” catholicism the “chronic” christianization of Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism on the basis of the Gospel. There is a way which leads from the *Apocryphon of John* to Valentinus, and from Valentinus to Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origen.

This is the basic view which underlies the edition and commentary of the writings of the Jung Codex: 1) the *Apocryphon of James* reflects a shade of Egyptian Christianity in which Valentinian Gnosis was grafted on a Jewish Christian tree; 2) the *Gospel of Truth* reflects the christocentric docetism of the Oriental school of Valentinianism and of Valentinus himself; 3) according to the letter to Rheginos *On Resurrection* only the pneumatic body of Christ (and so of the Gnostics) is saved—this in accordance with the Oriental school and the Founding Father himself; 4) the stress on the importance of the “psychic” element, the sympathy for the Demiurge and the personal features of God in the *Tripartite Tractate* are characteristic of the Western school, more specifically of Heracleon, and prelude the theology of Origen; 5) all these writings presuppose an already existing Oriental Gnosis evidenced by Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1, and the four different versions of the *Apocryphon of John* found in recent times.

Moreover, in this perspective the great heretics of the second century, Basilides, Marcion, and Valentinus, are discerned in their true and authentic originality: 1) Basilides was the first Christian to express the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*; 2) Marcion, though certainly influenced by Cerdo or another Gnostic, was so impressed by John’s and Paul’s concept of God’s unmotivated, free love of man that he even eliminated the underlying idea of man’s spiritual affinity with the Godhead; 3) for Valentinus the Christ-event had a central meaning, which is completely absent from the *Apocryphon of John*.

All this could have been discovered before Nag Hammadi, because

the text of the *Apocryphon of John* was already known in its outline, as well as Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1. But scholarship was so much dominated by the view that "vulgar Gnosis" was an offshoot of "learned Gnosis" that even those scholars who defended the primacy of myth did not dare to say more than that the system of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1, came near to Valentinianism: they did not even mention that the *Apocryphon of John* had been discovered long before their time.

I am not aware that there is anybody involved in the growth industry of Gnostic studies who contests the validity of the outline sketched above. There is only a quarrel about "firstmanship." There are, however, details which are still uncertain. In the first place they relate to the problem of the name of the sect from which the *Apocryphon of John* stems and to the original context of this writing.

Tertullian on several occasions mentions the "Gnostics" and the Valentinians together. The "Gnostics" are a specific sect, allied with the Valentinians but not identical with them. When writing his *Scorpiace* (\pm 213), he says that in the times of persecutions the Gnostics and the Valentinians dissuade people from martyrdom. He describes them as being present in Carthage: "tunc Gnostici erumpunt, tunc Valentiniani proserpunt" (1). One of their leaders is obviously a certain Prodicus (15). He is also mentioned in *Adversus Praxeam* (3); together with Valentinus he introduces "more than one god." Clement of Alexandria also says that the followers of Prodicus call themselves "Gnostics" (*Str.* 3.4.30; Stählin 2. 209.29-31). It would seem that Prodicus was a teacher of Alexandrian sectarians who styled themselves "Gnostics" and had spread from one seaport to another; we need not suppose that they came to Carthage from Rome in the wake of the catholic church. They could have been there long before the arrival of orthodoxy, because Tertullian was, after all, the first known catholic of Africa.

Irenaeus says in so many words, "The first of them, who took his start from the principles of the so-called 'Gnostic' heresy and adapted them to his own brand of teaching, was Valentinus" (*Haer.* 1.11.1). Further on he tells us that according to Valentinus the Mother Sophia brought forth the demiurge, "and that a left-hand ruler was also brought forth together with him in the same way as the falsely-so-called 'Gnostics' whom we are going to discuss in the following." This can only mean that according to Valentinus, just as to his pupils, Sophia suffered passions which were transformed into substance from which the Demiurge and the devil arose. "And first of all, they say,

from the psychic substance she formed the father and the king of all those things which are of the same nature as he is" (1.5.1). "From the sorrow the 'spiritual powers of wickedness' are supposed to be derived, whence the devil (whom they call 'world ruler') also took his origin" (1.5.4). Properly speaking, Sophia brings forth only the Demiurge, who takes over her task for the rest of creation: "But Wisdom, the second, built a house for herself and hewed out seven pillars and first of all she put forth a god, the image of the Father and through him she made heaven and earth" (Clement, *Exc. Thdot.* 47.1). This then is the well-known concept that the Demiurge originates from matter, a view the Orphics once taught (Phanes rising from the world egg and splitting heaven and earth). This doctrine was received by certain Gnostics: we find it in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, and we must postulate it as part of the myth that Sophia mirrored herself in the waters of chaos, so that the Demiurge is a reflection of her in primordial matter. So Dionysus was torn into pieces by the Titans when looking at his image in a mirror. According to the ancients the mirror captivated part of one's soul. And the theme could be transferred from Dionysus to Sophia because Dionysus was identified by the Orphics with Phanes, a demiurge like Sophia. The *Apocryphon of John* in its present state does say that Barbelo projects her image on the waters of chaos in order that Adam be created, but not that Sophia mirrors herself to bring forth Jaldabaoth.

This is not found in the four existent versions of the *Apocryphon of John*, nor in the chapter of Irenaeus in which he describes the teachings of these "Gnostics of Barbelo" (1.29.1). And yet he says that Valentinus taught this in agreement with the falsely-so-called "Gnostics" who will be discussed by him in the following (1.29.1). Hence, we must assume that Valentinus was familiar with a "Gnostic" myth as contained in the actual *Apocryphon of John*, but preserving certain primitive features that are absent from the existing versions.

Tertullian says that "the budding doctrines of the Valentinians have outgrown even the jungles of the Gnostics in wildness" (atque ita inolescentes doctrinae Valentinianorum in silvas iam exoleverunt Gnosticorum; *Adv. Val.* 39). What he means is this: the systems of the Valentinians have become so much more complicated than those of Valentinus himself that they are now wilder than those of the "Gnostics." This remark proves that Tertullian not only knew of the special relationship between Valentinians and "Gnostics," but also was

aware of the fact that the systems of the latter were still more bewildering than those of the former, a correct appreciation of the myth contained in the *Apocryphon of John*. Tertullian read Irenaeus and knew that this author attributed the system of *Haer.* 1.29 to these Gnostics; and he knew them personally from their actions in Carthage. Therefore I suggest that we should not call the group to whom the *Apocryphon of John* and related writings from Nag Hammadi are to be attributed "Sethians," a name not known to Irenaeus or Tertullian, but "Gnostics," as they were called in antiquity.

On the other hand the *Paraphrase of Shem*, generally held to be "Sethian," seems to proclaim that the Spirit looked down upon the water of Darkness. Thereupon the intellect of Darkness (the Demiurge) received an image of the Spirit and arose from Chaos. This obviously is still simpler than the "Gnostic" myth. What was the relation between the "Gnostics" and the "Sethians"? If the "Gnostics" are indebted to the Sethians, this seems to presuppose a long and complex development of Gnosticism within Judaism, because there can be no doubt that both the "Gnostics" and the "Sethians" are Jewish in origin and only superficially Christianized at a later date (cf. the *Paraphrase of Shem* with the report of Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.22). Because the views of the Mandaeans do agree with those of the "Gnostics," more than with those of the "Sethians," it seems plausible that they have a common background and that "Gnostics" is a translation of "Mandaeans," which has the same meaning. It would seem that the Valentinians themselves were aware of their affinity with the "Gnostics." Irenaeus acquired in Lyons some very second-hand documents of Ptolemaean origin from the local Valentinians, together, it would seem, with a copy of the then existing version of what later became the *Apocryphon of John*. The Gnostics, who were the friends of Plotinus and attended his courses for years until he wrote his treatise against them, were possibly Valentinians. And yet they had in their library purely pagan (or at least non-Christian) books, like the Apocalypses of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nikotheos and Allogenes and Messos, which in part turned up at Nag Hammadi. And they taught that the world-soul and Wisdom (Sophia) had inclined towards the lower regions of the world, though she has not come down, but has only illuminated, so that an image (*eidolon*) was made in the matter. From that image, they say, comes another image, which is the Demiurge who removed himself from his mother and made a world which consists of images only; they say this in order

to blame the Demiurge, who made this picture (2.9). It would seem that even a version of the *Apocryphon of John* was to be found in the Roman Gnostic library of these "Valentinians."

In Codex II of Nag Hammadi we likewise find the Valentinian and Antiochene *Gospel of Philip* together with, on the one hand, the *Apocryphon of John* and the related *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, and, on the other hand, such un-Gnostic and encratite writings as the *Gospel of Thomas* (written in Edessa), the *Exegesis on the Soul* (which comes near to the views of Julius Cassianus) and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, also from Edessa, as the name indicates. From this we should perhaps conclude that Codex II was composed (at Antioch?) by a Valentinian who was Gnostic enough to appreciate the daring speculations about Barbelo and Jaldabaoth, and Christian enough to swallow Thomas. Antioch had strong relations with Edessa; a Valentinian there could easily obtain Edessene writings like the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. If this hypothesis is correct, the *Apocryphon of John* also was known in Antioch at a rather early date. This could be important because Mani seems to have been familiar with the myth of the *Apocryphon*, as is shown by his use of the name Saklas (Asaqlun). Moreover, as Henri-Charles Puech has pointed out, the *Apocryphon of John* was known at a later date among the Syriac Audians and so in the Syriac-speaking region. In view of the importance of the *Apocryphon of John* for the history of religion in Syria and Mesopotamia it would seem that still more arguments are needed to support the suggestion that Codex II originated in an Antiochene milieu.

On the whole I could imagine that it was a Valentinian who collected the nucleus of the heterogeneous writings of Nag Hammadi in Greek, before they were translated into Coptic and copied somewhere near or in the monasteries of Pachomius. In this sense it could still be maintained that this was and is a Gnostic library, even though it contained non-Gnostic books like the *Sentences of Sextus* and the *Gospel of Thomas*. We might compare this collector with the redactor of the sources used by Hippolytus. According to Klaus Koschorke (*Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker* [Wiesbaden, 1975] 100), the latter probably was a Gnostic who interpolated and revised the texts he adopted for his anthology. As seems to be the case with the sources of the *Refutatio* of Hippolytus, perhaps we have to assume that a collector of manuscripts served as an intermediary

and here and there modified his texts in order to adapt them to his views and purpose.

Perhaps we are amazed that a man like Valentinus, impregnated by Christ and the Gospel, who was even deeply moved by the cross, could appreciate the completely non-Christian myth of the *Apocryphon of John*. But then Eugnostos, who wrote his *Letter*, which contains no trace of Christian influence, and collected Codex III as a deliberate composition in Greek of the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Letter of Eugnostos* [*Eugnostos the Blessed*], the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (a Christian adaptation of the former) and the *Dialogue of the Savior*, was a Christian, as the colophon of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* in Codex III shows. Moreover, this can be paralleled from modern times by the career of Rudolf Steiner: brought up as a catholic, he accepted later on the wild cosmological speculations of Helen Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society, before he added to these his christocentric Gnosis called Anthroposophy. This shows how easily Theosophy can become Anthroposophy. In the same way Valentinus may have started as a Christian, have come in touch with a non-Christian sect, and later on have projected his own experiences and insights on the blueprint he was familiar with. After all, Theosophy is a pagan, Anthroposophy a Christian form of modern Gnosis.

II

It continues to be plausible that Irenaeus used the (updated) *Synagma* of Justin for his catalogue of heresies. And it would seem that the chapter about Valentinus himself, as distinguished from his pupils (1.11.1), was taken over from the same source, because here, as in the other chapters of the catalogue, the name of the heresiarch is mentioned before his teaching is expounded (this is not the case in 1.29-30). But then this report is extremely valuable, because it has been written by a contemporary of Valentinus, who lived in the same city, Rome, and like him had some notion of the (Middle) Platonic philosophy of his day.

Therefore I suggest that this short summary still furnishes a valid basis for the reconstruction of the original doctrine of Valentinus. It is true, though, as the *Tripartite Tractate* shows, that the doctors of the Western school rewrote the system completely. It is no longer possible to say that Ptolemaeus or Heracleon adapted an existing manuscript by means of corrections, interpolations, and transpositions.

On the other hand, the agreement of the fragments from the Oriental school with Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.1, is so striking that Valentinus must have designed an elaborate system.

In the light of the *Apocryphon of John* it is exceedingly probable that the Master conceived the deity as a dyad of Depth and Silence (cf. the Unknown God and Barbelo), developed the notion of a pleroma, and knew of only *one* Sophia who was exiled from the pleroma (cf. Sophia Prounikos; "dicit Valentinus tricesimum aeonem excessisse de pleromate" [Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 4]). He must have taught that the Holy Spirit (not Christ and the Holy Spirit) emanates from God to give Gnosis and unity to the aeons in distress. That Jesus is brought forth as a preexistent being according to Valentinus is plausible because Jesus was the pneumatic body destined to carry the divine Christ; and we know that Valentinus acknowledged a spiritual body and a spiritual body only. This is in agreement with the *Gospel of Truth* (31: 5: "he came forth in a flesh of likeness"), which in its turn should be compared with Tertullian, *Carn.* 16 (similitudo carnis = imago corporis et non veritas). And this implies that it is a real problem whether, according to Valentinus, even one of the "psychics" could be saved. Was not this view a consequence of the more favorable attitude of Ptolemaeus and Heracleon towards the growing catholic church of their day? And is not the logic of the system that the pneumatics only are being saved? Paul did not believe anything else, nor did the author of the *Treatise on Resurrection*. Perhaps Valentinus thought, like Paul, that all members of the church were pneumatics, as long as he was a member of the great church. We have no evidence that he changed his mind afterwards. Perhaps he did, and so helped to create the confusion existing in the documents of the Western school.

If we admit that Valentinus borrowed the scheme of his myth from the Oriental, Gnostic sect, as I said in 1947 and Irenaeus said in 180 A.D., then the originality of the man is conspicuous:

1) His basic idea was that Christ came to awaken the Self which sleeps unconsciously in man. The system of the *Apocryphon* says nothing of Christ in this respect.

2) It is a trivial concept that the fall and misery of Sophia, and man in general, is due to wantonness. It is rather exceptional if a man like Valentinus, who knows the mystical union from experience, warns that it is dangerous to identify with the Ground of being, because this would lead to the dissolution of personality, and proclaims that it

is better to wait for God's revelation in Christ, which grants authentic individuation. This certainly was a timely warning in the century preceding Plotinus, and ever since.

3) In the *Apocryphon of John* man automatically has spirit, becomes conscious of himself, and is saved. But it is implied in the doctrine of Valentinus that the Self is grace and that the discovery of the Self is a revelation. Nobody has yet refuted, though many tried, the statement of the well-informed Tertullian: "spiritalem ... non naturam sed indulgentiam" (*Adv. Val.* 27).

4) Nothing is said in the *Apocryphon of John* about the guardian angel. And yet we know that Jesus was very specific about the angels of children; moreover, the *Gospel of Thomas* shows that this was one of the key concepts of Jewish Christianity. Valentinus may have become acquainted with this in the church of Egypt. He taught that Christ brought these angels with him to inspire Gnosis into spiritual man. They are the real Self of man, with whom he is confronted in the hour of death. And it is this sacred marriage between the Ego and the Self which is the meaning and end of the system. *Cur deus homo?* In order that man may overcome the split between his reason and his instincts. That certainly is a spirited interpretation of the Christian religion.

III

It has been shown by several scholars on different occasions that it was a long way from Valentinus to Heracleon, whereas Heracleon prepared the way for Origen. Those who project the German *Kirchenkampf* into the history of the early church are inclined to stress the differences between the two and to prefer the catholic to the Gnostic. But there is no question that the two systems have much in common.

The Valentinians, however, had a different approach than Origen towards the most important problem of human existence, which is at the same time the kernel of Origen's theology, viz., the suffering of the innocent.

In general Origen more or less believed in a sort of *karma*: if you are poor in this world, or maimed, or ill, or a slave, this is easily explained by the fact that your soul has sinned in preexistence owing to its free will. But being a biblical theologian, he could not fail to notice that Job suffers innocently, and that Paul considers his suffering not as a punishment, but as participation in the eschatological suffer-

ing of the Messiah. Therefore he has to admit that some souls are here on earth in order to embellish the state of the world, to suffer with the others, and to help the lower beings, without having any guilt to expiate themselves (*Princ.* 2.9.7: “cum tamen et aliqui ex his, qui melioribus meritis sunt, ad exornandum mundi statum conpati reliquis et officium praebere inferioribus ordinentur”).

This is also the basic idea of the newly discovered commentary on Job, written in the fourth century by Origen's follower Didymus the Blind.

The soul of man, which is immortal and in its essence not only different from but also more divine than the body, was linked up with the body in different ways: on the one hand because out of her own inclination and desire she chose to have communion with the body, on the other hand because she joined the body to serve those who need help (56.20-29).

This then is an adaptation of two clashing views within the same Middle Platonism to which Origen was so indebted.

Calvisius (or Calvenus) Taurus of Athens taught in the second century that the souls were sent to the earth.

Taurus and his followers say that the souls were sent by the gods to the earth. Some of them teach, in accordance with Plato's *Timaeus*, that this happens for the perfection of the universe, in the sense that there are as many living beings in this world as in the ideal world. Others hold that the descent of the souls takes place in order to manifest divine life (Stobaeus 1.378.5).

This, of course, is also the philosophical perspective of the Hymn of the Pearl in the *Acts of Thomas*, in which a prince is sent to this world to perform a given task. It is absurd for professors of philosophy to stick to the unwarranted view that this song is pre-Christian and Iranian. It rather shows that Origen was not the only Christian to smuggle the concept of Taurus into Christianity, a concept which is neither Iranian nor Gnostic, but Platonic.

On the other hand Albinus held that the soul had come down to expiate a “preexistential” sin, due to a decision of its free will in a previous existence.

Origen says nothing that is original. He combines the opposed positions of Middle Platonism which go back to different views of Plato on the soul: more optimistic in the *Timaeus* and rather pessimistic in the *Phaedrus*.

Compare with this the pure Christianity of the Valentinian inter-

polation in the *Acts of John*. The mandala dance of Christ and the disciples described there may be the reflection of an existing rite, because it would seem that in Sardis and possibly also Ephesus, where the *Acts* were written, the Jews, and so the Jewish Christians, were dancing on the 14th of Nisan, like Miriam on the shore of the Red Sea after the Exodus. But the spirit conveyed by the hymn sung is still the spirit of primitive Christianity:

If you dance, you understand what I do:
 Your suffering is the suffering of Man, which I will take upon me.
 You would not understand your suffering
 if I had not been sent by God to you to reveal what suffering is.

 He is with all of us, and himself suffereth with us when we suffer.

Jesus had said, "Blessed is the man who has suffered, he has found life." He proclaimed that John and James, and so all the martyrs, were drinking the same cup of world suffering as he did and were baptized with the same metaphorical blood baptism. According to the author of the *Acts* it is Christ in the Christians whom Saul persecutes. Paul himself believed that the whole body suffered (also the head) when one member suffers. John, the prophet of the Apocalypse, styles himself as a brother and companion in the suffering in (and of) Christ. The martyrs in the Apocalypse have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, i.e., they have baptized themselves in the arena through shedding their blood, which mystically is identical with the blood shed by Christ, because their passion and the Passion is one and the same sacrifice. In the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the latter says: "Then (in the circus) there will be Another in me, who will suffer for me." And in the *Acts of Peter* the apostle returns to Rome full of joy, because he becomes aware that Christ will suffer in him. This very profound and very Christian mysticism of the cross has been adequately understood by the Valentinian Gnostic who wrote the passage about the dance during the Last Supper.

On the whole there can be no doubt that Valentinus and his Gnostics remained more faithful than Origen and his followers to the essence of primitive Christianity. If we remove the cosmological framework and discern the basic intuitions, Valentinus was the Novalis of early Christianity. Two knights of Christ and Sophia.

DISCUSSION

GILLES QUISPÉL: FIRST, I want to say that we regress if we refuse to see Gnosis as a perennial philosophy. To reject it is to deny the valuable lessons of F. C. Baur's work on Christian Gnosis and to ignore the history of European culture which, unlike the English-speaking world, has always had Gnosis available as an alternative to faith and reason. Consider, for instance, the Albigenses, Jakob Boehme, or German Idealism.

My paper, however was concerned not with this point but with historical questions about the relation of Valentinus's Christian Gnosis to the not-so-Christian Gnosis of the *Apocryphon of John*. I want to recognize the work of Carl Schmidt, whose introduction to the *Pistis Sophia* long ago suggested that Valentinianism was based on a Gnosis like that of the *Apocryphon of John*. Despite his announcement about this text, few scholars between the wars recognized its existence. Even now, the original contents of the *Apocryphon of John* remain to be established. As for Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11, I argue that it was probably dependent on Justin's *Syntagma* and is to be taken seriously.

I have maintained that Origen, despite his agreements with Gnosticism, reached a solution of the question of evil which was not Gnostic but rather a combination of Middle Platonic positions. In contrast, the Valentinian answer found in the interpolations in the *Acts of John* is a more Christian solution to the problem of suffering.

MICHEL TARDIEU: You say that the *Apocryphon of John* stems from the "Gnostic" sect in the narrowest sense. Why do you not dare to attribute it to Prodicus?

QUISPÉL: I do not find much that is Sethian in the *Apocryphon of John*; instead, I have called it "Gnostic," which in antiquity was not a general term but the designation of a specific heresy. It is attested by Irenaeus that Valentinus followed this heresy, and Tertullian says that Prodicus was one of its heads. Still, I would hesitate to attribute the *Apocryphon of John* to Prodicus himself. First, from the little information we have of him, mostly from Clement of Alexandria, it seems that he was licentious, while the *Apocryphon of John* is ascetic. Moreover, Prodicus was about contemporary with Clement, while the *Apocryphon of John* is to be dated earlier, to a time before Valentinus.

ELAINE PAGELS: What is the background of the identification of the dance in the *Acts of John* as a Valentinian interpolation?

QUISPEL: I refer you to the account of the *Acts of John* in Hennecke's *New Testament Apocrypha*. Here the work is said to be based on Ephesus legends about John, with a Gnostic insertion on the dance and on Jesus as the symbol of the suffering of innocent humanity. There is Valentinian terminology in the passage, as in Christ's statement, "I am the Horos." It is best, then, for us to accept this as a Valentinian text.

WAYNE MEEKS: Here again we have the question of adequate sources for discussing the evolution of Valentinianism. What is the current state of study on this topic?

QUISPEL: An urgent task for Valentinian studies is the examination of differences between the Oriental and the Western schools. I will give two examples. Of the demiurge, Clement said that Valentinus made him the cause of death, a figure mean enough to have people eat from the tree of knowledge so that they would die. This is no optimistic or Platonic concept of the demiurge; God is made the origin of death. The *Treatise on Resurrection* takes the same position. Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, on the other hand, speaks positively of God, perhaps from an appreciation of the growing catholic church. A second point of difference concerns the salvation of the ordinary Christian. This tenet did not fit into Valentinus's system; it is a later addition of the Western school.

These examples show the importance of understanding the distinction between the two schools. Confusion on this point has led to nonsense in the study of the *Tripartite Tractate*. We were criticized for attributing it to the school of Heracleon, but others have ascribed it to Valentinus himself at three stages of his life or to Valentinus and two pupils. Such confusion results from misunderstandings of the relation of Eastern and Western Valentinianism.

G. C. STEAD: That the demiurge was made the author of death is not itself sufficient to indicate that this figure was seen as malignant. No exegetes of this period had reached a better solution to the problems raised by Genesis 3. Even Athanasius could describe God as acting much as did Valentinus's demiurge in being responsible for death.

QUISPEL: It is not only I but also Clement who blames Valentinus for making the demiurge the author of death. The question was clearly a live one; remember that the *Gospel of Truth* also speaks of the cross as a tree which didn't kill those who ate from it, with the implication that there was another tree that did.

STEAD: On the question of the salvation or partial salvation of the ψυχικός, we can again find Platonic parallels to what may seem Valentinian innovations. The immortal spirit or νοῦς was said by some Platonists to descend from the transcendent world and clothe itself with the layers of temperamental and physical attributes which it would discard again in its reascent. Plutarch, for example, had such a view of limited ascent: the physical body was to be discarded at death but the ψυχή was to be left at an intermediate level, at the moon.

QUISPÉL: This is not such a good parallel. On the Valentinian view, the Gnostics are those who have come to themselves, are conscious of ultimate reality and are destined for eternal bliss. Then, before the Pleroma, there was also a place for good churchpeople who could not appreciate the highest realm. This is not like the Platonic, Pythagorean, and Orphic view that a person left behind the subtle body. Instead, it suggests the place which, according to Heine, Kant gave to God. Having excluded the proofs for God in the *First Critique*, the philosopher allowed a place for one in the *Second Critique* out of pity for his poor servant: "Der gute Lump muss auch seinen Gott haben." The same disparaging concession is apparent in the Valentinian attitude toward the psychics. Valentinus himself recognized no such intermediate stage of salvation. He was a consistent thinker, who envisaged only the world dissolved and the πνεῦμα reintegrated.

PAGELS: This is a fundamental issue which has not yet been fully resolved. In Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11, τὸ ψυχικόν is said to be able to go either way: it is an unstable element which can identify itself either with the upper realm and be transformed into it or with the lower and be destroyed with it.

QUISPÉL: Yes, this doctrine exists, but it is a Ptolemaic view. Valentinus himself taught that Christ had only a pneumatic body and thus he came to save only the Pneuma. This is the logic of the system.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: (*To Quispel*) Your paper mentions points of Valentinus's originality. Did the various schools diverge in their preservation of these points?

QUISPÉL: Let us examine the notion of guardian angels as an example. This was a Jewish idea probably picked up by Valentinus in Egypt. In the Western school, the marriage of the angel and man becomes only eschatological, and little is said of it. In the East, for

example in Theodotus, Christ's coming with the angels is an essential point: at baptism the angel comes to inspire Gnosis. The difference is that between a future eschatological reconciliation of ego and self and an eschatology realized in the sacramental life of the Gnostic Christian.

ATTRIDGE: As far as Western Valentinianism is concerned, your account rings true to me. The *Tripartite Tractate*, for example, has elements which you mention: Christ is said to come to awaken the self, and it is believed better to wait for Christ's revelation which grants authentic individuality. These elements are, moreover, absent from the *Apocryphon of John*. But can we say that they were original? The theme of awakening, for example, had an earlier history as a paraenetic theme in Hellenistic Judaism and the New Testament. Perhaps the Valentinian originality lay only in the interpretation of the myth by a theme which was already Christian and traditional.

QUISPEL: I admit that Basilides is reported by Hippolytus to have said that Christ came to awaken the sleeping spirit in man. Now if this is accurate and if Valentinus knew Basilides—and neither point is certain—then Valentinus would be less than original in relation to Basilides. But my assertion of his originality was in reference to the *Apocryphon of John*: this text has the notion of a sleeping spirit but not that of Christ come to awaken it. The appeal of Christ to the unconscious spirit is also not found clearly in the New Testament, although the prodigal son is said to "come to himself." John comes closest to the concept in saying that one born from God knows whence he comes and where he goes, but this is not made the fundamental idea which it is in Valentinian Gnosis.

ATTRIDGE: Yet just this notion is found also in the *Tripartite Tractate*, which you assign to Western Valentinianism.

QUISPEL: Yes, perhaps; here would be one of the differences between Ptolemy and the *Tripartite Tractate* which I noted in my commentary.

ATTRIDGE: Aren't there other links between the *Tripartite Tractate* and Irenaeus's account (*Haer.* 1.11) of Valentinus's original system? The tractate's stress on the fate of the psychic element can be recognized as an innovation, but the position of the equivalent of Sophia in the *Tripartite Tractate* seems closer to the teaching of Valentinus than to that of Ptolemy.

QUISPÉL: I think not. It makes all the difference whether the fall is seen as an epiphenomenon of evolution or as the result of the conscious decision of the free will, as in the first part of the *Tripartite Tractate*. For Valentinus, the fall is an outbreak in the Pleroma. Here we have the crucial difference between a tragical and an ethical Christianity.

ATTRIDGE: Yes, the dynamics of the fall are different in Valentinus than in the *Tripartite Tractate*. But my comparison was concerned with the figure itself. Ptolemy has two figures, while the *Tripartite Tractate* agrees with Valentinus in having only one. Thus, this Western document here shares traditions with Valentinus and the Oriental school.

QUISPÉL: Now, I agree with Professor Stead that the difficulty of the treatise is an objection against attributing the *Tripartite Tractate* to Heracleon himself, because his fragments are so clear. We must, then, speak of the school of Heracleon instead. But we can conclude that there were differences between this figure and Ptolemy, despite their agreement in a high view of the catholic church.

PAGELS: There is a striking difference between Irenaeus's account of Valentinus's system, which includes an original dyad, and the *Tripartite Tractate*, which argues against this view.

QUISPÉL: Yes, the Western school was monistic, and here different from Valentinus. It is not possible that the monotheistic view was original, with the dyad of βυθός and ψυχή appearing later, for the dyad is attested in Irenaeus. Moreover, the concept of an androgynous god was already familiar from Orphic theology and Pythagoreanism: progenitor genetrixque deum deus unus et omnes. Thus, it was a secondary Christianization of the Western school to say that God is one.

STEAD: The notion of an androgynous god is an unstable one. It is not equivalent to a pair of gods, but it could yield to this view. On the other hand, it could also lead to the doctrine that the one God transcends sexual difference.

QUISPÉL: Mozart, a later Gnostic, said it well in his *Magic Flute*:

Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann
Reichen an die Gottheit an.

VALENTINIANISM AND THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

BY

R. McL. WILSON

IN one of the earlier studies relating to the Nag Hammadi library it was suggested that a combination of the *Gospel of Truth* with the *Apocryphon of John* would produce the developed Valentinian system. In other words, the *Gospel of Truth* represents an early form of the system, before the incorporation of those Barbelognostic elements which occupy so large a place in the system that was known to Irenaeus. This suggestion, to my knowledge, has never been followed up in detail, although one has the impression that the *Apocryphon* would prove to be the dominant partner rather than the *Gospel of Truth*. Impressions, however, may be subjective and misleading, and have to be rigorously tested against the material available.

What we do have is a paper by W. C. van Unnik,¹ in which he argues that the *Gospel of Truth* was written by Valentinus himself, before the development of the typically gnostic dogmas. He notes that "what the ecclesiastical writers make the principal point of their description and attack is here entirely wanting." There is no elaborate doctrine of aeons, no mention of a Demiurge in contradistinction from the highest God, and the primal sin is described not as the fall of Sophia but as proceeding from a not-knowing, a forgetting of the Father. Moreover we can see in the document "a certain reserve in its attitude to Docetism," and "though the content of the *Gospel of Truth* is Gnostic, its Gnosticism is not emphasised."

This position is shared by van Unnik's colleague, G. Quispel,² who writes in the same volume, "It appears that the opinions which it embodies reflect a stage in the development of doctrine prior to the division of Valentinianism into different schools. That means that our *Gospel of Truth* is very old and must have been written about A.D. 150, presumably by Valentinus himself." The third contributor

¹ *The Jung Codex* (ed. F. L. Cross; London, 1955) 81-129; quotations from pages 98, 99, and 101.

² *Jung Codex*, 50.

to the volume, H.-Ch. Puech,³ agrees that the *Gospel of Truth* "must have been put together c. 150 A.D.", but is more reserved on the question of authorship: "Whether we reject or accept the plausible attribution to Valentinus himself of the letter to Rheginus, and perhaps also of the Gospel of Truth ... in any case it is highly probable that the whole content of the Codex Jung is the product of a single circle and that certainly three of the writings in it reproduce the Valentinian doctrine in one of its most primitive forms." In his contribution to Hennecke-Schneemelcher,⁴ Puech writes that the document "is probably of Valentinian origin, and earlier than 180," but that one may hesitate to adopt van Unnik's conclusions in their entirety. The editors of the *editio princeps*⁵ mention van Unnik's theory with respect, but are prepared to go no further than to say that the composition of the document may go back to about 150, and that the author may have been Valentinus or one of his immediate disciples.

The theory has the general concurrence of Kendrick Grobel and R. M. Grant,⁶ although they do not agree on certain points of detail. Other scholars who have maintained a Valentinian origin, but without necessarily subscribing to the view that the work is by Valentinus himself, include A. D. Nock, H. Jonas, F. M. Braun and A. Orbe.⁷ On the other hand, Ernst Haenchen⁸ declared that the differences between the *Gospel of Truth* and Valentinianism were such that to pass from one to the other constituted a *metabasis eis allo genos*; but this is to ignore the possibility with which we began, that the differences are in large measure due to the assimilation into the developed Valentinianism of elements from some such system as that of the *Apocryphon of John*. H. M. Schenke, again, claimed that the *Gospel of Truth* shows nothing specifically Valentinian, and that its central ideas are more akin to the *Odes of Solomon*.⁹ One problem here is

³ *Jung Codex*, 18-20.

⁴ Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson) I. 240f.

⁵ *Evangelium Veritatis*, ed. M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, and G. Quispel (Zürich, 1956) xivf.

⁶ K. Grobel, *The Gospel of Truth* (London, 1960) 26; R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (2d ed.; New York and London, 1966) 128ff.

⁷ Listed by Puech in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, 241 n. 2.

⁸ ZKG 67 (1955-56) 154; cf. also his survey in TRu 30 (1964) 47ff.

⁹ *Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis* (Berlin, 1958). Links with the *Odes of Solomon* were also noted by F. M. Braun, *RevThom* 57 (1957) 597ff. and R. M. Grant, VC 11 (1957) 149ff. In an addition to the second edition of his *Gnosticism* (see above, n. 6) Grant writes, "What the Odes have in common with the Gospel of Truth is a speculative Jewish Christianity which comes close to Gnosticism but is not fully

that when the *Odes* themselves were first published they were claimed by many scholars to be Valentinian; or alternatively they have been linked with the name of Bardesanes, who in his turn is said at one stage in his career to have been associated with the Valentinian school.

It has already been observed that some scholars regard the work as Valentinian in a broad sense, i.e., as belonging to the Valentinian school, but not in the narrower sense of a work by Valentinus himself. Particular mention may be made of the view of Hans Jonas, that the document does not antedate but presupposes the developed Valentinian system, in other words that the missing elements are absent not because they have not yet been incorporated, but because they are taken for granted.¹⁰ Now it is not difficult to extract from the *Gospel of Truth* a number of passages which fit neatly into the system described by Irenaeus, but does this mean that the whole system was already present? Are these passages *specifically* Valentinian, or merely of a generally gnostic character—so that they could be applied to other systems as well? What must we expect to find in a document which presupposes some system?

Here some other texts may afford some standard of comparison. The *Pistis Sophia*, for example, does not develop a system, but clearly presupposes a Sophia myth of the Barbelognostic or Valentinian type. It has of course been elaborated and inflated, but the underlying myth shines through. So too in the *Gospel of Philip* there is no outline of the Valentinian system, but the use of the bridal chamber imagery, reference to a higher and lower Sophia and various other motifs point to a Valentinian origin. One paragraph indeed (67) is almost incomprehensible until it is read in the light of a passage in Irenaeus relating to Valentinianism. How does the *Gospel of Truth* compare with these? It is not of course to be expected that every Valentinian document will retail at length a part or the whole of the Valentinian system—it would be intolerably tedious if they did!—but how much should we expect to find in a document that presupposes the system?

Finally, reference may be made to yet another suggestion. In the most recent commentary on the document J.-E. Ménard writes:

Gnostic" (134), and that while the resemblances between the *Odes* and Valentinianism remain striking, Daniélou has indicated that one should also note the differences.

¹⁰ Cf. *Gnomon* 32 (1960) 327 ff. and *Studia Patristica* 6 (Berlin, 1962) 96 ff. Quotations from the *Gospel of Truth* are incorporated into his account of the Valentinian system in ch. 8 of his *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1958; second edition not available to me); see also the *Ergänzungsheft* to *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (Göttingen, 1964), esp. 408 ff.

Il ne fait aucun doute que nombre d'expressions du nouvel écrit gnostique nous plongent dans un climat alexandrien, et certains de ses énoncés sont rapportés par Clément d'Alexandrie comme étant de Valentin. Cette thèse a toutefois suscité des critiques. Pour nous, l'opuscule serait plutôt un commentaire homilétique valentinien sur l'*Evangelium Veritatis* que, sans cesse, il exalte de façon mythique comme étant le Livre retrouvé.¹¹

This would seem to suggest that the document is not the *Evangelium Veritatis* known to Irenaeus, but a commentary upon it¹²—unless Ménard's meaning is that the opening words define the *theme of the meditation* as the good news of the Gospel. At any rate the commentary theory does not appear to be worked out in detail in this volume. One point which may be brought against it is that if we date the Greek original of our present document, with Ménard (p. 3), to A.D. 150 or at the latest to 180, this does not allow much time for the composition both of the original *Evangelium Veritatis* and of the commentary on it.

The present paper is intended to raise questions rather than to provide answers, to promote discussion rather than to argue a hypothesis. To that end the arguments on one side or another are presented objectively and impartially, without any attempt to settle the issues but still, it is hoped, with some degree of critical appraisal of the differing points of view. The questions which arise are already in some measure apparent: the relation of this document to the *Evangelium Veritatis* mentioned by Irenaeus; whether it is a Valentinian document or not, and in what sense; and if it is Valentinian whether it is prior to or presupposes the developed Valentinian system. This last question is of some importance for the location of the document in the history of Valentinianism: if van Unnik is correct, we can trace something of the growth of the Valentinian theory, in particular a movement away from more "orthodox" forms of Christianity, and we should be able to identify one at least of the influences which were at work, in the Barbelognostic system as represented by the *Apocryphon of John*. If Jonas is correct, we have to assume a full-scale Valentinian system behind even so comparatively early a document as the *Gospel of Truth*, which in turn must make this gospel somewhat

¹¹ J. E. Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité* (NHS 2; Leiden, 1972) 35.

¹² This obviously recalls Josef Frickel's theory regarding the *Megale Apophasis*, but the fact that a case can be made in regard to one document does not mean that the same key will open other doors. To mix the metaphors further, we need to beware of the lure of fashion!

later than the date commonly proposed, although if it was known to Irenaeus it must have been written some time before A.D. 180. Does this really allow time enough for the development which must have taken place?

A further point to be noted is that the Nag Hammadi library has made it necessary to reconsider the traditional classification of the gnostic sects handed down by the Fathers.¹³ It is now clear that the various groups were not isolated one from another, but freely made use of texts, documents and ideas borrowed from other groups, so that Barbelognostic elements may be found in a basically Sethian text, and Sethian in a Barbelognostic. Is it possible that the *Gospel of Truth* derives from some unknown group, which has certain affinities with Valentinianism or has borrowed something from that school, without being directly connected with it? Or was it the work of some unknown Valentinian at a later stage than that known to Irenaeus, who sought to work out a closer rapprochement with Christianity? At this stage of the investigation all things are possible, and every avenue should be explored without prejudgment of the issues involved.

To take first the question of the relation to the document mentioned by Irenaeus, it may be that those who first examined the text jumped to premature conclusions on the basis of the opening words. Knowing of the reference in Irenaeus, they simply assumed from these opening words that this was the work in question. This does not necessarily mean that they were wrong. It would seem now sufficiently well established that it was a common enough practice, when a book had no title, to refer to it by its opening words,¹⁴ and the description of the book as "The Gospel of Truth" is therefore reasonably justified. This however need not mean that it is the work known to Irenaeus. Unfortunately, Irenaeus does not say very much about that work, except that it does not agree in any respect with the gospels of the Apostles. Was he perhaps misled by the opening words into thinking that it *was* a gospel? Had he even read the book, or did he form his judgment merely from hearsay?¹⁵ Furthermore, we must beware

¹³ See e.g., F. Wisse, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists," *VC* 25 (1971) 205-223.

¹⁴ Cf. Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité*, 11 and note his remark: "Quant au titre de l'écrit, Fecht *commet la faute* de l'identifier à l'Évangélium Veritatis connu d'Irénéus" (*italics mine*).

¹⁵ Van Unnik (*Jung Codex*, 101) raises the question, and suggests that Irenaeus has little to say about the work because its gnosticism is not emphasised.

of the facile assumption that identity of title means identity of document. We know of two *Gospels of the Egyptians*, two *Gospels of Philip*, two *Gospels of Thomas*, while Codex V of the Nag Hammadi library itself contains two different *Apocalypses of James*. It is therefore possible that our document is the one mentioned by Irenaeus, but the evidence is by no means conclusive. Other possibilities must still be taken into consideration.

A second point relates to the use of the New Testament in this text. Van Unnik argued first for authorship by Valentinus and for a date about A.D. 150, and then listed the New Testament quotations and allusions, from which he drew the conclusion that "round about 140-50 a collection of writings was known at Rome and accepted as authoritative which was virtually identical with our New Testament."¹⁶ This might seem to advance the development of the Canon by something like a generation, but of course much depends on the significance attached to the phrase "accepted as authoritative." Our other evidence suggests that Marcion was well ahead of his time, and that in the age of Justin Martyr only the gospels had attained to anything like canonical status. Other books were certainly known, and certainly respected, or they would not have survived; but at what stage can we think of them as authoritative? It could be argued that the stage of development reflected in the *Gospel of Truth* indicates a date somewhat nearer to the end of the second century. In this connection, however, reference should be made to Ménard's comment: "Ce qui est étonnant, surtout de la part d'un auteur valentinien, c'est qu'il ne cite pas davantage le quatrième Evangile."¹⁷ He draws a parallel with *PEgerton 2*, an "unknown gospel with Johannine elements," which Jeremias dates "before 150."¹⁸

Another argument for a Valentinian connection is that other texts in the Codex Jung are Valentinian. Thus Puech claims that "certainly three of the writings in it reproduce the Valentinian doctrine in one of its most primitive forms."¹⁹ One may perhaps question whether the *Tripartite Tractate* should be regarded as representing a primitive form, but in any case van Unnik himself has argued that one document, the *Apocryphon of James*, is not Valentinian,²⁰ while Codex VI con-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁷ *L'Évangile de Vérité*, 8.

¹⁸ Hennecke-Schneemelcher 94.

¹⁹ *Jung Codex*, 20.

²⁰ *VC* 10 (1956) 149-156.

tains not only gnostic but Hermetic texts—and a passage from Plato's *Republic*. The character of other texts in any given codex is not necessarily a clue to the character of the text we are dealing with. We have to assess each of them in terms of its own character and content.

In favour of a Valentinian connection, the editors of the *editio princeps*²¹ point to the language and doctrine of the book, its use of such terms as "aeons," "the All," the Pleroma, Deficiency, Rest, the distinction of three classes of men (pneumatic, hylic, and psychic), and so on. They have to admit however that the author sometimes uses such terms in a manner entirely his own, and further that we may seek in vain for any detailed list of the aeons, any express mention of the Sophia myth, any reference to the Demiurge or to the distinction between him and the supreme God. Schenke objects that all these expressions and ideas occur among other gnostics also, and supplies detailed references.²² A glance at the index to Foerster's *Gnosis* is enough to provide independent confirmation, at least for some of them: for the All there are references to Cerinthus, Justin the Gnostic, Basilides, the Ophites, the *Megale Apophasis*, and the Sethians, Archontics, Docetists and libertine gnostics, in addition to the Valentinians, while for Pleroma we may adduce the Naassenes, the Docetists and the libertine gnostics. Such terms are therefore not specifically Valentinian, and no proof of a Valentinian connection. They were certainly used by the Valentinians also, but they are not distinctive characteristics of the Valentinian school.

Schenke further argues against the Valentinian connection on three main points: that the doctrine of the Fall in this work is not the Valentinian doctrine of a fall in the higher world; that while the cosmogony shows some similarity with the Valentinian scheme, the Ptolemaic system regarded not the ignorance of Sophia but her desire and passion as the primal causes of the origin of the world, and further that for the Ptolemeans *πλάνη* is only the *geistige Zustand* of a particular personality, whereas in the *Gospel of Truth* it is a personality in its own right; and finally, that the obvious differences in Christology make the *Gospel of Truth* incompatible with Valentinianism: all the Valentinians maintain the view that there were three redeemer-figures, three Christs, whereas the *Gospel of Truth* has only

²¹ *Evangelium Veritatis* xii ff.

²² *Herkunft*, 20 ff.

one. This last point could perhaps be met if the Valentinian system was subject to a progressive development, as indeed would appear to have been the case, in which an effort was made to parallel each of the three stages, the pneumatic, the psychic and the hylic realms. An early form, in which this development had not yet begun, would show only part of the final theory. In any case, as Schenke's own discussion shows, there are variations between the different forms of Valentinianism known to us. Is it possible that the ideas of this school were even more manifold and varied than our earlier sources would lead us to believe? Can we begin to reconstruct the history of the development?

In his *Ergänzungsheft* Jonas writes that the document shows unmistakable agreements with the Valentinian doctrine and that there are good, though naturally not conclusive, grounds for identifying it with the *Evangelium Veritatis* mentioned by Irenaeus. This gives a date around 180 as the *terminus ante quem*, and if the statement that it enjoyed the repute of a real gospel is correct then its origin must lie probably about a generation further back, in the first generation of the school. Here he does not exclude the possibility of authorship by Valentinus himself.²³ He notes that in regard to the Incarnation and Passion the *Gospel of Truth* adds a new voice to "the gnostic choir as we have heard it hitherto," but admits in a footnote that in Valentinian theology as a whole it is not the passion of Christ but that of Sophia which is the central fact. In his main discussion he confines himself to the singling out of a train of thought "der so etwas wie ein Argument darstellt—dasjenige Argument in der Tat, das man ohne Übertreibung als Angelpunkt der valentinianischen Soteriologie bezeichnen kann." The essential point of his case lies in the formula "Since oblivion came into existence because the Father was not known, then if the Father comes to be known, oblivion will not exist from that moment on" (*GTr* 18: 7-11).²⁴ This he finds repeated, with the substitution of "deficiency" for "oblivion," at a later point (24: 28-32), and also in a passage in Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.21.4). "Vorausgesetzt in der Formel ist der komplette valentinianische Mythos, wovon die Formel die soteriologische entscheidende Folgerung zieht" (p. 412). The teaching of the whole passage is obscure to the uninitiated, but "einigermassen verständlich für den Kenner valentinianischer Spekula-

²³ *Gnosis*, 408: "Sowohl nach diesem äusseren wie nach innerem Rang wäre die Autorschaft Valentins selber nicht ausgeschlossen."

²⁴ Tr. G. W. MacRae, *NHLibEng*.

tion." The document is cryptic and esoteric, intended for "wohlvorbereitete Leser" (p. 414f.), but agreement at a crucial point is proof of its Valentinian character (cf. p. 409f.). "In dem Bewusstsein, dass ihr System die theoretische Rechtfertigung für die soteriologische Genugsamkeit der 'Gnosis allein' geliefert hatte, konnten die Valentinianer, und nur sie, sprechen, wie Irenaeus zitiert, und das gleiche gilt für die formelhaften Parallelen im EV" (p. 418). The case is certainly impressive, but it still leaves one wondering: how does this fit in with development in the Valentinian system? Could one really place such a document at so early a stage as A.D. 150? Or was van Unnik right after all?

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me—the words of Hebrews are still apposite, not least because to prolong the discussion would try the patience of the reader! The problems are evident, and await an answer.

DISCUSSION

ROBERT McL. WILSON: I HAVE sought not to present a thesis but to raise questions by noting several arguments which have been made about the *Gospel of Truth*:

First, Professor Quispel's suggestion that Valentinianism can be seen as a Christianizing of the earlier, vulgar Gnosis of the *Apocryphon of John*.

Second, van Unnik's position that the *Gospel of Truth* was written by Valentinus himself. Since it lacks the features ascribed to him by Irenaeus, the document must be dated about 140-150, before Valentinus's departure from the catholic church. Since New Testament material is used in the text, a considerable portion of our New Testament must have been known and accepted as authoritative at Rome by the year 150.

Third, the position of the editio princeps that the work was Valentinian, though only possibly by Valentinus.

Fourth, the argument made by Jonas that the text presupposes a developed Valentinian system.

While I earlier accepted van Unnik's view, I now think that the use of New Testament quotations indicates a later stage in the development of the canon than was reached by 150. Preference for a later date makes more acute the question of whether or not this is the

Evangelium Veritatis mentioned by Irenaeus. Ménard suggested that it may instead be a commentary on it, a theory perhaps influenced by Frickel's view of the Simonian *Megale Apophasis*.

MICHEL TARDIEU: We cannot now give a definitive answer to many of the questions posed by the *Gospel of Truth*. But I would like to point to the fresh methods of argument brought to the text in a good work by Benoit Standaert, "L'Évangile de Vérité: Critique et Lecture," in *New Testament Studies*, 1975. Using a comparative, statistical, and rhetorical analysis, he concluded that the author of the *Gospel of Truth* and that of the fragments of Valentinus is the same. Here, when philology and history are silent, literary criticism allows conclusions.

HANS JONAS: Professor Wilson refers to arguments I made in a *Gnomon* review of the *editio princeps* and in a paper at Oxford. I have contended that the *Gospel of Truth* presupposes something more articulate than itself, that its cryptic, allusive language points the initiate to a more explicit statement like what we know, e.g., of the Ptolemaean system. I still believe that this is more plausible than the view that the *Gospel of Truth* is an embryonic stage of Valentinian development. My case centers around $\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta$: I think that this makes little sense in the *Gospel of Truth* unless one endows it with personal, hypostatized powers of agency and makes it a figure like the demiurge or Sophia Achamoth.

It is, however, not part of my position to argue that the system presupposed actually is that of Ptolemy or of the *Excerpts from Theodotus*. Similarly, on my view the hypothesis that the *Apocryphon of John* was used by the author for his amalgam is possible but not necessary.

WILSON: This is a helpful clarification. I had understood you to mean a presupposing akin to the dependence of the *Gospel of Philip* on the Valentinian system as we know it in Irenaeus. If you had intended this meaning, it would have called for a Valentinianism more developed than was available in 150. Together with the evidence about the New Testament canon, this argument would place the document ten or even twenty-five years later. Of course, if it is the *Evangelium Veritatis* known to Irenaeus, it must be placed before him, but we don't know that it is.

HELMUT KOESTER: The problem is the question of controls. The *Gospel of Truth* alludes to hundreds of things, like the parable of the jars, which were known to its readers but which we don't know.

Of course, we can advance a bit by looking at the few that we do recognize. For example, *Gospel of Truth* 32 alludes to the parable of the lost sheep and, in particular, to sheep saved on the Sabbath. Thus, it refers to the version found in Matthew, not in Mark. We can't treat such passages as references to the New Testament canon, but they are references to individual works: Matthew, probably Paul, perhaps John. This information is helpful in dating the work.

WILSON: Van Unnik claimed only that New Testament writings were treated as authoritative, not that they were canonical.

KOESTER: But this is just my question: what is it to have an authoritative writing that can be alluded to, used, and interpreted? What are the canons of interpretation for general knowledge presupposed among its readers? What controls do we have? The *Gospel of Truth* alludes to stores of knowledge from various sources by a method of allusion different from "It is written...." If we could better deal with these allusions, we could perhaps progress on the question of whether a Valentinian secret knowledge is presupposed.

WILSON: We can distinguish three kinds of use. First, there are clear quotations marked as such; second are echoes and allusions which are not themselves evidence for an author's knowledge of a book, but which can confirm knowledge if we already suspect it. Third, there are parallels which could indicate dependence of either text on the other or a common source for both. With the New Testament and Gnosticism, we have perhaps less a case of direct dependence than of a common background in the Old Testament and Judaism and in contemporary thinking. Thus, we must widen our search to include all the evidence.

JOEL FINEMAN: These questions presuppose others. What, for example, is the genre of the *Gospel of Truth*? What is its rhetorical intention? Can we systematize what we would say about the logic of a text and the canons it refers to? Sometimes it is the intention of a writing to confuse. Standaert explores this question; he treats the style of the *Gospel of Truth* as replicating a puzzle. By its playing on words, its interweaving figural formulations, etc., it mirrors a paradox to provoke puzzlement. Such writing can serve a homiletic or pietistic purpose.

WILSON: It seems implausible that an author would write with the intention of provoking confusion. It is more likely that he wrote cryptically to those who could, he knew, decipher it.

As for the genre of the *Gospel of Truth*, it is in a section of Hennecke's *New Testament Apocrypha* called "Gnostic Gospels and Related Documents," whose contents have in common only their Gnosticism. The only strength of the classification is that it is broad enough to include all the texts! The editor speaks of the classic form of the Gnostic gospel as a revelation gospel. On this view, the *Gospel of Truth* is not a gospel proper. It is a meditation on the theme of the good news.

FINEMAN: Is "meditation" a genre? A literary form?

WILSON: That, of course, depends on the definition of "genre."

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: In asking about the genre, we should look not only at definitions but also at parallels. Perhaps the *Stromateis* constitute such a parallel, although they are less compact. Moreover, we should consider also how older texts were being read in the second century, for these interpretations would influence the composition of new texts like the *Gospel of Truth*. Plato's dialogues, for example, were read as allegories, as cryptic literature requiring interpretation on more spiritual levels.

JOHN WHITTAKER: Homer as well was so treated.

G. C. STEAD: Once one said, with Philo, that the Scriptures were obscure writings which the learned reader must interpret, then there was a justification for writing in this style. Appeal could be made also to the *Seventh Epistle* of Plato.

RAOUL MORTLEY: We have an example of a deliberately cryptic style in Clement of Alexandria, that reluctant Gnostic. He justified his cryptic writing in the *Stromateis*, apparently in face of the challenge, "Why write at all?" He replied that his style would stimulate readers to the effort of searching for themselves and that it would then enhance for them the value of what they discovered because of their effort in finding it. Although he says that he won't cast pearls before swine, there is no real suggestion that he wrote cryptically because he was addressing only an initiated elite. His reasons are more the justifications of symbolism on a wider scale.

WILSON: But how much are these obscure writings obscure only to us because we lack the background of the original readers?

MORTLEY: Clement claims to write obscurely.

WILSON: Is this actually a claim—or more an apology for what is demanded by the depth of the subject? The *Treatise on Resurrection* apologizes for the effort of grasping its difficult subject and yet promises that it is worth the cost.

MORTLEY: Clement says that his obscurity is sought. But I take your point that such a course may seem necessary when one tries to express the inexpressible in language.

WAYNE MEEKS: We have encountered here important questions of method for which the issue of possible controls is crucial: by what means do we distinguish obscurity in expression from obscurity in allusion to what we simply don't happen to recognize?

THE DOG AND THE MUSHROOMS
IRENÆUS'S VIEW OF THE VALENTINIANS ASSESSED

BY

ROWAN A. GREER

It is always tempting to suppose that when new pieces of a puzzle are discovered they can simply be added to the ones already arranged. When the Nag Hammadi documents were first found, it was possible to suggest that they would fill out our understanding of Christian gnosticism in the second century by supplying what was lacking in our evidence from the heresiologists.¹ It has become increasingly clear that the new pieces call into question the lines along which the puzzle was previously being solved. Questions concerning the origin and the persistence of gnosticism, as well as of the relation of Christian to pre- and/or extra-Christian gnosticism, have been raised from a new perspective. In particular, the lack of coherence between the Nag Hammadi documents and the evidence supplied by the heresiologists has emerged as a central problem.² A solution of the problem is necessary if the Nag Hammadi writings are to be properly assessed. In what follows there will be no proposed solution. Instead it will be argued that a more precise understanding of the heresiologists' perspectives represents one step towards the solution, and the point will be made by examining Irenæus's treatment of his Valentinian opponents.

It should be added parenthetically that the same point needs to be made with respect to the setting of the Nag Hammadi collection itself. A distinction must, of course, be made between the provenance of the individual documents and the collection as a whole. It may well be that the Nag Hammadi community has nothing to do with gnosticism as we know it from the second century. Epiphanius's remarks con-

¹ Cf. W. C. van Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings* (Studies in Biblical Theology 30; Naperville, Ill., 1960) 15: "Only in relation to what we know about these groups from other sources can we reasonably expect fruitful and indeed magnificent results from this extensive and momentous discovery."

² Cf. Frederik Wisse, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists," *JC* 25 (1971) 205-23. Wisse notes that only "five cases of clear agreement" have been found between the Nag Hammadi texts and the evidence of the heresiologists (207).

cerning the survival of gnosticism in his day need not be taken *au pied de la lettre*.³ We must reckon with what can be discovered about the late fourth and early fifth centuries in Egypt. And this, surely, includes careful examination of Shenoute's writings, of the activity of monks like Evagrius Ponticus (who has left us his *Gnostika Kephalaia*), and of the disputes between the Origenist and the anthropomorphite monks.⁴ It does not seem impossible to me that at Nag Hammadi we are dealing with a community of theosophical monks influenced by Origen, concerned with the ascetical and celibate life, and interested in whatever theosophical literature could be found. It is probably the case that a clear understanding of the point of view of the Nag Hammadi collectors is the greatest desideratum for a full assessment of the significance of the discovery.

From the point of view of the gnostic problem in general, however, it is also important to define more carefully the perspective of the heresiologists. Much has already been done in the case of Irenaeus. For one thing it has long been recognized that in Book 1 of the *Adversus Haereses* Irenaeus is depending not only upon discussions with Valentinians but also upon literary sources, which include both gnostic books and an earlier heresiological treatise, possibly the lost *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr.⁵ And there is an extensive literature dealing with Irenaeus's use of a version of the *Apocryphon of John* in 1.29.⁶ In addition, some attention has been paid to Irenaeus's use of rhetoric in his refutation of the gnostics.⁷ An important further step may be taken by suggesting that certain fundamental assumptions lie behind and inform both Irenaeus's rhetoric and his use of sources.⁸

³ Cf. G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies I* (Istanbul, 1974) 10. He accepts Epiphanius's statements at face value. What the heresiologist actually says is that in Athribite, Prosopite, Arsenoite, the Thebaid, near the coast, and in Alexandria "the spawn (*spora*) of the Valentinian gospel may still be found like the leavings of snake bones" (*Haer.* 31.7, *PG* 41.485). Does he mean that the bones of the Valentinians have come to life in the form of Origenist monks?

⁴ Cf. D. W. Young, "The Milieu of Nag Hammadi: Some Historical Considerations," *VC* 24 (1970) 127-37. For the Origenist controversy in Egypt, see Socrates, *H.E.* 6.7, Sozomen, *H.E.* 6.30ff., 8.11. An example of intercourse between the northern monasteries and the Pachomian foundations in the south may be found in Palladius's account of Macarius of Alexandria in *H. Laus.* 18.

⁵ Cf. Wisse, "Nag Hammadi Library," 212ff., and Ph. Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics," *VC* 30 (1976) 193-200.

⁶ Cf. the discussion by H.-Ch. Puech in Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson) I. 314ff.

⁷ See Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics."

⁸ Wisse regards the notion of a gnostic *Regula* as a theory imposed wrongly on the gnostics by the heresiologists. "Nag Hammadi Library," 219, 221.

He believes that the gnostics, specifically the Valentinians, belong in a corrupt chain of tradition stemming from Simon Magus. The idea is one that occurs in a great variety of contexts in the ancient world, both Graeco-Roman and Jewish. In a polemical context it is used by Justin Martyr to show that the further one gets from the Truth, the more distorted the "fragments of the Logos" become. The striking feature of the use of the idea by Irenaeus and by his predecessor in 1.23ff. is that the polemical point is made in an entirely different way. Far from involving any progressive corruption, the gnostic line of tradition reproduces the same fundamental error at each step of the way. The gnostic *traditio* is a perverse mirror image of the Apostolic Faith "once delivered to the saints." Irenaeus's fundamental perception, then, is that *corruptio optimi pessima*.⁹ However much the gnostics seem to sprout up like mushrooms (1.29.1) and fight like hydras (1.30.14), they are actually consistent in using Scripture by a false Rule to compose the portrait of a dog or a fox instead of a King (1.8.1; 9.4). In other words, behind the apparent diversity lurks a unified error.

It may be granted that Irenaeus's contrary assessment of the Valentinians bears some relationship to the realities of the second century. It is easy enough to give him full marks for recognizing that, like mushrooms, they sprout up in bewildering varieties. Everything we know points to the syncretistic character of gnosticism, its kaleidoscopic use of myth, and its failure to arrive at any fully coherent view. When Irenaeus says, however, that behind this multiplicity there is a single-minded attempt to construct the portrait of a dog, we may rightly question the accuracy of his perspective.¹⁰ Yet even here Irenaeus's point of view is not without basis. In his preface to Book 4 he notes that the reason no one has sufficiently refuted the Valentinians previously is "because they did not know their Rule, which with all diligence we have given you in the first book, in which we also demonstrated that their teaching is the summing up of all the heretics." Moreover, his assumption that the Valentinians had a Rule of Faith cannot be regarded as foolish. Ptolemy in his *Letter to Flora* promises "you will later learn about their origin and generation, when you are judged worthy of the apostolic tradition which we too have received

⁹ Wisse has noted the theme in Jude and related it to the notion of false prophecy. F. Wisse, "The Epistle of Jude in the History of Heresiology," *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig* (ed. Martin Krause; Leiden, 1972) 143.

¹⁰ Cf. Wisse's conclusion in "Nag Hammadi Library," 219.

by succession.”¹¹ It is easy to see that Irenaeus has a basis for supposing that the Valentinians mirror the Church by possessing a Rule. This basis may nonetheless be one from which he jumps to unwarranted conclusions. Even the orthodox Rule was not verbally fixed in Irenaeus’s time. The point I am making is that we should not ask whether Irenaeus’s account of the Valentinians is correct or incorrect, but should try to assess it as one based on fact but informed by a perspective rooted in Irenaeus’s commitment to what he regards as the Apostolic Faith. In what follows I wish to argue that Irenaeus seizes upon one aspect of the orthodox Rule of Faith as his authority and that he uses it as a glass of vision through which to “detect” the Valentinian Rule. As a result, his assessment of Valentinianism, while based upon the evidence at his disposal, is very much a caricature. Reconstructing Valentinianism, then, involves seeing Irenaeus’s caricature for what it is and penetrating beyond it to a more sympathetic understanding of Irenaeus’s opponents.

The unified perspective of Adversus Haereses, Book 2

The first step in the argument is to show that Irenaeus’s polemical stance against the Valentinians can be summarized by saying that he insists upon the “first and greatest head” in the orthodox Rule, viz. that concerned with the one Creator God, who contains all but is uncontained.¹² It is this idea that informs Book 2 and gives it its unity. What I mean by this will become clear by showing the inadequacy of a sequential description of the structure of Book 2. It is tempting to give such a sequential description of the argument. Throughout the book there are indications which look as though they would enable us to divide the text. In chapter 31 may be found the most important of these passages. Here Irenaeus concludes the major portion of the book and notes that the various points he has argued are valid not only against the Valentinians, but also against “the whole multitude of heretics.” He continues by listing those points in the order in which he has made them:¹³

For all the arguments I have advanced against their Pleroma, and with respect to those things that are beyond it, showing how the Father of all

¹¹ Ptolemy, *Ep.* 7.9 (ed. G. Quispel; SC 24bis; Paris, 1966): *axiōmēne tes apostolikes paradōseos, hen ek diadoches kai hemeis pareilephamen.*

¹² *Haer.* 2.1.1 (Harvey vol. 1, p. 251).

¹³ *Haer.* 2.31.1 (I, pp. 369f.).

is shut up and circumscribed by that which is beyond Him.... The arguments, again, which I have employed against those who maintain that the Father of all no doubt contains all things, but that the creation to which we belong was not formed by Him.... Those statements, again, which have been made with respect to the emanations, and the Aeons, and the [supposed state of] degeneracy, and the inconstant character of their Mother.... And the remarks I have made respecting numbers.... And all that has been said respecting the Creator (Demiurge) to show that he alone is God and Father of all....

By these words Irenaeus seems to imply that the first thirty chapters of Book 2 are to be divided into five major sections. And, indeed, it does seem possible to identify these five sections as 1-4, 5-7, 12-19, 20-28, and 29-30.

The next task is to examine this tentative division of the material and to inquire whether it can be supported by a correlation between the description in chapter 31 and the content of each section, and by other references through which Irenaeus indicates the beginnings and endings of the sections. Even Irenaeus's words in chapter 31 allow us to take the first two sections together, since they are concerned with the Godhead as a whole and are elaborated by discussion of "containing" or "being contained." In detail the argument is extremely complicated, but in chapter 5 Irenaeus tells us what he is doing:¹⁴

The remarks, therefore, which I made a little while ago are suitable in answer to those who assert that this world was formed outside of the Pleroma, or under a "good God";... I answer to those, again, who maintain that this world was formed by certain other beings within that territory which is contained by the Father, all those points which have now been noticed will present themselves....

The parallel of "adversus eos igitur" and "adversus eos autem," as well as the indications of time ("paulo ante" and "nunc"), suggest that Irenaeus argues first against those who posit something outside the Pleroma, and then turns to a refutation of those who agree that the Father contains all things but still proclaim a Creator other than the Father. Generally speaking, there is a close correspondence between this information and the summary in chapter 31, although it is difficult to know where the first argument stops and the second begins. In the first chapter Irenaeus argues that the Pleroma will either be included by what is outside it; or, if a firm separation is made between the Pleroma and the extra-Pleroma, it will be necessary to posit a *tertium*

¹⁴ *Haer.* 2.5.1 (1, p. 261).

quid which will include both. In the following chapters he adds that if the Valentinians agree that the Godhead contains all things, but persist in their conviction that there is a Creator God distinct from the Father, they may still be refuted. His basic argument is that a separate Creator God would imply a defect in the Father; only if He were ignorant or impotent would it be possible to exclude the act of creation from His will. In chapter 8.3 we find a summary of the first seven chapters which conflates the two arguments.

Although it is true that all the evidence points in the direction of the divisions that have been suggested, it seems impossible to locate them in the text. There are, as well, a number of other complicating factors. The discussion of the first eleven chapters is marked by repeated digressions in which an appeal is made to the orthodox doctrine of one Creator God. Moreover, the second argument is introduced as early as 2.2, where Irenaeus begins: "If, on the other hand, [these things were done] within His own proper territory..."¹⁵ Consideration of the Valentinian doctrine of the void further complicates the picture. Finally, there are a number of statements meant to show that the arguments are adaptable both to a refutation of the several points involved in the Valentinian doctrine and to a polemic against the other gnostics. To some extent these difficulties may be met by considering the two arguments as two major themes in a larger section comprising the first eleven chapters. Thus, Irenaeus begins the book "a Demiurgo Deo" and opposes the Christian doctrine to the gnostic view of God. The overlapping of the two arguments is unimportant because they belong so closely together. And the rhetorical digressions, including the excursus of chapters 9-11, can be understood as an attempt by Irenaeus to make his basic perspective quite clear so that his argument can be seen to follow from the orthodox Christian view of the Creator God. He takes the trouble to do this because the first major section of the book must indicate the basic disagreement between orthodox and gnostic from which the other points follow.

Chapter 31 describes the next major section of the book as concerning "the emanations, and the Aeons, and the [supposed state of] degeneracy, and the inconstant character of their Mother." Once again, at least in general terms, chapters 12-19 fit this description, as do indications of the course of the argument given within the section.

¹⁵ *Haer.* 2.2.2 (1, p. 254). The argument appears again in 2.4.2 (1, p. 259): "But if, driven to despair in regard to these points, they confess that the Father of all contains all things...."

The number of the aeons and their order of emanation are first discussed (12-13.4). Next the meaning of the individual aeons' names and their derivation from the Greeks are the focus of polemic (13.5-14). In chapters 15 and 16 the relation between the creation and the aeons is shown to be an illusion. Chapter 17 asks how the aeons emanated within the Pleroma. Finally, chapters 18-19 deal with various aspects of the myth of Sophia. There can be little doubt that all the material refers in one way or another to the Valentinian doctrine of the aeons. Nevertheless, the relationship of one minor section to another within chapters 12-19 seems often to be purely an external one. Moreover, although more strict attention is paid to specifically Valentinian doctrines than is the case in chapters 1-11, there are nonetheless a few references to other of the gnostics.¹⁶ With these qualifications we may conclude that the section as a whole comprises a block of material answering to the description found in chapter 31.

In chapter 19 Irenaeus indicates a major division of the book. He states that he has said "enough" to show that the gnostic "Rule" is "weak and untenable." Just as one need not examine the whole of the sea or an entire statue to demonstrate that the sea is salty or the statue gilded¹⁷

... in the same way have I (by exposing not a small part only, but the several heads of their system which are of the greatest importance) shown ... what is wicked, deceitful, seductive, and pernicious, connected with the school of the Valentinians, and all those other heretics who promulgate wicked opinions respecting the Demiurge, that is, the Fashioner and Former of this universe, and who is in fact the only true God—exhibiting [as I have done] how easily their views are overthrown.

Two points must be made on the basis of this passage. First, Irenaeus claims to have sufficiently fulfilled the promise made in the preface of Book 2 to overthrow "per magna capitula omnem ipsorum regulam." Second, it becomes clear that all of the "magna capitula" have to do with the doctrine of the Creator, or better, with theology in the strict sense of the word. To put it another way, Irenaeus has refuted the "doctrines" of the gnostics by appealing to the "first and most important head" of the orthodox Rule of Faith, sc. the doctrine of the Creator God.¹⁸ We must conclude that Irenaeus wishes to place

¹⁶ Cf., e.g., *Haer.* 2.13.8 (1, p. 284); 2.16.2 (1, p. 305).

¹⁷ *Haer.* 2.19.8 (1, p. 320).

¹⁸ *Haer.* 2.11.2 (1, p. 275).

the center of gravity for Book 2 in the first nineteen chapters and that what follows marks a filling out of the argument by considering certain less important points. It must also be noted in passing that the refutation, though directed primarily towards the Valentinians, is meant to serve for the other heretics as well.

According to chapter 31 the next major section of the book may be called "concerning numbers." And, indeed, chapter 20 introduces a discussion of the gnostic use of the New Testament in relation to the twelve aeons and to the passion of the twelfth, Sophia. Moreover, chapter 28 concludes with the observation:¹⁹

So much, then, I have said concerning numbers, and names, and syllables, and questions respecting such things as are above our comprehension, and concerning their improper expositions of the parables.

There can be little doubt, then, that "de numeris" in chapter 31 is meant to refer to the discussion of chapters 20-28. At the same time, this general title is misleading in two respects. First, the concern of the section is not simply with gnostic numerical speculation, but includes a wider reference to the gnostic allegorical exegesis as a whole. Second, especially from chapter 25 on, the argument tends to drift in a more theological direction; and Irenaeus introduces some of his fundamental concerns, which might be more appropriate to the major sections earlier in the book.

Chapter 31 says that the last of the sections is designed to show that the Creator "alone is God and Father of all." Although it is true that chapter 30 is especially aimed at the gnostic assertion that the Creator is a lower God than the Father, the major point of the section is an anthropological one. The claim that there are three kinds of souls and the soteriological implications of that claim are examined. The gnostic view of the spiritual souls saved by their nature involves as a consequence an exaltation of these souls over the Demiurge. In this way the gnostics are claiming to be better than the Creator, and Irenaeus shows the absurdity of the view. His description in chapter 31 seizes upon the theological implication of the argument rather than upon its anthropological and soteriological content. While one can certainly understand the relationship of the description to chapters 29-30, it is a misleading one. Nevertheless, it is only at this point that there is serious disparity between the description of chapter 31

¹⁹ *Haer.* 2.28.9 (1, p. 358).

and the actual sections of Book 2. The outline given there conforms in general terms to the sections of the book as they can be isolated. It is given greater precision by observations Irenaeus makes along the way, but it is not contradicted at any major point. The remainder of the book (chapters 32-35) looks very much like an afterthought. It deals with a miscellaneous series of questions, including the morality of the gnostics and their magical practices. Two chapters (33-34) consider anthropological questions, while the last is a refutation of any doctrine involving a multitude of gods.

Let me summarize the argument thus far by supplying an outline of the book:

- I. Theological refutation
 - A. The Pleroma as a whole, 1-11
 - 1. Assuming something outside the Pleroma
 - 2. Assuming God contains all, but that there is another Creator
 - 3. Concluding appeal to the orthodox doctrine of God
 - B. The aeons, 12-19
- II. The gnostic speculation about numbers, names, and parables, 20-28
- III. The gnostic anthropology and soteriology, 29-31
- IV. Appendix, 32-35

It will be seen that I have incorporated the five sections indicated in chapter 31, but have made two kinds of changes. First, it is necessary in the cases of II and III to provide a label somewhat more appropriate to the content of the chapters. Second, I have used the evidence of chapters 11 and 19 in order to relate the first three sections more closely to one another.

We must now ask of this outline whether it helps us to understand and to describe the unity of Book 2. As the reader will have been forewarned, I should wish to give a negative answer to the question. It is true that we have arrived at a general notion of the major sections which go to make up the book; indeed, the first three of them can be arranged in a fairly meaningful way in that they all contribute to a refutation based upon the orthodox doctrine of the Creator God. But the outline is disappointing for a number of reasons. First, it has been evident in the course of the argument that the various labels used are really nothing more than that. In each section there are rhetorical digressions and points considered that scarcely seem to

develop the argument implied by the more general rubric. In other words, each of the sections is made up of smaller sections which hang together in the same loose relationship that obtains for the whole. Second, this looseness of arrangement amongst the major sections comes close to demonstrating that the sequence of the blocks of material is not fully meaningful. For example, there is no real transition between the major sections of the outline; nor is there any attempt on the part of Irenaeus to show the relationship of one point to the next. Finally, the organization of the book as a whole is a question of "sentence first, verdict after." We should prefer to have the theological refutation as the grand climax of a work which built its refutation point by point towards the completion of a logical structure. As a consequence of these difficulties, the individual arguments seem deprived of any real context and tend to sound like a vain rhetorical beating of air. I suggest that the trouble derives from a false expectation on our part. Irenaeus is not building a logical structure, if by that we mean the development of an argument in which each point builds upon the last till a full conclusion is reached. On the other hand, if the unity of the book consists in the relation of the different sections to a single predominant theme, we shall not expect an outline to give us the answer to our question.²⁰ We must pursue the idea by attempting to define the "order" which holds the various arguments together. And by "order" we must not mean the sequence of the parts, but rather their relationship to a single unifying pattern.

I have already suggested the solution I wish to put forth. The "order" which holds the different arguments together is the "first and most important head" from which Irenaeus begins. That is, the orthodox doctrine of the Creator God is what holds together the various aspects of the argument. It has already become clear that in some sense this is evident in the very arrangement of the first nineteen chapters, since each portion of the discussion is an aspect of the theological refutation of the gnostics. In order to make my point, however, it will be necessary to do three things. First, a more careful description must be given of Irenaeus's "first and most important head." Second, it must be demonstrated that this doctrine totally informs the strictly

²⁰ Cf. André Benoit, *Saint Irénée: Introduction à l'étude de sa théologie* (Paris, 1960), 163. Despite his wish to go beyond Loofs and discover Irenaeus's own thought, Benoit seems to remain committed to the assumption that the sequence of Irenaeus's writings is what really matters. See p. 151 where he refers to "la ligne de développement" and "le cheminement même de la pensée."

theological section of the book. Third, the remainder of the book must be brought into relationship with Irenaeus's doctrine of God. In this way I hope to show that every aspect of the book is determined by a simple *theologoumenon* central to the argument. Once this is seen, the individual arguments are given their proper context and cease to be empty rhetoric. A focus is given the book, and the picture Irenaeus means us to have becomes fully visible.

At the very beginning of Book 2 Irenaeus states his point of departure as follows:²¹

It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein ... and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above Him or after Him; nor that, moved by any one else, but of His own free will, He created all things, since He is the only God, the only Lord, the only Creator, the only Father, alone containing all things, and far surpassing all things that they might exist.

Irenaeus constantly returns to the assertions about God made in this sentence, and there can be little hesitation in saying that here he has set forth the theological basis for his polemic. The difficulty that at first arises in the interpretation of the sentence lies in the fact that it seems little more than a listing of quasi-credal formulas. Actually, only three assertions are made: God is the Creator, God is one and "only," God "contains all things, but surpasses all." It will be my contention that the last can be seen to include the first two and that the formula "God contains all things, but is uncontained" supplies a simple and concise definition of Irenaeus's theological premise. The details of his doctrinal position may all be derived from the one formula, and in this sense his polemic and the whole of Book 2 may be related to the formula.

Let me start by attempting to show how Irenaeus understands the proposition that "God is uncontained." The meaning of the statement is first developed in an extremely simple way. Given two entities, either one will be contained by the other, or they will both be contained by a third. Furthermore, the argument can be carried to infinity.²² In other words, the impossibility of infinite regress establishes that there is a first principle. Irenaeus does not, however, develop the argument with any degree of philosophical sophistication. It is true

²¹ *Haer.* 2.1.1 (1, p. 251). "Surpassing" translates "praestans," and the word seems synonymous with "uncontained."

²² *Haer.* 2.1.3 (1, p. 252).

that he can describe God as “self-moved” and thereby demonstrates a certain familiarity with philosophical commonplaces.²³ Nevertheless, he seems unaware of the difficulty that is raised because his assertion is an analogical one. He knows that God cannot properly be described in human terms, but does not employ that insight in his development of the notion of God as uncontained. As a result he often seems to be speaking in rather crude spatial terms. But we must recognize that Irenaeus is not interested in developing the idea philosophically, nor does he wish to become involved in a discussion of metaphysical subtleties. Rather he is using a commonplace argument to show that there is one being sovereign over all the rest and that this Sovereign is God. The tendency of his thought is expressed in the following words:²⁴

... that which contains is greater than that which is contained. But then that which is greater is also stronger, and in a greater degree Lord; and that which is greater, and stronger, and in a greater degree Lord—must be God.

To say that God is “uncontained” is not simply to assert that there must be a single first principle; rather it is to proclaim the exaltation of God as Sovereign over all.

That God is uncontained in this sense implies that He is to be thought utterly distinct from everything else. Irenaeus puts the implication this way:²⁵

For what honor can those things which are temporal confer on such as are eternal and endure for ever? or those which pass away on such as remain? or those which are corruptible on such as are incorruptible?

The passage is found in the context of Irenaeus’s repudiation of the gnostic doctrine that the created order is made in the image of the Pleroma. The argument is not related by him to the orthodox doctrine of man as the image of God, and he has left himself open to the charge of inconsistency. Moreover, he is unfair in implying that the gnostics posit a common nature between the whole creation and the Pleroma. This natural unity obtains only for the spiritual seeds deposited in the creation. But for our present purpose what we must note is that Irenaeus is quick to deny any natural relationship between

²³ *Haer.* 2.1.1 (1, p. 251).

²⁴ *Haer.* 2.1.2 (1, p. 252).

²⁵ *Haer.* 2.7.1 (1, p. 265).

God and the creation. The contrasts of time and eternity and of corruptibility and incorruptibility serve to show that man and God are different by nature. Yet, once more, Irenaeus does not seek to develop the idea philosophically. He is content to refer it to God's will and His power, which are sovereign over the created order.²⁶ As the "uncontained" God is the transcendent Sovereign of the universe.

If the phrase "God is uncontained" implies for Irenaeus the natural gulf that lies fixed between the world and its Lord, the other half of the formula expresses in an equally firm way the removal of that gulf. That God contains all things is the true meaning of "Pleroma." Irenaeus's understanding is made clear by the following passage:²⁷

For if they hold that the light of their Father is such that it fills all things which are inside of Him, and illuminates them all, how can any void or shadow possibly exist within that territory which is contained by the Pleroma, and by the light of the Father?

Irenaeus is arguing that if the gnostics agree that the Father contains all things, then they must be prepared to say that He fills and illumines all things. The notion of a void or a shadow is thereby excluded. The important thing for us to notice, however, is that Irenaeus infers from the statement "God contains all things" the further assertion that He fills and illumines all things. The passage from which the citation just made comes goes on to say that the gnostic view "blames the Fatherly light" by implying it cannot illumine what is within it. Somewhat earlier Irenaeus rejects any implication that the Father is ignorant and requires Him to be "praescius omnium."²⁸ This evidence enables us to understand more fully the sense in which God fills and illumines all things. He does so because His knowledge and power extend throughout the entire universe.

Several of the points that have just been made help explain how Irenaeus can maintain what seem at first to be mutually exclusive statements about God. If we think of the argument simply in spatial terms, it is difficult to understand how something can be both uncontained and containing all. Or at least it seems paradoxical to posit a God who is both outside and inside the created order. On the other hand, if God is Sovereign, then this implies a way of maintaining both halves of the formula, distinguishing the senses in which each is true.

²⁶ *Haer.* 2.29.2 (1, p. 360).

²⁷ *Haer.* 2.4.3 (1, p. 260).

²⁸ *Haer.* 2.3.1 (1, p. 257).

God is uncontained in the sense that He is exalted over all; He contains all by His power and knowledge. Though removed by *nature* from the created order, He nonetheless manifests Himself through it.²⁹

For even creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it.

Despite the fact that God is “invisible ... on account of His superiority,” He is known “on account of His providence.”³⁰ Just as the citizens of the Empire may not see the Emperor, but still *know* his power because of its universal sway, so man can have some knowledge of God through experience of His power. In other words, God is distinct from the world by His nature, but is related to it by providence. Irenaeus develops the epistemological corollary of this view. Put less philosophically, he maintains that God is uncontained because there is no community of nature between Him and the created order, while He contains all in the sense that there exists a community of knowledge between Creator and creature. In this way Irenaeus’s formula stands for a doctrine of God that is at once unified and rich in its connotations.

It now becomes relatively easy to understand the relationship of the two other assertions Irenaeus makes about God in chapter 1. To say that God is “one and only” is really only a different way of saying that He is uncontained. Indeed, Irenaeus brings the propositions together himself.³¹

For it must be either that there is one Being who contains all things, and formed in His own territory all those things which have been created, according to His own will; or again, that there are numerous unlimited creators and gods....

Of course, the second possibility is eliminated by the argument that the many gods will be contained. The unity of God is a necessary consequence of His exalted sovereignty. By the same token, to say that God is the Creator is to posit His unbounded power. God needs nothing for the act of creation,³² and unlike men who require a “*materia subjacenti*,” God is able to create “*de nihilo*.”³³ This re-

²⁹ *Haer.* 2.9.1 (1, p. 272).

³⁰ *Haer.* 2.6.1 (1, p. 263).

³¹ *Haer.* 2.1.5 (1, p. 253).

³² *Haer.* 2.2.4 (1, p. 255).

³³ *Haer.* 2.10.4 (1, p. 274).

ference to the doctrine of creation is scarcely developed, and it is important to note that creation "de nihilo" is presented as an implication of the doctrine of God rather than as a conscious explanation of creation. To call God Creator, then, is to refer to His "uncontained" power. Equally, the epithet is meant to describe that power as "containing all." God's "dominion extended over all of them," and as Creator He governs the universe by His power.³⁴ Again, both the unity and the richness of Irenaeus's doctrine of God are made evident by his treatment of "one and only" and "Creator."

The next step in the argument is to show that Irenaeus's definition of God supplies the "order" for the various arguments in his theological refutation of the gnostics. In one sense this scarcely seems necessary, since the first nineteen chapters are in fact a refutation of the gnostic Godhead. Nevertheless, we must show in somewhat greater detail how Irenaeus's central affirmation informs the argument. Let us begin with the first eleven chapters. The first three of these chapters are designed to show that there is but one God; it is impossible to posit either a separate creator God or a void. The argument begins as a direct deduction from the proposition "God is uncontained but contains all." In this way the Valentinians who believe in something "outside the Pleroma" are refuted by a direct appeal to the fundamental Irenaeian platform. There are, however, Valentinians prepared to agree that God contains all things, but who still proclaim a separate creator God and a void. These are refuted by the argument that a "spot on the garment" defiles the whole garment. A truly separate creator God would require that the Father either be ignorant of creation or through hypocrisy or impotence allow it to take place outside His will. In either case an imperfection of some kind is attached to the Father. The doctrine of a void is impossible, since the limitations of the void will apply equally to the Pleroma. The polemic is confusing because it seems to be a rather wooden affirmation that God contains all things substantially, with the result that neither a separate Demiurge nor a void may be proclaimed. In fact, Irenaeus's point is somewhat more subtle and depends upon our understanding of what he means by his basic formula. The Father "contains" the Demiurge in the sense that there is a unity of nature in the Godhead; as the uncontained Sovereign, God has the marks of a simple and unitary nature. The unity of substance existing between God and the void,

³⁴ *Haer.* 2.6.1 (I, p. 263).

however, is not a conclusion required by Irenaeus's theology. Rather it is a consequence of the gnostic doctrine of emanation. If the void is emanated from the Pleroma, it is of the same substance; if the void is born of itself³⁵

... then that which is really a void is similar to, and the brother of, and of the same honor with, that Father who has been proclaimed by Valentinus; while it is more ancient, and dating its existence from a period greatly anterior, and more exalted in honor than the remaining Aeons of Ptolemy himself, and Heracleon, and all the rest who hold the same opinions.

In either case the void is not created, and the gnostics have failed to understand the sense in which God contains all things by applying the idea to nature.

Chapters 5-7 make more explicit the relationships that alone serve to explain the argument of chapters 1-4. Chapters 5 and 6 argue that there is a community of knowledge between God and the created order. The relationship is carefully defined so as to exclude any identity of nature between the two, and at the same time to show that it is impossible for the Valentinians to attribute ignorance of God to the creation without limiting His power and thereby depriving Him of His Godhead. Chapter 7 discusses the gnostic notion that the created order is comprised of "images" of the Pleroma. The refutation depends upon assuming that the gnostic doctrine of emanation requires an identity of nature between the Pleroma and the creation. Whether or not this is fair, it is clear enough that Irenaeus wishes to contrast this substantial view of the relationship of God and the creation with his own view that no substantial link exists. The gnostic understanding that God and the universe (at least the spiritual seeds in it) are related by nature but not by knowledge is contrasted with the orthodox view that the relation is one not of nature but of knowledge. In order to make the polemic work Irenaeus is forced to use implications of the gnostic view as though they held the same status as explicit gnostic doctrines. All this is acceptable, but the major conclusion to be drawn is that the individual arguments are quite obscure unless one reads them in the light of Irenaeus's doctrine of God. Even the small arguments that make up the first seven chapters are without their full meaning until they are put in "order" by being related to the fundamental pattern of the book. Chapters 8-11 fill out the first part of

³⁵ *Huer.* 2.4.1 (1, p. 259).

the theological refutation and are either rhetorical attacks upon the gnostics or further elaborations of the orthodox theology.

The second major section of the strictly theological polemic (12-19) is concerned with various aspects of the Valentinian aeons.³⁶ Again the stages in the argument are largely unrelated to one another and seem to be highly rhetorical. The number of aeons is either less than the Valentinians' claim or more. Bythos ought not to be counted with the rest, not should Sige be separated from him, nor is it reasonable to hold that Logos and Sige (word and silence) exist together. On the other hand, the four aeons emanated as a consequence of Sophia's passion increase the number of aeons to thirty-four (chapter 12). Moreover, the order of the emanations is not only incorrect; but *ennoia*, *logos*, and other terms are different names for the same thing. Even if the improper human analogy be allowed in describing the Godhead, it is not used correctly (chapter 13). None of these arguments seem very compelling when merely stated. But at the beginning of chapter 13 Irenaeus recalls our attention to his basic position.³⁷

If then, even in the case of human beings, understanding itself does not arise from emission, nor is that intelligence which produces other things separated from the living man ... much more will the mind of God, who is all understanding, never by any means be separated from Himself, nor can anything [in His case] be produced as if by a different Being.

The argument continues by appealing to "de his qui continent et continentur sermo."³⁸ In other words, the whole point of the first part of the section has been to show that God is one and the sole being who contains all but is uncontained. The absurdity of the Valentinian doctrine of aeons is nothing but a corollary of their failure to grasp the true doctrine of God. Seen from this point of view the arguments of chapters 12-13 begin to take on their true force. The same point is made in the last chapters of the section. Chapter 17 is designed to show that any meaning one may give to "emanation" requires that the emanation be "of the same substance" as its source. Chapters 18-19 treat the myth of Sophia; neither she nor her Enthymesis could ever have been in ignorance or separated from the Pleroma, since they must both be of the same substance of the Godhead. A slightly different point is made by examining the Valentinian doctrine of

³⁶ The various asides referring to other heretics must be excepted.

³⁷ *Haer.* 2.13.4 (1, p. 283).

³⁸ *Haer.* 2.13.6 (1, p. 284).

images in chapters 15 and 16. Here Irenaeus insists upon the utter distinction between God and the creation. It has not been possible to examine in full detail chapters 12-19, but we may still claim that the individual sections begin to take on their true meaning only when exposed to the "order" which informs them. The arguments all contribute towards proving the unity of the uncontained God, and in the case of a few passages, the distinction of nature obtaining between Creator and creature.

It may not seem so very surprising that the strictly theological section of the book can be related at every point to Irenaeus's doctrine of God, but what I wish to argue is that the relationship is required if the text is to make sense and that it can be made even in the sections of the book comprising chapters 20-31. The latter point must now be made of the section on the gnostic "numbers and parables." The aim of the section is to examine various of the gnostic types and to show that they are illegitimate. Irenaeus defines a type as follows:³⁹

For a type and image is, no doubt, sometimes diverse from the truth signified as to matter and substance; but it ought, as to the general form and features, to maintain a likeness [to what is typified], and in this way to shadow forth by means of things present those which are yet to come....

On one level the polemic shows how the gnostic types fail to meet this standard. At the same time, Irenaeus insists upon a material and substantial distinction between the type and the truth it represents. That he does so points in the direction of the full context in which the argument must be placed. The real weakness of the gnostic types is that they begin with the created order and concoct a God in its likeness.⁴⁰

For system (*regula*) does not spring out of numbers, but numbers from a system; nor does God derive His being from things made, but things made from God.

The gnostics, by ignoring the true relationship of God to the created order, are "casting off faith in the one God who formed all things, ... blaspheming our Creator."⁴¹ From this point of view it is Irenaeus's

³⁹ *Haer.* 2.23.1 (1, p. 333).

⁴⁰ *Haer.* 2.25.1 (1, p. 343).

⁴¹ *Haer.* 2.25.2 (1, p. 343).

insistence on the uncontained majesty of God that dominates the section. And he rightly sees the necessity of qualifying this transcendence by showing that it is accompanied by some knowledge of the God who is utterly distinct touching His nature.⁴²

The final section of the book proper (chapters 29-31) deals with the gnostic anthropology and soteriology. But, as was noted earlier, Irenaeus chooses to emphasize the theological consequences of this view. The summary of chapter 31, as well as the course of argument in the section itself, aims at showing once more the identity of the Father and the Creator. The gnostic claim that spiritual souls are saved by their nature involves saying that they ascend above the Demiurge. That the gnostics are better than the Demiurge is manifestly absurd, and a careful discussion of Paul's journey to the third heaven proves that the Demiurge is not "psychical." The argument builds towards the following conclusion:⁴³

... if ... He (the Creator) made all things freely, and by His own power, and arranged and fashioned them, and His will is the substance of all things, then He is discovered to be the one only God who created all things, who alone is omnipotent, and who is the only Father founding and forming all things ... and He has fitted and arranged all things by His wisdom, while He contains all things, but He Himself can be contained by no one....

We have come full circle, as a comparison of this passage with the first paragraph of chapter 1 will show. And at every step of the way we have met Irenaeus's formulation of the orthodox doctrine of God.

The analysis of Book 2 that has been given indicates that Irenaeus's refutation of the Valentinians hinges upon the orthodox doctrine of God. All other themes are subordinated to this perspective. Irenaeus's concern is neither soteriological nor anthropological. He is not worried by gnostic dualism save insofar as it undermines belief in the Creator. His preoccupation with the doctrine of God is not surprising. Indeed, the formula of the first Mandate of the Shepherd of Hermas is to be found everywhere in early Christian literature: "First of all believe this: that God is one, that He made everything from nothing, and that He is uncontained while containing all things."⁴⁴ Moreover, it

⁴² *Haer.* 2.28.1 (1, p. 349).

⁴³ *Haer.* 2.30.9 (1, p. 367).

⁴⁴ Cf. William R. Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology and some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism" *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig* (ed. Martin Krause; Leiden, 1972) 88-108.

is apparent that the formula is not originally Christian. This would be evident from Irenaeus's inability to integrate Christ with the formula.⁴⁵ But it is decisively demonstrated by Philo's use of "topological" theology.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the rabbis used the theme to define the traditional epithet for God, "The Place" (*hamaqom*). It looks very much as though a traditional (but no longer understood) name for God and popular themes from Hellenistic philosophy have fused in a Jewish apologetic to the Gentiles.⁴⁷ The "topological" theology functions both to explain the God of the Old Testament and to refute idolatry. Whatever its precise origins, Irenaeus employs what he has inherited to defend the Biblical view of God.

The perspective as found in Book 1

The point at which Irenaeus chooses to refute the Valentinians is their doctrine of God. His basic perspective determines the various lines of argumentation in Book 1. Of course, the argument as we have it proceeds from the *detectio* of Book 1 to the *evectio* of Book 2. But, in fact, it is the *evectio* that supplies the perspective from which Irenaeus describes the gnostics in Book 1. This explains both what he has selected to report and how he has treated his sources. Book 1 falls into three general sections.⁴⁸ After describing the Valentinian system of Ptolemy (1-10), Irenaeus turns to other Valentinian views, concentrating upon the Marcosians (11-22). Finally, he supplies us with the perverse chain of gnostic tradition stemming from Simon Magus, so that we may understand "the tree from which such fruits (the Valentinians) have descended." Since the book as a whole is meant to be the *detectio* of the heretics, it is largely descriptive. There are, however, several points at which Irenaeus stands back from his

⁴⁵ Cf., e.g., the discussion in *Haer.* 4.6 (2, pp. 158ff.). Citing Justin, Irenaeus alludes to the containing/uncontained formula and goes on to discuss God as known/unknown. He stops short of calling the Father uncontained and unknown and the Son containing all and known. His failure to deal with the Trinitarian problem has its correlate in his failure to integrate Christ with the theological formula.

⁴⁶ Cf. Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology," 94ff. He might have noted that *choresai* is used by Philo in *Op.* 20.

⁴⁷ Cf. E. Landau, *Die dem Raume entnommenen Synonyma für Gott in der neu-hebräischen Literatur* (Zürich, 1888) 30ff. The containing/uncontained formula is used to explain *hamaqom*, but looks like an explanation after the fact. Note, too, that *topos* occurs in Philo and in Theophilus as a name for God, connected with the formula.

⁴⁸ Benoit, *Saint Irénée*, 161.

detectio and makes judgments about what he has discovered.⁴⁹ These passages must first be examined, and then it can be argued that the point of view they express is also integrated with the *detectio* proper.

The preface to Book 1 begins by characterizing the heretics in terms borrowed from 1 Tim 1:4 and Titus 3:9. They are accused, as well, of being false interpreters of Scripture. The view that results is an "error," but one that is not immediately apparent, since the heretics "say things that look like" what the orthodox proclaim but are really different opinions. Thus, Valentinianism is assessed as a counterfeit Christianity. They palm off silver adulterated with brass as though it were pure. They offer costume jewelry, a glass emerald instead of the precious stone of the true faith. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. We encounter Irenaeus's view that the false gnosticism is a corruption of the best and is, therefore, the worst sort of error. More important, this corruption is described by Irenaeus solely as a false teaching about God and a blasphemy of the Creator. The focus upon theology in the strict sense that characterizes Book 2 can be seen as the point of departure in Book 1. Again the issue is theological and not soteriological or anthropological.

The only shift of emphasis in the preface to Book 1 is Irenaeus's insistence that the Valentinians' false view of God is based upon a misunderstanding, or better, a misuse of Scripture. The point receives more extended discussion in chapters 8-10, where Irenaeus next stands back from his *detectio*. The dominant metaphor is that of a mosaic. The passages of Scripture are meant to be arranged so as to form the portrait of a King, but the Valentinians have rearranged the stones of the mosaic so as to construct the portrait of a dog or a fox. The point is elaborated by showing that the gnostic interpretation of John 1 fails to see that John is proclaiming "one God, the Almighty, and one only-begotten, Christ Jesus" (9.1). And it is repeated by shifting the metaphor and arguing that the heretical interpretation resembles a cento of passages from Homer that are rearranged to give a plausible but false meaning (9.4).⁵⁰ The deeper explanation of this misuse of Scripture, in Irenaeus's opinion, lies in the failure of the Valentinians to use the Rule of Faith as the *hypothesis* in rightly ordering the passages of Scripture (10). Irenaeus, of course, regards Scripture and

⁴⁹ Chapters 8-10, 22, and 30-31.

⁵⁰ Cf. Robert L. Wilken, "The Homeric Cento in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.9.4," *JVC* 21 (1967) 25-33.

the Rule as no more than different aspects of the Apostolic Faith. They may be distinguished but cannot be separated from one another. Thus, he prepares the way for the *evertio* of Books 2-5. One need only contrast the Rule of the Church with that of the Valentinians to refute them. And the refutation may then be extended to the level of the interpretation of Scripture. In this way Irenaeus betrays his fundamental perspective. And, it must be added, the striking feature of the discussion in chapters 8-10 is the concentration upon the doctrine of God. The Scriptures are meant to portray God, the great King; but the heretics have forced them to proclaim a false God, a dog or a fox. Only the Rule of Faith can guarantee the preaching of the true God.

The same point of view may be found in chapter 22 where Irenaeus supplies a transition between his description of other Valentinian opinions and the genealogy of gnostics, springing from Simon Magus. Once again we are told that the Rule of Faith proclaims the one Creator God, who "needs nothing, but makes, dispenses, and governs all things through His Word and Spirit, and is exalted over all" (22.1). The error of the gnostics is that they deny the one Creator God. Irenaeus recognizes the mushroom-like character of his opponents. Their many different opinions make it hard to describe them. But he argues that behind their different views lies a single root error. To use his metaphor, the many different fruits come from a single tree. Irenaeus recognizes the diversity of gnosticism and seems to realize that this might call into question his basic perspective. But he remains convinced that a single least common denominator allows the gnostics to be treated as a unified enemy. However many heads the hydra may have, there is a single beast to be combatted (30.15).

The themes that have been observed are also reflected in Irenaeus's conclusion to Book 1 (31). Putting it all together, his basic perspective can be described as follows: 1) behind the bewildering variety of gnosticism lies a fundamental unity; 2) this unity is to be understood as the gnostic Rule, which leads them to misuse the Scriptures; 3) the result is a false portrait of God, a denial of the one Creator God, who contains all but is uncontained. It seems to me that Irenaeus recognizes that he is proceeding from a point of view. He knows that it is difficult to penetrate to what he calls the gnostic Rule. One is obliged to hunt through the dense forest of their writings to find the wild animal lurking there. But the perspective of orthodoxy is required if the enemy is to be tracked down and defeated.

The final step must be to argue that the perspective found in Book 2 and in Irenaeus's asides in Book 1 also determines his *detectio* of the gnostics. It must be admitted initially that the argument cannot be definitive, for two reasons. First, in order to see fully how Irenaeus has selected his evidence, we should need to have a better idea of the possibilities than our present knowledge allows. Second, the problem of Irenaeus's sources is sufficiently complex that we cannot often be precise in distinguishing between the source itself and Irenaeus's use of it. Despite these qualifications there are enough clues in the text of Book 1 to demonstrate the likelihood of the point of view for which I am arguing. Even in more general terms, the striking feature of the *detectio* in Book 1 is its concentration on the gnostic view of God.

The first ten chapters of Book 1 are probably based upon the writings of the Ptolemaic Valentinians at Irenaeus's disposal. In at least two respects it becomes clear that Irenaeus is occasionally imposing his perspective on the evidence. First, he reduces the diversity of his evidence to a unity. In chapter 1 he notices that a variety of names are used for the same aeon by the Ptolemaeans, and in chapter 2.3 he hints that there are different views of the Sophia myth.⁵¹ At the same time, his description penetrates so far as possible beneath the confusion. It is easy to rationalize the differing names by saying they refer to a constant pattern of divine emanations, and even the account of Sophia and Achamoth gives the impression of a coherent story. But the *detectio* looks very much as though it papers over a great many problems of detail. Second, Irenaeus's understanding of the meaning of "uncontained-containing all" infects his description of the relation between the divine Pleroma and what lies outside it. For example, Achamoth's formation outside the Pleroma is said to be "only by essence and not by knowledge" (4.1). The statement probably says more about Irenaeus's theology than about what Ptolemy taught. Achamoth is, in some sense, contained by the Pleroma with respect to nature, while the Pleroma is uncontained by her knowledge. What Irenaeus seems to be suggesting is that the gnostics have reversed the proper understanding of God as uncontained but containing all. He is uncontained by nature, not by knowledge. And He contains all by providence, thereby making Himself known; He does not contain all by nature. The description Irenaeus gives of the Demiurge and of the

⁵¹ Cf. G. C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *JTS* N. S. 20 (1969) 75-104.

triple division of mankind in chapter 5 reflects the same imposition of Irenaeus's theological perspective on his description.⁵²

Irenaeus's discussion of the other Valentinians in chapters 11-22 includes several observations by Irenaeus in which he appeals to an orthodox doctrine of God (15.6; 16.3; 19.1). He also suggests that we are to think of a gnostic Rule or *hypothesis* (20.3). But in this section of Book 1 the most striking feature seems to me the lack of any full connection between Irenaeus's description and the judgments he makes in his occasional asides. These always proceed from his insistence upon the theological dimension of the debate. But the description of the other Valentinians, and especially of Marcus the Magician, implies that Irenaeus's opponents were less concerned with proclaiming God than with offering a message of salvation. This feature of the material underlines the fact that Irenaeus does not always impose his perspective on the evidence he uses, and it enables us to say that his descriptions are not totally unreliable. At the same time it makes all the more astonishing the fact that Irenaeus virtually ignores the soteriological emphasis of the evidence and concentrates upon the implications of gnosticism for the doctrine of God.

The last section of Book 1 (23-30) focusses upon the genealogical listing of gnostic sects Irenaeus seems to have borrowed from a previous heresiologist. Comparison with Hippolytus's use of the source in *Philosophoumena* 6 enables us to see something of how Irenaeus employs it. In general terms the source itself suits Irenaeus's purpose. One of the themes that runs through the material is the charge that the gnostics deny the one Creator God of the Old Testament, who is the Father of Christ.⁵³ Because the material conforms to his purpose, Irenaeus seldom makes any substantial changes in it. The one possible exception is in his discussion of Simon Magus. Even though the parallels with Hippolytus are not exact ones, it looks as though Irenaeus has dotted some i's and crossed some t's. The account as it stands in Irenaeus by no means focusses upon the doctrine of God. Indeed, the first part of it rests squarely on the story in Acts 8. Simon's claim to be the "power of God" is, however, reworked in both Irenaeus and Hippolytus so that it becomes a claim to be God. And Irenaeus goes further by noting that Simon's moral failure is to be explained

⁵² Cf. E. H. Pagels, "The Valentinian Claim to Esoteric Exegesis of Romans as Basis for Anthropological Theory," *VC* 26 (1972) 241-58.

⁵³ Cf. Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics," 198.

by his disbelief in God. Whether Irenaeus is citing his source or elaborating it, the point he wishes to make stands out, even if somewhat artificially. Simon's error is a theological one. And the failure to believe in the God of the orthodox Rule of Faith is located at the very fountainhead of gnosticism, from which the Valentinians draw their error.

The parallel between the *Apocryphon of John* and chapter 30 adds little to the picture already described. Despite the difficulty of the different versions of the *Apocryphon*, here we are able to see how Irenaeus uses his gnostic sources. He does not cite them verbatim, but simply gives a *précis* which focusses upon the bare bones of the gnostic story. The myth in the *Apocryphon of John* is related to the Valentinian theology; and it is not impossible that the document, while not Valentinian, was used by them.⁵⁴ Moreover, the puzzle as to why Irenaeus does not use the anthropological section of the *Apocryphon* does not need to be solved by suggesting it would be repetitive or by supposing he had at his disposal only an abbreviated copy of the work.⁵⁵ Irenaeus has simply selected from the *Apocryphon* the theological section that suits his interest and lays the groundwork for his polemic.

Conclusion

The conclusion that has been reached is actually a simple one. Irenaeus's point of departure in his polemic against the Valentinians is to be equated with the "greatest heading" in the orthodox Rule of Faith, which can be expressed by citing the first Mandate of the Shepherd of Hermas: "First of all, believe this, that God is one, that He made everything from nothing, and that He is uncontained, while containing all." This glass of vision totally informs the *evertio* of the gnostic Rule in Book 2, and it shapes the selection and presentation of the evidence used for the *detectio* of Book 1. Surely Irenaeus is not completely wrong in his approach. It is reasonable to suppose that the Valentinian theologies shared a view of God that departed from monotheism. And, given the evidence of the *Letter to Flora*, it is not impossible that they had a Rule of some kind. Nevertheless, it is quite doubtful that the Valentinians were primarily interested in the doctrine of God. Theirs was an emphasis on salvation, on the rescue of the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵⁵ Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson) I. 317.

lost sheep. Thus, Irenaeus and the Valentinians are talking at cross purposes. Indeed, it might not be going too far to suggest that we encounter in their debate for the first time a dilemma that characterizes much of early Christian theology: how can an insistence upon salvation be reconciled with an insistence on monotheism? The "saved Savior" implies a unity between God and those saved, while monotheism insists upon the distinction between God and all else. This form of the dilemma lies behind the Trinitarian and Christological disputes of the fourth and fifth centuries. And it is one that Irenaeus faced himself in attempting, rather awkwardly, to reconcile his antignostic insistence upon monotheism with the Logos theology he inherited. Once Irenaeus's concern with the doctrine of God is fully grasped, it is possible to make some headway in using the evidence he has left us. One need not reject it in toto; one need only disengage it from his own point of view. And assuming that the collectors of the Nag Hammadi material had a quite different perspective, it need no longer surprise us that gnosticism looks very different when we compare the picture that can be reconstructed on the basis of the Nag Hammadi texts with the one Irenaeus draws. It is not merely that we are comparing the early fifth with the late second century. More than that it is that we are looking at the same phenomenon from widely differing perspectives.

DISCUSSION

ROWAN GREER: My paper took its beginning from a major problem in the study of Gnosticism, the lack of coherence among our different sources. While the partial nature of the surviving witnesses forbids a complete solution, I have suggested that a perspectival approach may be helpful in ordering the evidence. In applying this method to Irenaeus, I have argued that the selection and arrangement of his Gnostic information is guided by his interpretation of his own rule of faith, which is in the strict sense theological in character.

MICHEL TARDIEU: You suggest that at Nag Hammadi there may have been a community of monks influenced by Origenism. What grounds are there for this statement?

GREER: This wasn't a claim but only a parenthetical suggestion. There must be a *sitz im leben* for the Nag Hammadi collection as a whole as well as for the texts individually. In the fifth century, it is

unlikely that Valentinians persisted as organized groups. I wondered, then, if possibly it was Origenist monks who continued to read the texts. Of course, it was not the southern monks who were involved in the chief Origenist controversies, but there is some indication of interchange with the monasteries of the North.

TARDIEU: We know from the heresiological histories that there were thoroughly Origenist monks, the disciples of Hieracas, who were everywhere in Egypt. What is the difference between thoroughly Origenist monks like Hieracas and the monks of Nag Hammadi?

GREER: I am not able to say who the Nag Hammadi monks might have been. My concern was only in passing to indicate another topic in Gnostic study, the character of the Nag Hammadi collection, which invites perspectival questions. To apply these questions to Irenaeus was really the purpose of my paper.

ROBERT McL. WILSON: It does make a difference whether the collection belonged, for example, to Gnostics as a sacred tradition or instead to a heresiological library as Sävve-Söderbergh has argued. Your speculation is closer to James Robinson's suggestion that some members of the Pachomian monasteries could have been sympathetic to Gnostic ideas. But I fear we have no criteria for distinguishing among the possibilities.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: (*To Greer*) Your analysis (in the paper) of Irenaeus, book two, seems sound to me. But I find problematic the suggestion that theology was not of primary concern to Valentinianism. Certainly, there is a concern with it in the later texts, even in Ptolemy and certainly in the *Tripartite Tractate*. In fact, it is interesting to consider the *Tripartite Tractate* in light of your analysis. You list three basic assertions of Irenaeus's theological program: that God is the creator, that God is the one and only, and that God contains all but surpasses all. The *TriTrac* 51-53 explicitly makes all these points. It is possible that this was a response to a theological critique from the orthodox; there are indications of dialogue with orthodoxy and sophisticated forms of Platonism. But it is more likely that these concerns were at the center of Gnostic speculation itself.

GREER: This is a good point. I was thinking less of the *Tripartite Tractate* than of the *Gospel of Truth*. Here it seemed to me that there were dimensions of Valentinianism different from those on which

Irenaeus concentrated. These emphases need not have excluded a theological concern, but they do give it a less central position.

ATTRIDGE: You can argue this for the *Gospel of Truth*, but theology is central in the patristic accounts of the disciples of Valentinus.

GREER: I admit this, but I think theology occupied a different place in the Valentinian systems than in Irenaeus's account of them; it was important as it was bound up with other things.

GILLES QUISPTEL: I would like to make some remarks on Irenaeus as a source. Sagnard has shown that Irenaeus hasn't falsified his material; he was an honest man. But his sources were bad on Valentinianism, and he often didn't understand their gist. Thus, a false impression is sometimes presented. For example, the *Apocryphon of John* has a magnificent section on the unknown God. Irenaeus omitted this entire passage; he said only, "They say there is a God, with whom there is Barbelo." Again, the *Excerpts from Theodotus* show a Christocentric emphasis stronger than any in the apostolic fathers or in Clement: Christ is made the center of the whole history of salvation and the conqueror of death. But Irenaeus told us nothing of this, and so the evidence of Valentinian Christocentrism in the *Gospel of Truth* came as a surprise. But it was a surprise only because Irenaeus didn't give the evidence before him, not because he was dishonest.

GREER: It is my point that Irenaeus didn't concentrate on the Valentinian view of Christ because of his own preoccupation with the doctrine of God.

QUISPTEL: Yet, despite his biases, his limitations, and his misunderstandings of what Gnosticism was, Irenaeus was still basically right about the history of Gnosticism. Too often, the church fathers are not allowed to be right.

HANS JONAS: (To Greer) Your account of Irenaeus's perspective may well be right, although I am not fully convinced that there is so large a difference between a theological and a soteriological perspective. But I wish to caution against the position that to approach a subject under some perspective is to falsify one's portrayal. There is no other way to approach a subject with a vast body of material to arrange!

In general, I am ill at ease with your paper's attitude toward Irenaeus as a source. It seems rather condescendingly to assume Ire-

naeus guilty until proven innocent; it assumes that he is distorting the evidence and so will trust him only where he is found to be supported two thousand years later. This is improper juridical procedure which denies Irenaeus due process. If we compare the literary method of the heresiologists with that of modern book reviewers, we must appreciate their pains to summarize the views they then proceeded to demolish. Honesty is not a quality discovered only recently in modern philology!

Moreover, in faulting Irenaeus for illogical progression in his argument, you criticize him for being in the wrong millenium, for not knowing the method of Aquinas. Such rigor of argument is not the style of any of the fathers, not even Origen. I would say, then, that Irenaeus does not appear as such a bad or fumbling reporter when he is measured with the appropriate yardstick.

GREER: I want to dissociate myself from this reading of my paper. I intended precisely to read Irenaeus sympathetically, and thus from his own point of view rather than that of others. It was this point of view which I have sought to explicate. I have not at all charged Irenaeus with falsifying evidence. Surely a reporter can be careful and yet report the implications of a position in his own way in order to emphasize the points which concern him. We can see this procedure in, for example, the use of Antiochene texts by Cyril of Alexandria: he was certainly quoting them accurately and yet making them speak on issues which were not their main concern. Similarly, Irenaeus was concerned with what seemed from his perspective to be the implications of his evidence. These implications could be different from those a less involved observer would draw from Valentinianism.

JONAS: Still, I find your tone too grudging. You absolve Irenaeus from a charge that was gratuitous in the first place.

GREER: I began from Wisse's article in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 1971, which found only five points of contact between the Nag Hammadi materials and Irenaeus's account of Gnosticism. In response, I sought not to reject Irenaeus's evidence but to suggest the point of view from which it should be read.

WILSON: We must consider the significance and not merely the number of the points of contact. Of the five agreements found by Wisse, some are quite important. For example, part of Irenaeus runs parallel with the *Apocryphon of John*, though without the apophatic

theology which was irrelevant to his purpose. Even before Nag Hammadi, Foerster and Sagnard quite thoroughly vindicated Irenaeus, in a way in which Epiphanius, for example, could not be vindicated. On the whole, the Nag Hammadi texts have supported Irenaeus's reliability, although he wrote without liking or full understanding.

Problems arose for Irenaeus because his exegetical method was often the same as the one he attacked. Still, his theology was primarily Biblical, not philosophical. I am not sure that you have done justice to this feature of his thought when you said that Irenaeus's objection to Gnosticism hinged on his doctrine of God.

ATTRIDGE: Certainly, Irenaeus is a better source than Hippolytus or Epiphanius. Still, there are problems with his evidence. In his *Detectio [Haer.]*, for example, he gives a schematization of sects which, as Wisse has shown, is not supported by the Nag Hammadi library. Perhaps this is more a problem of his sources than of his accuracy.

Another point—Irenaeus's arguments are certainly not scholastic. But I would disagree with Professor Jonas's statement that it would be anachronistic to expect logical arguments from him, for we have such arguments from his time in, for example, Sextus Empiricus and Albinus.

JONAS: But are such arguments found in other Christian authors of the time?

ATTRIDGE: Perhaps not. But my point is that Irenaeus lacks the theological sophistication and subtlety of the sources he reports—the *Gospel of Truth*, for example, or even Ptolemy.

ELAINE PAGELS: I don't believe that this paper was to be read as a denigration of Irenaeus. Every author has a perspective, and it is useful to delineate it, as this paper has done for Irenaeus.

GREER: Yes, this is what I intended to do.

G. C. STEAD: Also in defense of the paper, I would like to say that Irenaeus may well have chosen deadpan description as itself an effective technique of ridicule.

SELF-GENERATING PRINCIPLES IN SECOND-CENTURY Gnostic SYSTEMS

BY

JOHN WHITTAKER

ALTHOUGH terms indicative of self-generation appear with relative frequency in Gnostic texts, they have not received much attention from modern scholars.¹ In fact the only extended discussion of the topic appears to be that of Charlotte A. Baynes, *A Coptic Gnostic Treatise* (Cambridge, 1933) 33ff., whose treatment is unfortunate in both conception and argument and therefore wide of the mark in its conclusions. Particularly far from the truth is Miss Baynes's assertion (p. 35) that "never in the beliefs of any school of Gnostic thought, nor, indeed, in the tenets of any theology, has the Monogenes been held to be *self*-begotten." In refutation of the second portion of Miss Baynes's claim it is easy now to point to the Christological conceptions of Marius Victorinus which have been admirably elucidated in recent years by Pierre Hadot.² Marius Victorinus argues with regard to the Logos precisely that (*Ad Cand.* 22. 11ff. Henry-Hadot) "ex se genito motu ab eo quod est esse, processit in esse suum proprium." The formulation "ex se genito motu" may, as Hadot points out,³ be regarded as a full Latinization of the phrase αὐτόγονος *monus* which Victorinus employs at *Adv. Arium* 3.17.15 and 4.13.5f. The reasons why Victorinus insists upon the self-generation of the Logos are, within the framework of the theological philosophizing of the Roman Empire, logical and obvious. Hadot puts them thus: "La génération du Logos est une autogénération pour deux raisons, d'abord parce que le Logos, préexistant en Dieu, ne fait que s'extérioriser en naissant, ensuite parce que l'être divin doit rester absolument immobile en engendrant."⁴

¹ I have attempted a general survey of the evidence of divine self-generation in later antiquity in my "The historical background of Proclus' doctrine of the αὐθιπλόστατα," *De Jamblique à Proclus* (Fondation Hardt, Entretiens 21; Vandœuvres-Geneva, 1975) 193ff.

² Cf. his *Porphyre et Victorinus I* (Paris, 1968) 297ff.

³ *Marius Victorinus: Traités théologiques sur la Trinité 2* (Paris, 1960) 725.

⁴ *Ibid.*

The second of these reasons is elaborated in a familiar fragment of Porphyry's *History of Philosophy* (fr. 18 Nauck) describing the eternal self-generation of Nous from the first principle. If any doubt persists regarding the implication of the terms αὐτογέννητος, αὐτοπάτωρ, αὐτογόνως and the like, one may reflect upon the following sentence of Porphyry (ibid.):

προήλθε δὲ [sc. Νοῦς] προαιώνιος ἀπ' αἰτίου τοῦ θεοῦ ἄρρημένος, αὐτογέννητος ὄν καὶ αὐτοπάτωρ· οὐ γὰρ ἐκείνου κινουμένου πρὸς γένεσιν τὴν τούτου ἢ πρόοδος γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ τούτου παρελθόντος αὐτογόνως ἐκ θεοῦ, παρελθόντος δὲ οὐκ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τινος χρονικῆς.

Although it may well be, as Hadot supposes, that Victorinus was influenced by Porphyry's exposition, it must nonetheless be emphasized that Porphyry's is by no means the first or only manifestation in later Greek speculation of the self-generating second principle. Plotinus indeed devotes to the matter a separate treatise (*Enn.* 5.4) πᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου τὸ μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον, in which, with an obvious reminiscence of *Ti.* 42e 5f., he argues (*Enn.* 5.4.2,21f. H-S) μένοντος οὖν αὐτοῦ [i.e., the first principle] ἐν τῷ οικείῳ ἦθει ἐξ αὐτοῦ μὲν τὸ γινόμενον γίνεται, μένοντος δὲ γίνεται.⁵ Cf. likewise, e.g., *Enn.* 6.9.3,49ff. H-S, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ αἶτιον λέγειν οὐ κατηγορεῖν ἐστὶ συμβεβηκός τι αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἔχομέν τι παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου ὄντος ἐν αὐτῷ. Although Plotinus does not exploit the specific vocabulary of self-generation (αὐτόγονος, αὐτογέννητος, etc.) here or elsewhere, it is the obvious implication of such passages as these that what proceeds from a prior entity without movement on the part of the latter is, in a sense, self-generated. The self-generation of Nous is indeed made explicit at, e.g., *Enn.* 5.9.5,4ff. H-S. But in general Plotinus prefers analogies such as that of the dispersal of heat from fire or cold from snow or fragrance from perfume (cf. *Enn.* 5.1.6,30ff. H-S). Since the vocabulary of self-generation was already in active circulation, as our Gnostic texts indicate, in the second century, and is still vigorously alive two or three centuries later in the writings of Synesius, Nonnus, and Proclus,⁶ it looks almost as though Plotinus deliberately avoided the exploitation of the relevant compounds in αὐτο-. It is particularly striking that Plotinus dwells at very considerable length upon the self-production of the One (*Enn.* 6.8) without

⁵ Cf. *Enn.* 5.3.12,33f. H-S: ἀλλὰ δῆλον, ὅτι, εἰ τι ὑπέστη μετ' αὐτόν, μένοντος ἐκείνου ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἦθει ὑπέστη. Syrianus, *In Metaph.*, p. 187.6ff. Kroll: τὰ δὲ θεῖα πάντα, μενουσῶν ἀεὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν (ἐν) οικείοις ἦθεσι, πρόεισιν αὐτογόνως, κτλ.

⁶ Cf. my "Historical background."

recourse to this vocabulary. Of the standard *termini* of self-generation which we meet in Gnostic and other theological and subtheological texts of later antiquity Plotinus employs only αὐτοφυῆς (cf., e.g., *Enn.* 6.5.1,3 H-S) but never (*sauf erreur*) to describe the self-production of the One, Mind or Soul. And one must bear in mind that unlike most of the terminology of self-generation αὐτοφυῆς had, and still has in modern Greek, a variety of secular usages and frequently means little more than “natural”; cf. e.g., *Suda* [Suid.] 1. 424.4f. Adler, with which one may compare Aristaenetos 1.7.3ff. Mazal: προσῆλθέ τις εὐπρόσωπος κόρη, κάλλος αὐτοφυῆς καὶ ὅμοιον αὐτομάτῳ φυτῷ φέρουσα. For other secular usages cf. LSJ s.v. One may conclude that Plotinus’s use of the term cannot be construed as a concession to the popular theological terminology of self-generation.

I have tried to show elsewhere why neither the concept nor the terminology of divine self-generation had any place in the more orthodox versions of Christianity.⁷ It is true that fleeting glimpses of the notion can appear on rare occasions in patristic literature; for example, Diadochus of Photice can permit himself to hint concerning the divine (τὸ αἰὶ ὄν) that ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει ἐν τῇ ὑπὲρ φύσιν φύσει (p. 175 des Places), and Jerome comments (*In Eph.* 2.3, PL 26. 489), “Deus vero, qui semper est, nec habet aliunde principium et ipse sui origo est suaeque causa substantiae, non potest intelligi aliunde habere, quod substitit.”⁸ But that the whole trend of patristic thinking is uncompromisingly opposed to the notion may be seen from the strictures showered upon it by, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Eun.* 1.477ff. (l. 164.24ff. Jaeger); Ps.-Justin, *Qu. Chr.*, PG 6. 1428ff.⁹ (aimed directly at Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.8?); Augustine, *Trin.* 1.1, PG 42. 820: “Qui autem putat eius esse potentiae Deum, ut seipsum ipse genuerit, eo plus errat, quod non solum Deus ita non est, sed nec spiritualis nec corporalis creatura: nulla omnino res est quae se ipsam gignat ut sit;” John of Damascus, *F.o.* 8.187ff. Kotter: ὁ μὲν γὰρ πατήρ ἀνάιτιος καὶ ἀγέννητος (οὐ γὰρ ἔκ τινος· οὐδὲ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ)¹⁰ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει οὐδέ

⁷ See my “Historical background.”

⁸ For some similar formulations see my “Historical background,” 212f.

⁹ This passage, which seems to have eluded the attention of modern scholars, did not escape that of Byzantine controversialists; cf. David Dishypatos, *Λόγος κατὰ Βαρλαάμ καὶ Ἀκινδύνου*, ed. D. G. Tsames (Βυζαντινὰ κειμῆνα καὶ μελέται 10; Thessalonica, 1973) 56.14ff.; Gregory Palamas, *Συγγράμματα* 3, ed. P. G. Chrestou (Thessalonica, 1970) 51.3ff. and 154.10ff.

¹⁰ This reading is preferable to Kotter’s αὐτοῦ.

τι τῶν ὄσα ἔχει), αὐτὸς δὲ μᾶλλον ἔστιν ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ πῶς εἶναι φυσικῶς τοῖς πᾶσιν.¹¹

There are, I think, two main reasons for this adamant Christian rejection. One of these reasons is that the notion of self-generation could provide a rationale for the Monarchian identification of Father with Son. According to Hippolytus, the second-century heretic Noetus of Smyrna justified this identification on the ground that the one God generates himself and must for that reason be considered both father and son to himself (*Haer.* 9.10, *PG* 16. 3378): οὕτως γὰρ δοκεῖ μοναρχίαν συνιστᾶν, ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ φάσκων ὑπάρχειν Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν καλούμενον, οὐχ ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, κτλ. Eriphanius, *Haer.* 57.6, *PG* 41. 1004, quiπs, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος καὶ οἱ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, Νοητοῦ ἔχων ὄνομα, ἀνόητος ὑπάρχει, καὶ οἱ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀνοητοῦντες, and his ridicule (a common enough patristic technique of appearing to deflate one's opponents without actually tackling their reasoning) has perhaps influenced some modern assessments of Noetus,¹² whose conception (to judge from Hippolytus's above account) may have been quite subtle. A similar conception seems to be criticized already by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 129, *PG* 6. 777: καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον τοῦ γεννῶντος ἀριθμῶ ἕτερόν ἐστι, πᾶς ὅστισοῦν ὁμολογήσειε.¹³ And we may conclude from attacks upon it in the so-called *Fides Damasi*¹⁴ and in Prudentius, *Apotheosis* 245ff. that this ingenious version of Sabellianism retained its appeal. But a second reason for the rejection by more orthodox Christian circles of the vocabulary of self-generation was undoubtedly that the abundant appearance of such terms in Gnostic literature, as well as in magical prayers and formulae and the like,¹⁵ had rendered them suspect and therefore

¹¹ But note the contrary intent of the parallel passage in Ps.-Cyril, *Trin.* 9, *PG* 77. 1140: ὁ μὲν γὰρ πατὴρ ἀναίτιος καὶ ἀγέννητος, οὐ γὰρ ἔκ τινος (ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ γὰρ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει), οὐδὲ τι τῶν ὄσαπερ ἔχει, ἐξ ἑτέρου ἔχει.

¹² Cf., e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, 21960) 121, referring to the "naiveté" of Noetus.

¹³ Cf. also Justin, *1 Apol.* 63, *PG* 6. 425: οἱ γὰρ τὸν υἱὸν πατέρα φάσκοντες εἶναι ἐλέγχονται μῆτε τὸν πατέρα ἐπιστάμενοι, μῆθ' ὅτι ἔστιν υἱὸς τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὄλων γινώσκοντες ὅς καὶ λόγος πρωτότοκος ὢν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ θεὸς ὑπάρχει.

¹⁴ Cf. my "Historical background", 213f.

¹⁵ Cf. my "Historical background," 206ff. According to the astrologer Vettius Valens, who can be dated to the second century, Ἐλπὶς and Τύχη are αὐτογέννητοι ὑπουργαὶ δύο θεῶν (p. 219.28ff. Kroll). With this we may compare, e.g., [Plato], *Def.* 411b 11f. (Τύχη ... ἢ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτομάτου αἰτία δαιμονίας πράξεως) and the anonymous Πυθαγόρου βίος of Photius, *Bibl.* 249, *PG* 103. 1584: ἢ δὲ τύχη τὸ αὐτόματον καὶ τὸ ὡς ἔτυχεν [sc. ἔχει]. On the date of Vettius Valens cf. O. Neugebauer, "The chronology of Vettius Valens' *Anthologiae*," *HTR* 47 (1954) 65ff.

undesirable. If it is the case that Plotinus deliberately avoids such terminology, then the reason could be that he, too, found it distasteful. Just as Aristotle in describing the Unmoved Mover in *Metaph.* A purposefully avoids the vocabulary of popular religion, so also perhaps does Plotinus consciously refrain from employing a terminology that would give to his work a to him undesirable Gnostic flavour.

Having taken note of an explicit statement of the self-generation of the second principle in Porphyry's *History of Philosophy*, and having seen that the conception is implicit in Plotinus, we may appropriately look for evidence of the same conception in texts of the pre-Neoplatonic era, and then consider what bearing the notion may have on the Gnostic systems of the second century.

That an *act* of generation is incompatible with the immobility and impassibility ascribed to the supreme deity is explicitly stated on at least two occasions by Philo of Alexandria.¹⁶ In a similar vein Apuleius calls the supreme deity (*Apol.* 64) *summus animi genitor* but goes on to describe him as *sine propagatione genitor*. The meaning of the latter cryptic formulation is indicated in the context where we are told that Apuleius's supreme divinity is also (*ibid.*) "assiduus mundi sui opifex, sed enim sine opera opifex, sine cura sospitator." God does not generate after the manner of man any more than he fabricates the universe after the fashion of a human artisan. The same point was to be put more succinctly by Iamblichus (*Myst.* 1.7.21.5f.): τὸ μὲν ακλινωῶς ἀπογεννᾶ πάντα καὶ ἐπιτροπεύει. But the identical *Problematik* is already apparent in the Ps.-Aristotelian *Mu.* 397b20ff.:

σωτήρ μὲν γὰρ ὄντως ἐπάντων ἐστὶ καὶ γενέτωρ τῶν ὁπωσδήποτε κατὰ τόνδε τὸν κόσμον συντελουμένων ὁ θεός, οὐ μὴν αὐτουργοῦ καὶ ἐπιτόνου ζῶου κάματος ὑπομένων, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει χρώμενος ἀτρώτῳ, δι' ἧς καὶ τῶν πόρρω δοκούντων εἶναι περιγίνεται.

In the version of the *De mundo* ascribed to Apuleius δυνάμει ἀτρώτῳ is rendered as *quadam infatigabili providentia*.¹⁷ But the demiurgic δύναμις is present in Plutarch (*Plat. quaest.* 2, 1001a-b), as well as in

¹⁶ I.e., *Quaes. Gen.* 2.12 and *Op.* 100. See my "Historical background," 220f.

¹⁷ Cf., however, Apuleius, *Dogm.* 1.9.199: "caelestem animam [i.e., the Platonic World Soul] optimam et sapientissimam virtutem (= δύναμιν) esse geneticam, subservire etiam fabricatori deo et praesto esse ad omnia inventa eius. ..." The reading *virtutem* is probably preferable to *virtute* chosen by the most recent editor, J. Beaujeu (*Apulée: Opuscules philosophiques* [Paris, 1973] 68); cf. C. Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," *ZNW* 44 (1952) 192 n. 137.

Atticus the Platonist, who gives to this demiurgic power almost separate hypostatic status (apud Eusebius, *P. E.* 15.6.7 = fr. 4 Baudry).

κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀκοήν, ἀξιοῦντος Πλάτωνος τὸν κόσμον γεγονέναι κάλλιστον ἔργον ὑπὸ τοῦ καλλίστου τῶν δημιουργῶν, καὶ περιθέντος τῷ τοῦ παντός ποιητῆ δύναμιν δι' ἧς καὶ οὐκ ὄντα πρότερον ἐποίησε τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ποιήσας εἰσαεὶ βουλώμενός γε σῶον διαφυλάττει.

The complete hypostatization of the demiurgic δύναμις is prominent in Justin Martyr who frequently describes the Logos as precisely δύναμις; cf., e.g., *Dial.* 61, PG 6. 613 (ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δύναμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικὴν), *ibid.* 105, PG 6. 721 (ιδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ [sc. τοῦ πατρὸς] λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεγεννημένος), and 1 *Apol.* 60, PG 6. 420 where the Son of God is called τὴν μετὰ τὸν πρῶτον θεὸν δύναμιν. The inspiration behind these pronouncements is, as Carl Andresen has emphasized,¹⁸ Middle Platonic, and the same is of course true of similar statements in Athenagoras, Tatian, and elsewhere.¹⁹

In none of these texts, however, is it specifically stated or even suggested that the secondary demiurgic principle be self-generated. There can nonetheless be no doubt but that already in the second century some thinkers had drawn the conclusion that if the impassibility of the first principle were to be preserved then the second principle must not be *generated* by the first but must rather *proceed* from it. Evidence of this is the appearance of terms such as προπηδάω and προέρχομαι²⁰ to describe the relationship between the Logos and the Father. The emphasis is upon the procession of the Son from the Father rather than upon the active generation of the former by the latter. It is perhaps not irrelevant to recall that the notion of self-generation, which sounds both paradoxical and exotic to modern ears, was readily acceptable to the ancient mind. The theory of the spontaneous appearance of life is at least as old as Anaximander,²¹ and as folk belief no doubt of great antiquity and

¹⁸ "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," 188ff.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Daniélou, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique* (Tournai, 1961) 317ff. But one should not forget that the Middle Platonic doctrine builds in turn upon a Stoic base; cf. W. Theiler, "Plotin zwischen Plato und Stoa," *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1966) 130.

²⁰ Cf. *LPGL* s.vv.

²¹ Cf. *Vorsokr.* 12 A 11 Diels-Kranz = Hippolytus, *Haer.* 1.6, PG 16. 3029: τὰ δὲ ζῷα γίνεσθαι (ἐξ ὑγροῦ) ἐξατμιζομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου.

universality. The notion was embraced in Aristotle's biological theory (cf., e.g., *G.A.* 762a8ff.) and remained from then on a biological commonplace. The ground was well prepared for the emergence of self-generating secondary principles. Moreover, by the second century of our era the familiar Stoic notion of the self-generating pantheistic universe²² was no longer an acceptable solution to man's search for the supreme principle. One looked instead beyond the universe and even beyond the demiurgic Nous in quest of the ultimate. But the demiurgic Nous which now took second place behind the transcendent ultimate tended to retain the classic characteristics of the Stoic God – one of which was self-generation. Thus, in the notion of the self-generated secondary principle two distinct strains of thought meet and blend: on the one hand there is the conviction that the second principle must be self-generated for the reason that the first principle is immutable and therefore nongenerative, and on the other hand the belief that the ultimate divinity must transcend the Stoic self-creating God.

It is therefore not surprising that Clement of Alexandria confidently claims that the appellation τὸν αὐτοφυῆ in a tragic fragment is simply a circumlocution for τὸν δημιουργὸν νοῦν (*Str.* 5.14.114.3, GCS 2.403.20).²³ Moreover, the πατρικὸς νόος αὐτογένεθλος of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (fr. 39 des Places) is, in some measure at least, a secondary principle.²⁴ We may compare the following pronouncement in the *Anonymous Gnostic Writing* of the Codex Brucianus (p. 358.37ff. Schmidt-Till): "Du hast den Menschen in Deinem selbstentstandenen Verstande (αὐτοφυῆς νοῦς) und in der Überlegung (διάνοια) und dem vollkommenen Gedanken erzeugt. Dies ist der vom Verstand (νοῦς) erzeugte Mensch, welchem die Überlegung (διάνοια) Gestalt (μορφή) gegeben hat." Somewhat similarly, I believe, Numenius says of his Second God (i.e., the Demiurge) that αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν τε ἰδέαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, and that he is μιμητής of the First God (fr. 16 des Places). The verb αὐτοποιέω, which does not seem to be attested elsewhere, presumably indicates self-generation, if one is to judge from the use of the adjectival form αὐτοποιός by Sophocles, *O.C.* 698:

²² Cf. my "Historical background," 195 ff.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 195.

²⁴ Cf. H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Cairo, 1956) 79: "The action of the transcendent God is thought, consequently the first entity that issues from Him is His Intellect, the πατρικὸς νόος." The term αὐτοφυῆς occurs in an oracle which Lewy, *ibid.*, 181. n. 46, ascribes rightly or wrongly to the Chaldaean collection.

φύτευμ' [i.e., Athena's sacred olive] ἀχείρωτον αὐτοποιόν. According to Jebb ad loc.²⁵ αὐτοποιόν refers here to the olive's "miraculous *self-renewal* after the Persians had burnt it." One may compare the similar use of the cognate formulation αὐτοποίητος by Athenagoras, *Leg.* 34, PG 6. 968 (οὐ γὰρ αὐτοποίητον ἐπὶ γῆς τὸ κάλλος, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χειρὸς καὶ γνώμης πεμπόμενον τοῦ θεοῦ),²⁶ and by Ps.-Justin, *Qu. Chr.*, PG 6. 1442ff. (εἰ αὐτοπάρακτός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος καὶ οὐ ποιητός, ἔξ ἀνάγκης καὶ αὐτοποίητός ἐστιν). In all probability therefore Numenius thought of his Second God as a self-generating second principle modelling himself upon the pattern of the First God.²⁷ We may note by way of comparison that according to Iamblichus, *Myst.* 8.2, the static supreme divinity serves as παράδειγμα for the self-generated Second God, who is described as τοῦ αὐτοπάτορος αὐτογόνου καὶ μονοπάτορος θεοῦ. It is particularly important that Numenius characterizes the First God as static (ἔστώς) and the Second as mobile (κινούμενος).²⁸ Furthermore, according to Proclus, *In Ti.* 3. 103. 28ff. Diehl, the First God of Numenius thinks ἐν προσχρήσει τοῦ δευτέρου, whilst the Second God creates ἐν προσχρήσει τοῦ τρίτου, τὸν δὲ τρίτον κατὰ τὸν διανοούμενον (fr. 22 des Places). Numenius's Third God is none other than his version of the Platonic World Soul, described here as "Nous reasoning discursively." We may conclude that Numenius's Second God is on the one hand only partially separate from the First, and on the other only partially distinct from the Third. With this partial separation one may compare the role of the self-generated πατρικὸς νόος of the *Chaldaean Oracles* vis-à-vis the first principle, or, e.g., the status of the demiurgic δύναμις vis-à-vis the supreme divinity as described in the Ps.-Aristotelian *Mu.* 397b20ff. and elsewhere.²⁹ But particularly rewarding is a comparison of Nu-

²⁵ *Sophocles: The Oedipus Coloneus* (Cambridge, 1889) 119. Cf. Herodotus 3.55.

²⁶ The sentiment is precisely opposed to that of Aristaenetos cited on p. 178 above.

²⁷ J. H. Waszink asks (*Porphyre* [Fondation Hardt, Entretiens 12; Vandœuvres-Geneva, 1965] 159), "Y a-t-il ici peut-être une contamination de deux expressions possibles: αὐτὸς ποιεῖ ἑαυτὸν et ποιεῖ τὴν ιδέα καὶ τὸν κόσμον?"

²⁸ Fr. 15 des Places. Cf. also fr. 12 des Places: τὸν μὲν πρῶτον θεὸν ἀργὸν εἶναι ἔργων συμπάντων καὶ βασιλέα, τὸν δημιουργικὸν δὲ θεὸν ἡγεμονεῖν δι' οὐρανοῦ ἰόντα.

²⁹ Cf. p. 180f. above. On the topic of partial separation it may not be irrelevant to point to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.17.2: "Quacritur igitur, quemadmodum emissi sunt reliqui Aeonnes. *Utrum unius ei qui emisit, quemadmodum a sole radii, an efficaciter et partiliter, uti sit unusquisque eorum separatim, et suam figurationem habens, quemadmodum ab homine homo et a pecude pecus? Aut secundum germinationem, quemadmodum ab arbore rami?*" On this text and on the topic in general see A. Orbe, *Hacia*

menius's trinity with Irenaeus's account of a Valentinian exposition of the opening words of the Prologue to John's Gospel (*Haer.* 1.8.5f.):

Ἰωάννης ... βουλόμενος εἰπεῖν τὴν τῶν ὄλων γένεσιν, καθ' ἣν τὰ πάντα προέβαλεν ὁ πατήρ, ἀρχὴν τινα ὑποτίθεται τὸ πρῶτον γεννηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ δὴ καὶ υἱὸν καὶ μονογενῆ καὶ θεὸν κέκληκεν, ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα ὁ πατήρ προέβηκε σπερματικῶς. ὑπὸ δὲ τούτου φησὶ τὸν λόγον προβεβλήσθαι καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν ὄλην τῶν αἰώνων οὐσίαν, ἣν αὐτὸς ὕστερον ἐμόρφωσεν ὁ λόγος ... πρότερον διωστειλάς τὰ τρία, θεὸν καὶ ἀρχὴν καὶ λόγον, πάλιν αὐτὰ ἐνοεῖ, ἵνα καὶ τὴν προβολὴν ἐκατέρων δεῖξῃ ... καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἄμα καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐνωσιν. ἐν γὰρ τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡ ἀρχή, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς ὁ λόγος, κτλ.

Here the partial separation of the three entities πατήρ, ἀρχή and λόγος is stressed, but no attempt is made to clarify, as does Numenius, the nature of the interaction subsisting between the members of the triad. Nonetheless the similarity between the Numenian trinity and that presented in the above text of Irenaeus remains astounding, even though the latter's account with its emphasis upon προβολή presumably excludes self-generation.

Much more exciting from our viewpoint is the triad ἀγέννητον, αὐτογενές (or αὐτογέννητον), γέννητον which appears for the first time in Hippolytus's exposition of the system of the Peratae (*Haer.* 5.12, PG 16. 3162).³⁰ That this triad conforms to an accepted contemporary metaphysical scheme is suggested by its reoccurrence twice in the *Pistis Sophia*,³¹ as well as by its identity with the hierarchical pattern of later Neoplatonic (i.e., post-Plotinian) metaphysics. Plotinus, it will be recalled, dwells at length upon the self-creation of the One whilst not denying the self-production of Mind and Soul.³² Proclus on the other hand affirms that Mind and Soul are self-produced (αὐθυπόστατα) but adamantly denies self-production to the One.³³ A similar scheme can be identified in Iamblichus³⁴ and no doubt already in the fragment of Porphyry's *History of Philosophy* referred to above.³⁵

la primera teologia de la procesion del Verbo (Estudios Valencianos 1/2: Rome, 1958) 640ff.

³⁰ Cf. further *Haer.* 10.10, PG 16. 3419ff., and also the appearance of αὐτογενής as a secondary principle in Hippolytus's account of the Naassenes (*Haer.* 5.7, PG 16. 3130).

³¹ Pp. 2.2f. and 24.38f. Schmidt-Till.

³² Cf. p. 177 above and my "Historical background," 215ff.

³³ Cf. *In Prm.*, pp. 1147ff. Cousin, and my "Historical background," 217ff.

³⁴ Cf. *Myst.* 8.2 and also my "Historical background," 219f., and p. 183 above.

³⁵ Cf. p. 177 above.

It is a most remarkable fact that the earliest explicit evidence of this metaphysical scheme is to be found in Hippolytus's account of the Peratae.³⁶

This remarkable state of affairs indicates how important is the question of the status in Gnostic thought of the notion of self-generation and its vocabulary (i.e., adjectival formations in αὐτο-). Hippolytus specifically indicates that the αὐτογενές of the Peratae is made up of δυνάμεων ἄπειρόν τι πλῆθος ἐξ αὐτῶν γεγεννημένων (*Haer.* 5.12, *PG* 16. 3162), but for the most part it is the *vocabulary* of self-generation that appears in our Gnostic texts rather than the explicitly formulated notion. Adjectival formations indicative of self-generation occur in our documents both adjectivally and substantivised as names or titles with surprising frequency.³⁷ And the profusion becomes all the more surprising when one considers not only the total absence of the vocabulary in question (excepting the secular use of αὐτοφυής) from the writings of Philo of Alexandria³⁸ and Plutarch, whose writings form a useful yardstick by reason both of their subject matter and of their volume, but also the general dearth of such terminology in pre-Neoplatonic literature.³⁹ This does not mean that we need regard any of these terms as Gnostic neologisms. With the exception of αὐτοφυής they are all rare in texts of greater antiquity than our surviving Gnostic documents, but most of those that do occur in the latter can be traced back to the classical period. We have already noted αὐτοποιός which occurs for the first time in Sophocles.⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that αὐτογέννητος, too, is first attested in that tragedian (*Ant.* 864) and αὐτο-

³⁶ Although not explicit in the surviving fragments, a similar scheme seems to lie behind what we know of Numenius.

³⁷ Cf., e.g., the indices to C. Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften* 1 (3d ed. W. Till; GCS 45; Berlin, 1962) 390; W. C. Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502* (2d. ed. H. M. Schenke; TU 60; Berlin, 1972) 359; A. Böhlig, F. Wisse, and P. Labib, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2: The Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHS 4; Leiden, 1975) 225.

³⁸ With the exception of αὐτογενής (but not of a self-generating divinity) at *Mut.* 259f.; cf. my "Historical background," 209 n. 1.

³⁹ Maximus of Tyre employs αὐτογενής and αὐτοφυής in a secular context at *Or.* 16.6, p. 62.24f. Dübner. Aelius Aristides uses αὐτοπάτωρ in describing the self-generation of Zeus at *Or.* 43.7ff., p. 340.14ff. Keil. We have already noted the appearance of αὐτογένεθλος and perhaps αὐτοφυής in the *Chaldaean Oracles*; cf. p. 182 and note 24 above. On the occurrence of terms indicative of self-generation in Jewish-influenced and magical and other texts see my "Historical background," and my "A Hellenistic context for John 10, 29," *VC* 24 (1970) 245ff.

⁴⁰ Cf. p. 182f. above.

γενής in Aeschylus (*Supp.* 8).⁴¹ The earliest attestation of αὐτοφυής is likewise to be found in tragedy (Euripides fr. 593 Nauck² = Critias fr. 19 Diels-Kranz). Although adjectival compounds in αὐτο- are at least as old as Homer (cf., e.g., αὐτοδίδακτος), it is in fact remarkable how many occur for the first time in tragedy, particularly in choral sections.⁴² Many of them remained *hapax legomena* and may therefore be reasonably regarded as tragic neologisms. Their adoption by Aristotle gave to some of these compounds a somewhat dry and technical character. In general, however, they remained rare and definitely poetical in flavour, which explains why we find some of them resurrected in the writings of Oppian and Nonnus.⁴³

Against this background the abundant appearance in our Gnostic texts of the vocabulary of self-generation seems strange, to say the least, and clearly calls for explanation. That the revival and theological exploitation of such vocabulary was not an exclusively Gnostic phenomenon is indicated by Aelius Aristides' qualification of the self-generated Zeus as αὐτοπάτωρ,⁴⁴ as well as by Maximus of Tyre's utilisation of the term αὐτογενής,⁴⁵ which, as we have noted, was used apparently already by Aeschylus and in the meantime attested only once in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. Neither Aelius Aristides nor Maximus is likely to have been influenced by Gnostic terminology. In any case αὐτογενής in the latter author carries no theological overtones, nor indeed are there any significant such overtones in the one instance in which the term appears in Philo. Likewise Porphyry's insertion of the terms αὐτογέννητος, αὐτοπάτωρ, and αὐτογόνως into what purports to be an exposition of Plato⁴⁶ seems to exclude a specifically Gnostic source of inspiration. We may conclude that there are grounds for not holding Gnostics alone responsible for the sudden ascendancy in the second century of the vocabulary of self-generation. Rather we must suppose that such vocabulary was at that time in the air, as it were, and was seized upon with relish by Gnostics on account of its metaphysical, theological, and poetical flavour.

In what specific sect or school this vocabulary first achieved promi-

⁴¹ If Bamberger's conjecture be correct.

⁴² Cf. LSJ s.vv. in αὐθ- and αὐτ-.

⁴³ Cf. LSJ as indicated in the previous footnote. Synesius, too, indulges in such terms; cf. my "Historical background," 204f.

⁴⁴ Cf. n. 39 above.

⁴⁵ Cf. n. 39 above.

⁴⁶ Cf. p. 177 above.

nence may not be easy to decide. We know that divine self-generation was a common enough Stoic conception.⁴⁷ However, by the second century of our era pantheistic Stoicism was long out of favour. Contemporary Middle Platonism might seem a more likely source of inspiration for our Gnostic writers. But we have already noted the absence of the pertinent vocabulary from the writings of Plutarch. The notion and vocabulary in question are likewise absent from the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous (the only complete Middle Platonic handbook to survive) as well as from the remnants of other Middle Platonic texts. Numenius might be considered a more probable influence were it not for the absence of evidence that he ever used any of the pertinent adjectival formations. In all probability, however, some of the pertinent terms did appear in Neopythagorean texts, if we are to judge from [Iamblichus], *Theol. arithm.* 5, p. 3.17f. de Falco (ἐαυτήν γε μὴν γεννᾷ (sc. ἡ μονάς) καὶ ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς γεννᾶται ὡς αὐτοτελῆς καὶ ἄναρχος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος), which affirms the self-generation of the first principle, or Syrianus, *In Metaph.*, p. 142.23ff. Kroll (... Φιλολάου δὲ δι᾽ οὐροῦ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ εἶναι συνοχὴν τῆς τῶν κοσμικῶν αἰωνίας διαμονῆς τὴν αὐτογενῆ καὶ κρατιστεύουσαν, ἑπάντων δὲ ὡς εἶπεῖν τῶν ἄλλων Πυθαγορείων κατ' ἴχνη ταύτης τῆς θεωρίας τὴν περὶ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ὑπόληψιν διαθροσάντων), which asserts that practically all "Pythagoreans" (i.e., Neopythagoreans) claimed that not the first principle but the number series which proceeded from it was self-generated.⁴⁸ It is unfortunate that the surviving evidence is too sparse to permit any estimate of the extent to which the notion and the vocabulary of self-generation may have appeared in Neopythagorean literature.

There is, however, another area in which the pertinent vocabulary did demonstrably play a significant role. Adjectival formations indicative of self-generation occur with remarkable frequency in the oracular literature of the Roman empire.⁴⁹ Such terms obviously belonged to the genre, and this, of course, is one reason why αὐτογένεθλος appears in the *Chaldaean Oracles*. With what frequency such terms occurred in the Chaldaean collection it is hard to say. However, it is probably no coincidence that Porphyry, whose taste for oracles of every kind is

⁴⁷ Cf. my "Historical background," 195ff.

⁴⁸ Cf. my "Historical background," 204f. and 221f.

⁴⁹ Cf. K. Buresch, *Klaros: Untersuchungen zum Orakelwesen des späteren Altertums* (Leipzig, 1889) *passim*; H. N. Porter, "A Bacchic graffito from the Dolicheneum at Dura," *AJP* 69 (1948) 27ff.; A. Cameron, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Apollo," *JTS* 20 (1969) 240f.; my "Hellenistic context," 245ff.

well known, revived and introduced into Neoplatonism both the *Chaldaean Oracles*⁵⁰ and the vocabulary of self-generation. This vocabulary, which we have seen to be absent from Plotinus, reappears in a fragment of Porphyry's *History of Philosophy*⁵¹ and remains from then on a constant component of Neoplatonic terminology. It is a safe assumption that the hieratic vocabulary of oracular literature has influenced also our Gnostic writers. At what date the pertinent vocabulary was introduced into the oracular repertoire is not at all easy to decide. As it happens, all the relevant oracular material dates from the imperial period. However, we have already noted that the term αὐτοφυής appears as a divine title in a fragment of the *Perithous* ascribed to both Euripides and Critias.⁵² It is intriguing that the formulation τίκτων αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν which occurs in an associated fragment of the same tragedy (Euripides fr. 594 Nauck² = Critias fr. 18 Diels-Kranz) reappears in an oracular pronouncement quoted by Didymus the Blind, *Trin.* 3.2.1, *PG* 39. 788.

ἀθάνατος δε θεός, παναγήραος, ἀστυγέλικτος,
ἄρρητος κρυφίοις ὑπὸ δήνεσιν, αὐτογένεθλος,
τίκτων αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν, ἄει νέος, οὐ ποιητός.⁵³

We may conclude that the notion of divine self-generation is at least as old as the late fifth century B.C. and may have appeared in oracular pronouncements well prior to the imperial period.

That the notion of self-generation as it appears in Gnostic texts is not influenced solely by oracular literature is evident from the elaborate theory of the self-generated second principle which appears in Hippolytus's account of the Peratae: clearly at work here is the influence of some philosophical system, even if it not be that of the brand of school Platonism represented by the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous.⁵⁴ Neopythagorean influence cannot be excluded, but there must have been, too, many possible influences about which we know little or nothing. It is

⁵⁰ Cf. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 7.

⁵¹ Cf. p. 177 above.

⁵² Cf. p. 186 above, and my "Historical background," 195.

⁵³ Cf. also the verses quoted by Didymus at *Trin.* 3.2.9, *PG* 39. 792. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (reprinted Darmstadt, 1956) 231 n. 1, rightly compares the oracular verses ascribed to Apollo by Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1.7.1, *PL* 6. 149. It should be noted that these latter verses appear as part of a longer Apolline oracle in the *Theosophia Tubingensis*, p. 98.5ff. Buresch.

⁵⁴ For traces of school Platonism in a Nag Hammadi text cf. J. Zandee, "Les enseignements de Silvain et le platonisme," *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (ed. J.-E. Ménard; NHS 7; Leiden, 1975) 158ff.

particularly suggestive that Varro (apud Augustine, *Civ.* 7.28) identifies the Platonic Forms with Minerva/Athena, sprung from the head of Zeus; that according to Philo, *Op.* 100, μόνος ... ὁ ἐπτά οὔτε γεννᾶν πέφυκεν οὔτε γεννᾶσθαι. δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι (i.e. not Pythagoreans) τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦτον ἐξομοίουσι τῇ ἀμῆτορι Νίκη καὶ Παρθένῳ, ἦν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Διὸς κεφαλῆς ἀναφανῆναι λόγος ἔχει; and that Justin, *1 Apol.* 64, *PG* 6. 425, speaks of Athena as the πρώτη ἔννοια of Zeus;⁵⁵ whilst Plutarch, *Isid.* 62, 376a, indicates that τὴν μὲν γὰρ Ἰσιν πολλακίς τῷ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ὀνόματι καλοῦσι (i.e., the Egyptians) φράζονται τοιοῦτον λόγον "ἦλθον ἀπ' ἐμαυτῆς," ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτοκινήτου φορᾶς δηλωτικόν. This etymology can have been formulated only on Semitic ground.⁵⁶ Behind it there lies presumably a conception of a self-generated second principle, identical with the Platonic World of Forms, which anticipates the doctrine put forward by Porphyry in his *History of Philosophy*.

We may conclude that self-generation, whether ascribed to first or secondary principles, was a frequent feature of the theologico-philosophical speculation of the early Roman empire. It is within this context and not in isolation that we must view the use of the language of self-generation in our Gnostic texts.

DISCUSSION

JOHN WHITTAKER: I HAVE examined the vocabulary of self-generation in philosophical and theological systems of later antiquity in order to provide a background for its use in Gnostic texts. Far from being a ridiculous concept, as Charlotte Baynes believed, the idea of divine self-generation had arisen in the Greek world by the fifth century B.C.; it flowered in the second century after Christ, especially in the Gnostic writings; withdrew in Plotinus; reappeared in Porphyry; and was used prolifically in later Neoplatonism. The concept, though not the vocabulary, is at home in Stoic philosophy, with its view that God produces himself and is the world. As Seneca wrote in a fragment

⁵⁵ Cf. likewise Athenagoras, *Leg.* 22, *PG* 6. 940, where Athena is defined as ἡ φρόνησις διὰ πάντων διήκουσα. and Cornutus, *N.D.* 20, p. 35.6 Lang. Note that Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2, uses the verb *exsilire* to describe the procession from Simon Magus (= Zeus) of Ennoia = Helen = Minerva.

⁵⁶ Cf. R. Marcus, "Note on an Aramaic etymology in Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*," *AJP* 63 (1942) 335. On divine self-generation in Egyptian thought see E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* 5 (New York, 1956) 176ff.

preserved by Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.7 (Fr. 15 Haase) "Deus ipse se fecit."

In the period of the Roman Empire, first principles were often called self-produced, notably in Plotinus's *Ennead* 6.8, which speaks of the self-production of the One and argues that the first principle can't exist by necessity but only by a free act of its will. Later Neoplatonism taught rather that the first principle is ungenerated, while the secondary principles are self-produced. On this view, the first principle's perfection demands that it be static, whilst the secondary principles proceed from the first without being actively produced by it.

In Gnostic texts the vocabulary was applied sometimes to the first principle, sometimes to secondary ones. Hippolytus's accounts of the Peratae and of the system of the Naassenes provide important examples of the latter use. I would conclude that there was a school or a number of schools of philosophy in the second century which claimed that the first principle was unproduced, and the second self-generated. The Gnostic texts provide the earliest evidence for this position.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: In the *Tripartite Tractate*, the first principle is said to be self-generated, and this self-generation is the Son. Is this usage Middle Platonic?

WHITTAKER: We don't find precisely this. But the fact that similar formulations appear in Hippolytus and elsewhere points to the existence of some school propounding this type of system. The appearance of the vocabulary in Gnostic texts is all the more striking when one considers its absence from Plutarch and Philo. Its renaissance in the second century is, I believe, also partly due to the influence of oracular literature. Similar diction had occurred in tragic literature, whose language in turn influenced the oracular writings. And, of course, we do meet the vocabulary in question in the *Sibylline Oracles* and possibly in the *Chaldaean Oracles* as well as in other oracular documents of later antiquity.

MICHEL TARDIEU: As you have shown, the Gnostics did not use the vocabulary of self-generation spontaneously; the case is the same with the *Chaldaean Oracles*. You cite the *Oracles* on the δις ἐπέκεινα, viz., the second principle called αὐτογενής. Given the amphibology of the notion of νοῦς, as demonstrated by Festugière, don't you think that, on the one hand, we must apply αὐτογενής to the ἀπὸς ἐπέκεινα and, on the other, apply it also to the world soul? In a little-known text of Pselius, a diatribe Πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς ἀμελοῦντας, the world

soul in relation to the goddess Hecate is described with the words ὄν ἐστὶν αὐτῆ οὐκ ἔχουσα γένεσιν, “the very one that does not have generation is an existant.” The whole description of Hecate shows clearly that we should admit the world soul among the self-generated principles. On the other hand, the Stoic conception of the soul is defined by self-generated motion; you have demonstrated this in your article in *De Jamblique à Proclus* (*Fondation Hardt, Entretiens 21*), 195-202.

WHITTAKER: Although Plotinus concentrates on the self-production of the One, it follows for him that Mind and Soul are likewise self-produced. There is no reason why this position shouldn't be found earlier; for one thing it fits with the identification of the world soul with the Stoic God who is self-producing, who both is the world and produces it. In this context the notion of a self-producing world soul is appropriate.

TARDIEU: Also in your earlier article, you showed that the origin of the vocabulary of self-constitution was found in the tragic literature, especially in the fragment of the *Perithous* which applies the concept of self-generation to χρόνος. Equally, the aeons are said to be self-generating in the Gnostic texts. Wouldn't it be interesting to show that finally this vocabulary of self-constitution, which is banal, comes from a philosophical adaptation of a mythical vocabulary in a specific application of a universal mythological model?

WHITTAKER: Perhaps it was found necessary to use this vocabulary to make the desired point. Similarly Plotinus uses the vocabulary of generation with reference to Mind and Soul, although he obviously does not intend it literally.

HANS JONAS: It seems also to me that the concept of self-generation stemmed from mythological thought and was only later taken into philosophy. The first purely philosophical usage is in Spinoza's concept of the *causa sui*: here God, or Substance, is its own cause of existence. There is no hint of becoming, will, action, or process. In antiquity, in contrast, the concept never shed the flavor of its mythological origin.

WHITTAKER: I think that this is because the notion of will was essential to the concept in its Neoplatonic context.

TARDIEU: The Phoenix, the Bird of Time, was popular among the

Gnostics because it was self-generating. There is a fine reference to the bird in the *Untitled Writing [OnOrgWld]* (CG II,5).

JOEL FINEMAN: (*To Whittaker*) You have traced many similarities in usage of the vocabulary of self-generation. Is there a distinctively Gnostic deployment of these terms?

WHITTAKER: I haven't found one. But I was seeking in this paper only to exclude Baynes's interpretation and to provide comparative material so that this further question can be pursued.

WAYNE MEEKS: You have given us hints about why this language was taken up by the Platonists, what problems it solved for them. What can we say about the functions of the language in Gnostic texts?

WHITTAKER: When not exploited solely for its mysterious quality, it seems to be related to similar problems. If the vocabulary is applied to the first principle, it is to affirm that this was produced by its free will. When it is referred to the second, which is said to spring forth by its own will, it preserves the static perfection of the first. The really striking examples are of its application to the second principle.

G. C. STEAD: There is an analogical problem in the mathematical Platonists, like Eudorus of Alexandria. They had to distinguish the One in its purity from the One as the source of the numbers, and thus they had two Ones.

WHITTAKER: The Neopythagoreans faced the same problem as well. They fall into two schools: some held that the numbers were generated by the first principle, whilst others believed that the numbers generated themselves out of the first principle.

STEAD: Yes. I mentioned Eudorus especially since he takes the concept back to the first century B.C.

WHITTAKER: Yes. It is all the more striking, then, that the vocabulary isn't found in Philo, since he seems to have been influenced by Eudorus. Also Plutarch was familiar with the views of Eudorus.

STEAD: It would have been difficult for Philo to maintain that the Biblical Father God was $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$. He did, of course, say that God is $\acute{\omicron} \text{ } \Omega\nu$; in a way, this is his equivalent.

WHITTAKER: Perhaps this may imply that Philo was unsympathetic to the notion of self-generation.

ATTRIDGE: I am not sure that the *Tripartite Tractate* is typical of Valentinian texts in its application of this vocabulary, but I do see two functions for it in this work. In the first place, there are the ontological and metaphysical problems shared with Middle and Neoplatonism. In addition, there is a soteriological, archetypal use. On this point, what the first principle does with itself in self-generation is what the individual does in attaining illumination. The aeons come into existence from the potentiality of the thought of the Father. The archetype of this movement on every level of being is what the first, self-generated principle does: he attains actuality by realizing the thought of the Father.

TARDIEU: (*To Whittaker*) In your paper here and in your article in *De Jamblique à Proclus*, you cite a beautiful but difficult text from Porphyry's *Historia Philosophiae* 4, where there is an abundant vocabulary of self-generation. I myself cannot believe that Porphyry wrote this at a time when he already knew the Gnostics. How would you situate this text in the Porphyrian corpus?

WHITTAKER: I too suspect that Porphyry was influenced here not by Gnostic texts but rather by oracular works as well as by no longer extant Middle Platonic expositions. That in a similar situation Plotinus avoided the specific vocabulary of self-generation indicates presumably his lack of sympathy for Gnostic and/or oracular writings. Porphyry, who made the vocabulary at home in Neoplatonism, was, of course, sympathetic to oracular literature, and this was his most likely source of inspiration.

LA GNOSE VALENTINIENNE ET LES ORACLES CHALDAÏQUES

PAR

MICHEL TARDIEU

WILHELM Kroll a-t-il eu raison, pour situer le milieu culturel d'où sont nés les *Oracles chaldaïques*, de les décrire comme une *gnosis ethnica* dont le versant chrétien serait le valentinisme? Cette page de Kroll, bien oubliée aujourd'hui, mérite d'être lue, car elle fournit l'essentiel de l'argument ordinairement reçu pour rapprocher *OrCh* et gnose valentinienne : « Nam illis (= les systèmes gnostiques) quoque propositum est, ut duplici via, cognitione et ritibus sacris, ad salutem ducant hominem viamque a deo ad mundum ferentem ideo potissimum multis describunt, ut illustrent, quomodo regrediatur ad deum homo; illa quoque eis solis salutem pollicentur, qui suis initientur mysteriis et his meliorem quandam generis humani partem contineri gloriantur. Ut oraculis a dis sibi solis datis nituntur Chaldaei, sic gnostici evangeliiis similibusque libris veram continentibus traditionem ceteris ignotam. Utrisque sublimem tenet sedem summus deus ab iisque tantum conspicitur, qui initiati sunt et ne ab his quidem sine aliqua difficultate; vulgus non ultra quam ad alterum deum huic mundo propiorem accedit. Utraque proficiscuntur e thiasis et mysteriis et ex his et placita e philo-

Les textes gnostiques coptes, découverts près de Nag Hammadi, sont cités d'après les pages et les lignes des fac-similés (NHC), le Brucianus et l'Askewianus d'après l'édition de C. Schmidt (Leipzig, 1892, et Copenhague, 1925); les textes provenant de la tradition indirecte d'après les éditions critiques ou, à l'occasion, d'après la compilation de W. Völker (Tübingen, 1932). Les *Oracles chaldaïques* (*OrCh*) sont cités d'après les pages et les lignes de l'édition de W. Kroll, *De oraculis chaldaicis* (Breslau, 1894 [Kr.]), avec renvoi à W. Theiler, *Die chaldäischen Orakel und die Hymnen des Synesios* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, Geistesw. Kl., t. 18/1; Halle (Saale), 1942), repris dans *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1966) 252-301 (Th.); H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Le Caire, 1956 [L.]); P. Hadot *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 1-2 (Paris, 1968 [Ha¹, Ha²]). Kroll, Theiler, Lewy et Hadot font état du contexte de chaque citation chez les néoplatoniciens; l'édition Des Places (Paris, 1971), qui l'a éliminé, reste utile pour l'apparat des *testimonia*. Les textes manichéens arabes sont cités d'après les pages et les lignes de la compilation de A. Afšār-i Širāzī, *Mutūn-i 'arabi wa fārsi dar bāra-yi Māni va mānaviyyat* (Téhéran, 1335/1956 [Af.]).

sophia, Platonica imprimis et Pythagorea, petita et vilem superstitionem recipiant» (p. 70). En dépit de ces trois points de rencontre évidents que constitue l'adoption par les Valentinien puis par les Chaldéens d'une conception générale du salut fondée sur le rite initiatique, d'une théodicée de tradition platonicienne mais aboutissant à la dualité des principes et d'une anthropologie déterministe enracinée dans la pratique populaire, Kroll ne pouvait faire autrement que conclure : «Neque tamen a gnosi Christiana Chaldaeus profectus esse censendus est; nihil enim in carmine inest Christiani».

L'hypothèse de Kroll rattachant le développement chaldaïque au contexte doctrinal qui vit l'apparition des gnozes, et au gnosticisme valentinien en particulier, tout en refusant un rapport de filiation du second au premier, n'eut pas au début de ce siècle un grand retentissement dans le monde savant. Le point de vue soutenu dans la dissertation de 1894, Kroll le réaffirme l'année suivante dans le *RhM* (50 [1895] 639) : «Wir können es (= le poème chaldaïque) sehr wohl als ein Dokument heidnischer Gnosis bezeichnen», ainsi que quatre ans plus tard dans la *Real Encyclopädie* [PW] (3 [1899] col. 2045, 34-36) : «Christliches scheint zu fehlen, jedoch bietet die beste Analogie zu unserem Gedicht die christliche Gnosis». Du côté des philologues classiques, Bidez (*Vie de Porphyre*, 88 n. 2) et Cumont (*Lux Perpetua*, 365) reprennent sans le discuter le point de vue de Kroll. Également M. P. Nilsson dans sa *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (2¹, 1950), point de vue inchangé dans la 3^e édition (Munich, 1974), p. 480 : «Sie (= les *OrCh*) sind der Gnosis so nahe verwandt, dass sie mit Fug eine heidnische Gnosis genannt worden sind»; p. 281 : «Das zweite nachchristliche Jahrhundert war die Blütezeit der Gnosis, die mit den chaldäischen Orakeln nahe verwandt ist, nicht nur in der Lehre, sondern auch in der Bewertung der Magie».

Deux similitudes de détail furent suggérées, mais non établies, par Cumont et Festugière. Dans ses *Recherches sur le manichéisme*, 1 (Bruxelles, 1908) 34 n. 5, le premier se demande si l'hebdomade chaldaïque des deux triades et du troisième dieu ὑπεζωκός, plutôt qu'introduite arbitrairement dans les *Oracles* par les néoplatoniciens, comme le pensaient Kroll et Bidez, ne proviendrait pas d'une transformation philosophique de l'hebdomade manichéenne des trois créations («ap-pels») et du Tertius Legatus. Dans *SO* 26 (1948) 77, le second note à propos de la doctrine du ὑπεζωκός qu'«il vaudrait la peine de rechercher si c'est à la théologie orthodoxe ou à quelqu'une des sectes gnostiques que l'auteur des *Oracula* l'a empruntée».

Du côté des gnosticisants, les rapprochements de Kroll ne suscitèrent aucun commentaire particulier chez Bousset; son article de l'*ARW* 18 (1915) 134-175, dans lequel il traite assez brillamment de la métaphysique des *Oracles* pour avoir amené Kroll l'année suivante (*RhM* 71 [1916] 355) à changer d'avis sur la question de la relation entre le Père et l'Intellect. est surtout préoccupé de refaire l'histoire de l'exégèse en prenant comme premier maillon un Cornélius Labeo, lecteur des *Oracles*, situé dans la seconde moitié du 1^{er} s.! C'est un trait de la science critique à l'époque de Bousset de dissoudre de mystérieux personnages dans la brume d'une datation haute, afin de reconstruire par là plus aisément une chronologie postérieure. Le même processus s'est produit avec Posidonius pour l'histoire de la philosophie, avec Marcion pour l'histoire de l'Eglise.

A la nébuleuse recherche des sources, allait bientôt succéder l'enquête phénoménologique. A remarquer toutefois qu'une seule référence explicite aux *Oracles* est contenue dans H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (t. 1, 3^e éd., p. 204 n. 1), à propos de l'identité de vue — déjà bien notée chez Kroll, 59-60 — entre Valentinien et Chaldéens sur le déterminisme astral, et si les *Oracles* ne sont pas mentionnés dans le tableau général des «gnoses» de la p. 6, la description d'une conception générale du monde par le caractère extensif du concept de gnose implique qu'il faut les y inclure. Ce que fera Puech à deux reprises : *Où en est le problème du gnosticisme?* (1934) = *En quête de la gnose*, 1, p. 164; *Phénoménologie de la Gnose* (1952-1953) = *ibid.*, p. 186.

Cependant, le réexamen du dossier n'eut jamais lieu. Occasionnellement, l'une ou l'autre de ses pièces (cf. Nock, *Essays*, 950) serviront à grossir les collections de parallèles chères aux gnosticisants. Mais aucun d'entre eux ne prit acte des réserves formulées par celui qui imprima à la recherche un bond décisif, Hans Lewy. Ce dernier reprit, mais non systématiquement, les points particuliers de rapprochement entre gnose valentinienne et *OrCh* dégagés par Kroll, tantôt les complétant tantôt rejetant tel ou tel. Mais contrairement à son devancier, il refusa aussi bien de considérer les *Oracles* comme une gnose païenne que de parler d'«influence» des Gnostiques sur les Chaldéens (voir surtout p. 387, 390 et 397). Les notions de «source», de «milieu» et d'«influence» restent, il est vrai, des concepts flous et très difficiles à manier quand il s'agit de littératures parvenues jusqu'à nous à l'état de fragments et à travers des interprétations. Néanmoins, aujourd'hui où l'apport de textes nouveaux, d'éditions et de commen-

taires soignés de textes connus permet une meilleure approche des deux domaines, il est plus facile de rassembler systématiquement toutes les pièces du dossier, de voir si d'autres thèmes et termes techniques peuvent être pris en compte et quelles conclusions peut tirer de ces analyses l'histoire des idées.

Le modèle d'exposition des fragments des *Oracles*, tiré des manuels scolastiques (métaphysique, psychologie, démonologie, cosmologie, éthique) par les éditeurs de la Renaissance et du 17^e s., a été repris par Kroll et ses continuateurs. Cet ordre sera abandonné. Un regroupement de tous les thèmes connexes et dérivés peut être tenté autour des cinq propositions suivantes :

I. Les éléments du corps de l'univers sont assemblés selon un schéma vertical à progression descendante.

II. La progression se fait par conjonction et disjonction des opposés.

III. Le ciel des fixes et le cercle de la lune ne sont que les limites supérieure et inférieure de la médiété.

IV. Les astres signifient mais ne produisent pas.

V. Il y a en dehors du monde un résidu de la matière ayant servi au démiurge.

Chaque proposition se réfère ou/et s'oppose à une doctrine soutenue préalablement ou dans le milieu contemporain. La genèse particulière à chacune d'entre elles importe, cependant, moins que le fait d'avoir été tenues en même temps et soumises à un traitement organique similaire, car ce sont les schèmes, et non les matériaux qui les remplissent, qui déterminent les rapports de dépendance.

Proposition I

Les éléments se lisent et s'énoncent de haut en bas : du premier terme de la dualité aux médiétés, et des médiétés au terme extrême. Ainsi, au schéma du *Timée* à quatre termes et deux médiétés (feu — air + eau — terre), le *De mundo* substituera une proportion à cinq termes dont trois médiétés (éther — feu + air + eau — terre). Si, d'un point de vue analytique, à l'éther qui comprend le ciel des fixes et les sept planètes selon l'ordre égyptien, on ajoute les trois médiétés et l'élément qui est tout au fond, la terre, on obtient un ensemble à douze termes, figuré géométriquement par le dodécaèdre ou par son équivalent astrologique, le zodiaque.

Les *Oracles*, qui pas plus ici qu'ailleurs n'ont fait d'exposé descriptif, abrègent et transforment l'ensemble selon une série de quatre termes

éther
 |
 soleil
 |
 lune
 |
 air

(33, 24-34, 3 Kr. = 142 n. 287 et 182 n. 26 L.), soit en haut, l'élément igné du ciel des fixes, au milieu les astres errants disposés selon l'ordre récent, c'est-à-dire le soleil en position «intercalée» (μεσεμβολῆσαι, selon l'expression des œuvres en prose des Julien, cf. 39, 11 Kr.) entre planètes supérieures et inférieures dont la lune marque la limite vers le bas, et enfin l'air élément médian du monde sublunaire. Dans ce type de composition, la qualité est fonction du rapport de proximité ou d'éloignement du premier. A l'éther parfait des corps divins où la nature est immuable et impassible, s'opposera la nature muable et passible des êtres éphémères d'en bas. Les *Oracles* décriront cet antagonisme de l'ordre du haut et du désordre du bas par l'opposition cosmologique et métaphysique des sommets et de la lie, du feu et de la terre, des intelligibles et de la matière.

Les Valentiniens avaient également adopté le modèle vertical à progression descendante, les éléments se succédant du plus parfait au moins parfait entre un ciel soumis à la rotation de sa sphéricité et une terre immobile. Il serait faux de déduire d'*Ask.* 336, 17-20 qu'ils avaient conservé l'ordre ancien des planètes encore défendu par le *De mundo* : 5 + 2 (Soleil et Lune). Car c'est un procédé habituel à la démonologie astrologique du temps de grouper d'un côté les cinq planètes sans fonctions mais aux noms inchangés et inchangeables, de l'autre les deux planètes essentielles au fonctionnement, à la fois sans noms et capables de recevoir tous les noms. Dans le schéma vertical traditionnel, les Valentiniens intégrèrent l'ordre récent des planètes venu, disait-on, de la Chaldée, pour les mêmes raisons d'exotisme qui leur font assimiler dans leur platonisme d'école les mythes venus de l'Orient biblique. La tradition indirecte, occidentale et orientale, est unanime sur la dépendance des coryphées du platonisme astrologique, Valentin, Bardesane, Théodote et Marcos, par rapport à l'apotélesmatique chaldéenne. Titres d'ouvrages perdus, fragments divers conservés, traités entiers (*Ask.* et *Bruc.*) attestent son utilisation pour elle-même et à des fins doctrinales (bref rappel dans W. et H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 318-329). Mais ces premiers introducteurs de la science

mathématique et symbolique dans le christianisme en furent aussi les premiers critiques (cf. propos. IV), et la profusion des écoles gnostiques s'explique essentiellement par les divergences d'interprétation en matière d'astrologie. La primauté du Dragon par rapport au zodiaque et aux planètes (cf. *Ask.* 317, 20sq), surveillant depuis son pôle la totalité cosmique (*Elenchos* 4 47, 2 [GCS 26, p. 69, 13-16 W.]), enroulé «au grand commencement du ciel» et principe du mouvement de la génération universelle (5 16, 14 [p. 113, 19-23]), de nature ténébreuse (cf. *Ask.* 317, 16-18; 332, 3: ΠΚΑΚΕ ΜΠΕΔΡΑΚΩΝ = ζοφοειδῆ dans la *Thémélios* d'astrologie chaldaïque publié par Pitra, *Analecta* V/2, p. 300, 5; chez les Manichéens, tête et queue du Dragon appartiennent également au monde démonique et ténébreux des astres errants où elles se substituent au Soleil et à la Lune promus à la fonction céleste d'épuration de la lumière, cf. al-Bīrūnī, p. 215, 19-21 Af.) et anti-soleil par essence (*Ask.* 332, 2-10), présuppose la spéculation chaldéenne sur l'extension de cette constellation du pôle de l'écliptique aux nœuds ascendant et descendant de l'orbite lunaire. Autre exemple : la christologie héliaque de l'*EpRh* [*On Res*] est inconcevable sans la croyance à la fonction attractive de la radiation, inséparable de l'adoption du système chaldéen des planètes.

Toutefois, ces dernières n'occupent plus la position haute au-dessous des fixes mais tout de même dans l'éther, que leur attribuait le schéma traditionnel. Désormais, entre sommets et lie, pour parler comme les Gnostiques : entre lieux de feu et de lumière qui mènent au Père et Dieu invisible (*Ask.* 356, 2; 368, 1-2) et lieux de glace et de neige qui conduisent au chaos ténébreux (*Ask.* 376, 21), les astres errants constituent «la voie de la médiété» (ΤΕΖΙΗ ΝΤΜΗΤΕ, *Ask.* 355, 11), qui forme avec le zodiaque la sphère du destin.

Les *Oracles*, qui placent eux aussi l'Heimarménè entre éther et air, attribuent au Soleil à l'intérieur de cet ensemble médian une fonction de médiété cosmique universelle. Fixé dans la totalité cosmique «au lieu du cœur» (κραδίης τόπω ἐστήριξεν, Proclus, *In R.* 2 220, 15 = 124 n. 221d L. = 281 n. 100 Th.), il est de par sa mitoyenneté absolue «centre» du ciel (36, 7 Kr. = 96 n. 126 L.) et des sphères (51, 21 Kr. = 276, 284 n. 108, 286 Th. = 195 n. 75 L.); par ses sept rayons (ἐπτάκτινα θεόν. 17, 22 Kr. = 295 Th. = 199 n. 97 L.) il repousse et attire aussi bien les astres qui le précèdent que les éléments qui le suivent dans la progression, l'effet attractif de sa radiation ne s'exerçant pas seulement sur les corps célestes qui l'accompagnent, mais sur la totalité des vivants qui peuplent le monde sublunaire :

quod feruor, quemadmodum omnes res euocat et ad se ducit — ut etiam fructus e terra surgentes in altitudinem per calorem uidemus, non minus aque uapores a fontibus ad nubes per arcus excitari— eadem ratione solis impetus uehemens, radiis trigoni forma porrectis, insequentes stellas ad se perducit, et ante currentes ueluti refrenando retinendoque non patitur progredi in alterius trigoni signum [esse], sed a se regredi (Vitruve, Arch. 9 1 12 Soub.).

Centre du mouvement qui entraîne les êtres vers le bas, le Soleil sera donc aussi centre du mouvement qui les ramène vers le haut. Car lui-même, après avoir projeté ses rayons vers la terre, les réintègre à leur source, de même que, par l'effet attractif de sa radiation corps ignés (comètes, étoiles filantes, torches), détachés de l'axe, peuvent revenir au terme de leur course à leur point de départ (cf. Pline, 2 50).

L'immixtion des dogmes astrologiques dans cette physique de souche platonico-aristotélécienne explique la formation et la fréquence des thèmes et termes techniques fondamentaux relatifs à la condition de l'âme chez les Gnostiques et dans les *Oracles*. Selon la formule de Censorin, «eum (= le Soleil), qui stellas ipsas quibus mouemur permouet, animam nobis dare qua regamur» (*Die nat.* 8, 3 [p. 13, 23-24 Hu.]).

Les «torches puissantes descendus du Père» (54, 11-12 KΓ. = 197 n. 84 L.) et le soleil, qui tend vers le bas ses rayons puis les fait remonter à leur source, seront le paradigme de l'aventure de l'âme sortie du Père «resplendissante de feu» (φέγγουσα πυρί, 53, 9 KΓ. = 260 n. 7c L.), mais «feu lumineux» (πῦρ φαεινόν, 47, 7 KΓ. = 291 n. 129 Th. = 86 n. 79 L.) descendu vers la «terre d'infortune» (χθονὶ δυσμóρω, 52, 4 KΓ. = 290 Th. = 172 n. 402 L.), jusqu'au jour de son retour à la «fleur de son feu» (πυρὸς ἄνθος), la source paternelle (= 24, 4-5 KΓ.). Ce double mouvement de descente et de remontée est bien décrit dans l'oracle sur la dérive de l'âme, cité et commenté par Psellus, *Ex.*, PG 122, col. 1129 C-D. De préférence à la reconstruction de Pléthon adoptée par Theiler 291, le voici tel que Lewy 189 n. 45 l'a reconstitué :

διζηται ψυχῆς ὄχετόν, ὅθεν ἐν τινὶ τάξει σώματι θητεύουσος ἑπέβη καὶ πῶς) ἐπὶ τάξιν αὐθις ἀναστήσεις, ἱερῶ λόγῳ ἔργον ἐνώσας. τοῦτ' ἔστι ζήτει τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ψυχῆς, πόθεν παρήχθη καὶ ἐδουλεύσε σώματι καὶ πῶς ἂν τις ταύτην ἀναστησάμενος καὶ ἐγείρας διὰ τῶν τελεστικῶν ἔργων ἐπαναγάγῃ ὅθεν ἀφίκετο.

«Cherche le canal de l'âme (= le conduit par lequel le feu divin dérive jusqu'au monde, autrement dit : le cours divin de l'âme), d'où dans

une certaine série, pour être salariée du corps, <elle est descendue et comment> dans son ordre propre, à nouveau, tu la feras se lever, si tu joins le rite à la parole sacrée. C'est-à-dire : cherche le principe de l'âme, d'où elle a été égarée (παρήχθη : παρα- sert à marquer ici la déviance de l'âme; selon le témoignage de Jamblique, *De anima*, conservé par Stobée, *Anth.* I 49, 37 = t. I, p. 375, 9 Wachs., les Gnostiques décrivaient pareillement le mal de l'âme comme dé-mence ou dé-viation, παράνοια ἢ παρέκβασις. Des Places n'a pas compris le sens de παρήχθη; en traduisant : «a été produite», il recopie le traducteur latin : «producta») et asservie au corps, et comment quel-qu'un, ayant ressuscité cette âme (interprétation chrétienne de Psellus ou plutôt de sa source, Procope; ἀναστησάμενος και est devenu sans aucune justification ἄνευ κρίσεως chez Des Places) et l'ayant éveillée (selon Lewy, interprétation de Proclus qui citerait Platon, *Phdr.* 245a 3; c'est possible, mais plus vraisemblable est la réminiscence chez Procope du ἔγειρε και ἀνάστα d'*Eph.* 5, 14) par l'accomplissement des rites, l'a reconduite là d'où elle est venue».

Comme l'a bien vu Lewy, cet oracle devait appartenir à la collection de Proclus, qui cite son corollaire dans l'*In R.* 2 99, 1 à propos des «âmes éphémères» (ψυχαὶ ἐφήμεροι) du mythe d'Er 617d 8-9, âmes «dont les dieux (= 48, 14-17 Kr. = 291 Th. = 189 n. 45 L.) disent que, tant qu'elles parcourent la génération, elles sont mercenaires, mais que si elles sont mercenaires à la nuque indomptée, elles font à nouveau la montée d'ici-bas et quittent la génération».

Les deux textes ont en commun la même doctrine et la même terminologie d'origine platonicienne. Le verbe θητεύειν, particulier aux *Oracles*, sert à décrire ici et là la condition servile de l'âme égarée dans l'existence, mais égarement provisoire, puisqu'à nouveau (le πάλιν de Proclus renvoie à l'αὐθις de l'oracle cité par Psellus) l'âme recouvre son état premier. Une telle attitude est constante «au siècle de l'anxiété» et définit d'abord l'essence même de la gnose, qui est science et expérience de la ὑπόβασις et de l'ἐπάνοδος, la première marquant l'entrée dans la déficience (ὕστέρημα, ὤτα) du monde sensible, la seconde signifiant le retour à la réalité plénière de soi-même (πλήρωμα, χωκ) : «qui connaîtra ainsi sait d'où il vient et où il va», déclare l'auteur de l'homélie valentinienne (NHC I 22, 14-15), et l'oracle cité plus haut sur l'ὄχετος ψυχῆς pose les mêmes questions que *Exc. Thdot.* 78, 2 : τίνες ἡμεν κτῆ.

Non seulement le système astral fixe à l'âme le sens général de son mouvement descendant et remontant, au terme duquel archè et télos

s'identifient, mais le feu d'en haut détermine aussi son lieu propre, ce qui en elle est divin et constitue sa nature première, véritable et perdurable. Cette partie céleste de l'âme sera appelée ἀκτίς par les Gnostiques chrétiens (Valentiniens des NHC I 45, 31; «Séthiens» de l'*Elenchos* 5 19, 17 [p. 120, 2-3 W.] et des NHC VII 4, 5-6) et par les *Oracles* (118 n. 200 L.; mais aussi dans un oracle de la *Théosophie* cité par Lewy 18 n. 46, 8), σπινθήρ par tous les Gnostiques (voir dossier dans mon article *REAug* 21 [1975] 227sq., textes 1-23) et par les *Oracles* (26, 5 Kr. = 289 Th. = 179 n. 8 et 358-360 L. = *REAug* texte 25), αὐγή par les *Oracles* (52, 12 Kr. = 294 Th. = 171 n. 396 L.) et ὄχετός également par les *Oracles* seuls (51, 4 Kr. = 291 Th. = 189 n. 45 L.; cf. aussi 153 n. 320 L.). Chacune de ces ἀκτῖνες ἀγῆται (20, 6 Kr.) ou βολαί (Plotin 6 4,3 : 4) est une parcelle de divin venue des «mondes» (= les astres), c'est-à-dire une vision de Dieu : αὐγαὶ πυρώδεις, οἶαι δὴ τινες αἱ τῶν διαττόντων ὑποδρομαί, ἄς θεοπτίας οἱ μεμηνότες (= les Chaldéens) ἀξιοῦσι καλεῖν (Psellus, *Op. daem.* 22, p. 33, 20-22 Boiss.); «jetée» (Théodote) dans ce monde-ci pour y être «mercenaire» (*OrCh*), elle y conservera l'inaltérabilité de ses origines. Terminologie qui restera longtemps fixée dans la mémoire des hommes (cf. dossier *REAug* textes 26-39) puisqu'elle est encore présente dans le piétisme romantique, chez le jeune Hegel, Kierkegaard et Andersen. Nul mieux que ce dernier (*Peiter, Peter et Peer*, 1868) ne saura décrire l'origine céleste de cette âme, dont l'être profond découle de la divinité astrale de l'ange et dont l'imagerie au terme de son histoire ressasse les formules du finale du mythe d'Er : «Avez-vous bien regardé le ciel par une nuit étoilée, et vu tomber les étoiles filantes? ... C'est comme si une petite lumière de Noël tombait du ciel et s'éteignait; c'est une étincelle d'âme venue de Notre-Seigneur, qui se précipite vers la terre, et au moment où elle pénètre dans notre atmosphère plus dense, plus lourde, l'éclat se perd, il reste seulement ce que nos yeux ne sont pas capables de voir, car cela est beaucoup plus subtil que notre air, c'est un enfant du ciel qui est envoyé, un petit ange, mais sans ailes, puisque le petit deviendra un être humain; il glisse doucement dans l'air, et le vent le porte dans une fleur» (*Contes*, trad. La Chesnais, t. 4, p. 65). «L'âme humaine, venue comme une étoile filante, s'envole de nouveau comme une étoile filante» (ibid., p. 69).

Au cours de sa descente à travers les couches de l'atmosphère, l'âme collige des portions d'éléments qui formeront son enveloppe (περί-

βλημα, 61, 19-20 Kr.) et son véhicule (ὄχημα, 47, 13 Kr.), véritables χιτῶνες ἐνυλότεροι (Proclus, *Inst.* 209) qu'elle revêt dans la descente et dont elle se dévêt dans la remontée. La suite éther—soleil—lune—air ne constitue pas pour les Gnostiques des étapes de la descente de l'âme, et c'est à tort que l'on invoque leurs croyances astrologiques à l'arrière-plan de cet oracle utilisé par Proclus (*In Ti.* 3 234, 36 = 47, 17-18 Kr.) à l'appui d'une thèse plus porphyrienne que chaldaïque (cf. 182 n. 26 L.; 182 n. 1 Ha¹). Cependant, même si l'exégèse valentinienne de *Gn* 3, 2 LXX (Irénee 1 5, 5 = Epiphane 31 19, 10 [p. 415, 21-22 H.]) ne doit pas être confondue avec l'expression analogue traditionnelle en philosophie grecque depuis Empédocle (cf. Dodds, *Proclus Elements*, 307-308), il reste que Gnostiques et *Oracles* ont exprimé le devenir de l'âme par les images partout répandues de la vestition et du dépouillement. Mais les contextes sont totalement différents : alors que la dialectique du «dévêtir»/«revêtir» appliquée à la situation eschatologique de l'élu gnostique (NHC I 14, 35-36; 20, 30-32 βωψ ου καακ = αρηογ = ἀποτίθεσθαι, *Exc. Thdot.* 64, ἀποδύεσθαι, Irénée 1 7, 1; †ζῆω = ἐνδύεσθαι, *Exc. Thdot.* 59) ne fait qu'inverser un processus anthropogonique (NHC II 119, 13-14 : vestition de honte/nudité de gnose), la même dialectique ἐσσύμενος (25, 27 Kr.; 51, 13; 52, 13)/γυμνός — γυμνής (52, 16; 57, 22), débarrassée de sa référence à la mythologie des origines et de la fin, illustre dans les *Oracles* une théorie de la connaissance mystique sur la base du vocabulaire de la pratique liturgique. C'est toujours nu que le myste se présente devant son dieu, c'est-à-dire dépouillé des vêtements cosmiques impurs (ainsi Plotin 1 6, 6 : 4-9), alors que l'élu gnostique paradant dans l'ogdoade est στολιστάμενος (*Exc. Thdot.* 1, 1; 61, 8; 63, 1).

Plusieurs expressions servant à décrire le voyage du retour sont communes aux Valentinien et aux *Oracles*. Il se fait dans la précipitation à courir vers les biens (πρωτ αρογν, NHC I 119, 26), dans la hâte de retrouver l'unité perdue (βεπη, I 7, 10-12. 37-38; 123, 5-11 = σπεύδειν, *Exc. Thdot.* 78, 2), dans l'impatience d'atteindre la lumière et les rayons du Père : χρή σε σπεύδειν πρὸς τὸ φάος καὶ πρὸς πατρὸς αὐγάς (52, 12 Kr. = 294 Th. = 171 n. 396 L.; cf. aussi 52, 16 Kr. = 294 n. 139 Th. = 170 n. 395 L.; également Porphyre, *Abst.* I 27, p. 104, 23 Nauck), thème qui rejoint celui de la fuite (cf. 172 n. 403 L.) et qui est une constante dans le mysticisme de cette époque, cf. Wlosok, *Laktanz*, p. 145 n. 6, et Hadot dans Marius Victorinus, *Traité*s, SC 69, p. 1074. Comme l'est également celui du re-nouvellement de

l'âme, en quelque sorte re-commencement, re-naissance et ré-génération, que signifie pour elle ce voyage et qu'exprime l'adverbe *πάλι* : NHC I 21, 8; 41, 8; 49, 35-36 : *ἄκεσαπ*; *EvTh [GTh]* 49 = NHC II 41, 30 et Irénée 1 21, 5 = Épiphanes 36 3, 2 (p. 46, 20 H.) : *πάλι*; *αὐθις* dans les *Oracles* 51, 6 Kr. = *πάλι* Psellus, *Ex.*, PG 122, col. 1129 D; *e converso* dans l'oracle cité par Proclus, *In Prm.* 7, p. 58, 28-30 Kl.-La. (sur l'opposition *νῦν* — *πάλι*, voir *A. Thom.* 15, p. 121, 13 Bo.). Au cœur de l'*hypobasis*, le soleil sera à nouveau le centre de la remontée, véritable *ἀναγωγεύς* des âmes, vers qui on se presse (*ἐπισπέρχων* 51, 21 Kr. = 276 n. 87 Th. = 195 n. 75 L.), afin que par lui chacun puisse se réunifier à sa nature première et lumineuse. « Ses rayons attirent ceux qui ont hâte (*σπεύδουσι*) de s'affranchir de la génération : il attire (*ἔλκει*) tout hors de la terre » (Julien, *Or.* 5, 172a 7-9). « Nous sommes attirés (*σωκ*) au ciel par lui (= le Sauveur de l'*EpRh [OnRes]*) comme les rayons par le soleil, sans que rien ne nous arrête » (NHC I 45, 36-39). Le Christ de l'homélie valentinienne et l'*heptaktis* chaldaïque (rapport bien noté par Quispel et Puech, *De resurrectione*, p. xv-xvi et p. 28) reposent sur la même cosmologie empêtrée d'astrologie qui attribuait au soleil la place médiane dans l'ensemble du système et la fonction de médiateur pour les éléments de la progression.

Proposition II

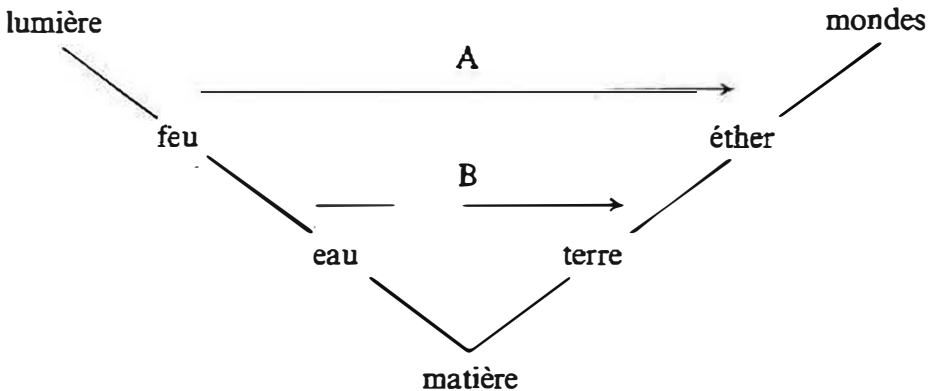
Au schéma : éther — soleil — lune — air décrivant l'ordre de progression des éléments, s'ajoutera un deuxième diagramme établissant le système des relations qui animent ces éléments et les relie à leur source. D'où l'énumération suivante (série A) dans un oracle transmis par Proclus, *In R.* 2 201, 16 (= 28, 7 Kr. = 278 Th. = 88 n. 83a L.) : lumière — feu — terre — mondes. D'accord avec Simplicius (progression descendante de toute la série) contre Proclus (les trois derniers termes expliquent le premier et renvoient à la tripartition des mondes igné, éthéré et hylique), Lewy rejette cependant l'assimilation, avancée par Simplicius, de la lumière à la monade paternelle et propose l'interprétation suivante :

lumière = *Aiôn*
 feu = *Empyrée*
 éther = ciel des fixes
 mondes = astres errants et terre

En soi chaque identification est possible, mais l'insertion d'une entité mythologique dans l'objet de la *psychôsis* est aussi hors contexte que la monade métaphysique de Simplicius. Il faut donc garder à la série sa structure physique, laquelle vise à énumérer les lieux élémentaires où se déverse le trop-plein de l'Âme du monde. Or une telle série à quatre termes a son parallèle (B) dans l'hexamètre cité par Proclus, *In Ti.* 2 50, 23 (= 35, 12 Kr. = 119 n. 202 L.) en conclusion d'un développement sur les quatre éléments utilisés par le démiurge pour créer le monde :

ἐκ πυρός ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ γῆς καὶ παντρόφου αἰθήρης.

Les deux séries se complètent et doivent être lues ensemble. En intégrant le substrat matériel, on obtient une série à sept termes, non à progression descendante continue, mais représentant entre deux extrêmes indivisibles (en haut lumière et mondes = ciel des fixes et planètes, en bas matière compacte) la combinaison des quatre éléments mélangés.



La série A n'a conservé du schéma que les quatre termes du haut, domaine de l'Âme du monde, la série B les quatre intermédiaires, domaine du démiurge. D'autre part, c'est l'ensemble de la figure, et non les éléments mis bout à bout, qui décrit une progression descendante dont les médiétés sont seules soumises à conjonction et disjonction, entre des extrêmes s'opposant par dilatation et rétrécissement. En effet, plus les rayons solaires s'avancent vers le bas, plus se réduit leur écartement et s'accélère leur concentration. Devenus en quelque sorte doubles (διπλώσεις τῶν ἀκτίνων, Proclus, *In R.* 3 346, 28-29) au terme de leur course, ils ne laissent alors aucune place au principe opposé. Il n'y a donc dans l'extrémité inférieure ni conjonction ni disjonction, mais un état compact et homogène, en totale contrariété avec l'en

haut. Ainsi, les sommets et les abîmes auront en commun immutabilité, impassibilité, inaltérabilité, mais s'opposeront en cela que les uns tournés *ad extra* sont ordonnés et féconds et les autres enfermés dans le dedans sont désordonnés et stériles. Par contre, les éléments médians de la « matière changeante » (20, 3 Kr. = 118 n. 200 L.) partagés entre le léger et le lourd, le subtil et l'épais, le clair et l'obscur, le chaud et le froid, le sec et l'humide, sont sujets aux altérations de leur puissance passible, accueillante et harmonieuse, mais aussi ambiguë et éphémère.

Gnostiques et *Oracles* ont tiré de cette physique des éléments, conforme à la tradition, un grand nombre d'oppositions significatives.

Pour décrire les extrêmes, Valentiniens et *Oracles* utiliseront d'abord le même langage négatif, comme le fera Plotin qui applique à l'Un et à la matière les mêmes prédicats, ἀνειδέον et ἄπειρον (cf. H. R. Schwyzer, dans la *Real-Encyclopädie* [PW] 21/1 [1971] col. 567, 51-63). Chez les Valentiniens, le même prédicat ἄμορφος s'applique aussi bien au Père (NHC I 66, 14: ΑΤΜΟΡΦΗ) qu'à la Sophia extérieure et à son avorton (Irénee 1 2, 3: *informem* = ἄμορφον, Epiphane 31 12, 1 [p. 404, 1 H.]; 1 2, 4: *informis et sine specie* = ἄμορφος καὶ ἀνειδέος, 31 12, 7 [p. 404, 21]; id. 1 4, 1 = Epiphane 31 16, 1 [p. 409, 21], c'est-à-dire les deux prédicats de la matière platonicienne, cf. 296 n. 141 et 384 n. 274 L., dont le premier est repris par les *Oracles* 62, 20 Kr.); ἄόρατος désignera aussi bien le Père (Irénee 1 5, 1 = Epiphane 31 18, 5 [p. 413, 15]) que la matière (Irénee 1 5, 5 = Epiphane 31 19, 8 [p. 415, 15])—dans ce dernier sens, également chez Platon, cf. 296 n. 142 et 383 n. 270 L.); ἀπίτωρ qualifie le Père (NHC I 51, 26-27), mais aussi le démiurge (Irénee 1 5, 1 = Epiphane 31 18, 4 [p. 413, 10]). Les Manichéens donneront à chacun des deux principes opposés le même prédicat: ΑΤΖΟΥΓΙΤΕ = ἄναρχος, *Psautier*, p. 3, 18. 26 Allb. = ازلی chez Ibn al-Nadīm (p. 151, 16 Af.), avec la nuance que le principe du monde inférieur, al-Šaiṭān, n'est pas de soi sans commencement, mais seulement par les substances et éléments qui le composent (p. 151, 21-22 Af.)

Cet apophatisme caractéristique du haut et du bas de la hiérarchie s'accompagne de notions distinctives antithétiques, qui transportent en métaphysique les oppositions de la physique. Usage sera fait des antinomies tirées de l'optique (clair-obscur), de la statique (ordonné-confus) et de la génération (fertile-stérile), mais aussi des catégories sensorielles du goût et de l'odorat. Ainsi, la *douceur* du Père (leitmotiv valentinien dont seize emplois dans NHC I, cf. *EvVer* [GTr] s.v. ζλαδ et TT [TriTrac] s.v. ΜΝΤΖΛΒΕ; chez Irénée 1 2, 2: *dulcedo* =

γλυκύτης Eriphane 31 11, 5 [p. 403, 18]) contraste avec l'amertume de la matière :

ζητεῖ δὲ φυγεῖν τὸ πικρὸν χάος

déclare l'hymne naassène (*Elenchos* 5 10, 2 [p. 103, 15 W]);

σώξετε καὶ τὸ πικρῶς ὕλης περίβλημα βρότειον,

reprennent en écho les *Oracles* (61, 19-20 Kr. = 297 Th. = 214 n. 151 L.). Là, «chaos» ne désigne pas le lieu hypochthonien de la mythologie, mais l'ensemble de la matière organisée (macrocosme et microcosme) sous le pouvoir de l'Heimarménè, monde hylique du mélange que les «Séthiens» de l'*Elenchos* appellent aussi, par référence à la *Genèse*, «eau ténébreuse, redoutable, amère (πικρὸν) et souillée» (5 19, 17 [p. 120, 3-4 W.]). Également, la πικρὰ ὕλη chaldaïque ne qualifie pas la lie des éléments, ce qui reste après le mélange, comme l'a compris Lewy à partir de Plotin 2 3, 17: 24-25, mais ce qui a servi au mélange. En ce qui concerne les sensations olfactives, l'ambrosie et la bonne odeur douce (τετραμβροσια μιν περυστηνογχε ετσαλδ, *Keph.* 39, p. 103, 15 B.) du Père s'opposent chez les Manichéens à la puanteur (κῆλαισσι apud Théodore b. Kōnai, p. 131, 3 Po. = 317, 27 Sch.) de la Hylè.

Quand l'âme accomplit son *anagôgè* et passe de ce monde où elle est à l'étroit et où elle suffoque (cf. le πνιγμός des *OrCh* 26; 19 Kr.) pour respirer (cf. les ἀνάπνοοι des *OrCh* 53, 21-22 Kr. = 205 n. 124 L.) et se dilater (πλατύνειν, 264 n. 17 L.) au dehors, c'est-à-dire dans la proximité des intelligibles (cf. 53, 4 Kr. = 292 n. 135 Th. = 173 n. 406 L.), elle accomplit un voyage qui, en la faisant sortir de la pesanteur et de la froidure des bas-fonds, l'«allège» (κουφίζουσα, 53, 11 Kr.) et la «réchauffe» (θέρμη ψυχούσα, 28, 13 Kr. = 259 Th. = 85 n. 70 L.). Les descriptions de la matière ou de ses substituts mythologiques dans l'oracle sur le «monde qui hait la lumière» transmis par le scholiaste du Ms. E d'Aristote (cf. Saffrey *RPh* 95 [= 3^e sér. 43, 1969], p. 64) et dans l'oracle sur le «monde aux sombres reflets» transmis par Damascius 2 317, 3-7 (= 62, 19-23 Kr. = 295 n. 137 L.) appartiennent à toute l'époque. Tartare, Chaos et Hadès, lieux de stérilité par accumulation de chaleur (= l'âme desséchée des *OrCh*, αὐχμηράν, 48, 29 Kr. = 297 n. 143 L.) ou de froid (= l'âme engourdie des Valentinieniens, ζρογογχα, *Ask.* 271, 23; 321, 10; 380, 14) concentrent en leurs replis les liens qui asphyxient l'âme.

Par opposition au feu violent et destructeur de la matière (dans

l'eschatologie des Valentiniens d'Irénée 1 7, 1 = Epiphane 31 21, 14), dont l'intensité redoublée dessèche l'âme dans les mondes hyliques (*OrCh* 48, 29 Kr.) et dont le système de l'*Apophasis Mégalè* dira qu'il est au principe de la génération et de la corruption universelles (cf. Tardieu, *Trois Mythes* 78 n. 123), le feu qui embrase l'âme à l'approche des sommets (cf. 53, 9 Kr. = 260 n. 7c L.), «porteur de vie» (35, 4 Kr. = 402 n. 11 Ha¹), «donneur de vie et puissant» (19, 20 Kr. = corr. 83 n. 62 L.), «unissant» (συνδέσμιον, 25, 27 Kr. = 127 n. 233 L.) et «divisant» (ἐμερίσθησαν ... μοιρηθεῖσαι 23, 30 Kr.), est nommé νοερόν (ibid.), parce qu'il tient du «propre feu du Père» (12, 11 Kr. = 78 n. 45 L.) sa subtilité et sa capacité à mesurer (11, 13 Kr. — 294 Th.).

De la puissance passible située entre les extrêmes et soumise aux mouvements qui portent les éléments à s'unir et à se séparer, viendront tous les couples d'opposés bien caractéristiques du monde médian : feu et air déploient les énergies du chaud et du froid, eau et terre celles de l'humide et du sec. Quand les Valentiniens disent que ces éléments et leurs énergies se sont constitués à l'image de la tétrade et de l'ogdoade d'en haut (cf. Irénée 1 17, 1 = *Elenchos* 6 53, 1 [p. 187, 6-9 W.]), c'est en fait l'inverse qu'il faut comprendre. L'organisation traditionnelle des catégories du monde sensible a servi de modèle à la construction métaphysique. Ainsi, l'organisation, tétradique et sous l'égide de la Mère, du plérôme valentinien par emboîtement de syzygies entre deux extrêmes *azygoi*, le Père et Horos, transpose à la pensée mythique les données de la physique, tout comme dans les *Oracles* (cf. 28, 5-7 Kr.), c'est la même Hécate, placée à la limite des mondes, qui organise la tétrade des éléments et des énergies qui jaillissent en abondance de ses flancs pour remplir d'âme l'univers et qui devient âme et mère du monde. De là vient que cette puissance féminine qui préside à l'accord et à la division, correctement placée par les Valentiniens de l'*Elenchos* au principe de l'ordre médian et par les *Oracles* au milieu des éléments (cf. 142 L.) où elle s'identifie au troisième dieu υπεζωκώς (22, 1 Kr. = 92 n. 101 L.) ait été sans cesse sujette à rehaussement : les Valentiniens d'Irénée la feront entrer en syzygie avec le Premier (I 1, 1 = Epiphane 31 10, 5-6 [p. 401, 5. 8-9]) comme assise suprême de toute l'arrhénothélie ; les commentateurs des *Oracles* la transféreront de sa secondarité cosmologique au δεύτερον de la triade des principes (cf. 266 n. 1 Ha¹ commentant 27, 23 Kr. = 266 Th. = 142 n. 283 L.), voire du deuxième rang au πρώτον. Ainsi Psellus, dans son invective Πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς ἀμελοῦντας (ed. Boissonade [Nürnberg, 1838], p. 151, 23-152, 5), après avoir ironisé sur les flancs et la chevelure

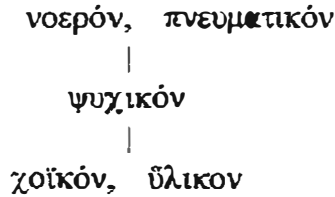
d'Hécate ainsi que sur «les autres parties de son corps que l'une après l'autre les Chaldéens énumèrent», retient comme pouvant, selon sa propre expression, «coller» à l'enseignement des θεῖα λόγια, c'est-à-dire à la Bible, les deux idées suivantes qui résument la conception platonicienne de l'Ame du monde passée dans les Oracles : 1) ἐκεῖθεν τὰ πάντα συνέστηκε (allusion évidente à *Col.* 1, 17; matériau comparatif chez Dibelius, *HNT* 12³, p. 14); 2) ὃν ἔστιν αὐτῆ οὐκ ἔχουσα γένεσιν (*topos* de l'ancienne apologétique interprétant de concert Platon, *Ti.* 27d 6 et *Ex.* 3, 14 LXX). Cette interprétation abusive, dont n'est pas exempt Kroll lui-même comparant l'Hécate chaldaïque avec la Sigè gnostique (p. 28), s'appuyait sur une longue tradition. La position d'Hécate à la jonction des mondes éthéré et sublunaire a servi aux néoplatoniciens d'argument pour établir sa fonction métaphysique de médiété et, à partir de là, sa nature syzygique.

Proposition III

A l'intérieur de la progression, étoiles fixes et astres errants forment un tout homogène, compris entre deux limites ou ceintures, le ciel des fixes vers le haut, le cercle de la lune vers le bas. Ce dernier constitue la frontière (cf. *De mundo* 392a20 Lo.: μέχρις ἧς ὀρίζεται) où se termine la zone éthérée, région des corps divins, et où commence la terre, région des corps hyliques. Il n'existe donc que deux mondes, tous les deux visibles : le sublunaire lieu des vivants terrestres, le supra-lunaire lieu du divin astral.

Pour les philosophes syncrétistes de l'époque hellénistique, ce schéma était trop simple pour être vrai. Imprégnés à la fois du dogme platonicien de l'existence paradigmatique d'un univers invisible lieu de la transcendance — il n'y a d'être réel qu'invisible — et de la théorie stoïcienne (Posidonius mais aussi Chrysippe) des trois feux à progression descendante, du plus subtil au plus trouble, du plus léger au plus pesant : τὸ αὐγοειδὲς καὶ λεπτόν, τὸ πυκνωθὲν καὶ συλειληθὲν, τὸ νοθρότατον καὶ θολερότατον, c'est-à-dire ciel — astres fixes et errants — monde sublunaire (cf. Plutarque, *De facie* 15 = *Moralia* 928d 1-4 = *SVF* II 668), triade devenue ἀγγή — φλόξ — ἄνθρωπος chez Philon, *Aet.* 86, ces philosophes identifièrent le feu subtil et supra-éthéré de l'ἀγγή, domaine du εἰλικρινὲς πνεῦμα, avec le τόπος ὑπερουράνιος, sommet de la voûte qui surplombe le ciel, dans le mythe du *Phdr.* 247a 8-c2, habitat de Dieu et de sa cour, les intelligibles (cf. Philon, *Op.* 31). Par conséquent, le ciel des fixes n'est plus le

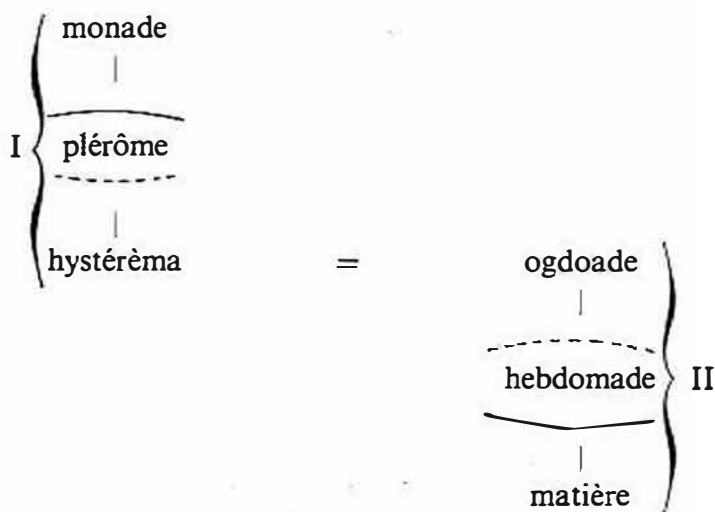
cercle qui enferme et contient la totalité, il n'est que la plus élevée des sphères, la ceinture où s'arrête l'univers des corps visibles de l'éther astral et où commence l'au-delà du monde sensible, l'ἔσχατη περιφέρεια où tout le divin est établi (Diogène L., *Vit.* 2 138, p. 356, 8-9 Long), la παναύγεια de Philon demeure du ὑπερουράνιος ἀστήρ. Le chaldaïsme a été le creuset où cette physique stoïcienne s'est emboîtée dans la métaphysique platonicienne, puisque les deux réunies fixent, selon les Ἀσσυρίων τελεσταί (*Elenchos* 5 7, 9 [p. 81, 4-5 W.]), les trois termes communs au macrocosme et au microcosme, à la nature et à l'âme.



Cette cosmo-anthropologie triadique, où ciel des fixes et cercle lunaire ne sont que les limites supérieure et inférieure de la médiété, sera lourde de conséquences chez les Valentiniens et dans les *Oracles*.

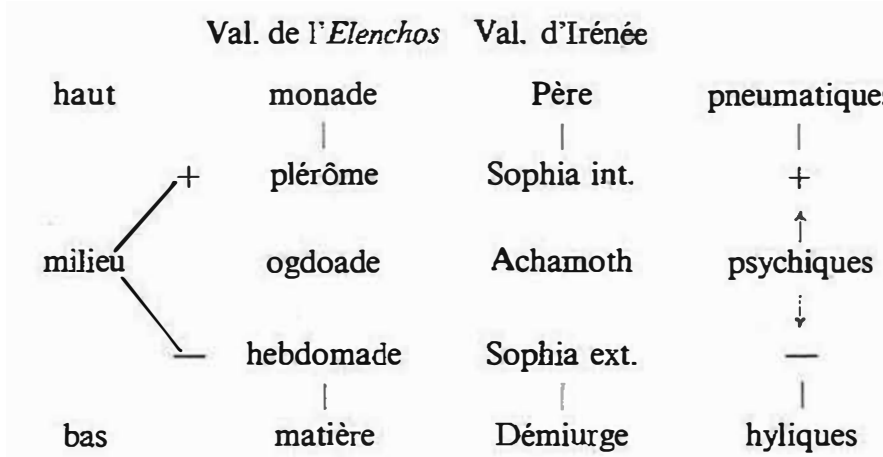
Les premiers s'appuieront sur elle pour établir que le ciel des fixes est le plus élevé des cercles visibles, «superposé à l'univers et freinant son mouvement ascensionnel, qui est très rapide, en imprimant sa pesanteur à la voûte elle-même (sur κύτος au sens cosmologique, voir l'oracle 13 de la *Théosophie*, 18 n. 46, 1 L. = 169, 15 Erbse) et en contrebalançant par sa propre lenteur la vitesse de celui-ci» (ἀντεπεζεύχθη τῇ τῶν ὄλων ἀναφορᾷ ὠκυτάτῃ ὑπαρχούσῃ ὁ ὑπερθεὺς οὐρανός, ὁ πρὸς αὐτῷ τῷ κύτει βαρύνων καὶ ἀντιταλαντεύων τὴν ἐκείνων ἄκύτητα τῇ ἑαυτοῦ βραδυτῆτι, Irénée I 17, 1 = *Elenchos* 6 53, 4 [p. 187, 16-19]). Le rôle de la lune dans la progression n'est pas précisé, toutefois l'hérésiologue mentionne que sa révolution de trente jours figure pour les Valentiniens le nombre des éons du plérôme (5 53, 5 [p. 188, 2-4]). Cette croyance prend appui sur la fonction de limite des mondes supérieur et inférieur attribuée à la lune par toute la physique ancienne. Dès lors, transposé au mythe théologique, le cercle lunaire aura pour fonction d'enclorre par le bas l'assemblage des entités sorties de la Mère, stoppant du même coup leur écoulement en syzygies et formant écran au désir ascensionnel des éléments hyliques. Ainsi, le plérôme valentinien, qui occupe le δεύτερον de la première triade, devenu οὐσία ψυχική dans la seconde, sera, à l'instar de

l'Heimarménè que deux bornes contiennent, enfermé lui aussi à l'intérieur de deux hémisphères, en haut le *horos* de la Mère aux trente noms (multiple de la monade triadique attestée dans l'épître valentinienne d'Epiphane comme ἔννοια—ὄρεξις—θέλημα > νοῦς—δυναμῖς—βουλή dans les *Oracles*; sur la troisième hypostase, voir 329-334 L.) au-delà duquel se tient le Père *azygos*, en bas Horos *azygos* qui clôt la chaîne des émissions.



Tel est le rapport diachronique des triades dans le mythe, la seconde divisant le troisième terme de la première par l'adjonction des trois parties de la physique. La situation du plérôme enveloppé entre ses limites répète pour les intelligibles la situation du démiurge enfermé dans les bornes de ses sphères. Lu synchroniquement, le tableau s'organise autour de l'équation médiane *hystérèma* = *ogdoade*, que les Valentiniens eux-mêmes ont en bonne logique appelée « τὸν τῆς μεσότητος τόπον au-dessus du démiurge mais au-dessous ou en-dehors du plérôme » (Irénee 1 5, 3 = Epiphane 31 18, 12 [p. 414, 13-14 H.]), logique que le mythe prolonge par l'assimilation de la mitoyenneté absolue à une entité féminine. Celle-ci est centre par rapport aux extrêmes et centre des termes médians de chaque triade, son pôle positif étant le plérôme né de la Mère de la première syzygie, son pôle négatif l'hebdomade où le démiurge se fait l'exécutant de son οὐσία ψυχική dans le monde sensible. Entre les deux Pères dissociés — car le démiurge sous la mouvance d'Achamothe est appelé Μητροπάτωρ, Irénée 1 5, 1 = Epiphane 31 18, 4 (p. 413, 9-10), mais aussi, comme le Premier, Ἀπάτωρ et Πατήρ — se tient la puissance qui unit et

sépare, mitoyenne de l'un et du multiple, leur convertisseur (μεταγωγεύς) parce que passage obligé dans la descente et agent de l'*épistrophè* (Irénee I 6, 1 = Epiphane 31 18, 1 [p. 412, 24]), dans le haut et au dedans opérant la conjonction des opposés (plérôme des syzygies), dans le bas et au dehors la division des éléments de la progression (sphères du destin).



Réduit à ses articulations essentielles, le système valentinien se présente, non sous la forme d'une tétrade (Bythos, Éons, Ame = Démiurge, Hylè — cf. Krāmer, *Ursprung*, 241), mais sous celle d'une triade dont les termes extrêmes sont dissociés par l'intervention d'une grande *dynamis*, Ennoia-Psychè (cf. Orbe, *Est. Val.*, 4, 76-92), qui introduit le mouvement dans la triade. Que cette ousie se retrouve chez les Naasènes à la même place (Noûs — Psychè — Chaos, cf. p. 26 Vö. = Krāmer, *Ursprung*, 231-232), qu'Alexandre de Lycopolis y ait recours pour exposer le système manichéen (Père — Psychè — Démiurge, cf. p. 5, 22 Br.), qu'elle transpose à la métaphysique des principes la fonction intermédiaire et la nature ambivalente de la déesse lunaire des magiciens et astrologues, tout cela importe moins que ce qui est dissocié par elle (Premier Père Propator/Second Père Mètropator) et que ce qui a rendu possible cette dissociation.

A partir des mêmes postulats de la physique syncrétiste adoptée par les Valentiniens, un schème identique sera construit par les *Oracles*. Les commentateurs distinguent trois *mondes*, *dieux* ou *cieux* «souverains» (ἀρχικοί) et «fontaniens» (πηγαῖοι), qui transfèrent à la totalité cosmique (B) la série feu — air — terre propre à la région sublunaire (A).

A		B
Lydus 26, 14-16 Wü.	Damascius 2 217, 6-7	Proclus, <i>In Tim.</i> , 2 57, 11-12 et Damascius 2 88, 21-22
ἐμπύρια	οὐράνιον	ἐμπύριον
ἀέρια	μέσον	αἰθέριον
ὕλικά	χθόνιον	ὕλαϊον

La tripartition B se fondait pour les néoplatoniciens sur ce que leur Écriture sacrée, les *Oracles*, appelait «firmaments» (στερεώματα, 32, 4 Kr.; mais au sens étroit : «astres» ou «mondes», 31, 31 Kr. = 278 Th. = 123 n. 218 L.), «dominations» (ἀρχαί, 38, 2 Kr. = 140 n. 274 L.) — deux termes provenant de la cosmologie et de la démonologie bibliques et arrivés aux *Oracles* par l'intermédiaire des Gnostiques —, «sommets» (ἄκρότητες, 40, 7 Kr. = 276 Th. = 132 n. 250 L.), «pères» (πατέρες, 39, 9. 12 Kr. = 139 n. 274 L.). Leurs différents noms n'ont pas été transmis (cf. 40, 6-8 Kr. = 132 n. 250 L. qui conjecture le complément); toutefois l'oracle cité par Damascius 2 217, 8-10 (= 37, 32-38, 2 Kr., dont la correction en 38, 6 est rejetée avec raison par Lewy 140 n. 275, mais ce dernier rend son texte très obscur par la suppression de la virgule après ἡέριος en 38, 1) indique que le troisième terme de la triade est «celui qui chauffe la terre dans le feu», le médian «aérien», le premier «une course sacrée» (ιερός δρόμος). C'est l'énumération des trois feux stoïciens, interprétés par un platonicien :

1. Le feu de l'*augè*, devenu le ἱερὸν πῦρ du Père dans l'oracle cité par Michel Italicus (13, 22 Kr. = 77 n. 42 L. = 296 n. 2 Ha¹), soleil invisible de la pure lumière, qui, bien au-delà du ciel des fixes et de la Voie Lactée, emporte ses dieux dans la course sacrée de son feu. Le monde empyré, explique Damascius 2 59, 26-28 et 87, 25-27 en citant l'oracle transmis par Proclus (*In Prm.* 941, 27-28 C. = 42, 1-2 Kr. = 131 n. 246 L.), est celui où «tout est soumis aux éclairs intellectuels du feu intellectuel».

2. Le feu de l'*aithèr*, partie la plus subtile de l'air (cf. propos. II), où la radiation héliaque en position intercalée au milieu des sept foudres (κεραυνοί 23, 3-4 Kr. = 123 n. 218 L.) règle, du ciel des fixes à la course de la lune (μηναιὸν δρόμημα, 34, 24 Kr. = 143 n. 287 L.), la marche en avant des astres (ἄστέριον προπόρευμα, ibid. et 280 n. 98 Th.) et des éléments (στοιχεῖα, 25, 7 Kr. = 127 n. 232 L. = 404 n. 4 Ha¹), cf. propos. I.

3. Le feu chthonien du monde sublunaire, enfin, «celui qui chauffe la terre», autrement dit : le soleil qui étend sa radiation jusqu'au monde matériel; de là vient que ce dernier est le seul qui appartienne totalement à l'univers visible ($\mu\acute{o}\nu\upsilon\nu\ \tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\phi\alpha\nu\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$, Proclus, *In Ti.* 2 57, 12).

Cette doctrine stoïcienne des trois feux à la base des trois grands mondes circulaires des *Oracles* et de leurs commentateurs se retrouve à la même époque chez les Manichéens, où elle sert à décrire par degrés de subtilité les enveloppes lumineuses de l'entité du monde supérieur.

Augustin, *C. Fel.*, 1 18
CSEL 25, p. 823, 22-23 Zy.

Šahrastānī, *al-Milal*,
p. 242 a 16-21 Af.

pater ingenitus

روح التور

aer ingenitus

جو التور

terra ingenua

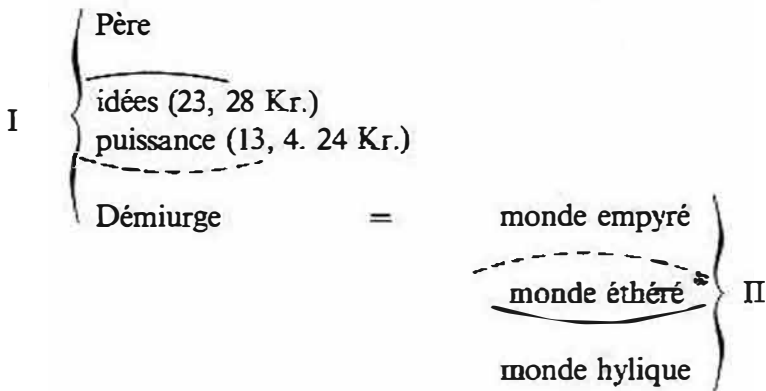
أرض التور

Cette dernière a «la forme du corps (*jirm* = corps astral) du soleil et sa radiation est semblable à la radiation du soleil» (p. 242 a 11-13 Af.), les termes supérieurs de la triade exprimant la progression ascendante de la subtilité de cette radiation. Le terme médian, air ou éther (assimilation constante dans les textes manichéens coptes, arabes et syriaques) est identifié à l'âme (*nafs* = *psychè*); le premier est une brise (*nasim* = *pneuma*). Cette doctrine des corps subtils, comme celle des cinq éléments à laquelle Šahrastānī, ou plutôt sa source, la rattache expressément dans son tableau des catégories, provient de la physique de l'hellénisme tardif, transmise par Bardesane au monde syriaque (pour le schéma pentadique, voir Schaefer, *Urform*, p. 125-126).

Les Valentiniens introduisaient entre Père et démiurge une puissance organisatrice du tout médian, appelée selon les lieux où elle exerce son énergie Sophia intérieure, Achamoth, Sophia extérieure. Les Manichéens intercalent la *psychè* également entre la brise paternelle et l'élément héliaque de la terre de lumière (Šahrastānī), projection dans le monde supérieur de la *psychè* du mythe cosmogonique, qu'Alexandre de Lycopolis fait mitoyenne de Dieu et du démiurge et que les Manichéens orientaux désignaient par la triade Mère des Vivants—Homme Primordial—fils de l'Homme Primordial. Or que disent les *Oracles*?

Rhèa-Hécate, «la déesse vivifiante» ($\eta\ \zeta\omega\gamma\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$) des néoplatoniciens, se tient non seulement sur toute l'étendue tournoyante des «corps du monde» (24, 1 Kr.), du cercle lunaire au ciel des fixes,

mais bien au delà, puisque sa puissance déborde les νόες ἀστέριοι et l'empyrée lui-même pour disjoindre dans le monde intelligible le Noûs démiurgique du Noûs paternel. «Au milieu des pères (= les firmaments des mondes) le centre d'Hécate est emporté» (μέσσον τῶν πατέρων Ἐκάτης κέντρον πεφορηθῆναι) déclare l'oracle cité par Damascius 2 164, 19 (= 27, 23 Kr. = 266 Th. = 57 Fest. *Révélation*³ qui l'interprètent par l'exégèse néoplatonicienne, 142 n. 283 L. qui lui restitue son sens primitif, 260-278 Ha¹ qui en reconstitue l'histoire des interprétations). Les néoplatoniciens tardifs interprétaient cet oracle à l'aide de l'exégèse porphyrienne systématisée par Proclus, transposant à la mythologie (πατήρ/ὁ ἀπαξ ἐπέκεινα — Ἐκάτη — δημιουργός/ὁ δις ἐπέκεινα) puis à la métaphysique (ὑπαρξίς — δύναμις/ζωή — νοῦς) les catégories des trois mondes circulaires de la physique des *Oracles*. Débarrassé des alluvions des commentateurs, le système de pensée des *Oracles* répète la structure valentinienne des deux triades : l'inférieure divise par les trois parties de la physique le troisième terme de la première; d'autre part, comme chez les Valentiniens les médiétés sont encloses entre deux limites, le cercle lunaire en bas, le ὑπεζωκός en haut (22, 1 Kr. = 92 n. 101 L.; également 20, 27 Kr. = 121 n. 209 L.), qui sont précisément les deux ceintures, sensible et intellectuelle, entre lesquelles opère la *dynamis* d'Hécate.



Aujourd'hui où nous savons que la triade être — puissance — intellect est antérieure à l'exégèse porphyrienne des *Oracles*, puisque les apocalypses gnostiques connues de Plotin et de son Ecole l'attestent abondamment (cf. mon article, *RSPT* 57 [1973] 562-564; ajouter NHC VIII 66, 18-24; 67, 17; 68, 3-5; 73, 8-10; 74, 9-12; 79, 7-20); que la triade des vertus inhérente aux mondes circulaires (foi — vérité — amour : 26, 30 Kr., et Proclus, *In Prm.* 7, p. 42, 15-16 Kl.-La.; Porphyre,

Marc. 24, p. 289, 17-18 Na., avec référence aux quatre éléments de la physique, ajoute l'*espoir*, que mentionnait le vers de l'oracle 26 n. 2 Kr.; également Proclus, *In Ti.* 1 212, 21-22; cf. 144 n. 291 L.) est également antérieure à la reprise porphyrienne des *Oracles*, puisque la série complète est énumérée au terme d'une ennéade dont est gratifié l'élugnostique ayant fui la Hylè, dans *Traité anonyme* du codex Brucianus 256, 10-14 Sch. = 51, 10-52, 2, Baynes; que, sur le modèle des mythologies et théologies orientales transmises par Damascius et Eusèbe, sousjacentes aux systématisations dont les métamorphoses successives forment les révélations prévalentiniennes, Valentin place, jouxtant le Premier et le Second jusqu'à les dissocier aux antipodes, une puissance féminine tentaculaire et polyonime mais réduite à l'ousie psychique dans l'anthropogonie —, force est de conclure que, pour l'histoire de la pensée, la brisure essentielle n'est pas entre les théoriciens de la relégation du démiurge dans la partie inférieure de l'Âme du monde (platonisme prétendu miasmatique de l'École de Valentin) et ceux qui optant également pour sa secondarité dans l'ordre des principes le maintiennent dans la partie supérieure de l'Âme (platonisme prétendu salubre de Numénios et des Ecoles), mais entre les tenants d'Écritures inspirées (Valentin lecteur de Moïse, de Zoroastre, de Dosithée, de Jésus et de Jean; Porphyre, Jamblique et la série des diadoques lecteurs des *Oracles*; les deux Julien et — en dépit de l'acharnement de la critique à l'y soustraire — Numénios lui-même lecteurs du premier ou de ses sources et tous lecteurs de Platon dont les doctrines sont θεόθεν ἐκφανθέντα, Proclus, *In Ti.* 2 50, 20-21) qui placent la *psychè* dyadique au cœur d'une triade amplifiée et démultipliée au gré de leurs fantaisies classificatoires, d'une part, et le rationalisme plotinien qui la pose au *tertium* et refuse tout autre ramification par subdivision d'entités, d'autre part. De là l'étonnement compréhensible d'Augustin (*Civ.* 10 23) commentant le *De regressu* de Porphyre: «Postponit Plotinus animae naturam paterno intellectui; iste autem cum dicit *medium*, non postponit, sed interponit» (p. 37*, 4-6 Bi.).

Dans cette position médiane, l'Âme platonicienne du monde passée dans les *Oracles* reçoit les attributs et les fonctions de la déesse *triaditis* des papyrus, Hécate. Ici, ses trois visages en font la souveraine (*kyria*) de la Physis totalement mère; chthonienne (*PGM* 4 1443) mais aussi «voyageuse parmi les étoiles et céleste» (2559), elle est «celle autour de qui tourne la nature même du monde» (2551-2552). Là, de son flanc droit «déborde abondamment le liquide innombrable» (28, 6 Kr. = 294 Th. = 88 n. 83a L.) qui remplit d'âme les éléments; son flanc

gauche aussi est une «source» (28, 24 Kr. = 88 n. 83b L. = 396 n. 2 Ha¹); sur son dos «la nature sans mesure se balance» (29, 2 Kr. = 289 Th. = 90 n. 91 L.) entre les forces qui l'entraînent vers les mondes matériels ou qui l'attirent vers les puissances intellectives du feu paternel. «Située après les pensées du Père et donnant vie à tous les êtres par la chaleur de son souffle» (28, 12-13 Kr. = 259 Th. = 85 n. 70 L.), Hécate, «centre de toutes les puissances» (κέντρον τῶν ὀλῶν δυνάμεων), commente Psellus (*Ex.*, PG 122, col. 1136 B), est «à double face» (ἀμφιπρόσωπος, 30 n. 1 Kr. = 282 n. 104 Th. = 93 n. 111 L.) comme Barbélo ou comme l'Achamoth-Sophia des Valentiniens, intérieure parce que réceptive des émanations qui partent du Père et extérieure parce qu'au principe de la procession vers les sensibles. Inférieure aux premières mais supérieure aux seconds, sa fonction de médiété fait d'elle à la fois le principe qui sépare les êtres et le lien qui les unit. Les Valentiniens insistent sur la rupture, les *Oracles* et leurs commentateurs sur la corrélation.

L'immixtion dans l'espace médian d'un principe féminin et l'ampleur démesurée donnée à ses attributs et fonctions alimenteront le dualisme. L'hétérogénéité absolue entre le monde supraéthéré lieu de la transcendance et le monde sublunaire lieu du démiurge implique qu'il n'y a pas d'action directe de Dieu sur la matière; l'oracle cité par Proclus, *In Ti.* 2 57, 30-58, 2 (= 13, 23-26 Kr. = 266 n. 42 Th. = 113 n. 184 L.) est très explicite sur ce point. En partageant cette doctrine, Valentiniens et *Oracles* s'opposent aux Juifs et aux Chrétiens unissant transcendance et pouvoir démiurgique (cf. J. Whittaker, *VC* 24, 1970, 241-260). Pour décrire la première, les Gnostiques feront usage et fabriqueront selon les méthodes en vigueur dans les Ecoles de philosophie (cf. Krāmer, *Ursprung*, 105-108) un nombre impressionnant de qualificatifs. Un relevé systématique de ces attributs négatifs dans la tradition indirecte et directe — le temps m'a manqué pour achever le dépouillement des derniers NHC, toutefois la proportion établie ici ne devrait pas être infirmée — comprend 115 entrées, regroupant environ 1500 lieux cités, pour les seuls noms en *ἄ-* privatif, conservés tels quels ou restitués par rétroversion. Sur ces 115 entrées, 73 sont communes à tous les Gnostiques, 42 sont propres aux Valentiniens, et il n'existe pas de terme obtenu par aphérèse en usage chez les Prévalentiniens qui n'ait été utilisé par des Valentiniens. De la sorte, il apparaît que le courant négatif inauguré dès les premières systématisations de la gnose mythologique — les analyses grandioses de la voie d'éminence et d'opposition dans l'*Apocryphon de Jean* et le *Traité anonyme* du codex

Brucianus le prouvent éloquemment — a été totalement absorbé par le valentinisme et amplifié par lui. Un tel répertoire montre à l'évidence que la pensée négative systématique ne commence pas avec le néo-platonisme, mais avec le gnosticisme, qui en trouva les fondements et l'esquisse chez les interprètes moyen-platoniciens de *R.* 509b, de la *Lettre 7* et de la première hypothèse du *Parménide* (après Festugière, *Révélation* 4 79-140; Orbe, *Est. Val.* 1 3-37; Hadot, *Porphyre*¹ 278-283; lire J. Whittaker, *VC* 23, 1969, 91-104; *HTR* 62, 1969 367-371; *SO* 44, 1969, 109-125; 48, 1973, 77-86). De même que Prévalentiniens et Valentinien retirent du Premier toutes les catégories et tous les nombres pour les lui réinjecter sous un mode transcendant (Intellect, Premier, Monade, Un, Etant, Vrai, Bien) ou mythologique (Père, Lumière, Lieu, Profondeur, Abîme, Sigè, Hauteur, Grandeur, Seigneur, Maître, Plénitude, Racine, Nom, Mystère), les *Oracles* affirment à la fois l'inadéquation des mots à la réalité transcendante et leur adéquation sous un mode intelligible (πάντ' ἐστὶ γάρ, ἀλλὰ νοητῶς [19, 6 Kr. = 274 Th. = 81 n. 55 L. = 283 n. 4 Ha¹]) ou mythique (Père, Lumière, Feu, Profondeur, Abîme, Sigè). Une telle dépréciation du langage et de l'intelligence, capable de tout dire parce qu'il ne dit rien, capable de tout comprendre parce qu'elle ne comprend rien, est un trait spécifique de toute pensée se muant en gnose.

Aux antipodes de la pure lumière et de l'empyrée, demeure du dieu ineffable, le monde sublunaire, chthonien ou hylique, englobe toute la matière fluente (ῥεούσης, Numénus 20 Lee. < ἀενάου chez Xénocrate, cf. Krämer, *Ursprung*, 326). Ce n'est pas à partir de la seule «terre sèche» comme le croient les Juifs (*Gn* 1, 9 LXX), que le demiurge fabrique l'homme, mais à partir d'une portion de chacun des quatre éléments de la matière polymorphe (τῆς πολυμεροῦς καὶ ποικίλης ὕλης, *Exc. Thdot.* 50, 1; πολυσχιδής chez Ptolémée, cf. 391 n. 291 L.; dans les *Oracles*: πολυποικίλου ὕλης, 20, 3 Kr. = 118 n. 200 L.) constituant le corps du monde, c'est-à-dire «à partir de la substance invisible, de la fluidité et de l'écoulement de la matière» (Irénée 1 5, 5 = Epiphane 31 19, 8 [p. 415, 15-16 H.]: ἀπὸ τῆς ἀοράτου οὐσίας, ἀπὸ τοῦ κεχυμένου καὶ ῥευστοῦ τῆς ὕλης = Tertullien, *Adv. Val.* 24, 1 [CCL 2, p. 770 Kroym.]: «ex invisibili corpore materiae, illius scilicet philosophicae, de fluxili et fusili eius»; †ΖΥΛΗ ΕΤΖΕΤΕ NHC I 104, 4). «Le monde qui hait la lumière» (μισοφαῖ κόσμον) dans l'oracle transmis par le scholiaste du Ms. E d'Aristote (Saffrey, *RPh* 95 [3^{me} sér. 43, 1969], p. 64) est «un torrent de matière (λάβρον ὕλης, 63, 24-25 Kr. = 302 n. 168 L.), où se trouvent meurtre,

agitations et souffles infects, maladies desséchantes, putréfactions et écoulements (ῥευστά)). Cette matière aux «courants tortueux» (σκολιά ρεῖθρα, 63, 26 Kr. = 303 n. 170 L.) est un «flot abject» (χεῦμα ταπεινόν, 54, 21 Kr. = 290 Th. qui reconstruit l'hexamètre), où l'âme, prisonnière du «corps fluent» (ῥευστόν σῶμα, 54, 2 = 61, 15 Kr. = 169 n. 387 L.) et «tumultueux» (ῥόθιον κύτος, 48, 24-25 Kr. = 277 n. 72 L.), est entraînée dans un monde cauchemardesque d'errance, de folie et d'oubli. Ici aussi, Valentiniens commentant la *Genèse* et *Oracles* commentant Platon disent la même chose. Pour les premiers : τῆ ψυχῆ οὔση ἐν ὕπνῳ ἐντεθῆναι, *Exc. Thdoi.* 2, 1; ὕπνος δὲ τὴν Ἀδὰμ ἢ λήθη τῆς ψυχῆς ἦν συνείχε μὴ διαλυθῆναι (2, 2; cf. Festugière, *VC* 3, 1949, 194); pour les seconds : μέχρις ἂν ἐξέλθῃ λήθης, 50, 17 Kr.; 54, 21 Kr.; τοῦς ὑπνῶοντας ἐνεκάρπισεν, 59, 12 Kr. = 293 Th. = 203 n. 114 L. Le rapprochement fait par Kroll entre cette dernière expression et la formule de Théodote (2, 1) reste fondé, en dépit des réticences de Lewy; car l'ἔνδοθεν σπέρμα (59, 10 Kr., reconnu chaldaïque par Lewy et «identical with the spark of the soul»; ex bono animabus impositum sperma», Proclus, *In Prm.* 7, p. 58, 21-22 Kl.-La.) joue dans l'oracle cité par Synésius le même rôle d'objet et d'agent de l'*anagôgè* que le σπέρμα ἄρρηνικόν de Théodote, défini par Clément précisément comme le σπινθήρ ζωοποιούμενος (1, 3) qui tire l'âme du sommeil (ἐξὑπνισεν, 3, 1).

Toutes ces images décrivant l'état d'oubli de l'âme livrée à l'écoulement de la matière et endormie remontent, par delà le pythagorisme et le moyen-platonisme, à Platon lui-même : *Ti.* 43a 6, εἰς ἐρρίρρυτον σῶμα καὶ ἀπόρρυτον ... εἰς ποταμόν; *R.* 621a 8-b 1: τὸν δὲ ἀειπλέοντα πάντων ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι. Quant à l'usage des catégories de la parenté et de l'espace pour désigner la transcendance sous un mode mythologique, il ne peut être tenu pour spécifique d'une terminologie valentinienne passée dans les *Oracles*, car il n'est méconnu ni de la tradition des *Orphica* ni de celle des papyrus magiques. Ce n'est pas par la description de l'en-deçà et de l'au-delà du domaine de la puissance que les Valentiniens firent époque, mais par la mise en place de la puissance elle-même comme complémentaire (→ *plērōma*), inclinée (→ *neûsis*) et indigente (→ *hystérēma*); à l'intérieur de ses limites, cet univers se concentre quand il jouxte l'ἄδιάκριτον d'en haut et se dilue dès qu'il se rapproche de l'ἀενάον d'en bas. Mais c'est sur le seul aspect de complément de l'indivisible dans les mondes (καὶ ἴσχει κόσμου πολλὰ πληρώματα κόλπων, 121 n. 211 L.) que les *Oracles* établirent leur mythologie concentrique de l'Âme, réservant avec une

grande partie de la tradition platonicienne (cf. 294 n. 136 L.) la dramaturgie de la *neúsis* à l'âme individuelle tournée vers les sensibles (μηδὲ κάτω νεύσης, 62, 19; 63, 12 Kr.).

Proposition IV

Le genre didactique des révélations gnostiques permettait à leurs auteurs d'y intégrer des exposés précis de doctrine astrologique. Le genre littéraire des *logia di épōn* les excluait. Par contre, ils abondaient dans les commentaires en prose qui accompagnaient les *Oracles*, en particulier dans ce que la *Souda* appelle les *Theourgika* de Julien (Suid. *iota* 434, Adler 2. 642) et Proclus ses *Hyphègètika* (*In Ti.* 3 124, 22; 3 247, 28, cf. 283 Th.; ὑφηγηματικά chez Damascius 2 203, 29). Lewy (123 n. 220) a supposé que, compte tenu du fragment cité par Proclus et repris par Damascius, le titre de ce dernier ouvrage devait être ὑφηγητικὰ ἐπὶ ζώων et serait par là identique au *Septième livre des zones* de Julien mentionné par Proclus, *In Ti.* 3 27, 9 (= 46, 11-12 Kr. et 102 n. 150 L.). C'est très vraisemblable. Des intitulés analogues se retrouvent dans la littérature gnostique. Rappelons le *Septième monde de Hiéralias le prophète*: ΠΜΑΖΣΑΨΩΨ ΝΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΝΨΙΕΡΑΛΙΑΣ ΠΕΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ (NHC II 112, 23-25); les *Figures de l'Heimarmène du ciel*: ΝΣΧΗΜΑ ΝΧΙΜΑΡΜΕΝΗ ΝΤΠΕ (NHC II 107, 16); les *Sept livres* mis sous le nom de Seth (ἕξ ὀνόματος Σήθ ἑπτὰ βίβλοι) de la notice des «Séthiens» d'Epiphane 39, 5 l (p. 75, 10 H.) dont le titre véritable a pu être : ἕβδομος (s. e. : βίβλος, λόγος οὐ κόσμος) τοῦ μεγάλου Σήθ, cf. mon article, dans *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, éd. Krause, NHS 8, p. 206-207; l'opuscule intitulé οἱ προάστειοι ἕως αἰθέρος (*Elenchos* 5 14, 10 [p. 110, 12-13 W.]), écrit non gnostique mais tenu «en grande estime» (5 14, 1 [p. 108, 13-14]) chez les Pérates. Tous ces traités perdus, sauf le dernier dont on a un fragment, mais dont le contexte astrologique les concernant ne permet aucun doute, s'employaient à décrire par le menu la disposition (διάθεσις, τῶν πλανητικῶν, NHC II 112, 22-23) des orbites planétaires et les propriétés (ἐνέργειαι, νενεργεῖα NHC II 107, 15) assignées à chacune d'entre elles, exactement comme ἐν ἑβδόμῳ τῶν ζώων de Julien cité par Proclus.

Gnostiques et théurges se devaient de connaître très exactement les lieux traversés par l'âme dans sa descente et sa remontée; rien d'étonnant donc à les voir utiliser pour leur propre dessein dogmatique la science des *mathemata*. Chez tous, le voyage de l'âme ne s'exprime pas seulement dans la terminologie de l'intériorité (cf. propos. I), mais

fait appel au langage des croyances et des pratiques astrologiques traditionnelles. A chaque étape, élu et théurge doivent présenter aux gardiens des ordres planétaires le mot-de-passe qui permet au voyageur des espaces eschatologiques de poursuivre le chemin du retour. Ce laissez-passer ne relève plus de la phonétique des langues de ce monde, mais s'agence selon l'ordre des voyelles et des consonnes divines, seules efficaces en la circonstance. Tout se passe, en fait, comme si le dieu suprême mettait en quelque sorte dans la bouche de son transfuge le commandement auquel le dieu gardien ne peut qu'obtempérer en ouvrant la voie.

Gnostiques et Chaldéens firent grand usage de ces collections d'abracadabras venus de la pratique magique et dont la contrainte incantatoire a été utilisée puis amplifiée à des fins spirituelles. Le Brucianus et l'Askewianus en sont remplis, où ils s'accompagnent souvent, comme dans les papyrus, de déclarations en langage ordinaire sous la forme de réponses à des questions posées. Dans les fragments arrivés jusqu'à nous, le *symbolon* peut subsister sous sa forme de dialogue, comme dans la 1^{re} *Ap. de Jacques* [*1 ApocJas*] (NHC V 33) ou ne livrer que la réponse, comme chez les Gnostiques de Celse, les Marcossiens d'Irénée ou les Gnôstikoi d'Epiphane.

Qu'ils soient *voces mysticae* ou *koïna*, les mots-de-passe remplissent chez tous la même fonction et portent les mêmes noms : ἀπόρρητα et σύμβολα des Gnostiques de Celse (Origène, *Cels.* 6 31), σύμβολον (50, 13 Kr. = 191 n. 55 L.), σύνθημα (50, 18 Kr. = 296 Th. = 190 n. 50 L.), γνώρισμα (59, 11 Kr. = 293 Th. = 203 n. 114 L.) des Chaldéens. Les *aporrèta* gnostiques sont des révélations faites à l'âme pour lui permettre d'acquitter sa redevance (τέλος) en répondant aux questions posées par les τελῶναι («réagers»; περιλήπται, «douaniers», dans l'Askewianus), et partant, d'obtenir son ἀπολύτρωσις (= σωτηρ, NHC V 33, 1-9). «Le Seigneur m'a révélé», déclare un fragment d'apocryphe en usage chez les Gnôstikoi d'Epiphane, «ce que l'âme doit dire quand elle remonte au ciel et comment elle doit répondre à chacune des puissances d'en haut» (26 13, 2 [p. 292, 14-16 H.]). En présentant son *symbolon* à la police des éons, le prétendant au voyage céleste déclare deux noms ou deux identités : celle de l'archonte péager, enfermée dans les éléments avec lesquels il est en sympathie (συμπαθεῖν, Origène, *Cels.* 6 31, 18), celle de son âme, transmuée par la force et la nature divines qui l'entraînent vers son principe. En s'affirmant maître du Destin, le gnostique s'affirme du même coup maître de sa propre destinée.

Sur la base des mêmes principes de sympathie et d'identité, la théurgie postérieure composera ses recettes d'immortalité. Les explications de Jamblique, la théorie des *indolmata* de Proclus, le Περὶ τῆς ἱερατικῆς τέχνης se réfèrent explicitement aux Chaldéens, et ces derniers comme leurs devanciers et contemporains gnostiques à la pratique magique. En définitive, la spéculation théurgique rationalisera un savoir dont la première utilisation spirituelle a été le gnosticisme, y compris dans sa forme la plus christianisée. Le caractère ineffable et intangible des noms barbares (cf. 58, 14 Kr.), la possibilité qu'ils offrent de rendre compte, à travers la logique des palindromes et la sonorité cosmique des voyelles, des liens qui unissent les êtres et d'exprimer, sur le registre de la phonétique, lois et étapes de la descente et de la remontée, tout cela prédécesseurs, proches et continuateurs de Valentin l'avaient parfaitement assimilé. Il restera aux Chaldéens et surtout à leurs diadoques à en établir le système, non plus en fonction de la seule *anagôgè*, mais à partir du rituel magique en son entier.

Ce qui rapproche le plus gnostiques et théurges ne vient pas du fait qu'ils aient intégré dans leur propos mystique la symbolique astrologique, qui reste une garniture, mais de leur position commune vis-à-vis du déterminisme astral. Selon les astrologues, l'influence des astres était totale sur l'homme : ils président à la formation de l'embryon, fixent ici-bas notre genre de vie et nous accompagnent dans l'au-delà. «Ante omnia dicunt (= les Chaldéens) actum uitamque nostram stellis tam vagis quam statis esse subiectam, earumque uario multiplicique cursu genus humanum gubernari, sed ipsarum motus schemataque et effectus a sole crebro immutari» (Censorin, *Die nat.* 8, 2 [p. 13, 16-20 Hu.]).

Les Gnostiques furent les premiers dans le christianisme à combattre les astrologues sur leur propre terrain, en opposant à leurs mythes d'autres mythes (Valentin), à leurs calculs d'autres calculs (Bardesane). Les contradictions que l'homme porte en lui-même ont leur source dans le «combat» (*Exc. Thdot.* 73, 3) que se livrent au-dessus de sa tête les puissances multiples et opposées de l'Heimarménè; ce combat ne peut prendre fin que par l'intervention d'un *deus ex machina*, Jésus, qui traversant les mondes successifs ne réduit pas à néant, comme le pensaient S. Paul et les apologistes, la puissance des puissances, mais la relativise en mettant à nu le mécanisme de leur fonctionnement (*Ask.* 24, 19-39, 4). De la sorte, qui connaît ce mécanisme lui échappe; qui entre par le baptême dans la voie qui mène à la gnose s'assimile la puissance de Celui qui a vaincu les puissances en perçant leurs

secrets. «L'Heimarménè est vraie jusqu'au baptême, mais après le baptême les astrologues ne disent plus la vérité» (*Exc. Thdot.* 78, 1). Tous les non-connaissants sont donc soumis au déterminisme astral.

Pour les auteurs des *logia di'épôn* et leurs commentateurs, comme pour les hermétistes, l'accès à la pratique théurgique et à la philosophie jouera le même rôle de libération de l'Heimarménè que l'accès au baptême et à la gnose chez les Valentiniens. Le fatalisme ne sera pas éliminé, mais s'exercera sur les autres, c'est-à-dire sur ceux qui n'ont pas eu accès au savoir transmis directement par les dieux. Par ce qui en elle est divin, son Noûs, l'âme «échappe à l'aile insolente de la fatalité» (54, 9 Kr. = 292 Th. = 212 n. 142 L.). Tout comme le gnostique qui entre dans le petit nombre de ceux qui ont pris part à la régénération et ne sont plus entravés dans les liens de la nature corporelle, le théurge ne fait plus partie du «troupeau soumis à la fatalité», ὄφ' εἰμαρτὴν ἀγέλην (59, 21 Kr. = 292 Th. = 212 n. 143 L.), il cherche à fuir la foule des hommes qui vont «en troupeau», ἀγέληδόν (59, 26 Kr. = 277 Th. = 55 n. 171 L.). Comme l'auteur des «rouleaux du Sauveur» polémiquant contre les pratiques magiques et en particulier la divination par nécromancie, l'auteur des *logia* traite par le mépris un bon nombre de techniques de divination (géomancie, tables solaires, conjurations à la Lune, ornithomancie, haruspicine): «ce ne sont que divertissements servant à étayer une escroquerie commerciale», τὰ δ' ἀθύρματα πάντα, ἐμπορικῆς ἀπάτης στηρίγματα (64, 35-36 Kr. = 255 n. 99 L.).

Une telle condamnation restait un vœu pieux, car qui sous le manteau qui ouvertement, les adeptes de la mantique continuaient à pratiquer l'une ou l'autre de ses formes à l'ombre des coryphées des Ecoles. Essentiellement, la critique de ces derniers, comme on le voit chez Théodote § 70, ne portait ni sur la réalité de l'influence des astres ni sur la signification symbolique de tel ou tel fait de la nature sensible et irrationnelle marquée par le destin (assimilation passée du stoïcisme — *SVF* 1 176 Ar. — chez Valentin, Bardesane et dans les *Oracles* 42, 12 Kr. = 291 Th. = 98 n. 134 L.; également 50, 1 Kr. = 266 n. 23 L.), mais sur l'efficacité de la pratique, sur la relation de cause à effet entre le signe interprété par le devin et l'événement attendu par le consultant. Le signe ne décide pas, il signifie seulement (σημαίνει τι, οὐχὶ ποιεῖ).

Cette expression de Théodote, qui s'appuie sur toute la tradition grecque depuis Héraclite (cf. *Vorsokr.* 93) et qui ne sera rejetée qu'avec Jamblique, traduit parfaitement la position commune aux Valentiniens et aux *Oracles* en matière d'astrologie et de divination. Sa contrepartie

sera l'affirmation que l'âme possède en elle-même par sa partie la plus haute le principe divin qui la libère de la « nature de servitude » (†ΦΥΣΙΣ ἤΜΝΤΒΑΥΑΝ, NHC I 117, 35), principe que les Valentiniens et *Oracles* appellent *semence* et *étincelle*. Au déterminisme astral fixant le destin de mort du plus grand nombre, correspondra ainsi le déterminisme du salut pour le petit nombre sauvé « par nature » (φύσει, *Exc. Thdot.* 56, 3), « par leur propre force » (οἱ ἑῆς ὠκῆς, 52, 25 Kr. = 194 n. 67 L. = 183 n. 4 Ha¹).

Un quatrain, enfoui dans un exposé de Bar Hebraeus sur les *Catégories* d'Aristote (*Entretien de la Sagesse* 2 24, ed. H. J. Janssens p. 84, 1-4 pour le texte, p. 242 pour la traduction) et laissé-pour-compte par l'éditeur, rend bien cette atmosphère mystique qui était celle des Valentiniens, des *Oracles* et de Plotin lui-même et que l'on retrouvera comme source inspiratrice des *Hymnes* de Synésius et de Proclus :

κωσ ρω ι τ ο δ ι ε υ δ ι
 κω ρ ο δ ι ε υ γ ρ ι ο τ
 κ ω ω ω ω ω ω ω ω ω ω
 κ ω ω ρ ι δ ι λ ι δ ι ε υ

«Lorsque l'intelligence (κωσ = νοῦς) eut déposé (ρω = ἀποδύεσθαι) son voile (κωωωωω = περίβλημα des *Oracles* 61, 19-20 Kr., πέπλος des *Orphica* dans Porphyre, *Ant.*, 14 n° 192 Kern, c'est-à-dire les αἰσθητὰ ἔργα enveloppant les intelligibles dans l'oracle transmis par Damascius = 37, 22-23 Kr.), alors j'ai su qui j'étais (cf. les formules valentiniennes dans propos. I et surtout Plotin 1 6, 9 : 7, 15-18 et 5 8, 10 : 39-43 sur l'identification du monde intelligible et du moi); et quand j'eus rejeté (κω = ἀποτίθεσθαι) de moi le limon (κωωω = βόρβορος, Plotin 1 6, 6 : 5; 8, 13 : 17; 6 7, 31 : 26), je me suis vu au-dessus de la lune», c'est-à-dire au-delà de la nature dont la lune est l'image (ἄγαλμα, cf. Proclus, *In Ti.* 3 69, 16 = 49, 2-7 Kr. = 98 n. 134 L.) et qui organise la génération par les quatre éléments mélangés, au-delà même du monde planétaire par où les âmes enchaînées à la Nécessité descendent vers les corps; pour parler comme Proclus, *H.* 2 17 Vogt : ἐπὶ τὰ κύκλων ὑπὲρ ἀντυγας αἰθέρι ναίεις; également *Psautier* manichéen, p. 81, 8-10 Allb.

L'auteur de ce quatrain, dont les idées appartiennent à l'époque de Bardesane e: qui pourrait bien être Bardesane lui-même («le Poète»), réutilise les images platoniciennes décrivant le retour de l'âme comme le font ses contemporains gnostiques, philosophes ou théurges. Pour

lui, comme pour eux, la fatalité est sans prise sur qui a reçu dans la partie la plus haute de soi-même le pouvoir de franchir la sphère de la destinée : «intelligentiam autem nostram sursum ducere» (Proclus, *In Prm.* 7, p. 58, 31 Kl.-La.)

Proposition V

La sphère platonicienne du monde renferme la totalité des éléments employés par le démiurge; rien n'a été laissé au dehors : οὐδὲν ... ἔξωθεν ὑπολιπών, *Ti.* 32c 8 = Albinus, *Didasc.* 12, p. 167, 33 He. : μηδὲν ἔξωθεν ὑπολείπεσθαι. En dehors d'elle il n'y a ni espace vide ni substance indéterminée ayant échappé à la démiurgie. Au dedans, la révolution circulaire impartie au tout par l'Âme comble les espaces vides entre les éléments mal emboîtés, de sorte qu'il n'y a là aussi ni vide non rempli ni substance échappant au mouvement tourbillonnaire. La sphère ne comportant de la sorte ni fuite vers l'extérieur ni raté à l'intérieur, le tout unique et circulaire est un vivant parfait (ζῷον τέλειον, 32d 1), se suffisant à lui-même (αὐτάρκτης 33d 2 = Albinus, p. 167, 36), inaccessible à la maladie et au vieillissement (ἄνοσος καὶ ἀγήρωσ, 33a 1-2b 1 = Albinus, p. 167, 35).

Toutefois, Platon reconnaissait lui-même que la mise en ordre des éléments les uns par rapport aux autres était un travail que le démiurge avait réalisé «autant qu'il était possible» (καθ' ὅσον ἦν δυνατόν, 32b 5), «dans la mesure où la nature de la Nécessité se laissait spontanément persuader» (ὀπτητερ ἢ τῆς ἀνάγκης ἔκουσα πεισθεῖσά τε φύσις ὑπέικεν, 56c 5-6). De là à penser que l'artisan avait fait pour le mieux et ne pouvait faire mieux, que la machine sortie de ses mains n'était pas aussi parfaite qu'on le prétendait, que subsistaient en dehors d'elle des matériaux inemployés risquant à tout moment d'en perturber le fonctionnement, il n'y avait qu'un pas que franchirent à la même époque deux chrétiens platoniciens, Valentin et Hermogène.

Quand le démiurge décide la fabrication du monde, il a les yeux fixés sur une certaine idée (= le modèle) du monde (= l'image). Albinus, p. 167, 7-9 : πρὸς τινα ἰδέαν κόσμου ἀποβλέποντος, παράδειγμα ὑπάρχουσαν τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου ὡς ἔν ἀπεικονισμένου ἀπ' ἐκείνης. Or, dans le passage de la représentation à la chose représentée, il n'y a pas adéquation, continuité et homogénéité de nature, mais brisure, distorsion et appauvrissement. Un des plus beaux fragments de Valentin transmis par Clément d'Alexandrie, *Str.* 4 89, 6-90, 4 = fr. 5 Völker p. 59, 2-7, servira de point d'appui à l'analyse : même

si «la majesté du visage qui a fourni au peintre le modèle» (μεγαλωσύνη τοῦ προσώπου παρεσχημένου τῷ ζωγράφῳ τὸν τύπον, 3-4) se reconnaît dans l'objet fabriqué — c'est le sens de l'expression : εἰς πίστιν τοῦ πεπλασμένου (6-7) —, la copie ne peut être égale en splendeur à l'original, elle sera ressemblante seulement. L'image, dira Valentin, ne peut prétendre posséder l'authenticité de la forme : οὐ γὰρ ἀβεντικῶς εὐρέθη μορφή (5), forme dont le lieu propre sont les intelligibles en provenance du Nom (= le Père), dont la Mère des syzygies assure la réception dans le plérôme et qui restent ce par rapport à quoi sont comblées les déficiences de la fabrication (τὸ ὄνομα ἐπλήρωσεν τὸ ὑστερήσαν ἐν πλάσει, 5-6). Ainsi «autant l'image est inférieure au visage vivant, autant le monde à l'éon vivant», ὅποσον ἐλάττων ἢ εἰκὼν τοῦ ζῶντος προσώπου, τοσοῦτον ἦσσαν ὁ κόσμος τοῦ ζῶντος αἰῶνος (1-3). Prise dans l'autre sens, non plus à partir des premiers reflets dans le plérôme des intelligibles (= l'éon vivant), mais des derniers dans la source matérielle des sensibles, la série des discontinuités attribuera aussi au monde et à son démiurge la position d'«un reflet du reflet», τοῦ εἰδώλου εἰδῶλον (Plotin 2 9, 10 : 27 = NHC VIII 10, 4). Qu'on le considère donc comme image de l'image de Sophia dans la matière (*Zostr.*) ou comme image de l'image du Père dans l'éon vivant (Valentin), ce monde-ci arrivera toujours au terme d'une dégradation (d'où sauvetage, purification et remontée, cf. *OrCh* 61, 7 Kr. commenté par Psellus, *Ex.*, PG 122, col. 1124 A 1-1125 A 4) d'un modèle par son reflet. Un Plotin qui ne lit pas Platon à travers les mythes des Barbares, percera le non-sens d'un tel cosmos qui n'est plus ordre, mais en perpétuel état d'infériorité.

Le processus de composition du monde signifie cependant moins l'infériorité de ce dernier que la nature même des éléments entrant dans cette composition. La matière valentinienne, qui s'identifie à la terre invisible et sans ordre de *Gn* 1, 2 LXX, fabriquée à l'origine par le démiurge juif, n'est pas inengendrée, incréée ou coéternelle à Dieu, comme l'admettaient certains interprètes récents du *Timée* soit à l'intérieur du christianisme (Hermogène) soit en dehors (cf. Calcidius, *Comm.* 278). Le *TT* [*TriTrac*] est très explicite sur ce point, cf. NHC I 53, 31-33, et c'est une assimilation indue des hérésiologues — reprise par les modernes, dont Lewy, lequel parle constamment du dogme valentinien de la matière préexistante et d'Hermogène comme «Gnostique valentinien» — de conclure à des positions fondamentales de philosophie païenne contraires à l'enseignement des Ecritures (coéter-

nité de la matière) à partir de points particuliers de doctrine effectivement communs à certains «païens» et «chrétiens», gnostiques ou non (la lie de la matière démiurgique); d'où l'assimilation subséquente: tel chrétien qui ne l'est pas (Hermogène, voire Marcion ou Basilide) sera réfuté comme l'étant.

Que ce soit dans la *Genèse* des Juifs ou dans la «Genèse» des païens (= le *Timée*), l'action démiurgique visera à introduire dans la matière créée sans ordre un ordre mathématique (progression descendante-ascendante), physique (séparation et combinaison des éléments opposés) et métaphysique (l'image trace du modèle). Dans les deux textes de référence, cette tentative est décrite comme réussie: le dieu juif s'extasie sur son œuvre, le démiurge platonicien également satisfait imprime à son produit la figure circulaire parfaite des idées et des nombres. Pour les interprètes gnostiques chrétiens du *Timée*, la satisfaction du démiurge devant son œuvre était aveuglement devant l'arbre qui cache la forêt, audace imbécile et ignorante d'un bavard qui ne voit ni le dieu qui le transcende ni le mal qui sourd de partout à partir de la réalité extérieure, la lie des éléments. Il était facile de lire le transfert de la matière inorganisée dans son état primordial à sa mise en ordre seconde par le démiurge, non plus comme décrivant un mythe d'origine dont le télos annule l'archè, mais comme exposant une physique et une ontologie foncièrement dualistes. C'est ce que fit Hermogène. La totalité des sensibles renferme les deux épaisseurs du monde: ce qui a été mis en ordre par le démiurge (εἰς τάξιν, *Ti.* 30a 4 = Albinus, p. 167, 14, πρὸς τὴν τάξιν) et ce qui a été laissé inorganisé, sans mesure et sans ordre (πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως, *Ti.* 30a 4 = Albinus, p. 167, 12; ἀκατασκευάστος, *Gn* 1, 2 LXX = Origène, *Princ.* 4 4, 6: *informis materia*); ce qui a été adouci (ἡμέρωσε, *Elenchos* 8 17, 2 [p. 236, 19 W.]) et ce qui a été laissé sans ordre (ἀτάκτως; «inconditus et confusus et turbulentus», Tertullien, *Adv. Herm.* 41, 1): «la partie adoucie est le cosmos, l'autre, restée sauvage, est appelée matière acosmique» (*Elenchos*, p. 236, 19-237, 1).

Une telle cosmologie contient aussi, comme celle de Valentin, la métaphore du *speculum* et de l'*exemplarium* (cf. Waszink dans Tertullien, *Treatise Against Hermogenes*, ACW 24, p. 95 n. 36 et 163 n. 334), mais prise en sens inverse comme dans *Zostr.*, et il est vraisemblable que c'est auprès des interprètes stoïcisants du *Timée* que les deux interprètes chrétiens trouvèrent argument pour établir leur thèse commune de l'imperfection du monde. En effet, c'est toujours vers le dehors — sed contra: ῥεῖ γὰρ οὐκ ἔξω, dira Plotin pour

rétablir l'orthodoxie platonicienne de l'incorruptibilité du monde — que s'écoule la matière constitutive du corps de l'univers, c'est-à-dire vers le modèle de ses formes et vers la source de son mouvement désordonné et de son agitation incessante. Cette source et ce modèle existent encore à l'état résiduel dans le reliquat de la matière, abandonné au dehors par le démiurge et que désigneront les métaphores de la lie (τρύξ, ὑποστάθμη, *faex* : Irénée 1 30, 5 = Eriphane 37 4, 4; Méthode, *Arbitr.*, p. 19, 10 Vaillant = Adamantius, *Dial.*, p. 142, 4 Bakh.) et de l'excrément (σκόβαλον, 61, 6 KΓ. = 285 n. 110 Th. = 213 n. 144 L. = 84 n. 4 Ha¹). Cette matière sédimentielle est la source du mal, dans l'homme par les passions et les démons qui agitent l'enveloppe corporelle, dans le monde par les tourbillons qui des lieux hypochthoniens viennent agiter et secouer l'ordre supérieur des éléments. Les interprètes néoplatoniciens, païens et chrétiens, des *Oracles* retiendront le premier usage de la métaphore, bien que, ainsi que l'indique le contexte de l'oracle chez Lydus, elle se rapporte d'abord à la totalité du monde sublunaire : τοὺς τῶν πλανήτων πόλους, οὐς Χαλδαῖοι στερεώματα καλοῦσιν, ἄνευ τοῦ σεληνιακοῦ, διὰ τὸ μέχρις αὐτοῦ διήκειν τὸ τοῦ παντός ὄλικοῦ σκόβαλον, 1 12, p. 6, 11-13 Wü., cf. propos. I. Egalement, l'oracle περὶ τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου transmis par Damascius 2 317, 3-7 (= 62, 19-23 KΓ. = 295 n. 137 L.) est relatif à l'ensemble des sensibles du monde sublunaire, ὡς εἰδωλικῶν καὶ ψευδωνύμων καὶ μυριάς μεταβολαῖς ὑποκείμενον, 2 316, 17-18.

Les *Oracles* font intervenir les images de l'excrément et du reflet (εἶδωλον, 61, 7 KΓ.) dans un contexte dualiste identique à celui que l'on trouve chez Valentin et Hermogène. C'est la lie des éléments qui chez eux aussi donne à la matière son goût d'amertume (cf. propos. III) et explique l'imperfection d'un monde sublunaire livré à la haine de la lumière et à la proximité du chaos ténébreux. Chez Valentin comme dans les *Oracles*, la lie dont les relents refluent vers le dedans du monde est le lieu de l'origine du mal. Chez le premier, les mondes supérieurs des astres seront touchés par le mal, chez les seconds ils seront soustraits à son influence. Chez l'un, c'est le tout du monde qui est corruptible, malade, vieillissant et mortel, chez les autres la maladie et le vieillissement des éléments inférieurs n'altèrent pas l'éternelle splendeur des astres. Que le mal englobe la totalité ou qu'il porte atteinte à une partie seulement, chez tous il s'explique par l'appendice de la matière démiurgique. La réinterprétation du *Timée* à l'époque qui voit l'éclosion des gnosés et la mise en vers des *Oracles* aboutit de la sorte à une cosmologie fondamentalement identique, qui exprime

côté les poètes, de l'autre les dialecticiens. D'un côté les Ecritures inspirées qui offrent la possibilité de renouveler et de démultiplier l'idée par l'image, de l'autre le platonisme des Ecoles terrain privilégié de l'exercice de la pensée logique. Tendances bien réelles mais non exclusives, car Valentin, Julien et Numénius utilisèrent les deux langages. Mais alors que le deuxième met en vers redondants des schémas de pensée déjà élaborés qu'il enjolive par les images familières à son nationalisme culturel, que la prose conservatrice du troisième ne fait que transposer timidement à l'arithmologie la puissance qui dissocie le Dieu transcendant du démiurge, l'utilisation des deux langages et la pression inspiratrice chez Valentin et ses disciples innovent de surprenante façon. Comment et en quoi?

Au lieu d'aboutir à une lecture concordante et monocorde des Ecritures, comme on le voit chez Philon, l'injection de platonisme dans le discours juif et chrétien sur Dieu désintègre chez les Valentinieniens l'exégèse traditionnelle par l'opposition entre principe transcendant auteur du fait ontologique, secret et plénier, et démiurge auteur du fait linguistique, manifesté et déficient. A son tour, le dualisme métaphysique se désintègre sous la pression du mythe, dont le déploiement tragique multiforme dramatise la pensée et court-circuite le processus émanatif (allées et venues de la Sophia entre les mondes dissociés et peuplement mythologique de l'espace intermédiaire). A leur tour, les circuits logiques de l'image se désintègrent dans l'anti-grammaire de la tautologie et de l'équivocité, car le Gnostique n'oublie pas que le mot, même restauré dans sa signification connaissante par le texte de révélation, reste un produit de l'ignorance du démiurge. La confiance qu'il a en lui sera totale et nulle à la fois, et c'est dans l'amphibologie prise comme norme du discours que se dévide l'écheveau des propositions et des notions. Langage qui aboutira aussi, comme par exemple dans la première partie du Brucianus, à considérer les unités non-significatives du mot comme les seules véritablement porteuses de signification. La didascalie valentinienne mit en œuvre toutes les possibilités de parole, de pensée, d'image et d'écriture, qu'offraient le système d'ambiguïté et le langage du non-langage. C'est à mi-chemin de cette voie qui entraîna la métaphysique valentinienne vers l'autisme que s'arrêtèrent les *Oracles*.

DISCUSSION

MICHEL TARDIEU: I HAVE been concerned with the *Chaldaean Oracles* for several years. Because of the unfortunate circumstances of its publication, Hans Lewy's book on the *Oracles* has come to us in a lamentable state; I have prepared a new edition with a number of appendices. There are inadequacies also in Des Places's recent edition of the text: he has taken over errors from Lewy, as on Fragment 139, and he also introduced fragments not from the *Oracles*, like Fragments 26, 98, 155, 165-66, 171-74, 177-78, etc. Thus, Kroll's edition (1894) remains the only usable text.

In this paper, I began from Kroll's suggestion that the *Chaldaean Oracles* are a pagan version of Christian Gnosticism, viz. Valentinianism. In an unsystematic way, Lewy had pointed out terms shared by the *Oracles* and Valentinianism. I have tried to give an exhaustive account of these terms, organized around five points common to late antique physics. None of these is a proposition in the Aristotelian sense nor developed dialectically; instead, they belong to the realm of religious philosophy and were treated in the style of hymnody and prayer.

My first point is a description of the relation of the Chaldaean thought to Greek astrology, a system in which the sun was said to be intercalated among the planets and to exert a force of attraction on the elements circling it. In relation to this *problématique*, I have collected all the vocabulary of the *Oracles* and Valentinianism on the soul and its adventure.

Second, I was concerned with two logia from the *Oracles* unexplained by Neoplatonic commentators or modern critics; Lewy's account was too simple. Within the shared metaphysics, since the terms for the above and the below are defined by negative attributes, the structure of the elements between the upper world (light) and the lower world (matter) organized the totality of negative theology.

The third point I discussed was founded on the fundamental Platonic dogma that only the invisible world is real, and also on the Stoic theory of three fires found in Plutarch with references to Posidonius and Chrysippus. Around these points is organized the heart of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the teaching that between two unrelated worlds there is another, which is a feminine power. It is the organization of this feminine principle which is significant.

My fourth point concerns the rejection of astrology which Lewy

had noted; my fifth examines the source of evil and its relation to the residue of demiurgic matter.

From my examination, I conclude that the system of the *Oracles* is incomprehensible unless we see at its foundation the development of the Gnostic systems around Valentinus. Thus, I have affirmed Kroll's position, but I refuse to use the word "gnosis."

GILLES QUISPÉL: Nock also called the *Oracles* a pagan Gnosis.

When we speak of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and Valentinus, we should not forget Basilides. The *Oracles* can explain some of his enigmatic terminology. For example, Fragment 53 (des Places) says: ...μετὰ δὴ πατρικᾶς διανοίας ψυχὴ ἐγὼ ναίω θέρμη ψυχούσα τὰ πάντα. For me, this explains the third Sonship of Basilides: there is not simply the human spirit in matter but two more besides.

TARDIEU: (To Quispel) I am unable to situate Basilides exactly in the world of Gnosis and philosophy. He is often made into a Gnostic; you, for example, consider him so. As for me, I am not sure.

WAYNE MEEKS: Earlier, our discussion tried to place Valentinus in relation to the Platonic tradition. Since the *Chaldaean Oracles* are even more on the periphery of this heritage, it would be helpful for us to pursue the question of their relation to the philosophy of their time.

JOHN WHITTAKER: The *Oracles* bear a number of resemblances to second-century Middle Platonism. On the status of νοῦς, for example, both were unsure whether it was to be considered a first or a second principle. Second-century Platonists were in a quandary: was the first principle a mind or an abstract One with no differentiation? While keen to maintain the oneness of the first principle, they did not like to abandon the notion of a governing mind. This ambivalence is reflected also in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

TARDIEU: Yes, this is an important point. We should never forget the amphibology of the notion of νοῦς, which has been described by Festugière in his *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*.

QUISPÉL: I agree that we should ask what kind of philosophy lies behind the *Oracles*. Lewy's remarkable book postulates a Middle Platonic background, but the real interest lies in the fact that the *Oracles* presuppose a cosmogonic ἔρως, a love which leaps from divinity and traverses the entire world, then returns to its ultimate source as ἀγάπη toward God. Proclus himself detected this teaching

in the *Oracles*. The concept helps explain the meaning of ἔρωϝ in Dionysius. If we could discover its source, it would be important for understanding John and the Johannine letters. Obviously, the concept is of Orphic origin: here φάνης, also called ἔρωϝ, is of central importance. Originally, it was a completely mythical concept: φάνης or ἔρωϝ was derived from the world egg. The Pre-Socratics treated ἔρωϝ as a philosophical term. Plato demythologized and anthropologized the notion: he spoke of the ἔρωϝ of humanity for the Infinite. My question, then, asks what kind of religious philosophy could have preserved and transmitted a mythical concept of ἔρωϝ, an entirely Hellenic concept which is found in the *Oracles*.

TARDIEU: How to situate the *Oracles* in ancient philosophy remains an unsolved problem. For example, we do not know if they were posterior or anterior to Numenius. Kroll, Lewy, and Festugière said posterior; Dodds said anterior, and I tend to agree with him. As for the relation of ἔρωϝ to Orphism, as you observed at Cairo (1976) and I myself observed in *Trois mythes* (1974), 115ff. and 148ff., the Derveni papyrus is an excellent witness for the use of ἔρωϝ to describe metaphysical entities.

WHITTAKER: During the early Empire there was a renaissance of interest in Empedocles, to which we are indebted for most of the surviving fragments—Hippolytus, *Ref.* in particular being a major source. The role of Empedocles' φιλία as a sort of cosmogonic ἔρωϝ must have provoked attention as well as his dualism of φιλία and νεῖκος.

QUISPEL: Yes, but my concern is with cosmogonic ἔρωϝ as known in Greek philosophy, for example in Parmenides. This is a female deity from which ἔρωϝ pervades the universe. It was demythologized in Plato and Aristotle and no longer existed by this period.

WHITTAKER: In Empedocles' eyes φιλία and νεῖκος were both cosmogonic forces and as such pervade the universe in turn in the procession of world periods. According to whether φιλία or νεῖκος be considered the ruling principle of the present world period, the system is optimistic or pessimistic. I assume that Empedocles, like most Greeks of his age, was pessimistically inclined and therefore believed that νεῖκος now ruled. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.29ff. derives the system of Marcion from Empedocles' doctrine of φιλία and νεῖκος.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: Creative ἔρωξ is also found in Oriental mythology available in the second century. It is attested, for instance, in the Phoenician mythology of Philo of Byblus, though it is called πάθος rather than ἔρωξ; the world egg is present as well. Thus, there were non-Orphic sources also accessible to the later Platonists.

WHITTAKER: In Middle Platonism, ἔρωξ was not a prominent term, but πρόνοια played perhaps a similar role. And, certainly, the ἔρωξ of the soul for the first principle was strongly emphasized. In the *Didaskalikos* (p. 165,27f. Hermann) of Alcinous (whom for no good reason modern scholars have dubbed Albinus) the first principle is termed πρῶτον ἔραστον καὶ ἐφετόν (cf. *Phoenix* 32 [1978] 144ff.) and the same formulation occurs in Plutarch *Isid.* 374d. Apuleius, *De dogm. Plat.* 2.2.221 calls it optimum et amabile et concupiscendum.

QUISEL: We must not look only in the Platonic tradition, since the whole terminology used in connection with ἔρωξ was more Posidonian than Middle Platonic; it was a Stoic transformation of Orphic lore.

WHITTAKER: But in the second century, Stoicism was dying, and the remnants were being absorbed into the Platonic tradition.

ATTRIDGE: (*To Tardieu*) I am interested in your suggestion that behind Valentinianism there is a basic physical theory. But there are also differences between a physicalist theology and Valentinianism. Some other forms of Gnosticism, like the Naassenes, would seem closer to a symbolized physics and thus closer to the *Chaldaean Oracles* than was Valentinianism.

TARDIEU: At this period, physics and religious physics were the same thing. In my paper, I did not show that the *Oracles* were constructed on the basis of propositions from physics. Rather, I gave a purely formal, speculative analysis of a system. I gathered terms around propositions which are important for the proper understanding of the *Oracles* but which had been ignored by the commentators. I did not intend to suggest that in Valentinianism or in the *Oracles* there is any conscious reference to physics. It is only implicit.

ATTRIDGE: But in Naassene thinking the notions are more than implicit. Here, the dynamic principles of the system are found in the vertically descending arrangement of elements and in the conjunction

and disjunction of opposites, etc. In contrast, in Valentinianism the physical positions are only implicit if they are there at all.

WHITTAKER: Behind every second-century theology there is a specific conception of the physical structure of the universe. The question of the origin and structure of the physical universe was an issue of tremendous popular concern and closely related to theological problems. Such concern at the popular level is reflected, for example, in the opening passage of the *Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*.

RAOUL MORTLEY: (*To Tardieu*) In their discussions of negative theology and use of words with the alpha privative, did the *Chaldaean Oracles* refer to the derivation of "Apollo" from the negation of multiplicity ($\alpha + \text{πολλά}$)?

TARDIEU: No.

MORTLEY: That is interesting, since the derivation is found in Plotinus, Clement of Alexandria, and Numenius. It was a common way to show the necessity of a negative theology.

WHITTAKER: I would be grateful for any additions to the catalogue of references to the interpretation of "Apollo" in the negative theological style which I published in my article, "Ammonius on the Delphic E," *Classical Quarterly*, 1969.

MORTLEY: (*To Tardieu*) The method of negation in theology can be discussed with either of two terms, whose differences have been explored by Whittaker: ἀφαίρεσις and ἀπόφασις. In early Platonism, ἀφαίρεσις—abstraction—was the more common term. In later Platonism, the preferred term became ἀπόφασις, perhaps as theology became more radically negative in its language about God. Which term was used in the *Chaldaean Oracles*? Does this text ever say that God is beyond existence or inexistent, as the *Parmenides* says, "ἐν μὴ ἔστι"?

TARDIEU: The question of negative theology before Neoplatonism is an immense subject. My discussion was based on what was said about ἀφαίρεσις and the *via eminentiae* in Krämer's book and in Hadot's work, to which Whittaker's articles on negative theology make frequent reference.

I do not think that ἀπόφασις and negative theology were very original or specific to Chaldaean thought; the situation was like what

Whittaker has demonstrated about self-generation. Negative theology, the accumulation of negative attributes, was used by the Gnostics without any specifically Gnostic method or system. There was no construction but only a confluence of terminology found everywhere in antiquity. Many of the negative attributes found in Neoplatonism were already there in Gnosticism, but I do not see how they were used.

JONAS: Were the terms ἀπόφασις and ἀπαίρεσις, then, synonymous in the *Oracles*, or were they distinguished?

TARDIEU: I consider them synonyms. Initially, one denies to the first being categories which belong to the sensible world; one says that the first principle is not extent, not father, etc. Then one says that he is extent, father, etc. : the categories are withdrawn in order to be injected again in a play of affirmation and negation whose laws I have not yet discovered.

WHITTAKER: On the non-existent God, we should consider Basilides' οὐκ ὄν θεός, which formulation was perhaps in deliberate contrast to Exod 3:13-14.

GNOSTIC WRITINGS AS WITNESSES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAYINGS TRADITION

BY

HELMUT KOESTER

SAYINGS of Jesus which appear in so-called gnostic gospels and other gnostic literature are often considered as secondary fabrications or literary inventions. This judgment is especially common with respect to sayings which seem to express "gnostic" themes. It is my intention to ask whether at least some of these sayings may not belong to an early stage of the transmission of Jesus' sayings. As a consequence, we may have to revise not only our judgment about the relative date of such sayings, but also our view of the character and theology of the early developments of this segment of the gospel tradition. At the same time, some insights might be gained with respect to the formation of the gnostic dialogue as a literary genre.

1. Sayings about Seeking and Finding

The Synoptic version of these sayings is well known from Matt 7:7-8 and Luke 11:9-10. The almost complete agreement of Matthew and Luke confirms the existence of this saying in their common source. It was formulated in three brief sentences, given first as an imperative, then as a basic statement:

Ask, and you shall be given.
Seek, and you shall find.
Knock, and it shall be opened to you.
For each who asks, shall receive,
and he who seeks shall find,
and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

This highly stylized version is derived from the Synoptic sayings source (Q) and doubtlessly speaks about God's answering of prayer. This is further emphasized by the added illustrations Matt 7:9-11 and Luke 11:11-13—illustrations which Q had already connected with these sayings on seeking and finding. But the whole unit is a secondary

composition,¹ and it is questionable whether the application to prayer agrees with the original intention of the request to seek and find. The Synoptic tradition also includes injunctions *against* the seeking for needed sustenance of earthly life: "Seek the kingdom, and all other things will be provided" (Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31).² That the "seeking" should be directed to a religious goal, and not toward goals of earthly life, is expressed several times.³

Variants of the saying about "seeking and finding" which appear outside of the Synoptic Gospels confirm the latter usage. The notion of prayer is missing in *GTh* 94:

He who seeks will find,
and [he who knocks] will be let in.

A variant of the saying combines the concepts of "seeking/asking" and "joy"; cf. John 16:24:

Ask and you shall receive,
in order that your joy shall be perfect.

DialSav 129:14-16:

And he who [knows]
[let him] seek and find
and [rejoice].

In both instances, the saying is part of a "dialogue" or discourse. However, in each instance other sayings are utilized in close proximity.⁴

A second version reflects the theme of the seeking of wisdom which is hidden. It is clearly a Christian adaptation of an older sapiential saying. "Baruch" in Cyprian *Quir.* 3.29:⁵

[Translations of texts in the Nag Hammadi library are from *NHLibEng*, as follows: the *Gospel of Thomas*, tr. Thomas O. Lambdin; the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, tr. John D. Turner; the *Dialogue of the Savior*, tr. Harold W. Attridge.]

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 87.

² In Q, this saying has become part of a secondary composition of sayings "On Cares" (Matt 6:25-34 = Luke 12:22-31).

³ Cf. Luke 17:33 ("Whoever seeks ... his soul ..."). See also the use of this term in parables: Matt 13:45; Luke 15:8.

⁴ On John 16:20 see below. For the quote from *The Dialogue of the Savior* see 129: 12-14: "[He who is] able, let him deny [himself and] repent" = Mark 8:34.

⁵ Henri-Charles Puech was the first to draw attention to this saying which occurs only in one manuscript of Cyprian's *Testimoniorum libri tres ad Quirinum* (ed. G. Hartel, CSEL). The saying is introduced: "Likewise in Baruch (= Baruch)." Cf.

For a time will come,
and you shall seek me, ...
to hear the word of wisdom and of insight,
and shall not find.

GTh 38:

Many times have you desired to hear these words
(which I am saying to you, and you have no one else to hear them
from).⁶
There will be days
when you look for me
and will not find me.

John 7:33-34:

Only a brief time I am with you
and I am going to the one who sent me.
You will seek me
and not find me,
and where I am, you cannot come.⁷

The early usage of this saying in the Christian sapiential tradition is also attested by Paul's reference to the "seeking of wisdom" (1 Cor 1:22);⁸ cf. his rejection of recognizing God "through the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:21) and his emphasis upon the apocalyptic character of the hidden wisdom (1 Cor 2:6-8).

The themes of "seeking" and "finding" characterize a religious quest. In this sense they occur several times in a number of related sayings in which "seeking" can be interpreted as "inquiring," and "finding" as "knowing." Inquiry after external things is thus contrasted with knowledge of oneself. *GTh* 3:

If those who lead you say to you,
"See the Kingdom is in the sky,"

Rather, the Kingdom is inside of you (and it is outside of you).⁹
When you know yourselves,
then you will become known.

Henri-Charles Puech, "Gnostic Gospels and Related Documents," Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson) I. 301.

⁶ Parentheses mine.

⁷ Cf. John 13:33: "You will seek me and, as I said to the Jews, where I go you cannot come."

⁸ This formulation in 1 Cor 1:22 is technical, i.e., it reflects the terminology of the Corinthians for whom the "seeking of wisdom" was a central religious goal; against Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973) 46.

⁹ This phrase is a later addition, since it confuses the contrast "not outside (sky, sea), but within."

Luke 17:20-21:

The kingdom of God does not come with observation,
nor will they say, "See, it is here!" or "there!"
Behold, the kingdom of God is inside of you.¹⁰

GTh 111:

The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence.
And the one who lives from the Living One
will not see death. ...
Whoever finds himself
is superior to the world.

This external inquiry can also be contrasted with the recognition of the revealer and his message or, again, with knowledge of oneself.

GTh 91:

You read the face of the sky ...
but you have not recognized the one who is before you,
and you do not know how to read this moment.

Luke 12:56:

The face of the earth and the sky you know to examine,
but this moment, why do you not examine it?

DialSav 128:1-5:

But I say to [you],
[as for what] you seek after [and you] inquire about,
[behold, it is] in you.

GTh 92:

Seek and you will find.
Yet what you asked me about in former days,
and which I did not tell you then,
now I desire to tell,
but you do not inquire after it.

¹⁰ The problem of the interpretation of this Lucan saying cannot be dealt with here; see especially Bent Noack, *Das Gottesreich bei Lukas* (SymBU 10; Uppsala: Gleerup, 1948), where the history of the interpretation is discussed. Hans Conzelmann (*The Theology of Saint Luke* [tr. Geoffrey Buswell; London: Faber & Faber, 1960] 120-25) demonstrates that Lucan redaction has decisively influenced its present formulation; cf. also August Strobel, "Die Passah-Erwartung als urchristliches Problem in Lc 17, 20f.," *ZNW* 49 (1958) 157-83: Luke directs this saying against the expectation that the parousia would come on the day of passover. The parallels in *GTh* 3, 91, and 111 suggests that the saying which Luke used contrasted external observation with the presence of the kingdom in the believer and/or in Jesus as the revealer.

The latter saying also occurs in *A. Jo.* 98:

John, there must be one man to hear these things from me;
for I need one who is ready to hear.¹¹

A variant is used in the enigmatic discourse John 16:23, 30:

“And in that day you will not ask me anything ...”
“Now we know that you know everything
and have no need that someone ask you.”¹²

The occurrence of this saying and its variants in such a wide variety of sources suggests that they belong to a development of the sayings tradition which took place in the first century A.D. The parallel in 1 Cor 1:22 points to a tradition of sapiential sayings.¹³

It is not impossible that the more elaborate saying of *GTh* 2 (in the form of *POxy.* 654) also belonged to these early sapiential sayings of Jesus about seeking and finding:

Let him who seeks not cease seeking until he finds,
and when he has found, he will marvel,
and when he has marvelled, he will rule,
and when he rules, he will find rest.

The same saying was found in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*¹⁴ but is also known to at least two other writings of the Nag Hammadi library. One of these is the *Book of Thomas the Contender*; cf. *ThCont* 145:11 ff:

And as you pray
you will find rest,

You will receive rest from the Good One,
and you will reign with the King.

The other, *The Dialogue of the Savior*, seems to have used an older “dialogue” in which the saying of *GTh* 2 was used as the thematic

¹¹ R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet (eds.), *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (2 vols; Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1891-1903; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959) 2/1. 200, lines 4-5. See also Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.13.2; Epiphanius *Haer.* 34.18.13.

¹² That John 16:23 and 30 belong together has been frequently observed; the discourse about petitions to be directed to the Father, 16:24-28, interrupts the close connection between these two verses. About the use of other sayings in John, particularly in the farewell discourses, see below.

¹³ The relationship of 1 Corinthians 1-4 to the sapiential tradition will be further discussed below.

¹⁴ According to Clement of Alexandria *Str.* 2.9.45 and 5.14.97.

outline for the arrangement of the topics discussed.¹⁵ *DialSav* 126: 5-17 speaks about "seeking and revealing," 129: 15 about "seeking and finding"; 134: 24-137: 2 reports a vision which may represent the theme "marvelling"; 138: 6-15 discusses "ruling"; 141: 3-4 introduces the last part of the dialogue with the question: "Why do we not put ourselves to rest at once?"

The saying is introduced by Clement of Alexandria in one instance (*Str.* 2.9.45) by "as it also stands written in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*"; no indication of its origin is given by Clement in a second instance (*Str.* 5.14.97), where he quotes the saying in full. That Clement knew a gospel with this designation and drew the saying from that source cannot be doubted. But our knowledge of that gospel is very fragmentary and the references to it are confusing.¹⁶ No more can be said than this: it was a second-century gospel which was possibly independent of any other gospels known to us.¹⁷

With respect to all the variants of sayings about "seeking and finding," it is extremely difficult to establish any relationships among them in terms of dependence and development. The most plausible explanation would assume that there were several different sayings about "seeking" circulating as part of the tradition of sayings of Jesus. Literary dependence cannot be demonstrated, except for the dependence of both Matthew and Luke upon Q in one instance (Matt 7:7-8 and Luke 11:9-10). But Q, insofar as it is known through Matthew and Luke, cannot have been the source for the other sayings on "seeking and finding." Since the *Gospel of Thomas* contains most of the other sayings discussed here, one is tempted to suggest that this gospel was the common source used by the *Dialogue of the Savior*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, and possibly even the Gospel of John. Although the Johannine attestations assure a first-century date for their incorporation into the sayings tradition of Jesus, it would be hazardous to consider these Johannine occurrences as proof for a first-century date of the *Gospel of Thomas*

¹⁵ See Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels, "The Dialogue of the Savior (III,5)," in *NHLibEng*, 229. A fuller account will appear in the Brill edition.

¹⁶ See Philipp Vielhauer, "The Gospel of the Hebrews," in Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson) I. 158-63.

¹⁷ It is not possible to establish any literary relationships between the *Gospel of Thomas* (oldest attestation of this saying) and any of the other attestations of the saying. There is not sufficient reason to consider the *Gospel of the Hebrews* the source of the *Gospel of Thomas*; against Puech in Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson) I. 297-98.

in the form in which it is preserved in its Coptic translation. The Greek fragments from Oxyrhynchus demonstrate the instability of text and context of such sayings collections. Furthermore, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, although often using sayings which occur in the *Gospel of Thomas*, also contains material from the sayings tradition which must derive from a different source. Therefore, if one must explain the occurrence of these sayings in several writings as due to a common source, it is best to posit a written (and/or oral?) tradition of sayings which was not unrelated to, but still different from Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*. In this source the theme of "seeking and finding" is not yet formulated as an ecclesiastical admonition for prayer, but reflects the older sapiential theme of seeking after wisdom, revelation, and salvation.

II. Revelation Sayings

There is one famous group of sayings in Matthew and Luke which has always been noted as strikingly different from most other sayings of the Synoptic tradition:¹⁸

Matt 11:25-26 = Luke 10:21

Matt 11:27 = Luke 10:22

Matt 13:16-17 = Luke 10:23-24

Matt 11:28-30

The close relationship of the second of these sayings to so-called "Hellenistic" thought has long been recognized.¹⁹ Matt 11:27 (Luke 10:22):

¹⁸ The classical treatments of this passage are Adolf Harnack, *The Sayings of Jesus* (New York: Putnam's, 1908) 272-310, and Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (1912; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956) 277-308. Most of my observations have been anticipated by these two treatments. Harnack (301) already pointed out the close relationship of Matt 11:25-26 to 1 Cor 1:19-21. Norden demonstrated that the formulaic (liturgical) language of this passage belongs to a tradition which spans the whole spectrum of religious language from the Wisdom of Solomon to the Hermetic literature. An attempt to illuminate the history-of-religions context of this passage was made by Thomas Arvedson, *Das Mysterium Christi: Eine Studie zu Mt 11.25-30* (Leipzig and Uppsala: 1937). For a review of previous discussion see A. M. Hunter, "Crux Criticorum—Matt. xi.25-30—A Re-appraisal," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 241-49. For the relationship of the passage to wisdom theology cf. M. Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1970) 71-108.

¹⁹ Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition*, 166) quotes this sayings as one of the three pieces among the Synoptic sayings of Jesus which belong to a milieu that is completely different from the non-Hellenistic (Aramaic) environment which has produced almost all other sayings. But Matt 11:25-27 and perhaps also Matt 11:28-30 are derived from

Everything has been handed over to me by my Father;
and no one knows the Son except the Father,
and no one knows the Father except the Son
and he to whom the Son wants to reveal.

John 3:35:

The Father loves the Son
and gave everything into his hands.

John 14:7-10:

If you have known me,
you also have known the Father. ...
He who has seen me,
has seen the Father. ...
[Because] I am in the Father
and the Father is in me
(cf. also John 13:3; 10:14-15).

DialSav 134: 14-15:

And if he does not know the Son,
how will he know the [Father]?

The parallels in the Gospel of John indicate that the transmission of this saying was not restricted to Q; it must have occurred also in older sayings traditions upon which John as well as the *Dialogue of the Savior* depended.

The last saying in this group is the sapiential invitation to the heavy-laden, Matt 11:28-30:

Come to me all who are toiling and burdened,
and I will refresh you.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
because I am meek and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls;
because my yoke is mild
and my burden is easy.

The invitation is also quoted in *GTh* 90:

Come unto me,
for my yoke is easy,

the Synoptic sayings source (Q); see Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle* (WMANT 33; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 60-61.

²⁰ Cf., e.g., Matthew's predilection for *πραῦς*, "meek," Matt 5:5; 21:5. This term is never used in any of the other canonical Gospels.

and my lordship is mild,
and you will find rest for yourselves.

Except for "lordship" instead of "burden" (Matt 11:30) this shorter version could be more original than Matthew's. Signs of Matthew's editorial work are missing in *GTh* 90,²⁰ nor is dependence upon Matthew indicated in *DialSav* 141: 3-6.²¹

Matthew said:
Why do we not put ourselves to rest at once?
The Lord said:
When you lay down these burdens.

It is difficult to determine whether other sayings about the "rest" (cf., e.g., *GTh* 2, 50) are also dependent upon this sapiential invitation.

The first saying in this group, "Christ's Thanksgiving to the Father," Matt 11:25-26 (Luke 10:21-22), is doubtlessly a Q-saying:

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding,
but have revealed them to the unlearned.

There is no quote or variant of this saying in the noncanonical gospel tradition. Its terminology recurs only twice in the Synoptic Gospels. The first is Mark 4:22 (= Matt 10:26; Luke 8:17; 12:2):

There is nothing hidden
unless it be revealed,
and nothing is secret
except to be made manifest.

This saying appears in *GTh* 5 and 6:

Recognize what is in your sight,
and that which is hidden from you.
For there is nothing hidden
which will not become manifest.

and

... for all things are plain in the sight of heaven.
For nothing hidden
will not become manifest,
and nothing covered
will remain without being uncovered.

²¹ Cf. also *DialSav* 121: 8.

The second Synoptic passage with a similar terminology is Matt 13:35:

I will utter what has been hidden
since the foundation of the world.

This sentence is introduced by "in order to fulfill what was said by the prophet,"²² but the most likely Old Testament reference is Ps 77:2 (LXX), from which the sentence is quoted in a form "differing entirely from the LXX and the later Greek versions."²³

The closest parallels to these synoptic sayings and their terminology are found in 1 Corinthians 1-4.²⁵ A variant of the peculiar quotation from the "prophet" in Matt 13:35 appears in 1 Cor 2:7:

We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,
the hidden (wisdom) which God has predetermined before the ages.

The terms σοφοί and συνετοί are used together only in Matt 11:25 (Luke 10:21) and in the quotation of Isa 29:14 in 1 Cor 1:19—nowhere else in the New Testament. All the other terms peculiar to the Synoptic passages above also occur in 1 Corinthians 1-4:

ἀποκρύπτειν: 1 Cor 2:7 (only here in Paul)
κρύπτειν: 1 Cor 4:5 (only here in Corinthians)²⁶
ἀποκαλύπτειν: 1 Cor 2:10; 3:13 (elsewhere in Corinthians only in 14:30)²⁷
φανεροῦν: 1 Cor 4:5 (only here in 1 Corinthians)²⁸
νήπιος: 1 Cor 3:1 (elsewhere in 1 Corinthians only 13:11)²⁹

The occurrence of all these terms in 1 Corinthians 1-4 cannot be

²² Some witnesses add "Isaiah" (Κ* Θ φ pc).

²³ Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 116. The most important difference is Matthew's κεκρυμμένα for προβλήματα (Aquila has αἰνίγματα, which is the correct translation for the Hebrew *hidot*).

²⁴ Harnack noticed this parallelism (see above, n. 19). But few scholars have followed Harnack's lead. Arvedson (*Mysterium Christi*) only mentions some verses of 1 Corinthians 1-2 in passing. There is no mention of Matt 11:25-30 in Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I; II* (HNT 9; 5th ed. by Werner Georg Kümmel; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1969) and Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975). But Hunter ("Cruz Criticorum," 244) says, with reference to Harnack, "In fact, St. Paul may well have known this saying" (i.e., Matt 11:25).

²⁵ In the deuterio-Pauline literature it is used in Col 1:26; Eph 3:9.

²⁶ Note that κρύπτω also stood in Isa 29:14 (= 1 Cor 1:19); Paul changed it to ἀθετήσω. Κρύπτειν elsewhere in Paul: Rom 1:19; 3:21; and frequently in 2 Corinthians (Rom 16:26 is not Pauline).

²⁷ Elsewhere in Paul: Rom 1:17, 18; 8:18; Gal 1:16; 3:23; Phil 3:15.

²⁸ Elsewhere: Rom 1:19; 3:21; (16:26); and frequently in 2 Corinthians.

²⁹ Outside of 1 Corinthians, Paul uses νήπιος only in Rom 2:20; Gal 4:1, 3; (1 Thess 2:7: the original reading certainly was ἤπιος).

accidental. Paul confronts wisdom speculations in these chapters and obviously uses the terminology of the Corinthian wisdom teachers. He also seems to allude to some of their standard "sayings" which must have been closely related to the saying Matt 11:25 and the "scriptural quote" in Matt 13:35.³⁰

Another "scriptural quotation," appearing in the same context in 1 Corinthians, apparently belongs to the same wisdom tradition, namely 1 Cor 2:9:³¹

... what eye has not seen
and ear has not heard,
nor has it risen in the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him.

Whereas Paul introduces this passage by "as it is written," the *Gospel of Thomas* (17) quotes it as a saying of Jesus:

I shall give you what no eye has seen
and what no ear has heard,
and what no hand has touched,
and what has never occurred to the human mind.

An allusion to this saying appears in *DialSav* 140: 2-4:

... for a word which eye has not seen,
nor have I heard about it.

This saying is frequently quoted³² and its source has not been determined with certainty.³³ There is, however, a Synoptic saying which should be considered here, Matt 13:16-17 (= Luke 10:23-24):

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, and the ears that hear what you hear, ... many prophets [and righteous men] have desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you heard and did not hear it.

In Luke, this saying appears in the same context as the sayings discussed above (following upon Matt 11:25-27 = Luke 10:21-22)

³⁰ James M. Robinson ("Kerygma and History in the New Testament," idem and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971] 42-43) had already drawn attention to the close affinity of the wisdom theology of the Corinthians and certain parts of Q.

³¹ See my reference in *Trajectories*, 186.

³² For references to such quotes see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 64. It is also used elsewhere in the Nag Hammadi writings; cf. *PrPaul* A: 25-29.

³³ Eckard von Nordheim ("Das Zitat des Paulus in 1 Kor 2,9," *ZNW* 65 [1974] 112-20) has recently argued that the quote is drawn from the Jewish *Vorlage* of the Coptic Christian *Testament of Jacob*.

and it is quite possible that this was the context in which it appeared in Q.³⁴ The first part of this saying (Matt 13:16 = Luke 10:23) parallels 1 Cor 2:9 and the *Gospel of Thomas* very closely. The second part (Matt 13:17 = Luke 10:24) appears to be a secondary elaboration which tries to set this saying into a framework of historical-biblical reference.³⁵ Thus, 1 Cor 2:9 could be an additional piece of evidence for the existence of an early sayings collection used by Paul's opponents and preserved in special Q material as well as in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The character of this collection needs further clarification. In Matthew and Luke, these statements appear as sayings of Jesus. But where Paul does not only allude to these sayings, but gives full quotations, they appear as "scripture": 1 Cor 1:19 and 2:9 (introduced in both instances by γέγραπται). However, the first of these quotes deviates somewhat from its supposed source Isa 29:14, and the second is drawn from an unknown source which Paul calls "scripture." Also the sentence appearing in Matt 13:35, quoted above, appears as a scriptural quote.³⁶

The best hypothesis which would explain this peculiar relationship between Q (Matt 11:25-30; Luke 10:21-24; perhaps also Matt 13:35),³⁷ 1 Corinthians 1-4 and the *Gospel of Thomas* is the assumption that the ultimate source of these sayings was a lost sapiential writing which the Corinthians knew and used in the context of their wisdom theology. If this book circulated under the authority of an Old Testament figure, references to it as "scripture" in 1 Cor 1:19 and 2:9, and perhaps also Matthew's reference to the "prophet" in 13:35, would find their natural explanation. At a subsequent stage of the

³⁴ Harnack (*Sayings of Jesus*, 135) assigned the saying to this Q context, but left out Matt 11:28-30 altogether. Lührmann (*Logienquelle*, 61) is undecided. That either 1 Corinthians or the *Gospel of Thomas* or both have parallels to Matt 11:28-30 (no parallel in Luke), Luke 10:23-24 (parallel in Matthew elsewhere), and Matt 11:25-27 = Luke 10:21-22 proves that all these sayings belong to one and the same tradition of wisdom sayings which was at some time part of the Q tradition.

³⁵ It is possible that this elaboration used another saying, like the one which is preserved in *GTh* 52: "His disciples said to him, 'Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel, and all of them spoke in you.' He said to them, 'You have omitted the one living in your presence and have spoken (only) of the dead.'"

³⁶ See above, with n. 23: "what was said by the prophet."

³⁷ Matt 13:16-17 = Luke 10:23-24 and Matt 13:35 are Matthean interpolations into the Marcan chapter of parables. The first of these is certainly derived from Q; the origin of the second is uncertain.

development, material from this sapiential book—once it had been used by gnosticizing Christians in the time of Paul—was incorporated into the tradition of sayings of Jesus whence it eventually came to Matthew and Luke and to the *Gospel of Thomas*. That older wisdom material could be reproduced and recast under the name of a new authority, and that “scriptural” sentences could become “sayings of Jesus”—both these phenomena have been frequently observed and need no further proof. The main point of my reflection is to suggest the possibility that one or several gnosticizing wisdom books under the authority of an Old Testament figure were used by Christians as early as the middle of the first century, and that subsequent development of Christian wisdom books, sayings collections and “gospels” owed to them very characteristic materials.

III. Sayings About Life, Its Time and Place

The question of the sources, development, and redaction of the dialogues and discourses of the Gospel of John is still one of the great enigmas of New Testament research. The Nag Hammadi library contains a large number of writings which are composed as dialogues. In some instances these are obviously theological treatises put into an artificial dialogue form.³⁸ But other writings from this library contain dialogical materials which were formulated on the basis of traditional sayings of Jesus. This seems to be the case in the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. I believe that further investigation of these writings can provide a key for the understanding of the development of the discourses of the Johannine Gospel. Only a few characteristic examples can be discussed here.

The dialogue of John 14:1-12 has a very interesting parallel in *DialSav* 132: 2-19:

“[...] and enter into [the place of life?] in order that he might not be confined [in] this impoverished world.”

Matthew said: “Lord, I wish [to see] that place of life, [that place] in which there is no evil, but rather it is pure light.”

The Lord said: “Brother Matthew, you cannot see it, as long as you wear the flesh.”

³⁸ The most striking instance is *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, a dialogue version (in the form of a discourse of Jesus to his disciples) of a possibly pre-Christian treatise *Eugnosios the Blessed*; see Douglas M. Parrot in *NHLibEng*, 206-7.

Matthew said: "O Lord, even if [I can] not see it, let me [know it]."

The Lord said: "Everyone [of you] who has known himself, has seen it; everything that is fitting for him to do, [he does] it. And he has been doing it in his goodness."

An excerpt from John 14:2-12 reveals a striking similarity:

"... I go and prepare a place for you,
and I will come again and take you to me,
so that where I am you will be also.
And where I go, you know the way."
Thomas said to him:
"Lord we do not know where you are going;
how do we know the way?"
Jesus said to him:
"I am the way and the truth and the life,
no one comes to the Father except through me ..." (v 7) ...
Philip said to him:
"Show us the Father, and it will suffice for us."
Jesus said to him: ... (v 9a) ...
"He who has seen me has seen the Father ... (v 9c-11) ...
He who believes in me,
the works which I do,
he will also do."³⁹

The similarities do not result from any literary dependence. In this instance, as well as in others, the *Dialogue of the Savior* exhibits much less elaborate structures than the Gospel of John, because it reflects more directly the actual "sources" which lie at the root of the development of this genre. That these "sources" were sayings is evident from brief dialogues which do not comprise more than one question and were constructed on the basis of a saying; cf. *DialSav* 142: 4-8:

Judas said: "Tell me, Lord, what is the beginning of the way?"

He said: "Love and goodness. For if there had been one of these dwelling with the archons, wickedness would never have come to be."

³⁹ These portions of John 14:1-12 which correspond to *DialSav* 132: 2-19 are almost identical with the "source" which Heinz Becker (*Die Reden des Johannesevangeliums und der Stil der gnostischen Offenbarungsrede* [FRLANT 68; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956] 105-7) has reconstructed. Whether or not this source analysis is tenable, my contention is that such dialogue ultimately derives from sayings which were expanded into larger discourses in the form of questions and answers.

The saying from which this dialogue was constructed probably was:

The beginning of the way
is love and goodness.

Cf. Sir 1:14:

The beginning of wisdom
is the fear of God.

In other instances, the question is simply derived from the traditional saying; cf. *DialSav* 142: 16-19:

They said to him:
"What is the place to which we shall go?"
The Lord said:
"The place which you can reach, stand there."

Such brief question-and-answer sayings are quite typical for the sayings tradition, especially for the stage of its development which is visible in the *Gospel of Thomas*; the same themes (way, place, life, etc.) also occur here. *GTh* 24:

His disciples said to him:
"Show us the place where you are,
since it is necessary for us to seek it."
He said to them:
"Whoever has ears, let him hear.
There is light within a man of light,
and he lights up the whole world.
If he does not shine,
he is darkness."

GTh 18:

His disciples said to Jesus:
"Tell us how our end will be."
Jesus said:
"Have you discovered, then, the beginning,
that you look for the end?
For where the beginning is,
there will be the end."

Sayings can also be used in order to formulate a question of the disciples. Thus, in a dialogue, questions may in fact represent traditional sayings and are not necessarily editorial products. *GTh* 51:

His disciples said to him:
"When will the repose of the dead come,
and when will the new world come?"

Cf. *DialSav* 139: 21-23:

Matthew said:
 "Tell me, Lord,
 how the dead die
 and how the living live."

The saying which was used to formulate these questions is preserved in *GTh* 11:

Jesus said:
 "This heaven will pass away,
 and the one above it will pass away.
 And the dead are not alive,
 and the living will not die."

The great significance of both the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Savior* lies in the fact that they provide us with numerous examples of the development of the sayings used in the composition of "gospels" which contain mostly dialogues such as the Gospel of John. The *Gospel of Thomas* exhibits the first stage of transition from sayings collection to dialogue. The *Dialogue of the Savior* shows the initial stages of larger compositions, at least in those portions which belong to an older dialogue source utilized by the author for the redaction of the writing preserved under this title.⁴⁰ The Gospel of John contains fully developed dialogues and discourses. Earlier stages could be reconstructed by using the analogies of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Savior*, both with respect to form and structure and with respect to themes and topics.

So far only such sayings about life, place, etc., have been mentioned which reflect typical "Johannine" themes and topics. There are, however, in the same contexts sayings with themes which one usually calls "apocryphal." They appear in very similar forms, and can be distinguished from the sayings quoted above only on the basis of dogmatic assumptions. *DialSav* 140: 12-14:

"He who is from the truth does not die.
 He who is from the woman dies."

The first sentence can be easily paralleled by John 11:25:

"He who believes in me will live, even if he dies."

⁴⁰ See above n. 15.

But for its continuation,⁴¹ one must turn to noncanonical parallels, such as found in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*:⁴²

“... Until when will men die?”

“... as long as women give birth.”

“I have come to destroy the works of femaleness.”

The same gospel also provides variants of two sayings of the *Gospel of Thomas*. *GTh* 22:

When you make the two one,
and when you make the inside like the outside,
and the outside like the inside,
and the above like the below,
and when you make the male and the female one and the same,
so that the male not be male
nor the female female; ...
then you will enter the kingdom.

GTh 37:

“When will you become revealed to us,
and when shall we see you?”
“When you disrobe without being ashamed,
and take up your garments
and place them under your feet like little children
and tread on them,
then you will see the son of the Living One,
and you will not be afraid.”

The parallel sayings in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*⁴³ represent an older form of this tradition, because they lack the elaborate repetition of analogous pairs which characterizes these sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*. To assume that one gospel depended upon the other would not explain the occurrence of the same sayings elsewhere. *2 Clem.* 12.2 quotes the major part of the first saying in a form closely resembling the *Gospel of the Egyptians*;⁴⁴ and the *Dialogue of the Savior* (143: 23 “... when you strip yourselves”) alludes to the second of these two sayings. The hypothesis of literary dependence cannot provide a satisfactory answer. Rather, one must assume that widely

⁴¹ Cf. also *DialSav* 144: 17-21: “Pray in the place where there is no woman ... destroy the works of femaleness.”

⁴² Clement of Alexandria *Str.* 3.9.63, 64.

⁴³ They are quoted by Clement of Alexandria *Str.* 3.13.92.

⁴⁴ But there is no reason to believe that *2 Clement* depends upon the *Gospel of the Egyptians*; cf. my *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern* (TU 65; Berlin: Akademie, 1957) 102-5.

known earlier sayings were developed independently and variously incorporated into gospel literature which shows different stages of dialogical elaboration. The *Gospel of Thomas* with its simple question-and-answer schema stands at the beginning of this literary development, comparable to the Synoptic sayings source. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* expands this schema somewhat, whereas the *Dialogue of the Savior* approaches the final stage which is most clearly paralleled in the Gospel of John.

One must assume that a good deal of this development of so-called "apocryphal" sayings of Jesus predates the composition of the Gospel of John. Sayings of Jesus about the "way," the "place," etc., are likely to have existed as parts of sayings collections long before the composition of the Johannine farewell discourses. If one doubts that a first-century date is possible for the sayings about "male and female being neither male nor female," one should remember that Paul's "in Christ there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28) probably quotes an older Christian baptismal saying.⁴⁵ There is very little reason to deny these sayings a place in the tradition of sayings of Jesus that was formed in the first Christian century, although there are very few parallels in the Synoptic Gospels. No more than a suggestion can be made here. The use of similar sayings of Jesus in other Nag Hammadi writings still awaits further investigation. But great progress will be made in the right direction if we can once and for all abstain from the pathetic stereotype that everything that cannot be paralleled by something in the canonical Gospels is heretical and was probably written or produced ca. 140 A.D.⁴⁶—why, in all the world, 140? It would be better if we could restrict our attempts to date canonical and apocryphal gospels to the establishment of clear *termini a quo* and *ante quem*—at least for the time being. Relative dating within that time span can no longer rely on the assumption that apocryphal gospels must have used the gospels of the New Testament canon. Investigation of the develop-

⁴⁵ See most recently Dennis Ronald MacDonald, "There is No Male and Female: Galatians 3:26-28 and Gnostic Baptismal Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1978). Cf. also Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) on Gal 3:28.

⁴⁶ This date (or "some time in the first half of the second century") has been assigned to a large number of apocryphal gospels, e.g., the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Gospel of Peter*, *Papyrus Egerton 2*, and others. Cf. the respective introductions in Hennecke-Schneemelcher (E.T. ed. Wilson), vol. 1. First-century dates are rarely considered, nor are second-century dates ever given for canonical gospels.

ment of forms and genres must precede any attempt to establish more precise dates of all these gospels in relation to each other. This is particularly important for those gospels which have developed along the line that leads from the sayings collection to the dialogue: the *Gospel of Thomas* and Q represent a relatively early stage, the *Dialogue of the Savior* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* occupy an intermediate position, whereas the Gospel of John and such writings as the *Epistula Apostolorum* show the fully developed literary genre.

The beginning of the *Gospel of Thomas* as well as the ending of the *Dialogue of the Savior* lead us back to the task of scholarship with respect to all materials from the history of early Christianity, whether they are orthodox or gnostic. The task to find an interpretation of Jesus' sayings was indeed the creative force which led to the writing of gospels in the form of dialogues. Here, canonical and apocryphal documents are unanimous, albeit not equally well preserved. *GTh* 1:

Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings
will not experience death.

DialSav 147: 18-20:

[] understands this
[] will live for -
[ever].

John 6:63:

The words which I have spoken to you
are spirit and are life.

John 8:52:

If anyone keeps my word,
he will never taste death.

DISCUSSION

HELMUT KOESTER: MY original intention for this paper was to assess the likelihood that the Nag Hammadi texts contain gospel materials which have not gone through the medium of a written gospel, at least not one which we know. I abandoned this broad project because I found it so difficult to be precise about what traditional gospel material is used in the Gnostic dialogues. At least in one instance, I decided, we can say that the *Dialogue of the Savior* was built on sayings

tradition which had roots in the first century. Moreover, the occurrence of several of its terms and concepts also in 1 Corinthians 1-4 calls for an explanation.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: What was the relation of the developing sayings tradition to Valentinianism?

KOESTER: Gnostic writings, especially the *Gospel of Truth*, use and interpret sayings and parables which we only sometimes can identify from other sources. This means that the effort of Gnostic theology was closely connected with interpretations of sayings of Jesus, or of wisdom sayings which had become sayings of Jesus. Thus, the *sitz im leben* of at least some Gnostic theology is in this interpretation and transmission of the sayings tradition.

ATTRIDGE: How do you evaluate the use of synoptic material in the fragments attributed to Ptolemy in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8? Does this show a use of a canonical text, or is it in touch with an independent tradition?

KOESTER: There are problems with using this kind of evidence as a tool for dating. Clearly, the second stage of Valentinian theology can be distinguished from other Gnostic writings which contain no references to the canonical gospels but drew their material instead from earlier stages, whether written or oral. Ptolemy and Heracleon, for instance, used the same gospels as did Irenaeus: the *Letter to Flora* used Matthew, and Heracleon commented on John. In contrast, the *Dialogue of the Savior* shows no obvious dependence on these gospels. While this difference clearly has consequences for dating, it must be developed further.

BARBARA ALAND: Why have you said that the original sapiential character of some sayings is better preserved in their apocryphal occurrences than in the synoptic gospels?

KOESTER: In the Gnostic forms of seeking and finding sayings, especially when the Revealer speaks of seeking and not finding "me," it is still Wisdom speaking. In the canonical tradition, it is Jesus speaking. Comparison with other wisdom sayings shows that these sayings were originally from pre-Christian wisdom books used by first-century Christians. In Matthew and Luke—that is, in Q—the relation of the sayings to Jesus as their speaker has become more explicit. Also, Luke sometimes gives them a more apocalyptic character than they have in the *Gospel of Thomas* or John.

ALAND: Could it not be Matthew and Luke who give the original form and the sapiential character which was added later?

KOESTER: There are three reasons against this hypothesis. First, the sayings are limited to peculiar sections in Matthew and Luke, and they don't easily fit into the other traditions in these gospels. It appears likely, then, that these sayings have a separate history. Second, your hypothesis would require the dubious proposition that John was dependent on the synoptics. Third, your suggestion would leave the parallels with 1 Corinthians 1-4 unexplained. Thus, the supposition of an early wisdom book seems a more plausible explanation.

ELAINE PAGELS: Could you elaborate your discussion of the *Gospel of Thomas* as a common source for the *Dialogue of the Savior*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, and perhaps John?

KOESTER: I don't think that any direct filiation can be traced. My point is that there was an extreme instability in written materials at this stage. We know this is true of John: chapter 21 was clearly added later. Perhaps it was also true of the synoptics. This would suggest that the instability of gospel literature from the mid-first to the mid-second centuries was greater than we've thought.

ROBERT McL. WILSON: Is this gospel literature or gospel tradition? I suspect that the whole situation was rather fluid until the documents were fixed in writing.

KOESTER: And until the authority of these writings was established as equal to that of what had been the Christian Bible, the Old Testament. I have been trying to avoid Dibelius's notion of a "wilde überlieferung," which is, after all, only a description of what I have called an unstable tradition.

It was not important for this tradition whether it was written or oral; material could go back and forth. We must abandon the form-critical idea of Gunkel and Bultmann that there was a "primitive stage" of oral sayings, with writings only appearing later as sophistication increased. We must recognize that from the beginning the sayings were in a literary culture, both in its Jewish and Greek environments. If they were oral, then, it was for a purpose like teaching, not because people were in a primitive stage.

ATTRIDGE: Where in the sapiential tradition would you place the *Thunder* (CG VI,2)?

KOESTER: I don't want to date the *Thunder!* I am arguing only that the relation between wisdom literature and the gospel tradition may provide a good avenue of access in our study.

WILSON: (*To Koester*) I would like to raise a question of dates. You question the date of 140 which was suggested for the *Gospel of Thomas* by Henri-Charles Puech. I don't know why he chose this date, but I think that even without it there is a problem. If Matthew and Luke are dated about 80 and Q about 60, then would there have been time before them for the development from a sapiential book which you suggest?

WAYNE MEEKS: Here we meet in another context the question raised by Professor Stead's paper: how long does development take?

G. C. STEAD: If one agrees with John A. T. Robinson that most of the New Testament was complete by 70, then the problem is even more acute!

KOESTER: There is indeed a serious dating problem here. 140 was not an accidental choice. If the canon is said to be put together by the end of the second century and Matthew and Luke are dated to the late-first century, then 140 suggests itself as in the middle. As with many of the Nag Hammadi writings, it is difficult to establish more precise dates. I feel that the best course for now is to establish the earliest and the latest possible dates; then we can search for criteria for more precision.

On the issue of the time required, remember that some processes are gradual, while others occur as explosions. We must learn to distinguish the two. The establishment of the Gentile mission took only five years; the development of the Pauline letter took six or eight. There is no evidence for this kind of letter before 1 Thessalonians; yet, with Romans the genre reached its accomplished form. Probably little time was required as well for the crystallization of sayings into written documents. Twenty years may well have been sufficient.

MEEKS: Yes, timetables are relative. As Martin Hengel argued in "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie" (*Neues Testament und Geschichte, Festschrift für O. Cullmann* [1972] 43-67), there was more Christological development in the twenty years between the crucifixion and the first Pauline letter than in the next three centuries.

KOESTER: Yes, there are periods of proliferation and periods of inactivity. But I don't think we should date all the New Testament

documents before 70 and then have a great gap until the magic year 140!

STEAD: No, I wouldn't want to defend Robinson's dating!

ATTRIDGE: 140 was the date suggested in 1897 by Grenfell and Hunt, the first editors of the *Oxyrhynchus papyri*. Their arguments are ones just suggested in caricature by Professor Koester: as non-canonical texts, they are obviously later than the canonical tradition; yet, they must have been written before the canonical gospels were widely recognized.

GILLES QUISPÉL: In defense of Puech, I would say that his date of 140 cannot be refuted. It was suggested for reasons which were not humorous or rhetorical. He had noted the arguments of Grenfell and Hunt: there were in *Oxyrhynchus* three fragments from different books, with the paleographical evidence indicating a date for all of them before 200.

ATTRIDGE: I don't want to defend a later date for the *Gospel of Thomas*, but I would note that paleography gives only a *terminus ante quem*. To fix any date before 200 is pure conjecture, and Puech didn't give any further arguments for his selection of 140.

QUISPÉL: Puech was writing in the manner appropriate to a book for outsiders. But he was a careful and very cautious scholar.

There is more which can be said for the 140 date. I believe that the *Gospel of Thomas* is an Encratite work from Edessa, possibly redacted in Eastern Aramaic and likely independent of the synoptics. For this writing to be translated into Greek and transported from Edessa to Egypt would have taken considerable time. Thus, Puech retained the date traditional since Grenfell and Hunt, which has had no paleographical or other philological refutation. Despite some doubts about it, then, I would not reject the date until I had consulted Roberts on paleography. His dating of the Egerton papyrus to 125 has been called "the last fig leaf of orthodoxy," but this is not a serious or scholarly attack. Similarly, the date 140 requires more weighty refutation.

KOESTER: I should make clear that I too am not arguing for a later date for the *Gospel of Thomas*. Rather, I would suggest one earlier than 140.

If I had circulated my paper with full notes, I would have acknowledged not only Puech but also all I have learned about the early date and provenance of the *Gospel of Thomas* in my long friend-foe relation with Professor Quispel.

GNOSTIC AND ORTHODOX VIEWS OF CHRIST'S PASSION:
PARADIGMS FOR THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE
TO PERSECUTION?

BY

ELAINE H. PAGELS

GNOSTIC Christians "deny the reality of the incarnation of Christ"¹—so says Lebreton, in his *History of the Primitive Church*, stating what most historians have taken for granted as a fundamental characteristic of gnostic heresy. For many, gnosticism is virtually synonymous with *docetism*—the teaching that Christ did not actually take on a human body, but only appeared to do so; that while he seemed, to ignorant bystanders, to be suffering and dying on the cross, his inner, spiritual nature remained untouched by such human vulnerability. Harvey only echoes the consensus when he declares that "the doctrine of Valentinus, as regards the human nature of Christ, is essentially docetic."²

Yet evidence from Valentinian texts discovered at Nag Hammadi challenges this assumption. The author of the *Gospel of Truth* acknowledges Jesus' passion and death: "nailed to a tree,"³ he was "slain."⁴ For the sake of redemption, "the merciful one, the faithful one, Jesus, was patient in accepting sufferings ... since he knows that his death is life for many."⁵ The author gives a moving account of his death:

Translations of the Nag Hammadi tractates are from *NHLibEng* as follows: the *Apocalypse of Peter*, translated by Roger A. Bullard; *Apocryphon of James*, Francis E. Williams; *Gospel of Truth*, George W. MacRae; *Interpretation of Knowledge*, John D. Turner; *Melchizedek*, Søren Giversen and Birger A. Pearson; *Treatise on Resurrection*, Malcolm L. Peel; *Second Apocalypse of James*, Charles W. Hendrick; *Tripartite Tractate*, Harold W. Attridge and Dieter Mueller.

¹ Jules Lebreton and Jacques Zeiller, *History of the Primitive Church* (tr. E. Messenger; 2d ed.; London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1949) 299, 355-357, 506, 513.

² W. W. Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei ... Adversus Haereses* (Cambridge: University Press, 1857) I. 52 n. 5.

³ *GTr* 18: 24; 20: 25.

⁴ *GTr* 20: 5.

⁵ *GTr* 20: 10-14.

... He was nailed to a tree ... He draws himself down to death though life eternal clothes him. Having stripped himself of the perishable rags, he put on imperishability.⁶

The *Tripartite Tractate* introduces the Savior as “the one who will be begotten and who will suffer.”⁷ Moved by compassion for those who existed in mortality, he willingly became “what they were. So, for their sake, he became manifest in an involuntary suffering ... Not only did he take upon himself the death of those whom he intended to save” but he also accepted their “smallness.” Furthermore, the author describes his incarnation: “he let himself be conceived and born as an infant in body and soul.”⁸

Yet the *Tripartite Tractate* expounds this teaching as a paradox. The one who is born and who suffers is the Savior foreseen by the Hebrew prophets; what they were unable to recognize was “that which he was before, and what he is eternally, an unbegotten, impassible Word, who came into being in flesh.”⁹ The *Gospel of Truth*, similarly, having described Jesus’ suffering and death, goes on to say that “the Word of the Father goes forth into the all ... purifying and bringing it back into the Father, into the Mother, Jesus of the infinite gentleness.”¹⁰ The *Interpretation of Knowledge* articulates the same paradox. On the one hand, the Savior becomes vulnerable to suffering and death; on the other, he is the Word, full of divine power.¹¹ The reader is enjoined to “receive the teaching of the one who was disgraced—it is an advantage and a profit to the soul.”¹² The Savior explains:

I became very small so that through my humility I might take you up to the great height whence you had fallen ... If now you believe in me, it is I who shall take you above through this shape that you see.¹³

So “he was crucified and he died”—yet because the death he died was that of sinful humanity, it was, in this sense, “not his own death, for he did not deserve to be killed for the sake of the human church.”¹⁴

⁶ *GTr* 20: 25-32.

⁷ *TriTrac* 113: 32-34.

⁸ *TriTrac* 114: 33-115: 11.

⁹ *TriTrac* 113: 35-38.

¹⁰ *GTr* 23: 33-24: 9.

¹¹ *InterpKn* 17: 35-38.

¹² *InterpKn* 10: 20-22.

¹³ *InterpKn* 10: 28-33.

¹⁴ *InterpKn* 4: 30-33.

Yet through his voluntary suffering, "We receive forgiveness of sins," as the "one who was disgraced" is revealed to be "the one who redeemed."¹⁵

A third Valentinian text, the *Epistle to Rheginos* (*Treatise on Resurrection*), approvingly cites Paul's declaration that the Savior suffered,¹⁶ yet adds, referring to 1 Cor 15:55, that he "swallowed up death."¹⁷ To clarify the paradox, he explains that

... the Son of God, Rheginos, was Son of Man. He embraced them both, possessing the humanity and the divinity, so that on the one hand he might vanquish death through his being Son of God, and that on the other through the Son of Man the restoration to the Pleroma might occur.¹⁸

Not one of these sources denies that Jesus actually suffered and died; all, apparently, assume it. Yet all are concerned to show how, in his incarnation, Christ transcends human nature, so that in his passion and death he prevails over death by divine power. The evidence from Nag Hammadi confirms what Harnack, more perceptively than later interpreters, observed: "The characteristic of gnostic Christology is not *docetism*, but the doctrine of the *two natures*."¹⁹ The Valentinians were, he adds, the first to take up this problem that was to become the center of patristic Christology two centuries later.

Even Irenaeus specifically distinguishes their position from docetism.²⁰ But, Irenaeus adds, they insist on distinguishing between different "persons" in Christ,

... claiming that one being suffered and was born, and that this was Jesus, but that there was another who descended upon him, and this was Christ ... and they argue that he who came from the demiurge, he who was from the dispensation, he who sprang from Joseph, was the being subject to suffering.²¹

In other words, "the psychic Christ suffered, together with the body that had been formed the dispensation." What descended upon him, however, the divine spirit, "remained apart from suffering; for it was not susceptible to suffering, being both incomprehensible and invis-

¹⁵ *InterpKn* 12: 25-13: 20.

¹⁶ *OnRes* 45: 26.

¹⁷ *OnRes* 45: 14-15; cf. 1 Cor 15:55.

¹⁸ *OnRes* 44: 21-34.

¹⁹ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (tr. N. Buchanan: Boston: Roberts, 1897) I. 258.

²⁰ *Haer.* 3.13.6; cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 26.

²¹ *Haer.* 3.16.6.

ble."²² They explain, therefore, that this spirit departed when Christ was brought before Pilate; it was his *human* nature, the *psychic* nature, together with his body, which experienced passion and death.

Yet, while he admits that the Valentinians join with other members of the church in confessing that the Savior suffered and died, Irenaeus insists on expelling them from the church as apostates and heretics. He expresses outrage that they make a confession in common with other Christians:

Such persons are, to outward appearance, sheep, for they appear to be like us, from what they say in public, repeating the same words as we do; but inwardly they are wolves. Their doctrine is murderous ...²³

Although "they say things resembling the doctrine of the faithful" they actually "hold views which are not only different, but absolutely opposite, and in all points full of blasphemies."²⁴ The similarity between their views and orthodox ones makes their doctrine more treacherous—like poison disguised as milk!

Clearly their theology differs from his: they maintain that the divine spirit remains apart from suffering. But what is so heretical, so dangerous, so blasphemous, about this interpretation of Christian doctrine? I am convinced that we cannot find the answer to this question as long as we consider controversies between orthodoxy and heresy, as scholars traditionally have, exclusively in terms of the history of dogma. When we investigate the writings of the "fathers of the church" and of their gnostic contemporaries to see how Christology actually functions in each type of literature, we may see that it involves specific practical issues—often social and political ones—as well. Specifically, controversy over the interpretation of Christ's passion and death involves, for Christians of the first and second centuries, an urgent practical question: how are believers to respond to persecution, which raises the imminent possibility of their *own* suffering and death?

Irenaeus's defense of martyrdom is precisely the context of his attack on gnostic views of Christ's passion.²⁵ In this he is not unique. Every one of the antignostic writers—Ignatius, Justin, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Irenaeus—endorses martyrdom as a "sacrifice acceptable to God," and

²² *Haer.* 1.7.2.

²³ *Haer.* 3.16.8.

²⁴ *Haer.* 3.17.4.

²⁵ *Haer.* 3.16.1-3.18.5.

praises the martyr as a heroic athlete, a warrior for Christ, who gains the crown of victory through death. Above all, martyrdom offers to the Christian the opportunity to "imitate the passion of Christ."

All of them, on the other hand, attest that those they call "heretics" tend to oppose any enthusiasm for martyrdom. Some consider it foolish, wasteful of human life, and therefore contrary to God's will. They argue that "Christ, having died for us, was killed so that we might not be killed."²⁶

Now we can see the relevance of the theological argument: only if Christ suffered and died in the same way that we do ourselves can our suffering and death imitate his. But if—as the Valentinians and others suggest—Christ's experience essentially *differs* from ours, in that the divine Savior could not suffer, then our experience cannot be equivalent to his. The believer's suffering could be analogous only to the passion of the *psychic* Christ, or of his body. Consequently, the experience of Christian martyrs could not be a true "imitation of Christ's passion."

Those who express the greatest concern to refute heretical interpretations of Christ's passion are, without exception, persons who know from first-hand experience the dangers to which Christians are exposed—arbitrary accusation, arrest, torture, and execution. The great opponent of heresy, Bishop Ignatius, for example, arrested and condemned, accepted the death sentence with joyful exaltation as his opportunity to "imitate the passion of my God!"²⁷ What does his Christology mean to him? Ignatius says that

Jesus Christ was truly prosecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified, and died ... But if, as some say—who are atheists, that is unbelievers—that his suffering was only an appearance, *then why am I a prisoner, and why do I long to fight with the wild beasts? In that case, I am dying in vain ... In that case, why have I given myself up to death?*²⁸

If, as Frend says, Ignatius intends his martyrdom to "vindicate the reality of Jesus' earthly ministry,"²⁹ the reverse is also true: that

²⁶ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1.

²⁷ *Rom.* 6.3.

²⁸ *Trall.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 4.2.

²⁹ W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (New York: Anchor, 1967) 184-199. He adds, "To Ignatius, as to Justin and Irenaeus, it was impossible for one who did not accept the reality of the Incarnation to die as a blood witness to Christ. Neither docetist nor gnostic could be a man of martyrdom" (200).

reality vindicates his martyrdom. Ignatius complains that those who question his view of Christ's passion "are not moved by my own personal sufferings; for they say the same things about me!"³⁰ His opponents, challenging his Christology, are directly calling into question the value of his voluntary martyrdom.

The author of the orthodox *Shepherd of Hermas* describes the situation of Roman Christians in the mid-second century: arbitrary indictments and arrests, "beating, imprisonment, great suffering, wild beasts, for the sake of the Name."³¹ He himself knows of many Roman martyrs, notably Bishop Telephorus and his next two successors, Hyginus and Pius, who, tradition tells us, was Hermas's own brother. Like Ignatius, Hermas simultaneously affirms the reality of Christ's suffering and the glory of martyrdom.³²

Justin Martyr, protesting the persecutions in his second *Apology*, cites specific accounts of believers falsely accused and executed.³³ He admits that he himself in continual danger: "I, too, therefore, expect to be plotted against and crucified."³⁴ Justin says that when he personally witnessed Christians enduring public torture and execution, he became convinced of their divine inspiration.³⁵ Justin notes persecution of Christians worldwide: mentioning Christians pursued in Palestine in the time of Bar Kochba, he declares to Trypho that

It is clear that no one can terrify or subdue us who believe in Jesus Christ throughout the whole world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to the wild beasts, in chains, in fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others, in larger numbers, become believers.³⁶

Consistent with his personal convictions concerning martyrdom and his courageous acceptance of his own death sentence is Justin's view that "Jesus Christ, our teacher, who was born for this purpose, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose again."³⁷ He concludes his second *Apology* by saying that he has composed it for the

³⁰ *Smyrn.* 5.1-2.

³¹ *Sim.* 1.3.

³² Friend, *Martyrdom*, 194.

³³ *2 Apol.* 2.

³⁴ *2 Apol.* 3.

³⁵ *2 Apol.* 12.

³⁶ *Dial.* 110.4.

³⁷ *1 Apol.* 13.

sole purpose of refuting “wicked and deceitful” gnostic doctrines.³⁸ Elsewhere he attacks those “called Christians,” followers of Simon, Marcion, and Valentinus: “We do not know,” he admits, whether they indulge in promiscuity or cannibalism, but “we do know” one of their crimes: namely, that “they are neither persecuted nor put to death” as martyrs.³⁹

Irenaeus, the great opponent of the Valentinians, like his predecessors, is a man whose life is marked by persecution. He mentions many who were martyred in Rome, and knew from personal experience the loss of his beloved teacher, Polycarp, caught in mob violence, condemned, and burned alive among his enemies. Twelve years later, in the summer of 177, Irenaeus witnessed growing hostility to Christians in his own city. First they were prohibited from entering public places; then, when the provincial governor was out of the city,

... the mob broke loose. Christians were hounded and attacked openly. They were treated as public enemies, assaulted, beaten, and stoned. Finally they were dragged into the Forum, ... were accused, and, after confessing to being Christians, they were flung into prison.⁴⁰

Influential friends who tried to intervene were themselves imprisoned; every day new victims, the most zealous members of the churches in Lyons and Vienne, were arrested. Although Irenaeus himself somehow managed to escape arrest, his close association with the confessors in prison compelled him to bring to Christians in Rome an account of their terrible suffering. When he returned to Gaul, he found the community decimated: nearly fifty Christians had died in the two-month ordeal. He himself was persuaded to take over the leadership of the community, succeeding the 90-year-old Bishop Ponthius who had died from torture and exposure in prison.

In spite of all this, Irenaeus expresses no hostility against his fellow townsmen—but plenty against the gnostic “heretics.” Like Justin, he attacks them as “false brethren” who

... have reached such a pitch of audacity that *they even pour contempt upon the martyrs, and vituperate those who are killed on account of confessing the Lord, and who ... thereby strive to follow in the footsteps of the Lord's passion, themselves bearing witness to the one who suffered.*⁴¹

³⁸ 2 *Apol.* 15.

³⁹ 1 *Apol.* 26.

⁴⁰ Frend, *Martyrdom*, 5.

⁴¹ *Haer.* 3.18.5.

This declaration concludes his detailed attack on Valentinian interpretation of Christ's passion. Condemning as blasphemy their distinction between two natures in Christ and their claim that only the human nature experienced suffering, Irenaeus insists that

... the same being who was seized and experienced suffering, and shed his blood for us, was both Christ and the Son of God ... and he became the Savior of those who would be delivered over to death for their confession of him, and lose their lives.⁴²

Indeed, he adds, "if anyone supposes that there were two natures in Christ," the one who suffered was certainly superior to the one who departed, "sustaining neither injury nor insult." In the judgment, when the martyrs "attain to glory, then all who have cast a slur upon their martyrdom shall be confounded by Christ."⁴³

Tertullian, another fierce opponent of heresy, describes how the sight of martyrs tortured and dying initiated his own conversion. Tertullian, like Irenaeus, connects the teaching of Christ's suffering and death with his own enthusiasm for martyrdom: "You must take up your cross and bear it after your Master ... The sole key to unlock Paradise is your own life's blood."⁴⁴ Tertullian directly traces the rise of heresy to the outbreak of persecution. This, he says, impels terrified believers to look for theological means to justify their cowardice.

This among Christians is a time of persecution. When, therefore, the faith is greatly agitated and the church on fire ... then the gnostics break out; then the Valentinians creep forth; then all the opponents of martyrdom bubble up ... for they know that many Christians are simple and inexperienced, and weak, and ... they perceive that they are never to be applauded more than when fear has opened the entries of the soul, especially when some terrorism has already arrayed with a crown the faith of martyrs.⁴⁵

To what he considers "heretical" arguments against martyrdom Tertullian replies:

Now we are in the midst of an intense heat, the very dogstar of persecution ... the fire and the sword have tried some Christians, and the beasts have

⁴² *Haer* 3.16.9-3.18.4.

⁴³ *Haer.* 3.18.5.

⁴⁴ *De Anima* 55.

⁴⁵ *Scorp.* 1.

tried others; others are in prison, longing for martyrdoms which they have tasted already, having been beaten by clubs and tortured ... We ourselves, having been appointed for pursuit, are, like hares being hemmed in from a distance—and the heretics go about as usual!⁴⁶

This situation, he explains, inspired him to attack as heretics those “who oppose martyrdom, representing salvation to be destruction,” calling encouragement to martyrdom foolish and cruel.⁴⁷

Hippolytus, like Tertullian, had witnessed the terror of the Severan persecution of 202. Hippolytus’s zeal for martyrdom, like Tertullian’s, is matched by his hatred of heresy. He concludes his massive *Refutation of all Heresies* by insisting that only orthodox doctrine concerning Christ’s incarnation and passion enables the believer to endure persecution.

If he were not of the same nature with ourselves, he commands in vain that we should imitate the teacher ... He did not protest against his passion, but became obedient unto death ... now in all these acts he offered up, as the first fruits, his own humanity, in order that you, when you are in tribulation, may not be discouraged, but, confessing yourself to be one like the redeemer, may dwell in expectation of receiving what the Father has granted to the Son.⁴⁸

In his mid-seventies, Hippolytus himself fulfilled his own exhortation: arrested on Maximin’s orders in 235, he was deported and exiled to Sardinia, where he died.

What pattern, then, do we observe? The opponents of heresy in the second century—Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus—are unanimous in proclaiming Christ’s passion and death and in affirming martyrdom. Simultaneously, they all accuse the heretics both of teaching false Christology and of “opposing martyrdom.” Irenaeus declares that

The church in every place, because of the love which she cherishes toward God, sends forth, throughout all time, a multitude of martyrs to the Father; while all others not only have nothing of this kind to point to among themselves, but even maintain that bearing witness (*martyrium*) is not at all necessary ... with the exception, perhaps, of one or two among them ... who have occasionally, along with our martyrs, borne the reproach of the name, as if they too had obtained mercy, and have been led forth with them, being, as it were, a sort of retinue granted to them. For the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Scorp.* 1,5,7, passim.

⁴⁸ *Haer.* 10.33.17.

church alone sustains with purity the reproach of those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, and endure all sorts of punishments, and are put to death because of the love which they bear toward God, and their confession of his son.⁴⁹

Irenaeus here denies to gnostic confessors even the name of martyrs: at best, they are only "a sort of retinue" granted to the *true* confessors. Surely he exaggerates the infrequency of martyrdom among the "heretics." Yet the evidence does indicate that martyrdom occurred rarely among gnostic Christians, and, further, that "principle rather than fear underlay their attitude."⁵⁰

Frend explains the gnostics' exemption in terms of specific characteristics of their sects. In his view, gnostic Christians considered that they belonged to a secret society akin to a mystery cult, "to a school rather than a church." Second, he says, gnostics "did not reject all paganism or idolatry," and therefore could accommodate to pagan practices more readily than other Christians. Certainly there is some truth in these arguments, especially when we consider certain peripherally Christian gnostic movements.⁵¹ But, as Koschorke notes, Frend's observations do not apply to such groups as the Valentinians, who, in the first place, consider themselves fully members of the Christian church⁵² and who, secondly, strictly distinguish between revealed Christian truth and pagan "error." To discover the sources of their attitude toward martyrdom, we must examine their interpretations of Christ's passion and death.

What attitude do gnostics take toward martyrdom, and on what grounds? Evidence from Nag Hammadi shows that their views are surprisingly diverse. Some affirm it; others repudiate it. By contrast with other gnostic Christians, the Valentinian take a mediating position. One thing, however, is strikingly clear: in every case, the interpretation of Christ's passion corresponds to the attitude toward martyrdom.

One group of gnostic texts insists, no less than the orthodox, on the reality of Christ's suffering and death. The *Apocryphon of James*, like the *Second Apocalypse of James* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*,

⁴⁹ *Haer.* 4.33.9.

⁵⁰ W. H. C. Frend, "The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire," *JEH* 5 (1954) 29.

⁵¹ See comments by K. Koschorke, "Die Polemik der Gnostiker Gegen das Kirchliche Christentum" (inaugural diss., Heidelberg, 1976) Exkurs 5: "Gnosis und Martyrium," pp. 132-136.

⁵² *Ibid.*; cf. *Haer.* 3.15.2; 3.16-17.

raises the question of Christ's passion in the context of the disciples' anxiety as they anticipate persecution. The Lord responds that their suffering must become identical with his:

If you are oppressed by Satan and persecuted and you do his (the Father's) will, I say that he will love you, and make you equal with me ... Do you not know that you have yet to be shut up in prison, and condemned unlawfully, and crucified without reason, and buried (shamefully) as (was) I myself? ... Verily I say unto you, none will be saved unless they believe in my cross. But those who have believed in my cross, theirs is the kingdom of God. ... Verily I say unto you, none of those who fear death will be saved; for the kingdom of death belongs to those who put themselves to death.⁵³

This gnostic author not only insists that Christ really suffered and died, but even encourages the believer to choose suffering and death in order to become "better than I: make yourselves like the Son of the Holy Spirit!"⁵⁴ Similarly, as Pearson points out, the gnostic text *Melchizedek* attacks docetism and proclaims the reality of Christ's flesh and of his passion.⁵⁵ Here, as in orthodox sources, martyrdom is a "living sacrifice": the Savior, who "included himself" in that offering, predicts his disciples' imprisonment, suffering, and death.⁵⁶ *Melchizedek*, learning that he, like the Savior, will undergo sacrificial suffering, receives the injunction to "be strong," and the promise that endurance in persecution will enable him to prevail.

The same concern with persecution, and a similar analogy between the believer's experience and the Savior's passion dominates the *Second Apocalypse of James*. The Savior "who lived without blasphemy, died by means of blasphemy."⁵⁸ As he dies, he says, "I am surely dying, but I shall be found in life."⁵⁹ The *Apocalypse* climaxes with the brutal scene of James's martyrdom, as, dying, he prays to God for salvation. Like Christ, James is "surely dying," but "shall be found in life."⁶⁰

While these three texts, affirming the reality of Christ's passion,

⁵³ *ApocryJa* 4: 38-6: 18.

⁵⁴ *ApocryJas* 6: 19-20.

⁵⁵ B. Pearson, introduction to *Melchizedek* (CG IX.), forthcoming in the Brill edition of Codices 9 and 10; or see short introduction in *NHLibEng* 399: "Especially interesting is the anti-docetic tendency: the body, flesh, and suffering of Jesus Christ are indeed real."

⁵⁶ *Melch* 6: 24-27; 16: 6-10.

⁵⁷ *Melch* 26: 2-10.

⁵⁸ 2 *ApocJas* 47: 24-25.

⁵⁹ 2 *ApocJas* 48: 8-9.

⁶⁰ 2 *ApocJas* 62: 16-63: 30.

express enthusiasm for martyrdom, others deny that reality and attack such enthusiasm. The *Testimony of Truth* declares that enthusiasts for martyrdom do not know "who Christ is."

The foolish—thinking [in] their heart [that] if they confess, "We are Christians," in word only (but) not with power, while giving themselves over to ignorance, to a human death, not knowing where they are going, nor who Christ is, thinking that they will live, when they are (really) in error—hasten toward the principalities and the authorities. They fall into their clutches because of the ignorance that is in them.⁶¹

The author ridicules the popular view that martyrdom ensures salvation: if it were that simple, he says, *everyone* would confess Christ and be saved!⁶² Those who live under such illusions

... are [empty] martyrs, since they bear witness only [to] themselves. But when they are "perfected" with a (martyr's) death, this is the thought that they have within them: "If we deliver ourselves over to death for the sake of the Name we shall be saved." These things are not settled in this way ... They do not have the word which gives [life].⁶³

This author attacks specific views of martyrdom familiar to us from orthodox sources. First, he attacks the conviction that the martyr's death offers forgiveness of sins, a view expressed, for example, in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*: "Through suffering of one hour they purchase for themselves eternal life."⁶⁴ Tertullian, too, declares that he himself desires to suffer, "that he may obtain from God complete forgiveness, by giving in exchange his blood."⁶⁵ Second, against orthodox teachers who, like Ignatius and Tertullian, see martyrdom as an offering to God, this author ridicules the idea that God desires "human sacrifice." Third, he attacks those who believe that martyrdom ensures their resurrection. We recall that the Roman judge asked Justin Martyr, only moments before ordering his execution, "Listen, you who are considered educated ... do you suppose you will ascend into heaven?" Justin answered, "I do not suppose it, but I know and am fully persuaded of it."⁶⁶ But the *Testimony of Truth* declares that such Christians are only "destroying themselves": they are deluded into

⁶¹ *TestimTr* 31: 22-32: 8.

⁶² *TestimTr* 32: 8-12.

⁶³ *TestimTr* 33: 24-26.

⁶⁴ *Mart. Pol.* 2.

⁶⁵ *Apol.* 50.

⁶⁶ *M. Just.* 4.

thinking that Christ shared their own mortality, when in reality he, being filled with divine power, was alien to suffering and to death.

... the Son of Man [came] forth from Imperishability, [being] alien to defilement ... he went to Hades and performed many mighty works. He raised the dead therein ... so that the lame, the blind, the paralytic, the dumb, (and) the demon possessed were granted healing ... For this reason he [destroyed] his flesh from [the cross] which he bore.⁶⁷

As the *Apocalypse of Peter* opens, Peter fears that he and his Lord face the same danger: "I saw the priests and the people running toward us with stones as if they were about to kill us, and I was afraid we were going to die."⁶⁸ But the Lord explains to Peter that "many who accepted our teaching in the beginning" will fall into error. Those who fall into the hands of these false believers "will become their prisoner, because they are without perception."⁶⁹ As Korschorke and Brashler have shown, the form of community this author condemns represents the orthodox group.⁷⁰ What the author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* despises most about these Christians is that they coerce innocent fellow believers into the hands of "the executioner," apparently the forces of the Roman state, under the illusion that by "holding fast to the name of a dead man," confessing the crucified one, "they will become pure."⁷¹ The author says:

These are the ones who oppress their brothers, saying to them, 'Through this our God has pity, since salvation comes to us from this,' not knowing the punishment of those who are made glad by those who have done this thing to the little ones whom they saw, (and) whom they took prisoner.⁷²

The author rejects their propaganda for martyrdom—that it earns salvation—and abhors their exclamations of joy over acts of violence done to the "little ones." In this way the catholic community "will propagate harsh fate."⁷³

Yet while the *Apocalypse of Peter* rejects the orthodox view of martyrdom, it does not reject martyrdom per se: "others of those

⁶⁷ *TestimTr* 30: 18-33: 12.

⁶⁸ *ApocPet* 72: 5-9.

⁶⁹ *ApocPet* 73: 23-74: 3.

⁷⁰ K. Koschorke, "Die Polemik der Gnostiker," 11-89; J. Brashler, "The Apocalypse of Peter," (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School [Claremont, California], 1977)

⁷¹ *ApocPet* 74: 4-16.

⁷² *ApocPet* 79: 11-21.

⁷³ *ApocPet* 78:1-2, 80: 3-6.

who suffer," the "immortal souls," understand that their own suffering "will perfect the wisdom of the brotherhood which really exists which is the spiritual fellowship."⁷⁴ In place of the teaching that enslaves believers—the teaching of the crucified Christ—the Savior gives Peter a new understanding of his passion:

"He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute, being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness. But look at him and me."⁷⁵

Through teaching, Peter learns to face suffering. Initially, he feared that he and the Lord "would die"; now he understands that only the body, "the substitute," can die; the "primal part," the intelligent spirit, is released to "join the perfect light with the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶

Valentinian sources, as we have seen, are more complex than either those which equivocally affirm Christ's passion, or those which claim that, apart from his mortal body, Christ remained utterly exempt from suffering. As we have seen, they offer different formulations, but all attempt to discriminate between the *human* Christ, the "psychic Christ," who suffered, together with his body, and the "incomprehensible, invisible spirit" which remained impassible.

What does this mean for the question of martyrdom? Irenaeus accuses the Valentinians of "pouring contempt" upon the martyrs and "casting a slur upon their martyrdom."⁷⁷ What is their position? Clement offers, in Heracleon's words, our only extant source for a Valentinian view of martyrdom.⁷⁸ Commenting on Luke 12:11-12, Heracleon considers what the Christian, accused before the magistrate, should say: is he to confess or deny? Heracleon explains that there are different ways to "confess Christ": first, the confession "of faith and conduct," and second, verbal confession before the authorities. The latter, he says, is what "the many"—that is, psychic Christians⁷⁹—consider to be the only confession. But, Heracleon points out, "even hypocrites can make this confession". What is required universally of all Christians, he says, is the *first* form of confession; the second is required of some, but not of all. Disciples such as Matthew, Philip,

⁷⁴ *ApocPet* 78: 32-7.

⁷⁵ *ApocPet* 81: 15-24.

⁷⁶ *ApocPet* 83: 12-16.

⁷⁷ *Haer.* 3.18.5.

⁷⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 4.71 f.

⁷⁹ Origen, *Jo.* 13.51.

Thomas, and Levi never confessed before the magistrates; still, he declares, they confessed Christ in the superior way, "in faith and conduct throughout their whole lives." In naming disciples who often typify gnostic initiates, Heracleon implies a contrast between them and such martyr-apostles as Peter, whom the Valentinians consider typical of psychic Christians.⁸⁰ Is he suggesting then that martyrdom is appropriate for *psychic* Christians—as for the psychic Christ—but not for the elect? Further, is he offering a rationale for the elect to evade martyrdom?

His comments remain ambiguous. First he seems to acknowledge the necessity of martyrdom; for while he considers the confession "in faith and conduct" to be more universal, he goes on to say that this leads naturally to verbal confession at a trial, "if necessity and reason dictate." What makes such a confession "necessary" and "rational"? Simply that a Christian brought before the authorities cannot deny Christ: in that case, verbal confession is the "necessary" and "rational" alternative to denial.

Following this positive comment, however, Heracleon restates the distinction between psychic and pneumatic believers. The former, he says, even when they make verbal confession, may be denying in their conduct. The elect, on the other hand, can never deny Christ in any way, because he dwells "in them" and "he can never deny himself." The latter statement again suggests that gnostic Christians may be exempt from making the second, verbal confession; although, if that is what he means, he avoids stating it directly.

In any case, Heracleon articulates a wholly different attitude than his orthodox contemporaries. He expresses none of the enthusiasm for martyrdom, none of the acclamation of the martyr's "glorious victory." Above all, he never suggests that the believer's suffering and death imitates that of Christ. To Irenaeus, Hippolytus, or Tertullian, who argue for martyrdom on the grounds that the believer, in suffering, becomes identified with the suffering Christ, the Valentinian could reply that the *psychic* believer's experience is, indeed, analogous to that of the *psychic* Christ; but the experience of one who is pneumatic is analogous to that of the *pneumatic* Christ, whose nature transcends suffering. Such a view could well prompt Irenaeus's anger that these gnostics "show contempt" for the martyrs and devalue their sacrifice

⁸⁰ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.1-14.4.

as if it were evidence of merely *psychic* faith, and his comment that the heretics claim that true witness (*martyrium*) "is *their* system of beliefs."

Valentinian Christology involves as well a second major problem: the constitution of Christ's body. This controversy proved so critical that it actually divided the Valentinians into two different schools. The eastern school, including such teachers as Theodotus, maintains that Christ's body is purely *spiritual*. Theologians of the Italic school, including Heracleon and Ptolemy, insists, on the contrary, that Christ's body is woven from the *psychic* element.⁸¹ The issue seems a peculiar one: what makes it so significant that it could split the Valentinians into different camps? What does it mean, and how does it relate to the interpretation of Christ's passion?

I suggest that this element of Valentinian Christology will remain obscure to us until we recognize that its function is essentially *ecclesiological*. The passages concerning this debate focus less on Christ's *passion* than on his *church*. Both eastern and western Valentinian teachers characteristically interpret Christ's body as "his body, the church." The first of Theodotus's teaching that Clement records, for example, declares that Jesus is clothed with the "pneumatic seed," that is, with "the elect."⁸² As Sagnard notes, Theodotus here alludes to such texts as Eph 4:15 to interpret the church as the "body of Christ."⁸³ The same image underlies *Exc. Thdot.* 17.1: "according to the Valentinians Jesus and the church and Wisdom are a powerful and complete mingling of bodies." Theodotus takes up the same point in 26.1, explaining that "the visible part of Jesus"—his body—"was Wisdom and the church ... which he put on through the flesh." The Pauline metaphor, as Theodotus uses it, also includes the image expressed in Ephesians and Colossians: according to *Exc. Thdot.* 42.1 f., "Christ is the head" of his body. The "members of his body" are associated with Jesus' action: everyone who "bears his cross" is Jesus' "brother." Most simply stated, "the body of Jesus is consubstantial with the church". As Casey says, "This is a clear statement of the

⁸¹ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.35.5-7.

⁸² *Exc. Thdot.* 1.1-2: The passage concludes οὕτως πᾶν πνευματικὸν σπέρμα, τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς, διὰ τῆς προειρημένης φωνῆς παρατίθεται. Cf. *Exc. Thdot.* 4.1, which defines τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ἣτις ἐστὶ "τὸ γένος τὸ ἐκλεκτόν".

⁸³ F. Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote* (SC 23; Paris: Le Cerf, 1948) 52; cf. also R. P. Casey, *The Excerpta Ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (London: Christophers, 1934) 20.

principle that some element of the Savior must be consubstantial with those he intends to save.”⁸⁴

Members of the Italic school are equally conversant with this extended metaphor. The homilist of the *Interpretation of Knowledge* not only cites I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 to show that all members of the church “are a single body,” but also follows Colossians and Ephesians in declaring that “all serve the Head together.” This author exhorts his congregation (“our members”) to “love the Head” and “be thankful you do not exist outside the body.”⁸⁵ The same metaphor recurs the *Tripartite Tractate*.⁸⁶

But if members of both schools use the same Pauline metaphor, they disagree sharply on the question of what—or who—constitutes the “body.” Does the “body of Christ” consist exclusively of the pneumatic elect? Or does Christ’s body include psychic “members”? Theodotus, with others of the oriental school, takes the first position: the *Logos* receives as his flesh “the pneumatic seed, that is, the elect.”⁸⁷ This theologian specifically defines the “visible part of Jesus” as “the church of the *superior seeds*.” This means, he explains, that when Jesus invites his own to enter into the *pleroma* (“I am the door”) he means that “you, who are of the *superior seed*, shall come up to the boundary where I am.”⁸⁸ Those whom he leads into the *pleroma* belong exclusively to that “*superior seed*.”⁸⁹

Members of the western school take the opposite position. That section of the *Excerpta* taken from western sources opens by proclaiming the universality of Christ’s “headship”: the Savior becomes the “head of all things.”⁹⁰ Here the church includes two different elements—the *elect* and the *called*. These correspond to what Christ, entering into the cosmos, receives as the elements of “his body.” Irenaeus, referring to Rom 11:25, says that “of those whom he was to save, they say he received the firstfruits, the pneumatic, from Acha-moth, and from the Demiurge he was clothed with the psychic Christ.”⁹¹ Elsewhere he explains that the Valentinians teach that the

⁸⁴ Casey, *Excerpta*, 22.

⁸⁵ *InterKn* 16: 28-18: 34.

⁸⁶ *TriTrac* 118: 34; 123: 17-21.

⁸⁷ *Exc. Thdot.* 1.1-2.

⁸⁸ *Exc. Thdot.* 26.1.

⁸⁹ *Exc. Thdot.* 35.1.

⁹⁰ *Exc. Thdot.* 43.3.

⁹¹ *Haer.* 1.6.1.

expression firstfruits “denoted what is pneumatic, but that ‘the lump’ meant us, the psychic church, the ‘lump’ of which they say he assumed, and blended it with himself, in that he is ‘the leaven.’”⁹² *Exc. Thdot.* 58.1, having stated that the church consists of both the elect and the called, cites the same passage, explaining that the Savior “raised and saved what he had received, and what, through them, was consubstantial.” Thus Valentinian theologians adopt what later becomes a basic principle of patristic theology: “whatever is assumed is redeemed.”

The Valentinian sources from Nag Hammadi apparently accept the western version of Christology—and its corresponding ecclesiology. The *Interpretation of Knowledge* explains how the Savior took on the “flesh of condemnation,” and participated in the condition of those “condemned in Adam,” conjoining in himself “the one who was disgraced” and “the one who was redeemed.”⁹³ Consequently, as Klaus Koschorke shows, “his body,” the church, consists both of those who have received gnosis, and of those who have yet to receive it.⁹⁴ The *Tripartite Tractate* which describes the “unbegotten and impassible Logos” who came in flesh, and took on a body and soul, a human birth, and human suffering, teaches a corresponding ecclesiology. The author acknowledges that “the spiritual race immediately became a body of its head” when he appeared, since “the election shares body and essence with the Savior.” But the other “members” hesitated to join themselves with the Savior as members of his body: they “needed a place of instruction” in the present age.⁹⁵

Is the church—the “body of Christ”—to remain “split,”⁹⁶ divided between the “lesser” and the “greater” members, between “members that are still dead”⁹⁷ and those who are spiritually “alive”? The author of the *Interpretation of Knowledge* pleads with all members of the church to join together in the loving union appropriate to the body of Christ, who “loves his members with his whole heart.”⁹⁸ Those who have gnosis are not to despise the rest, regarding them as merely

⁹² *Haer.* 1.8.3.

⁹³ *InterpKn* 11: 36-13: 20.

⁹⁴ K. Koschorke, “Gnostic Instructions on the Organization of the Congregation. The Tractate ‘The Interpretation of Knowledge’ from CG XI,” in vol. 2 of this work, especially sec. 2 and 4.

⁹⁵ *TriTrac* 122: 12f.

⁹⁶ *InterpKn* 6: 39.

⁹⁷ *InterpKn* 17: 23-29.

⁹⁸ *InterpKn* 15: 18-19.

“ignorant” and “alien” from themselves. Conversely, the latter are not to envy those who receive greater spiritual gifts.

Do not accuse your Head because it has not appointed you as an eye but rather as a finger. And do not be jealous of that which has been made as an eye ... but be thankful that you do not exist outside the body.⁹⁹

If the *Interpretation of Knowledge* encourages unity in the present time, the *Tripartite Tractate* offers an eschatological vision of the whole body restored to its original unity. The elect who have received gnosis already are joined with the Savior, sharing his body; but the “calling” must await the bridechamber that will celebrate the union of Christ and his “body,” the church, in the eschatological future.¹⁰⁰ The writer anticipates the time when

... all the members of the body of the church are in a single place and receive the restoration at one time, when they have been manifested as the sound body—the restoration into the pleroma.¹⁰¹

Then “those (who are) mixed” and “those (who are) unmixed” will “join with one another.”¹⁰² For “when we confessed the kingdom which is in Christ, we escaped from the whole *multiplicity of forms* and from *inequality* and *change*”—conditions which characterize the present age. “For the end will receive a unitary existence just as the beginning:” those who now are separate, the *elect* and the *called*, now divided as “male and female,” “slave and free,” shall all become one, restored to a state “where there is no male nor female, nor slave and free ... but Christ is all in all.”¹⁰³

Valentinian theologians describe this eschatological reunion first as the resurrection of the body, in which

Jesus Christ the great champion ... receives to himself ... the church, that is, the *elect* and the *called* (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ... τὸ ἐκλεκτὸν καὶ τὸ κλητὸν) the pneumatic from the Mother, and the psychic from the dispensation, and he saved and raised what he had received and what, through them, was consubstantial.¹⁰⁴

For the Savior, having taken upon himself the pneumatic element, then assumed “the psychic church, which ... he took on and blended with himself.”¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ *InterpKn* 18: 28-34. For discussion, see Koschorke, “Gnostic Instructions.”

¹⁰⁰ *TriTrac* 122: 19-27.

¹⁰¹ *TriTrac* 123: 16-23.

¹⁰² *TriTrac* 132: 3-12.

¹⁰³ *TriTrac* 132: 16-28.

¹⁰⁴ *Exc. Thdot.* 58.1.

¹⁰⁵ *Haer.* 1.8.3.

This vision also is described as “the bridechamber” where Christ is joined with “the church, that is Wisdom.”¹⁰⁶ There the psychics who are saved (αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι πισταὶ ψυχαὶ) join with the elect in the “marriage feast, common to all who are saved, until all are equal, and all are joined in reciprocal relationship” (ἄχρισ ἔν ἀπισωθῆ πάντα καὶ ἀλληγορήσῃ).¹⁰⁷

Achieving this union is the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world—indeed, of the world’s creation.

The pneumatic element was sent forth so that it might be united with the psychic in syzygy, so that the two elements might be educated together in the process. *For the psychic needed forms of education through the senses; and for this reason, they say, the world was created, and the savior came to the psychic element ... in order to save it.*¹⁰⁸

But since the Savior came into the cosmos to reveal himself to psychics, whose perception is limited to their physical senses, he took upon himself, besides the pneumatic and psychic elements, “a body, having a psychic nature, yet prepared with indescribable skill, in order to become visible and tangible and capable of suffering.”¹⁰⁹ Harvey misreads Valentinian Christology, then, when he says that “the doctrine of Valentinus, as regards the human nature of Christ, is essentially docetic. It was *animal* (psychic) but not *material* (hylic).”¹¹⁰ On the contrary, the Valentinians insist that Christ had to become incarnate in order to become accessible to those “who needed education through the senses.” Further declare that it was precisely his *human* nature that experienced suffering.

What prompts Harvey’s misunderstanding is Irenaeus’s comment “They deny that Christ assumed anything hylic.”¹¹¹ Harvey takes τὸ ὕλικόν to mean “material” in the sense of physical and tangible. But the Valentinians, saying that Christ “assumed nothing hylic,” understand this element, like the others (τὸ ψυκικόν/τὸ πνευματικόν) to be an incorporeal essence (οὐσία). Compounded of the experiences of terror, grief, fear, and ignorance,¹¹² τὸ ὕλικόν is what remains essen-

¹⁰⁶ *InterpKn* 31: 36; cf. *Exc. Thdot.* 17.1.

¹⁰⁷ *Exc. Thdot.* 63.1-64.

¹⁰⁸ *Haer.* 1.6.1.

¹⁰⁹ *Haer.* 1.6.1; cf. Origen, *Jo.* 13.60; *Exc. Thdot.* 23.1.

¹¹⁰ Harvey, *Adversus Haereses*, 52.

¹¹¹ *Haer.* 1.6..

¹¹² *Haer.* 1.5.4-5; *Exc. Thdot.* 47.4-48.4.

tially unassimilable to the divine.¹¹³ The *Tripartite Tractate* defines the hylic element as what belongs to “arrogant thought”; it is called “the left,” the “darkness,” and “the last.”¹¹⁴ Human beings, composed of psychic and hylic elements, discover within themselves the “hylic soul,” also called τὸ σαρκίον, contending against the psychic “divine soul.” The hylic soul is an internal enemy, invisible, and consubstantial with the “spiritual powers of darkness.” Sin strengthens its hold; therefore the believer must struggle to “bind” it and destroy it.¹¹⁵ Distinct from those “three immaterial elements”—pneumatic, psychic, and hylic—a fourth, the choic, is put on as the “garments of skin.” Thus Adam becomes (in our sense of the term) a material creature.¹¹⁶

This explains why the physical and tangible element of Christ’s incarnation was “woven from the psychic element,” and had nothing to do with the hylic. “Whatever is assumed is redeemed,” and this element, essentially unredeemed, must be purged from those who attain salvation.¹¹⁷ Can we compare the saying that Christ assumed “nothing hylic” with the patristic claim that he was born “in every way like us, but without sin”? The *Tripartite Tractate* declares that Christ, “conceived and born as an infant, in body and soul,” yet was “exalted” among the rest, “because he had let himself be conceived without sin, stain or defilement”¹¹⁸—in other words, free of τὸ ὑλικόν.

From Irenaeus’s viewpoint, however, this second theme of Valentinian Christology involves the same practical implications as the first—and bears consequences equally disastrous for the church. Just as their view of the passion divides believers between those who identify with either the *psychic* or the *pneumatic* Christ, so their image of the “body of Christ” discriminates between *psychic* and *pneumatic* elements in “his body,” that is, in the *church*. Consequently the initiates “represent themselves as spiritual persons” while “we of the church” are called “merely psychic.”¹¹⁹ Admitting their constructive intention, Irenaeus declares, nevertheless, that “they cannot accomplish a reformation effective enough to compensate for the harm they are

¹¹³ *Haer.* 1.4.5; 1.6.1.

¹¹⁴ *TriTrac* 98: 18-20.

¹¹⁵ *Exc. Thdot.* 52.1-53.1.

¹¹⁶ *Exc. Thdot.* 55.1.

¹¹⁷ *Exc. Thdot.* 51.1-53.1.

¹¹⁸ *TriTrac* 115: 9-17.

¹¹⁹ *Haer.* 1.6.1-2.

doing." What they actually do is to "cut in pieces the great and glorious body of Christ, and, so far as they are able, to destroy it." Preserving unity, in Irenaeus's terms, demands that they themselves be expelled and placed "outside the church"¹²⁰

Why did the orthodox interpretation of church unity—and of martyrdom—prevail? Although the question is much too large for this brief sketch, we have observed a close connection between outbreaks of persecution and zeal for orthodoxy. This may suggest that when violence increasingly menaced small provincial Christian groups such as those in Lyons and Vienne, they attempted to ensure survival through solidarity with Christians throughout the known world. They moved toward increased communication with other groups, especially with well-established churches. So Irenaeus, bringing news of the martyrs in Lyons, travelled to Rome. In the process of increased communication, the diversified earlier communities were pressed by their common danger to reach agreement—indeed, unanimity—on matters of holy days, a canon of Scripture, and a creedal confession of faith. Increasingly stratified orders of institutional hierarchy were established to consolidate the communities internally, and to authorize communication with "catholic" churches throughout the world. Those who followed this growing consensus in doctrine and church politics also belonged to the churches that—confessing the crucified Christ—became conspicuous for their martyrs. Groups of gnostic Christians, on the other hand, who resisted such doctrinal conformity, questioned the value of martyrdom, and often opposed the increase of hierarchical church office, were scattered and lost.

DISCUSSION

ELAINE PAGELS: OUR tendency is to read Valentinian texts to fit our schema of what they will say. Valentinian Christology, for example, is usually assumed to be docetic, as is that of Gnosticism in general. Yet there are many texts which suggest a Christology concerned with the question of two natures, rather than with docetism. Even Irenaeus distinguished Valentinian theology from docetism. His quarrel with it was that it distinguished the psychic Christ who suffers and dies from the spiritual Christ who is removed at the trial before Pilate. Irenaeus's

¹²⁰ *Haer.* 4.33.7.

attack was so intense, I believe, not for theological reasons but because of the implications which he saw in the Christology for the believer's own suffering and death. There is a pattern in the anti-Gnostic fathers: these men, who knew persecution directly and praised martyrdom as a glorious sacrifice, also affirmed that Christ truly suffered and died. They saw in Gnosticism a challenge to this combination of beliefs.

In the Gnostic texts themselves, there is a variety of positions on Christ's death and on martyrdom. Some writings take positions like those of the orthodox. Others deprecate the slaughter of martyrdom and say that the real Christ did not die on the cross. The Valentinian material is more difficult to describe; it seems to occupy an intermediate position. It does contain a discussion which has helped to produce the impression of docetism: the Eastern school affirmed that Christ had only a spiritual body, while the West recognized a psychic body as well. I have argued that the issue here was really ecclesiological: in the East only the elect were included in the body of Christ, while in the West the church was understood to include both the psychic and the spiritual elements.

WAYNE MEEKS: I am interested in your point of view and in the incipient methodology which asks how the ideas and activities of early Christians, including Gnostics, existed in the real world of social organization and political activity.

BARBARA ALAND: (*To Pagels*) I would like to raise two points. First, you express puzzlement about Irenaeus's concern with the Valentinian view that the divine spirit remains apart from suffering. But this belief was precisely the point of the heresy. The center of Christianity is the affirmation that in Christ the divine spirit suffered. From the systematic theological point of view, then, Irenaeus's response was right.

Second, I agree that Valentinianism often does not seem docetic. In the *Gospel of Truth*, for example, Christ is said to die on the cross. But his death cannot be quite real if the body is *qua definitione* the creature of $\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta$ and if Christ knew it, as he surely did. It is only those who don't know who truly die.

PAGELS: Of course, the Valentinian position is heretical in light of developed orthodoxy. But I was looking at it in its second-century context. Irenaeus's objection is theological, but it is also involved with his view of martyrdom. Thus, it was a serious practical problem for him.

GILLES QUISPÉL: Certainly, the denial of Christ's suffering is unorthodox. It was so declared in 553 by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which proclaimed that one of the Trinity had suffered in the flesh.

PAGELS: (*To Aland*) I agree with you that the theological issues here are important, and I have tried to see their *problematik*. I need to think more about what you said of the body in the *Gospel of Truth*. But I do want to disagree with Harvey's view that when Christ is said not to assume τὸ ὕλικόν, this means that he had no body. Rather, I think, this phrase designates the element of evil which Christ could not redeem.

QUISPÉL: Pseudo-Tertullian, a good source which I believe to be based on Hippolytus, says that the Valentinians affirm, "Christum ... in substantia corporis nostri non fuisse, sed spiritale nescio quod corpus de caelo deferentem." This evidence is confirmed by the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Treatise on Resurrection*.

G. C. STEAD: Christianity has always been split in its approach to the issue of suffering in the godhead. On the one hand, it is heir to a tradition of affirming the impassibility of God; yet, it also affirms that Christ was crucified and so suffered pain and even despair. From early times, perhaps from ancient Greek thought, the context of the discussion has been plagued with misunderstanding. Aristotle saw doing and suffering as distinct categories, a view which suggests the alternative of full spontaneity or exposure to the forces of adverse powers and circumstances. Christians must see this scheme as too simple. A better approach is suggested by the analogy of temptation: Christ or a saint may be said to be above particular temptations but not above temptation *simpliciter*. Similarly, God could be said to be above particular sufferings but yet to bear suffering in some total experience. The Valentinians, I think, had some perception of this tension, for they spoke of despising temptation. On this analogy, it can be said both that Christ suffered, for he bore sins in which he had no part, and that he did not suffer, for he didn't suffer as we do.

HELMUT KOESTER: Persecution also raised pastoral problems. Even Cyprian fled the first time! To these problems, Valentinianism offered a more radical understanding of political and social estrangement and a better pastoral approach to the spiritual survival of the terrors of suffering. It offered the assurance that there is a part of the self that cannot be touched by agony. At this point, we can see Valentinianism

as a people's church, not simply as an odd group with an abstruse speculation.

PAGELS: The orthodox charged that Gnostics appeared precisely at times of persecution. There is an appeal in an offer of a theological rationale for avoiding martyrdom.

HANS JONAS: I agree with Professor Aland that the key issue here is theological. The usefulness of the Gnostic view for evading martyrdom is only a secondary appeal. While important for those concerned, it was not crucial to the question of what the Christian message was. The affirmation that it was the bodily Christ who was crucified and was raised is central to Christianity. The first and second centuries recognized this fact; with only a spiritual Christ, there is no folly to the Hellenes or scandal to the Jews. The belief that deity did not merely assume something irrelevant with the "apparent" body but actually became incarnate and went through the suffering of mankind was crucial to the departure of Christianity from Judaism. As Paul shows, it was at the core of Christianity from the beginning; there was no need to wait for councils to define it. Thus, the devaluing of this aspect of Christology is profoundly heretical.

PAGELS: But the Valentinians were also concerned with Christ's suffering. Tertullian, Irenaeus, and the Valentinian writings themselves acknowledge this. They found a problem, however, in saying that the *spirit* could suffer.

JONAS: But how important was this suffering in Valentinianism?

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: (*To Pagels*) You have called Valentinianism a mediation. This is true not only of its practical stance but also of its theology. Some of its doctrines about the sufferings of Christ function as a mediating principle between the theoretical extremes of passibility and impassibility. Such a dynamic is characteristic of Valentinian theology. Certainly, the *Tripartite Tractate* contradicts Irenaeus's account of Valentinianism. *TriTrac* 65:17-21 says of the Son, "This one was given for enjoyment and nourishment and joy and an abundance of illumination, which consists in his fellow laboring. ..." What I have translated "fellow laboring" here could as well be "fellow suffering," for laboring is suffering on another level. Later, the text speaks of the suffering of the Savior and finally of Christ and the material world. All this is a redemptive process.

PAGELS: And it is true suffering.

ATTRIDGE: Yes, although perhaps it is affirmed in response to orthodox criticism.

PAGELS: The passage speaks also of the sufferings of the church.

ATTRIDGE: Yes, that all suffering is redemptive is part of the mediating technique of the myth, which uses analogy and replication.

PAGELS: We also find here the pattern of juxtaposing suffering with the impassibility of the Logos.

RAOUL MORTLEY: (*To Pagels*) You have made attitudes toward martyrdom dependent on Christology. I wonder how dominant a factor the theology in fact was; I am not sure even that attitudes to Christology and to martyrdom were closely related.

There were surely sociological reasons for behavior in response to persecution. They would be connected, for example, to the view of Christians as a tribe, a third race, which was found in the New Testament and the fathers. More specifically, they would be connected with a Jewish typology of martyrdom. From the time of the Maccabees, there was a notion of not allowing one's people to be destroyed. Here was established both a behavioral pattern and a literary genre which can be seen to influence the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Just how important was the introduction of Christology into this existing tradition?

PAGELS: You are, of course, right that Christology was the new element in an older heritage which Frend's work has helped us to understand. I have not claimed that attitudes toward martyrdom depend on Christology. Nor, with Tertullian, have I said the reverse. But I have observed that the two occur together.

MEEKS: You are saying, then, that Christology was more than an intellectual exercise; it had implications for the way one lived one's life.

QUISPTEL: (*To Pagels*) Your paper touches an important problem in Gnostic studies. The advocacy of suffering in persecution found in the *First Apocalypse of James* came as a surprise; indeed, Orbe declared that such a work could not be Valentinian. In fact, however, we know little of the original Valentinian attitude toward persecution. We know that at Carthage at the time of Tertullian, some Gnostics under Prodicus

persuaded the local Valentinian congregation to withdraw. We have insinuations from Irenaeus, and some scholars find a reference to the Valentinians in Clement of Alexandria's remark that there are some Gnostics who declined to suffer. Against this scanty evidence, we have the Valentinian interpolation in the *Acts of John*, with its clear presentation of a theology of suffering. On all levels of this system, there is the implication that God suffers. But we had to wait for Bulgakov and Bonhoeffer for this to be accepted in Christian theology.

The issue of docetism is a complicated one. Harry Wolfson taught me that this theme is not typically Gnostic but rather came from Jewish sources; for example, there is the account of the angels who visited Abraham with docetic bodies and seemed to eat and drink.

One last point—I have a problem with what you say about Ignatius's opponents. They were docetists, but do we know that they were also Gnostics, as you have said? The *Gospel of Peter*, also from Antioch, gives us an example of a docetic Christology which is not Gnostic.

ATTRIDGE: On the subject of Jewish antecedents for docetism, I would note that the *Wisdom of Solomon* illustrates the theological discussions of suffering and theodicy in the first century. Commenting on the servant songs of Isaiah, this writing affirms that just men only seem to suffer.

KOESTER: The second century is a puzzle. Apart from Ignatius, who was himself an unusual figure, orthodox theology from this time is almost unknown. As von Campenhausen has shown, the account of Polycarp's martyrdom originally lacked its references to Christ's passion. During this period, then, it was the Gnostics who were speaking about suffering and resurrection. Thus, we must ask again what constituted orthodox theology in the second century.

GNOSIS AND THE PIETY OF METAPHOR:
THE *GOSPEL OF TRUTH*

BY

JOEL FINEMAN

I

STANDAERT, in "L'Évangile de Vérité": critique et lecture," makes theological sense of the dialectical possibilities opened up by the Valentinian formula: "the Name of the Father is the Son."¹ In turn, Standaert relates that theology to rhetorical devices specific to the *Gospel of Truth*—hendiadys, antanaclysis, paranomasia, pronomial ambiguity—developing the logic that fits the text's idiosyncratic style to its idiosyncratic piety. In what follows I accept Standaert's reading in its entirety, but want to take up the same issue at a more basic level of stylistic analysis by asking what kind of general semiotic operations are required to think the system of substitutions presupposed by "the Name of the Father is the Son."

I am guided by the Lacanian theory of metaphor, which is based on the Saussurian assumption of the arbitrariness of the sign and the Jakobsonian distinction between metaphor and metonymy.² A sign is the relationship of a signifier to a signified, a relationship which is meaningful within a semiotic system of hierarchicized differences but relatively unmotivated in itself.

The sign is represented by the algorithm:

S
s

where S stands for a signifier, s for a signified, and the bar between them for the separation between the two levels. The algorithm is read

¹ B. Standaert, "'L'Évangile de Vérité': critique et lecture," *NTS* 22 (1976) 243-275.

² F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (tr. W. Baskin; New York, 1966); R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague, 1971), part II, ch. 5.

as signifier over signified and assumes that the signified is an effect of the signifier, though not necessarily a determinate effect.

In "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud," Lacan defines metaphor as the substitution of a new signifier for an original signifier which, as result or condition of the metaphoric process, drops to the level of a signified.³ This is represented in a formula thus:

$$\frac{S'}{S} \times \frac{S}{s} \rightarrow S' \frac{1}{s} \rightarrow \frac{S'}{s}$$

where S is the original signifier, S' is the new signifier, s the original signified. The formula is designed to characterize any substitutive metaphorization, as, for example, "the girl is a rose," the meaning of which depends on the transformation of the original signifier, "girl," (original signifier of the concept girl) into the signified of the signifier "rose." Applying the formula, we write:

$$\frac{\text{rose}}{\text{girl}} \times \frac{\text{girl}}{\text{concept girl}} \rightarrow \text{rose} \frac{1}{\text{concept girl}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{rose}}{\text{concept girl}}$$

It will be noted that the metaphorization formula assumes an algebraic simplification which factors out the middle term of the equation. This factoring out figures the process of metaphorization. So too, it is this disappearance of the original signifier, transformed into a signified which fades out of the equation altogether, that Laplanche in a controversial elaboration of the Lacanian formula makes representative of the formation of the Freudian unconscious through primal repression.⁴ Laplanche rewrites the formula so as to retain within the equation the fading or occultation of the original signifier:

³ J. Lacan, "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud," *Ecrits* (Paris, 1966) 493-528. For the sake of clarity I simplify the original formula, which Lacan presents as:

$$\left(\frac{S'}{S} \right) \cong S (+) s$$

where the sign \cong designates congruence and "Le signe + placé entre () manifestant ici le franchissement de la barre — et la valeur constituante de ce franchissement pour l'émergence de la signification" (515).

⁴ J. Laplanche and S. Leclaire, "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study" *French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis* (tr. P. Coleman; *Yale French Studies* 48; New Haven, 1972) 118-175; originally published in *L'Inconscient (VI^e Colloque de Bonneval)* (Paris, 1966).

$$\frac{S'}{S} \times \frac{S}{s} \rightarrow \frac{S'}{s} \rightarrow S' \frac{1}{s} \rightarrow \frac{S'}{s}$$

$$\frac{S}{S}$$

Here S'/s corresponds to conscious discourse and articulates the metaphoric conclusion, but the signification of S'/s presupposes the unspoken relationship of S/S which lies below conscious discourse as a latent or virtual condition of substitutive signification. It will be noted that below the larger bar S retains its two aspects, as signifier and signified, in a strange relationship which makes the signifier a signified of itself. Commenting on this relationship, Laplanche writes:

At the level of unconscious language, there are only images, serving simultaneously and inseparably as signifier and signified. In a sense it may be said that the unconscious chain is pure meaning, but one can say as well that it is pure signifier, pure non-meaning, or open to all meanings.⁵

⁵ Laplanche, "The Unconscious," 161. Laplanche is here concerned with relating Lacan's metaphor formula to Freud's technical metapsychological distinction between conscious word-representations (*Wortvorstellungen*) and unconscious thing-representations (*Sachvorstellungen*). See Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works* (ed. J. Strachey; London: Hogarth, 1959) 14: 201-204. For Laplanche, the mysterious homology of S/S below the bar establishes points of stability, ballast, which anchor for the subject particular signifieds to particular signifiers; S/S fixes the sliding of the signified under the signifier. Laplanche would refer the formation of such stabilizing points to traumatic events in childhood whereby the infant passes into speech by acceptance of the discourse of the Other. Lacan would put this in a different way; see his introduction to A. Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (London, 1977). For Lacan, language has always already accomplished the occultation of a primal signifier precisely because, as language, it has always already accomplished the substitution of word for thing, of representation for presentation: it is this substitution that the infant assimilates to his subjectivity when he learns to locate himself in language (again through the discourse of the Other). The trauma, as it were, is in the learning of language itself, the passage from *in-fans* to the capacity for speech. In effect, in acceding to language the infant identifies himself with the lost signifier whose loss is what establishes the possibility of language and the order of culture. In psychoanalytic terms, this lost signifier is the phallus, more precisely, the castrated phallus, which Lacan calls the signifier of signifiers to stress the fact that signification depends upon its absence (see "La signification du phallus," *Écrits*, 685-696). As with Laplanche's simpler formulation, and perhaps more consistently, for Lacan the accession to language is correlative with (1) the child's transition from an imaginary being to a symbolic meaning—the so-called barring of the subject; (2) the passage of the infant from relationships of identificatory duality to those of mediated Oedipal triangularity; (3) the onset of the castration complex and discovery of "the Name of the Father," this the paternal metaphor; (4) the formation of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other; (5) the origin of desire—specifically, desire of the other's (mother's) desire (for the phallus which she does not have).

The difference between the Lacanian formulation and that of Laplanche is that for Laplanche the unconscious is the condition for language whereas for Lacan language

II

I turn now to the *Gospel of Truth* and its meditation on the Name of the Father. I should say in advance that I am aware of how common name-mysticism is in the period and that one question I hope the seminar will address is whether the name speculation of the *Gospel of Truth* is in fact distinctively Valentinian (as is suggested by similar formulations elsewhere, e.g., the *Gospel of Philip* or the *Sethian Gospel of the Egyptians*), and then, more generally, how best to distinguish Gnostic speculation about language from similar concerns in other mysticisms. The issue is obviously connected to Jewish heterodoxy and to grammatical and exegetical theory as developed out of Stoic and Philonic allegorization, and as such raises the question of how Valentinus and other Gnostics appropriated to their own purposes vocabularies and themes that were not originally their own. For the moment, source criticism seems decisively frustrated by the complicated parallels and diffusions of second-century syncretism, but this does not mean that Gnosticism is therefore properly identified with the difficulties attending its historical investigation. We must assume, at least provisionally, the integrity and coherence of Gnostic sensibility, and try to understand the particular uses to which common

is the condition for the unconscious. Between the two psychoanalysts, therefore is a theoretical dispute as to which comes first, the psyche or the logos, though for both of them the accession to language is a threshold event that necessarily evokes equivalent effects for the subject. For the purposes of this paper we can bracket the theoretical debate (though it broaches a Gnostic issue in that Gnosticism, too, hesitates to label the first cause Father or Anthropos, see below). But it is important to emphasise Lacan's appeal to a linguistic register. In privileging language, in insisting that the subject is an effect of the signifier, Lacan expresses an essential logocentrism and allies himself with a fundamentally structuralist point of view which sees the individual as a subjective function of systemic cultural forms prior to and constitutive of the individual himself, just as language precedes and determines its speakers. For this reason, as Derrida points out ("The Purveyor of Truth," *Graphesis: Perspectives in Literature and Philosophy* [Yale French Studies 52; New Haven, 1975] 31-114) Lacan's psychoanalysis is a system necessarily dependent on a transcendental signifier, the phallus, and the gaps through which it reveals its absence. For Derrida this is the great failure of Lacan: his logocentric lapse. But for this very reason, Lacan's seems to me the right or, rather, the last methodology with which to approach Gnosticism with any contemporary critical sympathy, since subtending this essay is the proposition that psychoanalysis is the conclusion of the same Western religious tradition that Gnosticism initiates. It is precisely because that tradition unpacks itself coherently that psychoanalytic theory is immanent in Gnostic literature as theme: the transition from mythos to logos being itself governed by logos up until that point—contemporary psychoanalysis—where logos itself is thematized, *qua* myth, along with its loss.

topoi were deployed. For example, I will later suggest that the recursive daring of Valentinian hermeneutic practice—allegories of allegories of allegories to no eventual end, as Irenaeus complained—is connected to the way it manipulates the Name in accord with what I here call the piety of metaphoric semiosis.

What is confusing about the entire discussion of the Name of the Father is the reflexive turn of the naming, a circularity that, as Standaert has shown, the author exploits rather than clarifies by pronominal ambiguity.

Now the name of the Father is the Son. It is he who first gave a name to the one who came forth from him, who was himself, and he begot him as a son. He gave him his name which belonged to him; he is the one to whom belongs all that exists around him, the Father. His is the name; his is the Son (*GTr* 38: 7-15).⁶

Here, Christology, as also soteriology, repeats a fracture built into cosmologic ontology. The Father is a principle prior to first principles, a beginning which precedes the beginning, a fullness from out of which the All proceeds.

... this is the Father from whom the beginning came forth, to whom all will return who have come forth from *lūm* (*GTr* 37: 38-38: 4).

In the naming of himself the Father therefore names his Son, or, the same thing in reverse—or almost the same thing—the naming of the Son is equivalently constitutive of the Name of the Father. The Father has a Name, that Name is the Son: therefore, following the logic of our text, the Name of the Father is the Son. The integrity of this logic depends upon a signifying process or practice which completes or realizes each term of the three-term series—Father, Son, Name—by its mediatory reference to the other two terms.

For the name is not from (mere) words, nor does his name consist of appellations, but it is invisible. He gave a name to himself since he sees himself, he alone having the power to give himself a name. For he who does not exist has no name. For what name is given to him who does not exist? But the one who exists exists also with his name, and he knows himself. And to give himself a name is (the prerogative of) the Father. The Son is his name. He did not therefore hide it in the work, but the Son existed; he alone was given the name. The name therefore is that of the Father, as the name of the Father is the Son (*GTr* 39: 3-26).

⁶ References to the *Gospel of Truth* are from the translation by G. MacRae in *NHLibEng*.

Each term thus slips into the other by virtue of the commutativity of the Name. Moreover, the process of salvation is also conceived in terms of such slippage.

... the end is receiving knowledge about the one who is hidden, and this is the Father (*GTr* 37: 37-38).

and

He gave them the means of knowing the knowledge of the Father and the revelation of his Son (*GTr* 30: 24-26).

The result is that there is a symmetry between the circularity of the salvation scheme and that of the cosmology sketched out for Father and Son. In order to be saved one must know the Father who is unknowable. He, the Father, can only be known through the Name which is the Son. Those who can know the Father's Name are those who themselves have already received a name from the Father. Therefore, having been named by the Father, they can themselves become the Name of the Father, just as the Son is the Name of the Father because the Father gave himself a Name.

Those whose name he knew in advance were called at the end, so that one who has knowledge is the one whose name the Father has uttered. For he whose name has not been spoken is ignorant. Indeed, how is one to hear if his name has not been called? For he who is ignorant until the end is a creature of oblivion, and he will vanish along with it. If not, how is it that these miserable ones have no name, (how is it that) they do not have the call? Therefore if one has knowledge, he is from above. If he is called, he hears, he answers, and he turns to him who is calling him, and ascends to him. And he knows in what manner he is called. Having knowledge, he does the will of the one who called him, he wishes to be pleasing to him, he receives rest. Each one's name comes to him (*GTr* 21: 25-22: 13).

With these two circularities we are close to what Irenaeus reported was "the great and abstruse mystery" of Valentinianism, namely,

that the power which is above all others, and contains all in his embrace, is termed Anthropos; hence does the Saviour style himself the "son of man" (*Haer.* 1.12.4)⁷

In both cases the axiological coordinates of Gnostic piety presuppose reflection through the Name, which is why the author of the text

⁷ References to Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, are from ANF, vol. 1.

goes to some trouble to tease out the substitutive permutations built into the generative scheme that makes the Name of the Father the Son. So too, the rhetorical procedures of the text reenforce the author's arguments for mediation through the Name by a continued play of vaguely denominated antecedents such that Father and Son blend together in the space of pronomial ambiguity.

On the other hand, and this suggests the sophistication and precision of Valentinian speculation, the author worries about a possible misunderstanding that might come from taking these substitutions through name slippage as straightforwardly reciprocal identifications. A moment of rhetorical intensity is reached in the discussion of the Name when the text suddenly interrupts itself for the sake of apodioxical refutation of an interpretation that would indeed have the Son name the Father.

But no doubt one will say to this neighbor, "Who is it who will give a name to him who existed before himself, as if offspring did not receive a name from those who begot them?" (*GTr* 39: 29-40: 1).

The author of the *Gospel of Truth* argues vehemently against any such inference because a reversal of this kind would invert the significance of each of his key terms: the priority of the Father with regard to the Son, revealed by the paternal signification of the Name. In a climatic account of the movements of the Name, therefore, in a passage that joins ontology, soteriology, and Christology, the text pauses to recapitulate the entirety of its argument.

First, then, it is fitting for us to reflect on this matter: what is the name? It is the name in truth; it is not therefore the name from the Father, for it is the one which is the proper name. Therefore he did not receive the name on loan as (do) others, according to the form in which each one is to be produced. But this is the proper name. There is no one else who gave it to him. But he is unnameable, indescribable, until the time when he who is perfect spoke of himself. And it is he who has the power to speak his name and to see it. Where therefore it pleased him that his name which is uttered should be his Son, and he gave the name to him, that is, him who came forth from the depth, he spoke about his secret things, knowing that the Father is a being without evil (*GTr* 40: 2-29).

Again, the homiletic force of the passage depends upon retaining the ambiguity of the pronouns, their double reference, even at the very moment their equivocation is being argued away. The equivocation derives from a duplicity in the Name itself, the Proper Name, in the double sense of the Greek, κύριον ὄνομα (Coptic: *jaeis nren*):

(1) a powerful name, sovereign, authoritative, and (2) a proper name, as in a personal noun, correctly possessed by that which it denominates.⁸ On the one hand, the power of the Name, its lordliness, is what determines its nature as proper to that of the Father; on the other, the propriety of the Name, as personal name, is what determines it as property of the persona of the Father. Power and possession require each other: thus, we are told, the Father is the source of all names.

Yet there is something strange about both these determinations. To the extent that the Name is itself a power, the text develops it as a sovereignty that precedes the Father himself: "It is the name in truth: it is not therefore the name from the father, for it is the one which is the proper name." Taking the text at its word, we can say that the Son doesn't name the Father; rather, the Name names the Father. But is it possible that there is such a nomenclatural Truth before truth itself—a Beginning that precedes the beginning from which the beginning proceeds? Here, in infinite regress, the Name is a power that secures the principle of power, an origin prior to origins. But why should this pre-beginning be a Name?

On the other hand, equally paradoxical, the propriety of the Name, its adequacy to its reference, is revealed only in the dispossession of the Name from its denomination, i.e., in its being given to the Son: "... it pleased him that his name which is uttered should be his Son, and he gave the name to him." If the Name as a power is an origin prior to that which it determines, then, balancing this, as a personal appellation it exists only as successive to its own reference. But is it possible that the truth emerges only as its own aftermath, or that the origin of origins lags after itself? How is it that in one reading the Name is sheer priority, and in another, the consequence of the first, it is registered as absolute anteriority? The text would seem to exploit and to propose both paradoxes as explanation for the reflection that makes the Name of the Father the Son. On the one hand, the Name is a principle of authority prior to its author. On the other hand, the Name is the devolution of truth as its own displacement. In both cases the signified is an effect of the signifier. But what is striking is that in neither case is the truth, origin, Father adequate to itself

⁸ For speculation about affinities to Jewish sources, see G. Quispel, "The Jung Codex and its Significance," *The Jung Codex* (London, 1955) 72-75.

alone: rather, it seems always to refer elsewhere instantly, backwards and forwards, to something that we can only call the truth of truth, as it is bespoken by a Name.

III

How can we characterize and control the subtly nuanced displacements and deferments that the passages quoted above present? Here the Lacanian formula for metaphor will help. For what is involved, I will argue, is a profound Gnostic insight into the origin of the sacred in the origin of language itself. And this is revealed, I will further suggest, despite the schematism, in the metaphORIZING substitution by means of which the Name of the Father comes to signify the Son. I apply the formula thus:

$$\frac{\text{Name of the Father}}{\text{Father}} \times \frac{\text{Father}}{\text{Son}} \rightarrow \frac{\frac{\text{Name of the Father}}{\text{Son}}}{\frac{\text{Father}}{\text{Father}}}$$

The formula asserts that at first the Name of the Father signifies the Father. Second, in accord with the *Gospel of Truth's* understanding of divine naming as equivalent to ontological creation, that the Father's creation of the Son is a signifying of the Son ("his name which is uttered should be his Son"—a familiar onto-logistic topos). Third, that as a result of these two signs having been joined together in the same discourse, the Name of the Father now metaphorically signifies the Son. Finally, either as a consequence or condition of all of this, that the Father must drop out of the chain of discourse in which his Name signifies the Son, and fall below that discourse into another order of discourse, at a different ontological level, in which the Father becomes a signifier that is its own signified. If we think back to Laplanche's characterization of the unconscious, we see that in the naming of the Son, the Father becomes exactly what the *Gospel of Truth* calls him: inconceivable, incomprehensible, ineffable—precisely because, in the manner the *Gospel of Truth* describes, he names himself.

The point I want to stress here is that these appellations for the Father are not quite the instances of negative theology for which they

are usually taken. The force of the formula is that it obliges us to recognize the ineffability of the Father as a meaningful function within a larger semiotic system. This “negativity” of the Father, if that is how we must characterize a signifier that is its own signified, is what supplies signification to the entirety of Gnostic theology, at least in so far as that theology is epitomized in the proposition which asserts that “the Name of the Father is the Son.” Reading the right side of the equation as an expanded sign, we may say that the latent signification of the-Name-of-the-Father-is-the-Son is that the Father voicelessly names himself. Reading the left side of the equation, what we see is the very process of metaphoric substitution. By joining the two sides together, in its scrupulous theological development of each stage of the equation, Gnosticism develops a piety and an originology of a radical—one is tempted to say, of an original—kind. For in doing so, Gnosticism bases its theology on the same metaphoric slippage upon which the human transition into language depends.

This last is the great claim of Lacanian psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the child passes into language when he assumes “the name of the father” by accepting the castration of the Oedipus complex. Lacan calls this “the paternal metaphor.” The infant loses an imaginary plenitude of being, his ego, for the sake of the symbolic meaning he becomes by being positioned through the discourse of the Other as a subject in the cultural order. In the *Gospel of Truth* we get an ontological rather than a psychological articulation of the same passage, positioning, and loss. But here Being itself is named as Speech itself, with the result that the being of Being is fractured in the moment of its voicing, just as the Father is lost as presence when he is re-presented as a Name.

Now this is not the place to argue either the details or the validity of Lacanian psychoanalysis. And it may well be the case that Lacanian psychoanalysis offers us not so much an analysis of as, rather, another version of the same tradition of logocentric theology that in the West begins with Gnostic hereticism. But even leaving these important issues aside, we can recognize that with the formula for metaphor we come upon the fundamental problem and at the same time the most typical stylistic feature of Gnostic theological discourse. Referring to the formula, we can specify the problem in very precise terms: how conduct a discourse about the origin of discourse when the origin is structured by the discourse such that it is excluded from it and unspeakable within it—and this precisely because the discourse is con-

ceived and thematized as discourse: how to express what expression abolishes.

One response to this dilemma of original signification, and one that Gnosticism surely assayed, is to search out in language an ever-expanding series of signifiers in the hope that one or the sum of them all might eventually recuperate the lost original signifier-signified. For Lacan this would be the metonymic movement of the signifiers of desire, all of them a response to the original metaphoric occultation. Hence the proliferating emanationist nominalism of the more elaborate and bizarre Gnostic syzygistic systems. In decadent or sentimental Gnosticism this ends up as Word-magic and Hermeticism, decadent because of the extralinguistic claims it makes for its own discourse, a theoretical demand for what on its own terms is non-sense. The trouble with such a search *in* language for what language excludes, is that with each new term, with every additional recuperative signifier, a new metaphoric substitution is effected, with the result that the penultimate term again repeats the original occultation.

We see the problem clearly in the fate of the Name itself. Signifying the Son, the Name becomes unspeakable when an agent is brought in to signify it. This is both the structural function and the consequence of docetism. When the fleshly Jesus is understood to signify the Name of the Father, which in turn signifies the spiritual Son, the result is that Jesus ends up signifying the spiritual Son, while the Name of the Father, like the Father himself before it, in turn fades out of the equation:

$$\frac{\text{Jesus}}{\text{Name of the Father}} \times \frac{\text{Name of the Father}}{\text{Son}} \rightarrow \frac{\frac{\text{Jesus}}{\text{Son}}}{\frac{\text{Name of the Father}}{\text{Name of the Father}}}$$

Or, as Clément's *Excerpta ex Theodoto* has it,

The visible part of Jesus was (the) Wisdom and the church of the superior seed, which he put on through the flesh, as Theodotus says: but the invisible part was the Name, which is the only-begotten Son (*Exc. Thdot* 26.1).⁹

Anyone who has read through Gnostic texts will be able to trace a similar fading with regard to almost any key term he chooses to focus

⁹ Translated in W. Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (ed. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford, 1972) 1. 226.

on, but this is especially the case with semiotic imagery, because semiosis, the semiosis of metaphorization, is the root of the problem. Once the initial substitution has been effected—and it has always already been effected—the play of substitution continues to no conceivable end. This is the problem just as it is the content of a theo-logism which asserts on the one hand that

it is the sign of the one who is in their sound (*GTr* 32: 16-17)

and, on the other,

It is possible for him to be seen. But the name is invisible because it alone is the mystery of the invisible which comes to ears that are completely filled with it. For indeed the Father's name is not spoken, but is apparent through a Son (*GTr* 38: 15-25).

The soteriological version of all this is aptly expressed in an image whose phonological register precisely figures the kind of semiosis, gnosis, knowledge, meaning that is at stake.¹⁰

For everyone loves the truth because the truth is the mouth of the Father; his tongue is the Holy Spirit. He who is joined to the truth is joined to the Father's mouth by his tongue, whenever he is to receive the Holy Spirit. This is the manifestation of the Father and his revelation to his aeons: he manifested what was hidden of him; he explained it (*GTr* 26: 30-27: 9)

Neither mouth nor tongue, but that moment of signification which brings the two together in a metaphorizing name is salvation—"so that one who has knowledge is the one whose name the Father has uttered" (*GTr* 21: 20-30)—being saved, being spoken, being named, being metaphorized. Again, according to Lacan, all languages, cultural orders, psyches, will organize themselves in accord with structural exigencies derived from the metaphor formula. What distinguishes our

¹⁰ Lacan's metaphor formula can be applied to the acquisition of the first phonemes, so that the first phoneme /pa/, absolute phonological difference in the mouth, is re-valued as presence or absence of the closed tract once the nasal consonant through /ma/ is opposed to the oral consonant as presence to absence of the open tract. The result is that the original determination of /pa/ as pure difference is occluded and in this loss establishes the diacriticality upon which phonological structure depends. See Jakobson and Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, 51. This also explains why Pa-Ma are cross-cultural names for Father and Mother; see R. Jakobson, "Why 'Mama' and 'Papa'?" in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, (The Hague, 1962) 538-545. In Freudian terms, this is why the father is always the dead father. When Gnosticism literally represents the Name of the Father it does so as pure pre-diacritical vocality: "iiii ēēē eeee oooo uuuu ôôôô aaaaa ... ēi aaaa ôôôô ... aee eee iiiii uuuuuu ôôôôôôôô ... iēa aiô ... u aei eis aei ei o ei ei ei," *GEgypt* 66: 9-22, tr. A. Böhlig and F. Wisse in *NHLibEng*.

text and Gnosticism in general is that here we find those structures and their consequences explicitly thematized and immanent in linguistic terms.

IV

What does it mean to say that the Father drops out of the chain of conscious discourse? In "L'instance de la lettre" Lacan further comments on metaphor:

L'étincelle créatrice de la métaphore ne jaillit pas de la mise en présence de deux images, c'est-à-dire de deux signifiants également actualisés. Elle jaillit entre deux signifiants dont l'un s'est substitué à l'autre en prenant sa place dans la chaîne signifiante, le signifiant occulté restant présent de sa connexion (métonymique) au reste de la chaîne.¹¹

The hidden signifier, then, is not entirely absent from the chain which it subtends. It is present through its metonymic relationship to the rest of the chain. What is this metonymic relationship? Simplifying a difficult issue, we can suggest an answer by inspecting the two remaining terms of our first series. Both the Son and the Name of the Father are metonymies of the Father himself (i.e., contiguously related figures of the Father that represent him whole). As such, as metonymies of the Father, they testify to the absence of the Father in that they continually refer to Him whom they replace.

Later in the same essay Lacan formulates this relationship more exactly when he defines metonymy as

la connexion du signifiant au signifiant, qui permet l'élosion par quoi le signifiant installe le manque de l'être dans la relation d'objet, en se servant de la valeur de renvoi de la signification pour l'investir du désir visant le manque qu'il supporte.¹²

That is, because the elements of the chain of signifiers are related to each other contextually and contiguously, when one of those signifiers is absented from the chain, the *entirety* of the chain will continue to evoke what has been elided, though always noting the elision with the rhetorical "charm" of figurative decoration. This is how metonymies retain significance while remaining inexplicable. Thus the formula for metaphor, as it charts the loss of the original signifier, not

¹¹ "L'instance," 507.

¹² "L'instance," 515.

only locates the Father as signifier-signified below the bar, but it also characterizes the presence of the absence of the Father in the string of signifiers from which he has been abolished: in short, he is the lack that the metonymic references to him in the chain of conscious discourse continually support.

In psychoanalytic terms, this lack is the primal, radical lack into which the child is born, or castration, or the hole—the *objet petit a*—around which desire constitutively circulates. In linguistic terms, this is the initiatory gap *in* language upon which the movement of signification, like the trajectory of desire, depends. What is striking is that in the *Gospel of Truth* we find a continued thematization of just such a lack, and that Gnosticism as a whole gives us an exact analogue to the psychoanalytic theoretical paradigm. In the *Gospel of Truth* “lack” is defined as an ignorance of the Father which is eventually redeemed through knowledge of the Father. Here again, the pivotal turn calls up a confusing reflexivity: for the Son through whom knowledge of the Father is revealed is at the same time a representation of the very lack that the revelation is intended to redeem.

So with the pleroma, which has no deficiency; it fills up his deficiency—(it is) that which he provided for filling up what he lacks, in order that therefore he might receive the grace. When he was deficient he did not have the grace. That is why there was diminution existing in the place where there is no grace. When that which was diminished was received, he revealed what he lacked, as a pleroma; that is the discovery of the light of truth which rose upon him because it is immutable. That is why Christ was spoken of in their midsts, so that those who were disturbed might receive a bringing back, and he might anoint them with the ointment (*GTr* 35: 36-36: 17).

With this conception of a lack or deficiency emerging from a fullness which does not lack anything but which will nevertheless be fulfilled when the lack that it does not lack returns to it, we approach a general ambiguity, duplicity, double valence in the Valentinian cosmological myth. With the distinction between the Pleroma and the Kenoma, the spiritual world of fullness and the material world of deficiency, “lack” is necessarily implicated in an ontological *double entendre*. The fall of Sophia eventually engenders the lower world. Through this fall a piece of the divine Pleromatic substance enters the Kenomatic domain. Insofar as the divine substance, the pneuma, is outside the Pleroma, it is a lack, a fracture of heavenly plenitude which constitutes the divine catastrophe. On the other hand, the only representative of plenitude in the lower world is this very pneuma, this fragment of

divine plenitude. What is a lack for the Pleroma is therefore at the same time a fullness for the Kenoma. Hence the totality of the envisaged global re-union, which is not only salvation for the pneuma in the Kenoma but recuperation of the Pleromatic Godhead as well.

But if he who came down was the good-pleasure of the Whole—for “in him was the entire Pleroma in bodily form”—and himself suffered, (then it is clear that the seed which was in him also shared in the suffering, and therefore it follows that the Whole and the All suffered). But, as a result of the fall of the twelfth aeon, the Whole in which it was trained, as they say, suffered. For then they recognized that what they are, they are by the grace of the Father, an inexpressible name, form and knowledge. The aeon which desired to grasp that which is beyond knowledge fell into ignorance and formlessness. Therefore he brought about a “void” of “knowledge” which is a shadow of the name, which is the Son, the form of the aeons (*Exc. Thdot.* 31: 1-4).

In the *Gospel of Truth*, collapsing several versions of the Valentinian myth, this doubly defined place of the “lack,” as positive and negative, is occupied by the Son who is the Name of the Father. And we have seen that this position can be generated or enunciated by the process of metaphorization abstractly schematized in the Lacanian formula for metaphor. Thus, if we read the lower line, S/S or Father/Father, as representative of the Pleroma, the “Fullness,” the “Abyss,” then we have a figuration of the plenitude to which the upper line, S'/s, or (Name of the Father)/Son, can only mutely and obliquely gesture. Moreover, in that gesturing, the distance, lack, gap that is semiotically built into the relationship is metonymically present as the correlative of any signification at all.

Now what I want to suggest is that in the larger cosmological myth of Valentinianism, the fall of Sophia also operates in accord with the scenario established by metaphorization: that is, that the Gnostic conception of the origin of sin is developed in perfect parallel with the mystery of the Father's Name. If so, then the formula for metaphor not only describes the movements of the Name, but also locates a structuring impulse that subtends the fundamental valorizations and oppositions of Valentinian theology and narrative as a whole. Here it is important to recall that for one of the strongest schools of Valentinianism, the fall of Sophia was explicitly conceived in terms of her mimetic folly (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 60.6-7). This is something alluded to at the very beginning of the *Gospel of Truth*.

For this reason error became powerful; it fashioned its own matter fool-

ishly, not having known the truth. It set about making a creature with (all its) might preparing, in beauty, the substitute for the truth (*GT* 17: 14-20).

Now given the Platonic atmosphere, it is perhaps not surprising that Sophia's lapse should be situated within a classical polemic against mimesis and representation. But at the same time, Gnosticism is distanced from that tradition in the way it hesitates to identify Sophia in absolutely pejorative terms. Hence the duplication of Upper and Lower Sophia, and even the differing valuations of the evil Demiurge that we find through the varieties of Valentinianisms, as though at some point the components of the paradox begin to sediment out.¹³ Even in her cosmic error, Sophia is neither absolutely evil nor absolutely good; and her fall, too, is neither the same nor the antithesis of the origin of origins but, quite literally, its imitation—with imitation here developed in such a way as to eschew either the absolute oppositions of dualism or the homogeneity of monist emanationism. That Achamoth and a Demiurge, issue of Sophia's fall, proceed to repeat her initial mimesis, engendering the lower world through declensive reflections of her first substitution, illustrates the principle that, once set in motion, the free play of substitution goes on and on, imitating imitation, repeating repetition, in a series that traces the course of Gnostic desire directly back to the displacements and deferments initiated by the origin lost through the Name itself. Thus developed and nuanced, the Valentinian conception of Sophia's primal substitution constitutes a decisive complication of the Platonic tradition of antimimetic metaphysics, and this is a complication that we find in the very heart of Valentinus's original teaching, as reflected in one of the few extant fragments.

"The world is as much inferior to the living aeon as the picture is inferior to the living figure. What then is the reason for the picture? It is the majesty of the living figure, which presents the example for the painter so that it may be honored through his name. For the form was not found to correspond to the actuality, but the name filled up what was lacking in the image. But the invisible power of God works for the authenticity of the image." Then Valentinus designates the creator of the world, in so far as he was called God and Father, as the likeness of the true God and

¹³ This quite apart from such questions as whether the *Gospel of Truth* is early or late Valentinianism, whether it is the philosophical elaboration of, or preparation for, the developed myth, or the vexed issue of the historical evolution of different Valentinianisms that we find in Quispel or, instead, in Stead. G. Quispel, "The Original Doctrine of Valentinus," *VC* (1947) 43-73; G. C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *JTS N.S.* 20 (1969) 75-104.

as his herald, but Sophia as the painter whose work the likeness is, for the glorification of the invisible one. ... (Clement, *Str.* 89.6-90.2)¹⁴

From an antirepresentational perspective, we can see why Gnosis readily interprets the lower world and the lower God in negative terms, as degraded substitutes for the divine realities of which they are merely images. Sophia, as the effective agent of this substitution, becomes, as it were, the personification or principle of metaphorization, the painter whose work represents reality by virtue of its actual distance from reality, a work, therefore, that presents itself as a lack in so far as it re-presents fullness. Yet if we look carefully, we see that while this is the case, the case is not so simple as that. To be sure, we are told that the form is inadequate to the actuality, and that the image, as image, fails its model. But we also learn that "the name filled up what was lacking in the image" just as "the invisible power of God works for the authenticity of the image." These are cryptic statements, and, for all the discussions of them, I know of no fully adequate exegesis.—again Valentinian ambiguity frustrates any univocal paraphrase. But even in its obscurity, it seems that the fragment attempts to articulate a relationship in which the lack that is presented by the imaging of an image is itself the truest aspect of the image. What does it mean to say that the Name filled up what was lacking in the image save that what the image lacked was the Name? But the Name is itself also an image: whether as Christ, or the Logos, or an independent principle of its own, all of which have been suggested. What then does it mean to speak of an authentic image save that, in the lower world at least, the truth *is* an image, true *as* an image, just as the erring Sophia is "the painter whose work the likeness is, for the glorification of the invisible one." What I am suggesting is that Valentinianism accepts the metaphysical assumptions of the antimimetic tradition, but that then, in a strange reversal, it thinks its theology through the very substitution that antimimeticism deplored. Thus Valentinianism becomes the piety of metaphorization *per se*, placing representation prior to presence itself in that the latter is perceived as the consequence of the former since it is only through naming, imitation, metaphor that the ultimate signified of all signifiers is created, redeemed, and lost.

¹⁴ Translated in Foerster, *Gnosis*, I. 242.

I realize that this brief reference to the issue of imitation and representation vastly oversimplifies what is an enormously difficult and complicated question, one we can barely speak about without making more exact reference to the Platonic and Middle-Platonic tradition out of which Valentinianism emerges, and one to which different Valentinianisms no doubt had very different responses. So too, I assume a conception of metaphor based on substitution rather than analogy or similitude, and this in the face of classical rhetorical and semiotic theory.¹⁵ I risk the simplification, however, for the sake of an even coarser generalization about Valentinianism and Gnosticism which seems to me important even though it too must inevitably be subject to subsequent qualification and refinement.

In the Western religious tradition, Gnosticism is a singular theology because it continually speaks of God as a phenomenon present precisely by virtue of His absence, as a trace which witnesses to what is no longer there. In the *Gospel of Truth* the most explicit figure for this strange absent-presence of God is the "footprint-trace" (ἵχνος) of the Father's will (*GTr* 37: 26) but upon examination all the valorized terms of Valentinian discourse come to possess this double register, most obviously and most especially the pneuma as it acts out its cosmological destiny, but so too with Sophia and the Demiurge as well. I believe this is what is peculiar to and about Gnosticism and that it follows directly from an attempt to found a piety based on what I have been calling the semiosis of metaphorization. It is not simply the ineffability of God (Basilides, Philo, Middle Platonism) but the speculative intelligence which links this unspeakableness to the *trace* of divinity in revelation that specifically defines Gnostic religious sensibility—which is ultimately why Gnosticism is something that both Plotinus and Christianity could agree to abhor.

It is difficult to characterize this specificity except by distinguishing it from what Gnosticism approaches. Pythagoreanism too, for example, with which Valentinianism has obvious affinities, also had a pneuma, understood as an emptiness and void. But in Pythagoreanism this void is a pure emptiness which serves as diacritical marking between two positivities otherwise complete in themselves.¹⁶ In contrast to this,

¹⁵ For a defense of which, see Lacan, "La métaphore du sujet," *Écrits*, 889-892.

¹⁶ "The Pythagoreans, too, held that void (κενόν) exists and that breath (πνεῦμα) and void enter from the Unlimited into the heaven itself which, as it were, inhales; the void distinguishes the nature of things, being a kind of separating and distinguishing factor between terms in series." Aristotle, *Ph.* 6.213b22, translated in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (Cambridge, 1971) 252.

Gnosticism makes the void itself, the pneuma, into a kind of positivity which constitutes and supplementarily connects two incomplete emptinesses that it assembles around itself. Yet at the same time, this Gnostic pneuma, lack and trace of which the spirit is compact, is not a complete positivity in itself: if it were, Gnosticism would indeed be merely the mirror inverted version of transcendental theology—the classic example of negative theology—that the tradition of orthodox religiosity has always represented it as in order thus to distort and to defuse the radical alternative to that tradition that Gnosticism as a contemplative project presents.

There is a great difference between asserting on the one hand that the Name of the Father is the Son and in saying, on the other other, that the Father *is* the Son. The latter formulation asserts an identity which promises the pious an eventual identification with the Godhead that will consummate all lacks, gaps, voids in the immediacy of realized transcendence. Contrast this with a more typically Gnostic formulation:

Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images. One will not receive truth in any other way. There is a rebirth and an image of rebirth. It is certainly necessary that they should be born again through the image. What is the resurrection? The image must rise again through the image. The (bridegroom) and the image must enter through the image into the truth: this is the restoration (*GP 67: 9-18*).¹⁷

In this sense Christianity is the eventual answer to, or defense against, the originating fracture of plenitude that Gnosticism presupposes when it says anything at all about transcendence. Gnosticism generates the sacred as lack through metaphor, and Christianity would be the denial of exactly this, which is why Christianity rejects metaphor just as it rejects Gnosticism. From a Lacanian perspective, though, this would necessarily be a rejection after the event, a secondary response to it, for language is always metaphoric, figurative, substitutive, before the fantasy of identification, the equating of word with thing, can be imagined. That the word is always a substitute for the thing it represents, always a Gnostic Name, is the semiotic reality to which Gnosticism always adhered, which is why, on the one hand, Gnosticism is a heresy that precedes its orthodoxy and why, on the other, it was destined to be repressed. Suspended midway between the present partiality of the ninety-nine sheep and the missing fullness of the One, between the left

¹⁷ Tr. W. Isenberg in *NHLibEng*.

hand as figure of loss and the right hand as figure of plenitude (*GTr* 31: 35-32: 16), there is a continual attraction to either extreme—to pure difference or to pure synonymy, to presence or to absence, to lack or to fullness. In its purest version—a purity which is perhaps only ideal and that may never have been realized—Gnosticism proposes to link these oppositions each to the other without quite collapsing the opposition into an identity. It thus problematizes its oppositions without erasing them, and then proceeds to make that problem into its piety. Saying the same thing in a way that is perhaps more familiar to Gnostic studies, we can answer the question as to whether Gnosticism is Monist or Dualist by suggesting that Gnosticism is the troubled difference *between* the two, their pneuma: exactly the difference that permits both these transcendentalisms to be thought in their own purity, so that, once thought, they can retrospectively efface and disavow the very difference that is their possibility.¹⁸

V

The originality I above assign to Gnostic theology develops directly from the formula for metaphor with which we began. The staging of Christianity as response to Gnosticism, rather than the other way around, assumes that the controversy between the two arises out of their different appreciations of the nature of the sign; so too, that Gnostic metaphorization is phenomenologically, if not chronologically, prior to its alternative. This is why, in the end, Gnostic hermeneutic practice is for us a more important matter than are those explicit theological formulations which derive from the implicit theory of meaning that Gnosticism presupposes. So too, I take it, it is for its theory of meaning and not for its theology that Gnosticism holds an interest for us today that is neither antiquarian nor philological. In this final section I have nothing to add to the characterization of Gnostic hermeneutic practice that has been established by the scholars upon whom I rely. My concern is to locate that characterization within a

¹⁸ There is a contemporary irony in the fact that whatever it was Christianity did with Gnosticism in the second century, Jungian psychoanalysis is doing the same thing with it again today. The alphabet of fixed symbols with which Jungianism appropriates Gnostic imagery inexorably transforms the Gnostic metaphor of the "trace" into a codified archetype of fullness. By denying the arbitrariness of the sign, Jungianism thus repeats the Christian identificatory defense, exchanging an insight into meaning for the stable one-for-one signals transmitted by a code.

provisional historical phenomenology of literary criticism that in some way parallels the historical phenomenology of religion into which my claim for the semiotic priority of metaphoric piety may be placed. Again, my remarks are general and exploratory, and I recognize their provisional character.

Nevertheless, the reference to hermeneutics and to literary criticism seems more than justifiable. Very clearly, Gnosticism begins as literary criticism, as a kind of textual anti-Semitism (perhaps reflexive, if Gnosticism really does develop out of disaffected Judaism) with regard to the Old Testament that establishes the commentary, the re-reading, as the genre appropriate to Gnostic discourse. That Marcion is the first to make up a canon, and that he does so by excising most of what was customarily received as authoritative, is emblematic of the critical presuppositions built into Gnostic exegetical sensibility. So too, the Gnostic refrain "Not as Moses said" defines a negative stance towards literature, towards the authority of a text and a textual tradition, as much as it expresses a dogma.

Gnosticism will always retain this propensity to violate a text, to force and twist it, as its opponents continually complained, and beyond that it will do the same with its own texts and traditions as well. As Gnosticism develops, Marcion's literalism will come to be transformed into a programmatic allegorization, which in turn will turn round upon itself, but in all cases Gnosticism will exercise itself so as to take the text for something it seems not to be. This is not to say that the interpretations proposed by Gnosticism are false to some obvious and stably predetermined meaning in the text that is simply waiting to be retrieved; rather, that the force of Gnostic exegesis derives from a scandal that its readings deliberately intend and provoke. Gnosticism begins, therefore, as literary criticism because its first statements are always revisions of something already presupposed. It follows that it is not paradoxical to assert that Gnosticism is something new and original in hermeneutics precisely because it understood itself to be something secondary and metaleptic. For it is in this way that Gnosticism marks the beginning of self-conscious reflection upon texts and textuality, a deliberate theatricalization of reading.

This is why Valentinianism is for us the most Gnostic of Gnosticisms, just as it is the most "hermeneutical." If Gnosticism must always have some other against which to define itself, then Valentinianism—the least anti-Semitic and the most Christian of Gnosticisms—is maximally Gnostic because it establishes the minimum distance from its other,

the smallest critical difference, within which to work out its criticism. Its proximity to its other brings their differences, and the methodology by means of which those differences are enunciated, into sharper relief, so that, whatever the chronological situation, with Valentinianism we reach a culminating moment in which Gnosticism and what will become the Western exegetical tradition develop asymptotically towards each other, getting as close to each other as the final or original difference between them allows.

What is that difference? The answer, I think, lies in what is distinctive about Gnostic interpretative practice. Gnosticism represents something new in the tradition of literary criticism, and this despite its Philonic, Stoic, and Jewish interpretative precursors. It is at once a boundary and a breaking of the boundaries of acceptable exegetical procedure, as we know from the fact that Gnostic interpretation is the first critical methodology to be officially proscribed. Once again, in this as in theology, Gnosticism is the heresy out of which what will be our tradition emerges, and this, too, even if it is the case that Patristic apology will eventually come to imitate the interpretative strategies and maneuvers of the heresies it attacks. What then is the Gnostic interpretative heresy? We are familiar with one version of the declension of orthodox exegesis: from prophecy, to typology, to allegorization of the Old Testament, to allegorization of the New Testament as well. At each stage of this expansion of exegetical scope, interpretation is secured by reference: first, to the divine inspiration of the author, translator, or interpreter, and, second, by reference to the confirmation authorial inspiration receives from history. This is obviously the case with prophecy and typology, but so too with allegorization of the Old Testament, and so too with the allegorization of the New Testament, which finds its ground in the rule of faith whereby the historical fate of the church stands surety for the authority of interpretation. As is well known, this is the burden of Christian apologetic response to heresy: that historical referents stabilize Christian readings.

What makes Gnosticism so radical an alternative to this is that in asserting, as the *Gospel of Philip* puts it, that "truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images" (67: 9-11), Gnosticism makes history itself into a text in need of interpretation. In one sense, this totalizes the Gnostic hermeneutic project, for when everything is an image, then everything must be interpreted. On the other hand, this textualization of history, this cosmological docetism, now

leaves interpretation permanently open rather than closed, since there is no longer any referent to which textuality can point except textuality itself.

In theological disputes, this readily invites the kind of third man argument Irenaeus frequently deployed against Valentinianism: i.e., if the Kenoma is merely an image of the Pleroma, as the Gnostics maintain, then why is the Pleroma itself not merely an image of a second Pleroma beyond it, and beyond that yet another, and another, and so on, until the very idea of a Pleroma is lost in the infinite regressions of interpretative imagination.

Now the gifts, oblations, and all the sacrifices, did the people receive in a figure, as was shown to Moses in the mount, from one and the same God, whose name is now glorified in the Church among all nations. But it is congruous that those earthly things, indeed, which are spread all around us, should be types of the celestial, being (both), however, created by the same God. For in no other way could He assimilate an image of spiritual things (to suit our comprehension). But to allege that those things which are super-celestial and spiritual, and, as far as we are concerned, invisible and ineffable, are in their turn the types of celestial things and of another Pleroma, and (to say) that God is the image of another Father, is to play the part both of wanderers from the truth, and of absolutely foolish and stupid persons. For, as I have repeatedly shown, such persons will find it necessary to be continually finding out types of types, and images of images, and will never (be able to) fix their minds on one and the true God. For their imaginations range beyond God, they having in their hearts surpassed the Master Himself, being indeed in idea elated and exalted above (Him), but in reality turning away from the true God (*Haer.* 4.19.1).

Irenaeus's point is exactly right. Having textualized the cosmos, Gnosticism is committed not to allegories but to allegories of allegories, and, as a result, its interpretations must always remain one signifying step behind the images whose meaning they attempt to speak. Perhaps this is one reason for the characteristic novelty, originality, pluralism, ingenuity of Gnostic speculation, the way, almost artificially, it reduplicates its themes and motifs and multiplies its mediating aeons—the very interpretative diversity that made Gnosis suspect to orthodoxy. More to the point, is this not exactly the hermeneutics suited to the piety of metaphor, a hermeneutics of substitution at one with a theology of substitution in the way it links letter and spirit, signifier and signified, in a moment of interpretative significance that erases its original referent in the quest for a meaning thereby indefinitely postponed. Further, if, as Lacan argues, metaphor is the condition of language and language the condition of the unconscious,

can we not recognize in the orthodox tradition of interpretation a symptomatic reaction against this original scandal of infinite exegesis? In this sense again, but now by psychoanalytic necessity, Gnosticism becomes a heresy prior to, and constitutive of, an orthodoxy specific to itself: for in its commitment to interpretation, Gnosticism must first hold out the promise of, before it proceeds to forestall, the stability of any interpretation whatsoever.

It would be important for contemporary hermeneutics to determine whether this is indeed the case. For if Gnosticism is literary criticism by virtue of the fact that it precedes the tradition it founds, then literary criticism today, succeeding the tradition it has dissolved, may turn into gnosis in spite and in search of itself. Here the example of the Alexandrian Lacan—himself hereticized by psychoanalytic orthodoxy—acquires its own historical force. Gnostic theology reformulated as psychoanalytic logology: the pre-beginning and the after-image of the classical tradition of piety and of literary criticism ... it suggests the end of an epoch.

DISCUSSION

JOEL FINEMAN: ALTHOUGH the Freudian inspiration of my paper is clear, my intention was not to provide a practical psychoanalytic interpretation. Instead, I have begun from the fact that contemporary philosophical discussions about how one understands a text provide parallels to Gnostic concepts. It is striking that Gnosticism is a heresy which precedes its orthodoxy. And our time is one of the deconstruction of that orthodox tradition, of moving beyond it and welcoming the heretical. Thus, these two movements provide a phenomenologically necessary bracketing of orthodoxy. I have sought, then, to relate the *theos* of the Gnostic theology and the *logos* of contemporary deconstructive discourse.

In my analysis, I have avoided immediate relation of Lacan's Paternal Metaphor to the "Name of the Father" in the *Gospel of Truth*. Rather, I have been concerned with semiotic operations required to gather together the key theological terms of the *Gospel of Truth*, although this method inevitably erases some of the nuances and conflates the texts. I have begun from the Lacanian elaboration of the Saussurian idea of the sign: signifier over signified or S/s, which

assumes an arbitrary relation of the signified and the signifier such that the signified is understood as an effect of the signifier. On this view, metaphor, a process of metaphorization, is the initial moment in language, with metaphorization defined as the transformation or slipping of an original signifier into the signified of a second signifier. Thus, we have:

$$\frac{S'}{S} \times \frac{S}{s} \rightarrow \frac{S'}{s}$$

Now, the second signifier constitutes a metaphor by continuing the original signified. But this new, charged meaning is only possible because the occulted term continues to exist at a lower level:

$$\frac{\frac{S'}{s}}{\frac{S}{S}}$$

At this lower level, the signifier is its own signified, as it couldn't be if we were discussing realizable signifiers. According to Laplanche, this unspeakable dropping of the middle term constitutes the unconscious and is the condition for language. For Lacan, in contrast, language is the condition of the unconscious and the unconscious is an effect of language so that S/S is just a way of pointing to the loss of being with which the subject is constituted as a subject (barred subject). Without entering this important dispute, I think we can use the formula to organize the key terms of the *Gospel of Truth* in a global relation that corresponds to the intention of the work. To say, "The Name of the Father is the Son," suggests that the Father generates the Son in an act of signification conceived as voicing. We can construct the equation:

$$\frac{\text{Name of the Father}}{\text{Father}} \times \frac{\text{Father}}{\text{Son}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{Name of the Father}}{\frac{\text{Father}}{\text{Father}}}$$

Here, Father is abolished from the chain of articulable signifiers for the sake of signification and exists as an unspeakable figure of fulness. Now, if we think in Jakobsonian terms that all signifiers are related contiguously and contextually and that language is organized by the

opposition of metaphor and metonymy, then we note that metonymy, responding to the dropping out of the middle term, refers to this elision. Thus, we have not only the occultation and absence of the Father; the articulate discourse also characterizes the presence of this absence in speech. There is a lack in articulable discourse which evokes but cannot speak the fulness. And this lack is what permits discourse to proceed.

It seems to me that this analysis corresponds to issues in Gnosticism. The name of the Father is subsequently occulted in a docetic movement, when the Son is said to signify Jesus. That this happens to many of the terms in Gnosticism is related to the problem I am addressing: how does one articulate the origin of discourse when it is structurally unspeakable? Gnosticism tried to articulate it while recognizing that it is inarticulable. Irenaeus objected insightfully that this method produces an infinite regress of substitution; there is always a search for new terms to articulate what has been lost. But this is necessarily the case if this account does figure the first moment of language. Irenaeus's response was a denial of the whole process of metaphor; it represents the orthodoxy which succeeds the heresy and denies the heresy's priority. The issue is whether we have, "The Name of the Father is the Son," or, "The Father is the Son."

If we understand the origin of our tradition according to this analysis, then larger questions are raised. In our time, we again have a metaphoric free play of substitutive signifiers and an unstable moment in criticism. While the bracketed orthodoxy had an assumption of fulness and plenitude, we again, in contrast, have a vocabulary of lack, gap, fracture, and allegoricization without end.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: I have a question about your analysis of, "The rose is a girl." You suggest that "rose" stands for "concept of girl." But it seems to me that there is another term in the process of metaphorization: "rose" first stands for "concept of rose."

FINEMAN: Yes, you are right, but this means only that the origin of language is not in one word or in a designation but in the arrival of a syntactical scheme. I have given a mythic representation of the origin of language, with its infinite chain of signs metonymically related. The totality of language is presupposed in this view of its beginning; if one followed it far enough, one could include all terms, just as one could be led to all words by beginning with any word in a dictionary. And, of course, the infant at first learns but a fragment

of language which bespeaks the entirety of language. The real issue here concerns the charge of a metaphor. I have explained it by using a substitutive theory of metaphor. There are, of course, other views which are based on likeness and analogy. The claim remains a psychological one: namely, that this describes the loss of the subject effected by his accession to language.

ATTRIDGE: Sometimes, though not in the *Gospel of Truth*, the Father is said to be the Name of the Son. How would this fit into your scheme?

FINEMAN: I have not attempted to provide an analysis which would work for all texts; of course, we can find apparent counterexamples if we don't do close practical readings of the texts. But I think the reversal you mention corroborates the claim that the principle of imitative substitution is crucial to Valentinianism and distinctive of it. Here Sophia is said to fall through an attempt at imitation; the first lines of the *Gospel of Truth* declare that the Father created the world as a substitute for truth. Moreover, there is a piety associated with this substitutive chain which is different from that which would efface what is below the bar in the equation, where the signifier is the signified of itself.

WAYNE MEEKS: Could we turn the first term of your equation upside down, as if the text read, "The Son is the Name of the Father"? I read it in this way because I think that Jewish speculation is the mythical basis of the text. Here the Name of the Father could not be uttered, and this provides the problem from which the text begins: if the Name is unspeakable, there can be no access to the signified because the signifier isn't there. We don't have the Name of the Father to signify the Father, because the Name doesn't work as a Name. Yet we must know the Father to be saved. Thus, in place of the nullity of the unspeakable Name, we can put the Son, for the Son is the Name of the Father. Could your analysis admit this reversal of subject and predicate?

FINEMAN: A sign is not a predication or a sentence, and it wouldn't be a signifier if it were unspeakable; what is below the line is not a sign, but rather, the unspeakable condition of signification. Moreover, I don't think your suggestion corresponds to other aspects of the text.

HELMUT KOESTER: What if the Name of the Father is not a signifier but implies ownership and power? Then Gnosticism is not simply a language game. I agree that it is attractive to see it in this way, but I doubt that the Name signifies something else; it seems to me to give power to become a magician and to do real deeds. It is for this reason that the ultimate Name is ineffable and that it is found in magical papyri.

FINEMAN: Language game? You are raising the question of the propriety of the proper name and the idea of possession. The text itself plays with these notions in a punning treatment of *kyrios* and *kyrion*. My analysis includes yours and argues against the notions of propriety and power as much as against the notion of plenitude of being. For example, in this text, possession of the Name is demonstrated by its dispossession, when the Father gives his name to his Son. Any claim that the Name is equivalent to the thing, that the Father is the Son, is a claim for magic and a denial of the metaphoric process. This is decadent Gnosticism. As such, it is subsequent to the formulation I have described; it is the orthodoxy which follows the heresy.

KOESTER: I think that in the working out of the Valentinian system the S/S in the lower part of the equation is not really cancelled out but is made powerful and operable.

FINEMAN: You can, of course, say that, but if these are ideological valuations, they do not derive from the perspective of my analysis. Let us simply note that to say that the word is a thing, is magical or prelinguistic. Thus, such a formulation presupposes a natural rather than an arbitrary link of signifier and signified. I argue that the claim for such natural links comes from the moment after Gnosis, i.e., it could only be thought *after* the linguistic fact. The powerful thought of Gnosis is the lack in God which never becomes a complete positivity; it cannot correspond to the recuperation you describe. If the Father is broken, the word cannot be a thing.

MICHEL TARDIEU: I agree with you that the interest of Gnosticism is not merely antiquarian or philological; I also agree with your attack on the Christian theory of the nature of the sign. You raise important epistemological questions, but I find the Lacanian answer dubious. If you had proceeded with formal logic or generative grammar, I would have no trouble. But I am surprised to see that the Lacanian approach is fashionable in California; in French contemporary psycho-

analysis, his work is an elaborated orthodoxy, a revelation *sub specie aeternitatis*.

FINEMAN: A historical and political recuperation of Lacan has had a moment of success. Is this Lacan or his domesticated consequence? This should be no novelty to historians of religion. I care about that other time when he, or what he represents, was not orthodox; when he was as much a heretic as one could be in his profession, and when he had to establish a small sect. The parallel with Gnosticism is rather exact, save for the fact that now we have a logological rather than a theological discourse. This suggests the end of a tradition, a conclusion which is the tradition's, not Lacan's, responsibility.

TARDIEU: I also disagree with your conclusion that this semiotic analysis was specific to Gnosticism. What is the difference between Valentinian signs and magic or Chaldaean signs?

FINEMAN: As I say in the paper, I think the specificity of Valentinianism, for us, derives from its proximity to its alternative. Valentinianism is maximally Gnostic because it works at a minimal distance to its other, our orthodox tradition. What is at stake is not the theory of sign but the theory of meaning. My claim is that all language proceeds like this. Do we, then, accept the infinite play of substitutions, or do we try to stabilize rather than free it? Take a modern example: the Jungian theory of archetypes denies the arbitrariness of the sign and so speaks of the necessary connection of signifiers, of the reconciliation of opposites, of self-realization and fulness in the subject. This, especially when applied to Gnosticism, is only a rephrasing of the orthodox theory of fulness in the first principle. Gnosticism is as much different from Jungianism as Freud was from Jung, for it does not attempt to cover up the unspeakableness. The issue here recurs, not as archetypes recur, but as fundamental semiotic questions of meaning.

ELAINE PAGELS: I appreciated your conclusion that Valentinian language is characterized by an ambiguity of terms and an openness of hermeneutics. I would, however, question your treatment of Marcion with the Valentinians; it seems to me that his view of meaning was much different.

FINEMAN: I only referred to his negative response to the tradition, his literalism—"not as Moses said."

PAGELS: I also have a different interpretation of the text you cite from *Gospel of Truth* 22 as, "The name of the one becomes his." I think that the passage is better translated to mean that each one receives his own name, that each one's name becomes his own, not that each becomes the name of the Father.

FINEMAN: Yes, I read this text differently. Of course, this is a question of translation which I cannot judge.

RAOUL MORTLEY: I was interested in your remarks on the textualization of the cosmos. When this view is adopted, then interpretation is required not only for sacred books but for everything. I don't think that this attitude is specific to Gnosticism; it could occur wherever Platonic exemplarism was at work. It is found in Plutarch, for example, and in the fifth book of Clement's *Stromateis*. Moreover, Philo and Proclus quoted the Heraclitus fragment, "Nature loves to hide itself," in order to contend that all nature requires interpretation.

I also have a question. Is the sense of being and lack in Lacan really similar to that in the Gnostic texts? In the Lacanian view, the lack of being is a sense of separation from the mother. It does not have an ontological aspect, as it does in Gnosticism.

FINEMAN: But Lacan means a want to be which derives from an original sense of lack. Despite his strategic disclaimers, Lacan's ontology is very much a part of his psychology. The mother as fulness is conceived retrospectively; it is the separation which allows the imaginary fulness to be thought. Similarly, it is the lack of Gnosis which subsequently allows fulness to be thought.

This is allied with what you said about the book images. In Derridean terms, being must first be determined as a trace before it can be understood as fulness. The book, the writing, will retrospectively precede the logocentrism of phonology. I am thinking of the "living book of the living" and all the book images here. Clearly, this is a topos, but the issue is how the topos is deployed in this piety. It could be worked out with the theory of the trace in conjunction with the figure of the book. But I think this would soon enough lapse back into a straightforward logocentric Lacanianism.

MORTLEY: But the Gnostics believed in an object, fulness.

FINEMAN: Surely, but it is again a question of deployment. They think it only in its loss which, if we take their texts literally, is what constitutes their belief.

GNOSIS UND CHRISTENTUM

VON

BARBARA ALAND

DAS Verhältnis von Gnosis und Christentum ist nach wie vor umstritten oder ungeklärt. Zwar haben wir uns daran gewöhnt, von christlicher Gnosis zu sprechen. Aber was das eigentlich ist, darüber herrscht keineswegs Übereinstimmung. Liegt der Ton mehr auf „christlich“ oder auf „Gnosis“ oder bezeichnet der Begriff ein neues Drittes, das weder mit Christentum noch mit Gnosis Entscheidendes gemein hat? Die Antwort auf diese Fragen hängt natürlich davon ab, wie man Gnosis definiert, und darin besteht die umstrittenste Frage von allen. Wir wollen versuchen, uns der Antwort darauf auf einem streng überprüfbaren Weg ein Stück weit zu nähern. Dabei gehen wir von der sog. christlichen Gnosis aus und fragen, ob die Spekulation der ihr zugehörigen Texte ohne den bestimmenden Einfluß des Christentums gedacht werden kann.

Als Ausgangsbasis für die folgenden Interpretationen wähle ich das Evangelium Veritatis, eine unumstritten christlich gnostische Schrift. An ihr kann untersucht werden, ob das Attribut „christlich“ mehr besagt als einen bloßen Aufputz eines im Kern andersartigen, eben gnostischen Denkens. Das wäre dann bewiesen, wenn das unverwechselbar christliche Element dieser Schrift aufgezeigt und nachgewiesen würde, daß es konstitutives Moment des von ihr verkündigten „Evangeliums“ wäre. Sollte sich das Evangelium Veritatis in diesem Sinne als christlich erweisen, so ergäbe sich dann die Frage nach dem Verhältnis dieser „gnostischen“ Schrift zu aller übrigen Gnosis. Logisch wäre es jedenfalls nicht möglich, eine Schrift für (im Kern) christlich und gleichzeitig für gnostisch zu erklären, sofern beides etwas grundsätzlich Verschiedenes wäre. Dann könnte aber auch der stets als selbstverständlich vorausgesetzte sachliche Zusammenhang zwischen dieser „gnostischen“ Schrift und aller übrigen Gnosis nicht mehr aufrecht erhalten werden.

Was folgte daraus? Zwei Möglichkeiten sind denkbar. Entweder müßten wir das Phänomen einer christlichen Gnosis (zu der das Evangelium Veritatis und alle im selben Sinne christlich-gnostischen

Schriften gehören) von einer nicht-christlichen Gnosis sachlich unterscheiden. Das Verbindende zwischen beiden wäre dann lediglich eine mehr oder weniger tief reichende gnostische Verbrämung. Oder aber Gnosis bezeichnete doch ein sachlich zusammengehöriges Ganze. Dann müßte dieses aber, wenn die Einordnung des Evangelium Veritatis bzw. der übrigen christlichen Gnosis richtig wäre, mindestens im Ansatz als christlich bezeichnet werden, und über die Entstehungsfrage wäre damit auch entschieden.

I

Das Evangelium Veritatis endet mit einer Beschreibung des Gnostikers, der erkannt hat: er ruht in Gott. Für ihn gibt es weder „Neid, noch Seufzen, noch Tod“, sondern er ist „im wahren und ewigen Leben“, ja mehr noch: er ist „selbst die Wahrheit“¹. Das impliziert eine Definition von Leben. Leben im eigentlichen Sinn heißt ausschließlich, Gott zu erkennen, und zwar so, wie ihn der gnostische Mythos offenbart. Entsprechend ist Tod nicht das natürliche Sterben, sondern etwas weit Furchtbareres als das, nämlich Gott nicht zu kennen bzw. zu vergessen. Der erkennende Gnostiker sieht im Rückblick—aber auch erst dann—daß er von diesem Tod bedroht war.²

Von diesem Leben und diesem Tod redet das gesamte Evangelium Veritatis. Daß sie in Wahrheit Leben und Tod sind, ist nicht nur subjektive Behauptung des gnostischen Verfassers, sondern wird objektiv begründet durch den geoffenbarten gnostischen Mythos. Er schildert den Ursprung von Sein und Nichtigem. So wie das Sein darin gründet, daß der Logos als Emanat des Vaters diesen erkennt, so entsteht aus Unkenntnis des Vaters, in der die übrigen Äonen befangen sind, das „Nichtige“,³ und zwar so, daß aus der Unkenntnis Schrecken und Furcht erwachsen, diese sich zu einem Nebel verfestigen und daraus schließlich in langer Ableitung, die der Mythos im einzelnen vorführt, diese Welt entsteht (vgl. 17,10-27). Der Kosmos ist also materialisierte Unkenntnis des Vaters. Wissen und Nichtwissen begründend Sein und Nichtiges. Deshalb gilt nicht nur in der makrokosmischen, sondern auch in der mikrokosmischen Szene für den ein-

¹ 42,11 bis Ende, vgl. bes. 42,19f.; 43,9f.; 42,25f.

² Vgl. 19,15-17; 19,34ff.; 28,24ff.; 26,15-27 u.ö.

³ 17,23; vgl. 20,35; 26,26ff.; 29,8; 29,28-30,2; 39,11f.

zelen Menschen, daß Erkenntnis Gottes nicht nur Leben schafft, sondern selbst Leben *ist*.⁴ Darum kann der Inhalt des valentinianischen Mythos und damit der Inhalt des erlösenden „Evangeliums“ in der von Hans Jonas so bezeichneten „Formel“ zusammengefaßt werden: „Da der Mangel entstanden ist, weil sie den Vater nicht kannten, daher wird, wenn sie den Vater kennen, von dem Augenblick an der Mangel nicht mehr sein.“⁵

Hans Jonas hat zweifellos recht, wenn er die Bedeutung dieses hier nur in aller Kürze skizzierten spekulativen Entwurfes darin sieht, daß die in jeder gnostischen Religion erhobene Behauptung, die Erkenntnis habe erlösende Kraft, „hier eine metaphysische Begründung in der totalen Seinslehre“ erhält, „die sie überzeugend zum alleingenußsamen Modus der Erlösung macht, und diese Erlösung selbst in jeder Seele zum kosmischen Ereignis“.⁶ Diese Begründung gelingt deswegen—und auch darin hat Jonas recht—weil die valentinianische Gnosis, zu der das Evangelium Veritatis gehört, den „kühnen Entschluß“ faßte, „den Ursprung des Dunkels und damit der dualistischen Entzweiung des Seins in die Gottheit selbst zu verlegen“.⁷

Hat Jonas aber auch darin recht, daß er diese Gnosis des Evangelium Veritatis, wie alle übrige Gnosis, als eine „reine Bewegungs- und Ereignismetaphysik“ charakterisiert?⁸ Er spricht davon insofern, als nach seiner Interpretation „in dem uranfänglichen Drama“ des gnostischen Mythos die—unpersönlich gefaßte—Gottheit einen Verlust an Erkenntnis erleidet und dadurch ein dynamischer geistiger Prozeß („Devolution“) in Gang gesetzt wird, „der jede Etappe aus der vorigen hervorgehen und alle zusammen Phasen eines einzigen Gesamtverlaufs sein läßt“. Wird damit das Entscheidende auch der Gnosis des Evangelium Veritatis beschrieben? Ist, anders gefragt, der gnostische Mythos wirklich, wie Jonas schon 1934 einprägsam formulierte, „Geschichte der ‚Verweltlichung‘ des Seins“?⁹ Von der Antwort darauf hängt nicht

⁴ Vgl. 43,2-24.

⁵ 24,28-32; s. auch 18,7-11 und Irenäus, *Haer.* 1,21,4; Harvey 1, 186. Vgl. dazu H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (3. Aufl.; Göttingen 1964), I, 410ff. und H. Jonas, *Evangelium Veritatis*, edd. Malinine, Puech, Quispel, *Gnomon* 32 (1960) 327-335, s. bes. 330, 335.

⁶ „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 334f.

⁷ „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 334.

⁸ „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung des Phänomens der Gnosis.“ *Gnosis und Gnostizismus* (hrsg. von K. Rudolph; Darmstadt 1975) 626-645, bes. 629.

⁹ „Dann ist, wenn der gnostische Gehalt Entweltlichung meint, der gnostische Mythos Geschichte der ‚Verweltlichung‘ des Seins, so aber, daß er aus dieser Vorgeschichte das gegebene Jetzt erhellt und Möglichkeit und Sinn des Künftigen als Wiederentweltlichung exponiert“, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* 1, 258.

zuletzt die Frage ab, in welcher Beziehung Gnosis und Christentum zueinander stehen. Die 1966 in Messina versammelten Gelehrten sind Jonas' Sicht gefolgt, die dort formulierte Definition der Begriffe Gnosis und Gnostizismus zeigt seine Handschrift.¹⁰ Seitdem sind eine Fülle von erhellenden Interpretationen zu Einzelaspekten des gnostischen Themas erschienen. Jonas' Gesamtansicht ist nicht widerlegt worden. Sie wirkt in den seitdem formulierten Definitionen stets mehr oder weniger deutlich nach.

Mir scheint, daß die Beobachtungen Jonas', so entscheidend wichtig sie sind, den Sinn der Universalspekulation dieser gnostischen Schrift noch nicht erschöpfen.

Daß schon die Sprache des Evangelium Veritatis, das z.B. einen Vatergott kennt, dessen „Wille“ für die Schaffung von Leben entscheidend ist, der Vermutung widerspricht, es handle sich bei der Gnosis um eine Geschichte der Bewegung des unpersönlich gedachten göttlichen Geistes, sei zunächst nur angemerkt. Denn diese Beobachtung muß nicht entscheidend sein, da die Sprache des Evangeliums aus anderen Zusammenhängen, in diesem Fall dem Christentum, übernommen sein kann und keine Rückschlüsse auf den Charakter des geschilderten Geschehens zuzulassen braucht.

Zwei Fragen muß jedoch nachgegangen werden:

1. Als wer wird der Vater erkannt, wenn nach der „Formel“ von seiner Erkenntnis die Aufhebung des Mangels abhängen soll? Oder anders gefragt: Besteht der Inhalt des Erlösungswissens wirklich „letztlich“ in nichts anderem als in der transzendenten Geschichte des Mythos selbst, insofern diese als *Geschichte der Devolution des Seins* uns enthüllt, „wer wir waren, was wir wurden, wo wir waren, wohinein wir geworfen wurden usw.“?¹¹

2. Was ist der Grund für die Entstehung der Unkenntnis?¹²

Auf die erste Frage kann nach dem Evangelium Veritatis eine eindeutige Antwort gegeben werden: Der Vater wird als ein Gott er-

¹⁰ U. Bianchi (Hrsg.), *Le origini dello Gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina 13.-18. Aprile 1966* (Supplements to *Numen* 12; Leiden 1967) XXff. Die deutsche Fassung von C. Colpe, „Vorschläge für eine terminologische und begriffliche Übereinkunft zum Thema des Colloquiums“, s. in W. Eltester (Hrsg.), *Christentum und Gnosis* (Berlin 1969) 129-132.

¹¹ So Jonas, „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“ (s. oben Anm. 8), 637f.

¹² Jonas antwortet darauf: „Das dynamische Element ist bereits in der Lehre von der Gottheit selbst sichtbar. Sie wird (Unterstreichung von mir) aus der Ruhe ewiger Präexistenz in eine Bewegung versetzt, die zur ‚inneren‘ Geschichte der Schöpfung wird ...“, „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“ (s. oben Anm. 8), 629.

kannt, der Erkenntnis schenken will. Er hat den Sohn zu seinem „Namen“ gemacht (39,20), zu seinem „aussprechbaren Namen“.¹³ Er hat also seinen Namen, d.h. sich selbst, nicht verborgen (39,21), sondern wollte, daß man ihn erkennt. Das Werk des Sohnes besteht schon nach den Einleitungsworten des Evangelium Veritatis darin, Erkenntnis des Vaters zu vermitteln. Wenn sich der Vater diesen Sohn als seinen Namen hervorbringt (38,33f.), so heißt das: Der Vater ist von seinem Wesen her ein gnädiger, gebender, sich mitteilender Gott. Entsprechend sind seine Äonen sowie seine Gnostiker wesensmäßig Empfangende. Sie suchen nach dem, aus dem sie gekommen sind und finden (empfangen) das Evangelium.¹⁴

Wenn das so ist, wie konnte dann Unwissen über den Vater entstehen, und zwar innerhalb des Pleromas, zwischen Gott und seinem All? Der Autor des Evangelium Veritatis bezeichnet es—treffend—als ein „großes Wunder“, daß die Äonen „in dem Vater“ waren, ohne ihn zu erkennen und deshalb aus dem Pleroma, dem Sein, herausgehen konnten (22,27ff.). Warum handelt es sich um ein „Wunder“ (μαεϊζε)? Das ist nicht leicht zu verstehen, zumal wenn man bedenkt, was kurz zuvor ausdrücklich konstatiert wird: Daß Gott die Vollendung des Alls, d.h. seiner Äonen—die durch Erkenntnis geschehen würde—in sich zurückgehalten und sie dem All nicht gegeben habe (18,36f.). Das scheint dem gerade aufgezeigten Wesen Gottes zu widersprechen, und so wird dieser Satz denn auch gegen verschiedene Mißverständnisse abgesichert. Zunächst: Es ist nicht Mißgunst, die den Vater seinen „Gliedern“, den Äonen, die Erkenntnis vorenthalten läßt (18,38ff.). Das Wesen des Vaters ist also wirklich so, wie es sein „Name“ verkündet, das eines gnädig Gebenden. Es sind—zweitens—aber auch nicht heilsökonomische Gründe, die den Vater die Erkenntnis—zunächst—zurückhalten ließen, um sie später zu geben. So interpretiert Schenke.¹⁵ Es heißt im Evangelium Veritatis jedoch ausdrücklich, die Vergessenheit der *πλάνη*, d.h. das Unwissen, sei nicht offenbart worden. Die Vergessenheit sei nämlich nicht beim Vater entstanden (17,36ff.).¹⁶ Es wird also ausgeschlossen, daß zwischen Gott

¹³ 40,23-29, vgl. die Übersetzung von H. M. Schenke, *Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis* (Göttingen 1959) 54.

¹⁴ 17,2ff.; vgl. 34,34-35,2: 36,9ff.

¹⁵ *Die Herkunft* (s. oben Anm. 13), 35 Anm. 5a u.ö.

¹⁶ Vgl. auch 35,15ff.: „Reich war die Tiefe des Vaters und der Gedanke der *πλάνη* war nicht bei ihm.“ So auch 35,5: der Vater ist „Licht, in dem es keinen Schatten gibt“.

und dem Vergessen irgendeine positive Beziehung bestehen könnte, und ein solcher strikter Ausschluß ist auch notwendig, wenn ernst genommen werden soll, daß das Wesen des Vaters gebende Gnade ist. Drittens wird festgestellt, daß die Entstehung und Materialisierung der Unkenntnis keine „Demütigung“ für den Vater war, „denn Nichtiges war die Angst, das Vergessen und das Gebilde der Lüge“ (17,21 ff.). Schließlich wird indirekt ausgeschlossen, daß die Unkenntnis auf ein Fehlverhalten der Äonen selbst zurückgehen könnte. So interpretierte Jonas, der von dem „Phänomen göttlichen Irrsins und Versagens“ spricht.¹⁷ Demgegenüber wird im Evangelium Veritatis jedoch ausdrücklich betont, daß der Vater es war, der Erkenntnis zurückhielt (18,36). Für ein Fehlverhalten der Äonen gibt es keinen Anhalt im Text. Ihr Wesen besteht darin, den Vater zu suchen. Das tun sie (17,5).

Warum entsteht dann aber die Unkenntnis? Das Evangelium Veritatis antwortet darauf positiv nur mit der Feststellung: „Die Vergessenheit ist nicht bei dem Vater entstanden, wenn sie auch seinetwegen entstanden ist. Sondern was in ihm entsteht, ist die Erkenntnis, die offenbart wurde, damit die Vergessenheit aufgelöst werde“ (18,1-6). Diese Sätze enthalten eine Definition der Vergessenheit (der Unkenntnis, des Nichtigen), und erst von ihr aus läßt sich Antwort auf die Frage finden, warum sie entstand: Sie ist nicht aus sich selbst. Sie ist keine Gott in irgendeiner Weise formal gleichwertige, absolute Macht, sondern hat ihr „Sein“ nur in der Relation zu Gott. Inwiefern? Weil es der im Evangelium Veritatis immer wieder betonte Gotteswille ist, Erkenntnis von sich zu schenken,¹⁸ ist Unkenntnis dadurch definiert, das zu sein, was Gott nicht will. Das heißt, die Vergessenheit sei „seinetwegen“ entstanden. Nur als Gegensatz und Negation zu dem ewig gnädigen Gotteswillen hat sie ihre Existenz. Als solche aber „ist“ sie wirklich. Denn der Gotteswille ist konkret: Schon als der Vater „zuerst“ (37,16; 38,8) dem Sohn allein Erkenntnis seiner selbst mitteilt und dadurch Sein schafft (39,7 ff.), ist damit die Möglichkeit gesetzt, keine Erkenntnis zu erhalten und zu haben. Diese Möglichkeit „ist“ ganz und gar nur als Negation des schaffenden Gotteswillens. Sie ist deshalb schlechthin nichtig (vgl. 17,23-25; 39,11 u.ö.), ohne eigene Kraft, eine „unmögliche Möglichkeit“.¹⁹

¹⁷ „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 334. S. auch oben S. 320 mit Anm. 12.

¹⁸ 16,31-17,7; 37,15 ff.; 38,6 ff.; 40,23-33; vgl. auch 22,33-36 u.ö.

¹⁹ So Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* III, 3, 405; vgl. auch den gesamten § 50 über „Gott und das Nichtige“, III, 3, 327 ff. und 84 ff. Daß ich von Barth (wie von anderen modernen systematischen Theologen) gelernt habe, wird jedem bei der Lektüre dieses Interpretationsversuches deutlich sein. Nicht ganz verständlich ist mir jedoch die

Das Nichtige ist demnach nicht nichts, sondern es ist im Gegenteil sehr wirkräftig und bedrohlich. Wir stimmen mit Jonas überein, der von der Unwissenheit zu Recht betont, sie sei nicht einfach „indifferente Abwesenheit“ des Wissens.²⁰ Hier liegt ein entscheidender Unterschied zur neuplatonischen Bestimmung des Bösen als *privatio boni*. Aber wir stimmen nicht mit ihm überein, wenn er sie eine „positive Störung“ nennt, „die einen Teil des Absoluten aus ihm selbst her befiel“.²¹ Woher sollte diese Störung kommen? Jonas zieht sich hier auf den Hinweis auf „Geheimnisvolles“ zurück.²² Die „Kraft“, die die Unwissenheit tatsächlich besitzt (cf. 17,18 ff.), stammt u.E. vielmehr daher, daß Unwissenheit das ist, was *Gott* nicht wollte und will. Als Negation seines Willens hat sie ihre eigene negative (nichtige) Kraft, eine Kraft, die das bloße Nichts nicht hätte. Als nichtige Kraft stellt sie deswegen auch keine „Demütigung“ für den Vater dar, der die Wahrheit selbst ist, „die feststeht, unveränderlich, unerschütterlich und vollkommen schön ist“ (17,21 ff.).

Die Unwissenheit ist also keine Beeinträchtigung der Wahrheit selbst. Wohl aber ist sie eine Bedrohung von Gottes Willen und Werk. Wir kommen zurück auf den zentralen Satz, von dem wir ausgingen: „Es war ein großes Wunder, daß sie (die Äonen) im Vater waren, ohne ihn zu erkennen, und daß sie von sich aus herausgehen konnten (aus dem Pleroma), da sie den nicht zu begreifen und zu erkennen vermochten, in dem sie waren“ (22,27-33). Es handelt sich in der Tat um ein staunenerregendes „Wunder“, daß Gottes Äonen, die Werke seines Willens sind (vgl. 37,4f.), der Vergessenheit anheimfallen können, d.h. dem, was Gott nicht will, daß er also zuläßt, daß sie der Bedrohung durch das Nichtige erliegen (vgl. 18,36f.). Aber ist die Bezeichnung „Wunder“ überhaupt angemessen? Ist hier nicht vielmehr von einer

Reaktion einiger theologischer Teilnehmer an der Diskussion über dieses Papier, als ich darauf *expressis verbis* verwies. Denn das schien ihnen diesen Versuch, wenn nicht zu desavouieren, so doch in bestimmter Weise abzustempeln. Jeder wird in jede Interpretation ein bestimmtes Verständnis einbringen. Daß Kriterium einer Interpretation immer nur der Text selbst sein kann, ist selbstverständlich. An diesem und nur an diesem Kriterium muß jede Deutung daher gemessen werden. Dann wird sich zeigen, ob eine Interpretation methodisch zulässig war oder nicht. Die Resultate müssen erweisen, ob der Weg dorthin den Blick für bisher Übersehenes und für neue Zusammenhänge geschärft hat. M.E. befruchtet die Lektüre der modernen Theologie das Verstehen der Väter; möchte auch umgekehrt die Arbeit des Patristikers dazu beitragen, daß die Väter die moderne Theologie befruchten.

²⁰ „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 334.

²¹ „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 334.

²² „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 332 mit Hinweis auf 22,25f.

furchterregenden Demonstration der Undurchdringlichkeit des göttlichen Willens zu reden? Wie reimte sich das aber wiederum mit dem zentralen Inhalt des Evangelium Veritatis, der Verkündigung des sich offenbarenden Gotteswillens?²³ Mir scheint, daß der Begriff „Wunder“ in einem sehr präzisen Sinne gebraucht ist, nämlich in dem positiven, d.h. dankbar staunenden Sinne derer, die das „Evangelium der Wahrheit“ empfangen haben. Von einem „Wunder“ in dieser Bedeutung, nicht in der eines undurchsichtigen Mirakels, ist auch wirklich zu Recht die Rede: Denn—das wird im folgenden am Text auszuführen sein—ohne dieses Wunder könnte die Bedrohung durch die nichtige Vergessenheit nicht überwunden werden. Ohne „Fall“ der Äonen gäbe es auch keine—endgültige—Rettung der Äonen bzw. aller derjenigen (Menschen), die wie sie „gefallen“ sind.

Inwiefern? Zunächst muß die Bedeutung und die Wirkung des Heraustretens der Äonen aus ihrem Pleroma bedacht werden. Die unmittelbaren Folgen werden genau genug angegeben: Die Unkenntnis „verfestigt“ sich in der Art eines Nebels (17,11ff.), es kommt zur Entstehung der Welt. Sie ist potenzierte Gottvergessenheit, „Ersatz für die Wahrheit“ (17,20). Entscheidend daran ist zweierlei. Einmal, daß die Welt in diesem ihrem Wesen nur von dem Wissenden zu durchschauen ist. Nur wer von dem geschehenen „Wunder“ weiß, und zwar aufgrund empfangener Offenbarung weiß, kann die Welt beurteilen. An sich gleicht sie, was ihre Durchschaubarkeit betrifft, nur dem „Nebel“ (17,12). D.h. es gibt keinerlei Möglichkeit, aus der Welt selbst ihr Wesen abzuleiten. Ihr einziger Erkenntnisgrund ist der offenbarte Mythos. Daraus ergibt sich weiterhin: Was wirklich furchtbar ist, eben Gottvergessenheit, das Nichtige, weiß nur der, der erkannt hat. Jeder, der nicht Erkenntnis von jenem „Wunder“ empfangen hat,²⁴ muß notwendig das Nichtige und die Gefahr, die es darstellt,

²³ Vgl. die Einleitungsworte et passim.

²⁴ Erst wer Erkenntnis empfängt, „entsteht“ (27,29ff.), oder, was dasselbe bedeutet, „ist ein Wesen von oben“ (22,2ff.). Der besondere valentinianische Charakter des Evangelium Veritatis kommt darin zum Ausdruck, daß dieser Satz strikt logisch begründet ist. Denn weil das Nichtige als Negation göttlichen Mitteilens, d.h. sachlich als Vorenthaltung von Erkenntnis definiert war, muß seine Aufhebung durch Mitteilung, d.h. durch Ermöglichung von Erkenntnis, geschehen. Das entspricht durchaus der „pneumatischen Gleichung“, von der Jonas redet („Evangelium Veritatis“, s. oben Anm. 5, 335). Die Frage ist aber, wie es zu dieser Gleichung kommt. Ist sie, wie Jonas meint, aus der „immanenten Erfahrung“ einer Kluft zwischen der Welt und dem Menschen erwachsen und dient dazu, den menschlichen „Zustand der Entfremdung“ zu überwinden („Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“, s. oben Anm. 8, 631)? Oder ist sie nicht vielmehr der Versuch, eine im Glauben real erfahrene Erlösung und „Wiedergeburt“ zu begründen und damit einsehbar und weitersagbar zu machen? Vgl. dazu unten S. 334f.

verkennen. Denn es ist ja aus der Welt auf keine Weise ablesbar, ist auch nicht mit dem bloßen Nichts identisch. Es ist vielmehr das, dem Gottes Äonen selbst verfallen konnten. Das macht seine sonst in keiner Weise zu erfassende Furchtbarkeit aus.

Dieses Nichtige, dem die göttlichen Äonen verfallen können, dem läßt Gott sie auch verfallen. Warum ist das ein „Wunder“? Weil damit die Überwindung des Nichtigen angedeutet ist. Denn zwar wird das Nichtige durch den Fall der Äonen zunächst stark und mächtig, aber gleichzeitig ist damit seine Erschöpfung vorgezeichnet.

Vermittler der heilsamen Erkenntnis ist Christus. Seine Bedeutung beschränkt sich aber im Evangelium Veritatis keineswegs darauf, nur als göttliche Offenbarergestalt aufzutreten und Wissen zu verkünden, sondern dieses Wissen ist an Menschwerdung und Kreuzestod gebunden,²⁵ ja besteht geradezu im richtigen Verständnis beider. Allerdings vermeidet der Autor nicht die—vom Standpunkt christlicher Theologie aus geurteilt—übliche gnostische Entleerung des Kreuzestodes. Denn Christus wird durch das Kreuz niemals gefährdet. Darin besteht der entscheidende Unterschied zu einer wirklich christlichen Christologie. Zwar geht auch der gnostische Christus aus dem Pleroma heraus und erhält einen Körper (23,30f.), aber, da er Erkenntnis besitzt, durchschaut er den Körper als das lügenhafte Gebilde der *πλάνη*, das er qua definitione ist. Er verfällt ihm daher von vornherein nicht. Wohl aber verfielen ihm, bzw. der Ursache des Körpers, die göttlichen Äonen, und auf diesem Hintergrund ist die Deutung des Christusereignisses zu lesen. Der gnostische Christus wird zwar von der *πλάνη* verfolgt, weil Inhalt seiner Offenbarung die öffentliche Mitteilung ist, daß die *πλάνη* nichtig ist—sie bringt ihn in Bedrängnis, richtet ihn zugrunde und nagelt ihn an ein Holz (18,22ff.). Aber indem sie das tut, verfolgt und tötet sie nur ihr eigenes Werk, das lügenhafte Gebilde des Körpers, und richtet sich damit selbst zugrunde. Am Kreuz triumphiert Gott also über das Nichtige. Fall der Äonen, d.h. Starkwerden des Nichtigen, und Überwindung des Nichtigen müssen aber zusammengesehen werden. Der Triumph am Kreuz wird erst möglich, weil das „große Wunder“ geschah, daß Gott den Fall seiner Äonen zuließ. Das Wunder des Falles zielt also schon auf die—endgültige—Überwindung des Nichtigen²⁶ und ist eben deswegen „Wunder“.

²⁵ 18,11-24; 19,17-34; 19,34-20,27 u.ö.

²⁶ Ähnliches besägen übrigens häufig gnostische Mythen, in denen sich das erstarkte Nichtige (der Demiurg und seine Mächte) in immer neuen Anläufen gegen die verschiedenen Erlöser schließlich selbst erschöpft. Die Selbsterschöpfung des Nichtigen wird meist nicht am Kreuz Christi demonstriert. Sachlich besagt beides jedoch dasselbe.

Der Kreuzestod hat als Triumph über das Nichtigkeits allerding nur gleichsam „einleitenden“ Charakter. Denn so wie sich die *πλάνη* an Christus erschöpft, weil er im Stand der Erkenntnis ist, so muß das Gleiche an jedem einzelnen Gnostiker in dieser Welt geschehen. Aber das ist nun auch möglich geworden, weil die latente Bedrohung, die das Nichtigkeits als Negation göttlichen Willens darstellte, dadurch entkräftet ist, daß Gott selbst sich ihr stellte und sie überwand. Richtige Gnosis zu haben, bedeutet Leben. Das impliziert zu wissen, wer der Tod ist und daß er tot ist.

Ich fasse die Ergebnisse der Interpretation des Evangelium Veritatis zusammen:

1. Sein (Wahrheit, Leben) ist ausschließlich durch Gott konstituiert. Es besteht in Erkenntnis Gottes. Die Erkenntnis muß geschenkt werden. Gott will sie schenken.

2. Nichtigkeits (Böses, Chaos) ist die Negation dieses göttlichen Schenkungswillens. Denn indem Gott durch Erkenntnis Sein stiftet, ist die Möglichkeit von Unkenntnis gesetzt. Sie „ist“ als Möglichkeit nur als Negation göttlichen Willens. Sie äußert sich als Bedrohung von Gottes Sein.

3. Gott läßt die Bedrohung seines Seins durch das Nichtigkeits zu, indem er seine Äonen in Unkenntnis verfallen läßt. Das ist ein „großes Wunder“. Dadurch wird aus der Möglichkeit der Nicht-Erkentnis reale Unkenntnis.

4. Diese reale Unkenntnis materialisiert und potenziert sich. Der Kosmos (Körper, Hyle) ist mächtig gewordenes, Gestalt gewordenes Nichtigkeits.

5. Sein und Nichtigkeits sind keine ontologischen Prinzipien gleichen Ranges und gleicher Ursprünglichkeit. Es besteht kein Wesensdualismus, sondern nur ein vorläufiger, faktischer Dualismus. Gnosis besteht darin, den faktisch vorfindlichen Dualismus als vorläufigen zu erkennen.

6. Der Mensch entspricht dem ontologischen Status der gefallenen Äonen. Er ist vom Nichtigkeits bedrohtes und ihm verfallenes göttliches Sein. D.h.: Er ist „nicht nichts“, aber er ist „noch nicht entstanden“ (27,34 ff.). Es scheint mir daher unzutreffend zu sein, von einer „göttlichen Seele“ des Menschen o.ä. zu reden.²⁷

²⁷ So sehr häufig in der Gnosisforschung, vgl. die Arbeitshypothesen von Messina, in der deutschen Fassung (s. oben Anm. 10), 130; ähnlich U. Bianchi, „Das Problem der Ursprünge des Gnostizismus“, *Gnosis und Gnostizismus* (hrsg. von K. Rudolph; Darmstadt 1975) 601-625, bes. 622f. u.a. Dagegen sagt das Evangelium Veritatis von

7. Unkenntnis kann nur durch Erkenntnis überwunden werden (vgl. die Jonas'sche „Formel“). Das muß aber so geschehen, daß Erkenntnis sich gegenüber der Unkenntnis endgültig durchsetzt.

8. Es geschieht durch Christus, Gottes „Namen“, der den in realer Unkenntnis Befangenen (vgl. 3) durch Offenbarung Erkenntnis über Sein und Nichtiges vermittelt. (Die bloße Möglichkeit von Unkenntnis wäre nicht zu bekämpfen gewesen).

9. Christus ist von Anfang an im Stande der Erkenntnis. Da Erkenntnis gleich Leben ist, stirbt er nicht am Kreuz. Wohl aber „starben“ Gottes Äonen.

10. Die Offenbarung Christi bedeutet für das Nichtige (mythologisch gesprochen): Es wird durch die Aufdeckung seiner selbst als Nichtiges provoziert, es verfolgt daher den Offenbarer und „nagelt ihn an ein Holz“. Damit richtet es sich gegen sein eigenes Gebilde, den Körper. Damit ist der Selbstvernichtungsprozeß des Nichtigen eingeleitet. Das bedeutet sachlich: Das Nichtige wird seiner Möglichkeiten beraubt, weil sie als unmögliche aufgewiesen werden.

11. Das Kreuz dokumentiert die Zugrunderichtung des Nichtigen durch sich selbst. Es ist Triumph Gottes über das Nichtige. Von Auferweckung ist nicht die Rede. Das Kreuz entspricht dem Sinngehalt der Auferweckung.²⁸

12. Das Nichtige ist damit im Prinzip überwunden. Jeder einzelne Gnostiker muß das Nichtige sich an ihm selbst zugrunde richten lassen. Er wird dazu dadurch instand gesetzt, daß ihm die Offenbarung Christi weitervermittelt wird.

13. Die Offenbarung an den Einzelnen ist reine Gabe und Erwählung. Sie kann nicht erworben werden und ist auch nicht Wiedererweckung eines „göttlichen Funkens“ im Menschen: sondern sie ist Schaffung des seienden Menschen, wie er von Gott gewollt ist (vgl. 27,26 ff.).

14. Wie im Anfang durch Gabe der Erkenntnis (= Erwählung) an

denen, die „noch nicht entstanden sind“, sie seien „in dem, der wollen wird, daß sie entstehen, wann er es will“ (27,36-28,3). D.h. ihre „Entstehung“ ist nicht durch ihre „göttliche Seele“ garantiert, sondern ausschließlich von außerhalb ihrer selbst, durch den „Seienden, der sie festgesetzt hat aus dem Nichtseienden“ (28,13-15, cf. Röm 4,17). Vgl. dazu auch 37,19-33.

²⁸ Dem widerspricht nicht, daß in anderen gnostischen Schriften durchaus von Auferstehung gehandelt wird. Sie bedeutet die „Auflösung des Todes“, die im Evangelium Veritatis schon das Kreuz dokumentiert. Vgl. den Brief an Rheginus [On Res], bes. 46,14-20, mit dem Kommentar von M. L. Peel, *Gnosis und Auferstehung. Der Brief an Rheginus von Nag Hammadi* (Neukirchen 1974) 86.

den Logos (Christus) Sein gestiftet wurde, so wird auch der Mensch durch diese Gabe und Erwählung.²⁹

II

Woher kommt diese gesamte Konzeption? Ich möchte meinen, sie ist nur auf dem Hintergrund des Christentums und als Interpretation des Christusereignisses möglich. Der Angelpunkt dieser These besteht darin, daß hier Gott (Gottes Äonen) fällt, d.h. dem Nichtigen verfällt, und zwar fällt, um damit die Überwindung des Nichtigen durch Gott zu ermöglichen. Das kann ich nur als Interpretation des Christusereignisses verstehen. Denn wo sonst stürbe die Gottheit, um den Tod selbst zu vernichten?³⁰ Die Interpretation, die der Autor des Evangelium Veritatis vornimmt, besteht darin, daß, mythologisch gesprochen, der eine Christus der neutestamentlichen Zeugen in Sophia (= fallende Äonen) und gnostischen Christus, d.h. in fallenden und rettenden Gott, aufgespalten wird. Theologisch gesprochen heißt das, daß Christus als gekreuzigter und auferstandener Gott durch zwei verschiedene göttliche Personen dargestellt wird. Die fallenden Äonen haben die theologische Funktion des gekreuzigten Gottes, der offenbarende Christus die des auferstandenen Gottes.

Das ist, vom neutestamentlichen Zeugnis aus gesehen, ohne allen Zweifel Häresie, aber es ist *christliche* Häresie. Es ist christliche Häresie, weil, wie Jonas sehr richtig sagte, die valentinianische Gnosis den „kühnen Entschluß“ faßte, „den Ursprung des Dunkels ... in die Gottheit selbst zu verlegen“.³¹ Angemessener formuliert wäre allerdings, daß die Valentinianer, weil sie Christen waren, davon ausgingen, daß der „Ursprung des Dunkels“ in der „Gottheit“ selbst „liegt“, d.h. nur in Relation zu ihr „ist“.³² Die fatalste Folge der gnostischen Interpretation, oder besser: Umdeutung des Christusereignisses ist, daß die Überwindung des Nichtigen durch Christus gleichsam nur eingeleitet wird. Zwar ist seine Kraft dadurch gebrochen, daß es sich in der Verfolgung des erschienenen Logos gegen sich selbst zu richten beginnt, aber dieser Prozeß muß bei jedem einzelnen Gnostiker fort-

²⁹ Vgl. 38,6-41,35, bes. 38,32-35; 39,7-17; 40,23-29; 41,4-7.

³⁰ Vgl. dazu E. Jüngel, „Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottes. Ein Plakat“, *Unterwegs zur Sache. Theologische Bemerkungen* (BEvTh 61; München 1972) 105-125, bes. 122ff.

³¹ „Evangelium Veritatis“ (s. oben Anm. 5), 334.

³² Vgl. dazu oben S. 324f.

gesetzt werden. (Deshalb besteht der gnostische Mythos aus einer Aneinanderreihung von immer erneuten Erlösungsvorgängen, und die Form gnostischer Verkündigung ist die Paraphrase als umschreibende Wiederholung der Erlösung.)³³ Das Nichtiges ist also nicht endgültig überwunden, es kann jedoch bei jedem einzelnen neu überwunden werden, weil seit Christus Erkenntnis in der Welt ist, weitergegeben und angenommen werden kann. Ein weiterer Unterschied zur genuin christlichen Lehre besteht darin, daß Entstehung, Erstarkung und Zugrunderichtung des Nichtiges als ein rein innergöttlicher Vorgang beschrieben wird bzw. als ein Geschehen zwischen Gott selbst und seinem Feind. Menschwerdung und Tod Christi geschehen also nicht pro nobis, nicht, weil das Geschöpf Gottes seinem Feind erlag. Der Mensch erhält nur nachträglich Anteil an dem schon vor seiner Existenz begonnenen und grundsätzlich entschiedenen Prozeß.

Weitere Differenzen wären zu nennen und sie sind gewiß schwerwiegend. Es darf aber darüber nicht übersehen werden, daß die christlich-agnostischen Theologen aus dem Christusergebnis, das Grundlage ihres Nachdenkens war, auch Folgerungen zogen, die sehr wohl christliche Folgerungen und Bekenntnisse genannt werden müssen und die mit derselben Entschiedenheit in großkirchlichen Kreisen zur gleichen Zeit nicht gedacht wurden. Ich rechne dazu vor allem das Bekenntnis, daß die Erlösung extra nos geschieht: Der einzelne Mensch ist wie der gefallene Äon in völliger Unkenntnis Gottes, ohne das zu wissen. Von sich aus kann er in keiner Weise die Sphäre des Nichtiges, in der er verfangen ist, durchschauen und ihr so entkommen, sondern allein dadurch, daß er Offenbarung über Sein und Nichtiges empfängt. Sie erst ermöglicht Einsicht in die grundsätzliche Gebrochenheit des Nichtiges, die das Kreuz dokumentiert. Die vollständige Abhängigkeit des Menschen von der Offenbarung bringt der Autor des *Evangelium Veritatis* dadurch zum Ausdruck, daß er sagt, der Mensch „entstehe“ erst durch Offenbarung (27,29-28,6). Wer erst zur Entstehung gebracht werden muß, kann dazu selbst nichts beitragen, vielmehr wird er „erwählt“ (24,4). Daraus ergibt sich weiterhin, daß für den christlichen Gnostiker wie für den Christen erst post Christum bzw. post revelationem zu erkennen ist, was das Nichtiges ist, und d.h. auch, was die Sünde ist.³⁴ Nichtiges wird nämlich erst jetzt als das erkannt, dem

³³ Vgl. dazu meinen Aufsatz „Die Paraphrase als Form gnostischer Verkündigung“ in *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis* (ed. R. McL. Wilson; NHS 14; Leiden 1978) 75-90. S. dazu auch unten S. 335f.

³⁴ Vgl. dazu 32,31-33,32, bes. 33,16-32.

sogar Gottes Äonen verfallen konnten und das durch Offenbarung überwunden werden mußte. Unabhängig davon sind für den irdischen Menschen allenfalls Auswirkungen des Nichtigen, niemals aber die furchtbare Gewalt des Nichtigen selbst zu erkennen. Schließlich ist nicht zu übersehen, daß die Definition des Nichtigen als Negation des göttlichen Willens, als Verkörperung dessen, was er nicht „erwählt“ hat, m.E. nur aus christlichen Voraussetzungen heraus zu verstehen ist. Sie ist zumindest nicht aus mythologischen Vorstellungen und griechisch philosophischem Denken heraus zu erklären.

Ich breche hier ab und versuche, die Konsequenzen aus den vorgelegenen Überlegungen zu ziehen:

Das Evangelium Veritatis ist nicht ohne den Anstoß der christlichen Botschaft zu denken und zu verstehen: Es setzt das Christusereignis voraus und ist Interpretation dieses Ereignisses. Nicht die äußerlichen Anspielungen auf christliches Eigengut (der Name Christi, Menschwerdung, Kreuz etc.) machen es zu einer christlichen Schrift, denn sie könnten sekundäre Adaption, „Pseudomorphose“, sein, sondern die christliche Überzeugung, von der der Autor ausgeht. Christliches ist hier also nicht auf andersartige Inhalte aufgesetzt; wohl aber wäre möglich, daß der Verfasser den christlichen Inhalt von andersartigen, „gnostischen“ Traditionen her, aus denen er kam, aufgenommen, verstanden und interpretiert hat. Das Evangelium Veritatis wäre dann Zeugnis einer „Inkarnation“ des Christentums in diese Traditionen, so wie es auch in hellenistische und andere Traditionen „inkarniert“ wurde. Diese Traditionen wären sehr genau inhaltlich zu bestimmen. Sie sind u.a. möglicherweise bestimmt durch das, was Ugo Bianchi den „Gnostizismus ante litteram“ nennt.³⁵ Er ist aber gerade nicht identisch mit den Vorstellungen des Evangelium Veritatis. Das ist entscheidend.

III

Diese Schlußfolgerungen für das Evangelium Veritatis gelten m.E. aber auch für den gesamten Valentinianismus. Daß das Evangelium Veritatis valentinianisch ist, muß nicht erneut bewiesen werden. Ich

³⁵ Dazu gehören die archaische Vorstellung, daß die Welt sich „konstitutionell durch die ursprüngliche Aktivität eines beunruhigenden und störenden Wesens auszeichnet“, den Demiurgen; das hohe Alter eines „antileiblichen, antikosmischen und eschatologischen Dualismus“, etc. („Das Problem der Ursprünge des Gnostizismus“, s. oben Anm. 27, 622f.).

mache hier nur darauf aufmerksam, daß die Charakteristika, die mir bei der Interpretation des Evangelium Veritatis grundlegend zu sein schienen, sich auch im ausgeführten valentinianischen Mythos finden.

1. Das Nichtige (Böse) ist das, was Gott nicht will, es wird dadurch real, daß Gott den Fall seiner Äonen zuläßt, so das Evangelium Veritatis.

Im Mythos des Ptolemäus bei Irenäus hat nur der Nous Erkenntnis Gottes, den übrigen Äonen wird sie „auf Wunsch des Vaters“ vorenthalten.³⁶ Daraufhin bemächtigt sich aller ein πάθος (ὁ ἐνήρηξαιτο μὲν ἐν τοῖς περὶ τὸν Νοῦν καὶ τὴν Ἀλήθειαν ...),³⁷ das aber erst beim letzten Äon, der Sophia, ausbricht und zu realer, „materialisierter“ Begierde (ἐνθύμησις) und Erregung wird. An der Sophia wird also die Folge der fehlenden Erkenntnis demonstriert. Ihr Fall ist eindeutig nicht ihre Schuld. Sie entspricht mit ihrem Verlangen nach dem Vater nur dem ihr von diesem Vater zugedachten Wesen.³⁸ Diese Begründungskette wird im weiteren Verlauf des Mythos mehrfach wiederholt.³⁹

2. Das real gewordene Böse wird von Gott überwunden, indem er Erkenntnis vermittelt, so das Evangelium Veritatis.

Die Errettung der Sophia (und der übrigen Äonen) wird im Mythos in zwei Akten beschrieben, die sich aber gegenseitig bedingen: Die entstandene Erregung wird aus dem Pleroma ausgewiesen und die Sophia (wie die übrigen Äonen) empfängt—durch Christus—Erkenntnis.⁴⁰ Dadurch werden alle Äonen zu νόες, d.h. dem Nous gleichgemacht, dessen Charakteristikum die Erkenntnis ist. Sie erhalten dadurch—jetzt erst—„Gestalt“, sie „entstehen“ also.⁴¹ Im weiteren Verlauf des Mythos wird dann das Gestaltwerden durch Erkenntnis immer neu beschrieben.

3. Die Konsequenzen für das Böse (Nichtige):

Der Gedanke des Evangelium Veritatis, daß sich das Nichtige dadurch selbst zugrunderichtet, daß es den erschienenen Offenbarer verfolgt, ist so im Mythos des Ptolemäus nicht ausgeführt, wohl aber dessen Konsequenzen: Durch die Aufdeckung des Nichtigen als Nich-

³⁶ Haer. 1,2,1; Harvey 1, 13,12.

³⁷ Haer. 1,2,2; Harvey 1, 14,4.

³⁸ Haer. 1,2,1; vgl. 1,2,4; Harvey 1, 20,3ff.

³⁹ Vgl. Haer. 1,4,2; 1,4,5; 1,5,4: Aus der Trauer über den Mangel an Erkenntnis entsteht die Materie.

⁴⁰ Haer. 1,2,5; Harvey 1, 21,1-22,1.

⁴¹ Haer. 1,2,6; Harvey 1, 22,5f.; vgl. Ev.Ver. [GTr] 27,26ff.

tigen wird es seiner Kraft beraubt.⁴² Anders gesagt: Das Nichtige ist nicht mehr dasselbe, was es zuvor war, nachdem sich an der Errettung der Sophia der offenbarende Wille des Vaters gezeigt hat. Wie im Evangelium Veritatis steht das Kreuz, „das alles Materielle“ (d.h. Nichtige) „aufzehrt“ (!),⁴³ für den Triumph Gottes über das Nichtige.

IV

Aus dieser Sicht des Evangelium Veritatis und des Valentinianismus ergeben sich m.E. dann aber auch Konsequenzen für die herkömmliche Gnosisinterpretation.

1. Wenn man vom Valentinianismus ausgeht—selbstverständlich zunächst nur unter dieser Voraussetzung—kann man nicht von einer strengen Scheidung zweier dualistischer Sphären („Wesensintegrität“)⁴⁴ als Grundmerkmal der Gnosis sprechen. Vielmehr weiß der Valentinianismus davon, daß Göttliches dem Nichtigen ausgesetzt wird: Gott fällt, damit Gott das Nichtige überwindet. Von sog. Wesensintegrität ist nur als Ergebnis und Folge dieses ersten Falles und der ersten Errettung zu reden. Die Wesensintegrität des Erlösers ist Beweis für den Sieg Gottes über das Nichtige und damit Verheißung für jeden einzelnen Gnostiker. Sie kommt aber als solche erst zustande, weil die bedrohende Kraft des Nichtigen durch Gott gebrochen ist.

2. Der Sinngehalt des gnostisch valentinianischen Mythos ist nicht als eine „große *Bewegung* (Unterstreichung vom Verf.) der ‚Erkenntnis‘ in ihren positiven und privativen Zuständen von Anfang bis zum Ende der Dinge“ zu beschreiben.⁴⁵ Denn das Proprium des Mythos ist nicht sein „durch und durch *dynamischer* Charakter, der jede Etappe aus der vorigen hervorgehen und alle zusammen Phasen eines einzigen Gesamtverlaufs sein läßt“.⁴⁶ Zwar ergibt sich Stufe für Stufe des Mythos aus der jeweils vorhergehenden, aber das ist es nicht, worauf es im Entscheidenden ankommt. Sondern wenn der Mythos dem einzelnen irdischen Menschen als Heilsverkündigung zugespro-

⁴² Vgl. z.B. Haer. 1,6,1; Harvey 1, 51,13-15; 52,14-53,1.

⁴³ Haer. 1,3,5; Harvey 1, 30,7f.

⁴⁴ So und ähnlich mehrfach bei L. Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (WMANT 37; Neukirchen 1970), später von anderen übernommen.

⁴⁵ H. Jonas, „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“ (s. oben Anm. 8), 629.

⁴⁶ a.a.O., 629.

chen wird, so ist für seine heilsame Wirkung ausschlaggebend die durch ihn vermittelte Einsicht in Entstehung und Überwindung des Nichtigen, die schon mit dem ersten Fall und der Errettung des Göttlichen gegeben ist. Nicht die Einsicht in den dynamischen Charakter des mythischen Geschehens rettet den einzelnen. Weil das so ist, kann es gnostische Schriften geben, die nur das himmlische Pleroma und die Entstehung des Nichtigen schildern.⁴⁷ Seine Überwindung, die gar nicht mehr berichtet wird, ist dann implizit durch die Mitteilung der Entstehung des Nichtigen und damit seine Aufdeckung gegeben. Solche gnostischen Schriften wären—und zwar, wie z.B. im Falle des Eugnostosbriefes, ausdrücklich als Lehrschriften—nur schwer denkbar, wenn der dynamische Charakter des Gesamtgeschehens entscheidend wäre.

Zwar hat der Mythos, wenn man so will, insofern „dynamischen Charakter“, als sein Geschehen auf ein Ziel zuläuft: die endgültige „Aufzehrung“ alles Nichtigen. Aber diese „Dynamik“ ist nicht darin begründet, daß jeweils eine Geschehensstufe die andere aus sich hervortreibt, sondern wird dadurch ermöglicht, daß der Schöpferwille Gottes begrenzt ist. So, wie er nämlich nur ein ganz bestimmtes Pleroma aus sich entläßt, so ist auch das Nichtige, das als seine Negation entsteht, nicht unendlich. Deshalb kann es auch einmal „aufgezehrt“ werden, und das Geschehen des Mythos kann zu einem Ende kommen. Für den einzelnen Gnostiker ist aber nicht das entscheidend, sondern die Tatsache, daß er selbst Erkenntnis erlangt hat und damit schon vollkommen ist, schon die Wahrheit *ist*.⁴⁸ Nicht Dynamik ist daher das unterscheidende Merkmal des Mythos—daß eine Etappe als aus der anderen hervorgehend geschildert wird, bindet vielmehr nur die im Prinzip immer gleichen Einzelschilderungen der Errettung vor dem Nichtigen durch Erkenntnis zu einem Gesamtgeschehen zusammen. Jeder einzelne Erlösungsvorgang ist nur Nachvollzug des ersten innergöttlichen Geschehens. Strukturprinzip des Mythos ist daher nicht die Bewegung, sondern die Wiederholung. Praktisch heißt das, daß z.B. die verschiedenen Phasen in der Gestaltung der Achamoth und ebenso in der Gestaltwerdung des Menschen⁴⁹ jeweils dasselbe besagen, näm-

⁴⁷ Vgl. den Eugnostosbrief. Dort heißt es nach der Schilderung von 12 Äonen, 72 Kräften und 360 Firmamenten, die alle „vollkommen und gut“ sind, plötzlich: „und so trat der Mangel der Weiblichkeit in Erscheinung“ (85,7ff.). Vgl. auch Irenäus, Haer. 1,29.

⁴⁸ Ev. Ver. [GTr] 43,19f.; 42,25f.

⁴⁹ Vgl. Irenäus, Haer. 1,4,1 und 1,4,5 bzw. 1,5,6, die Gabe des Pneuma an den Menschen, und 1,6,1 u.ö., sein Erkennen in dieser Welt.

lich: Gott schenkt Erkenntnis und überwindet damit das Nichtigke, so wie er der Sophia Erkenntnis geschenkt hat.

Daß Gott Erkenntnis schenkt, ist entscheidend und wird durch den Mythos verkündet. Dieser ist m.E. daher nicht als objektive Geschichte des Seins zu verstehen, die dadurch in Gang kommt, daß die „Gottheit“ ... „aus der Ruhe ewiger Präexistenz in eine Bewegung versetzt wird“.⁵⁰ Wodurch und warum „wird“ sie in Bewegung versetzt?

Daß der Mythos auch nicht als Heilsgeschichte aufgefaßt werden kann, wie es manchmal geschieht, scheint mir eindeutig. Er denkt völlig unhistorisch. Das kann hier nicht näher ausgeführt werden.⁵¹

3. Schließlich folgt daraus das Wichtigste: Der Valentinianismus kann m.E. nur als Versuch verstanden werden, einer Glaubensüberzeugung Ausdruck zu verleihen. Ausgangspunkt aller seiner Spekulationen ist die Gewißheit, durch Christus erlöst zu sein. Sie wird als neue Erkenntnis beschrieben und zwar Erkenntnis des gnädig schenkenden Gottes. Der Mythos erklärt, warum diese Erkenntnis Leben, Wahrheit und Sein ist, bzw. was das—überwundene—Nichtige ist. D.h. aber, daß der Valentinianismus *nicht* aus der „immanenten Erfahrung einer Kluft“ zwischen der Welt und dem Menschen hervorgegangen ist.⁵² Denn was „Welt“ ist und daß sie furchtbar ist, erfährt der Gnostiker erst aus der Offenbarung. Keine immanente Erfahrung kann das Ausmaß der Gewalt dieser „Welt“ ausloten. Der Mensch erfährt von sich aus die Furchtbarkeit der Welt ja nur nach Art von wirren, unwirklichen Traumbildern, die vergehen, sobald er erkennt.⁵³

⁵⁰ H. Jonas, „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“ (s. oben Anm. 8), 629 (Unterstreichung von mir).

⁵¹ Vgl. dazu oben S. 328.

⁵² H. Jonas, „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“ (s. oben Anm. 8), 631. Im persönlichen Gespräch machte mich Prof. Jonas auf die letzten Seiten des 2. Bandes seines Gnosisbuches aufmerksam, auf denen sich sehr genaue „Bemerkungen über das Verhältnis von Erlebnis und Denken“ finden (219ff.). Sie klären das Verhältnis der gnostischen Spekulation zu mystisch ekstatischen Erfahrungen, in dem Sinne, daß „die Theorie als Antizipation (nicht Projektion) der Erfahrung“ gesehen wird „—die Umkehrung des Verhältnisses also, wie es der Psychologismus sieht“ (219). „Gewiß ist auch für uns das spekulative System eine ‚Projektion‘—aber nicht von gehabten Erfahrungen und Erlebnissen (eher von möglichen, wenn man paradox sein will), sondern Projektion einer Gesamthaltung zum Sein, die dessen spezifische theoretische Auslegung zum dringlichsten Anliegen macht“ (222). So gern ich dem zustimme, scheinen mir doch die gnostischen Spekulationen nicht voll verständlich zu sein, ohne daß man noch einen Schritt weitergeht und sie als das christlicher Offenbarung nachfolgende Denken begreift. Denn nur dort sehe ich die Vorstellung eines Nichtigen vorgebildet, dessen Erkenntnisgrund ausschließlich in der Offenbarung gegeben ist.

⁵³ Ev.Ver. [GTr] 28,32-30,4.

Einsicht in das Wesen des Nichtigen und die Bedrohung, die es darstellte, erwächst ihm erst aus der Erkenntnis.⁵⁴ Daher die „Bestürzung“, „als das Wort in Erscheinung trat“.⁵⁵ Die valentinianische Lehre spiegelt daher, wie mir scheint, nicht „einen menschlichen Zustand der Entfremdung“ wider.⁵⁶ Skepsis führt nicht zur Gnosis.⁵⁷

V

Diese Schlußfolgerungen sind bisher nur vom Valentinianismus aus gezogen worden. Die charakteristischen Merkmale seiner Konzeption finden sich m.E. aber auch in denen anderer gnostischer Schulen wieder. Das sei hier nur kurz an zwei Beispielen demonstriert.

1. Im Apokryphon des Johannes wird zum Fall der Sophia gesagt, daß sie ein Bild aus sich heraus in Erscheinung treten lassen wollte, obwohl der Geist ihr nicht zugestimmt hatte. Ohne die Zustimmung und Gewährung des Geistes erlangt zu haben, bringt sie es hervor, und zwar „wegen des προύνικον, das in ihr war“ (BG 37,10f.). Damit wird ihr Tun zwar offensichtlich negativ qualifiziert, doch unmittelbar anschließend heißt es: „Ihr Denken konnte nicht tatenlos (ἀργός) werden.“ Offensichtlich besteht also das Wesen eines Äons darin zu „denken“, hervorzubringen, und kann daher gar nicht unterbunden werden.⁵⁸ Das bestätigt sich, wenn man die Art des Zustandekommens des vorher geschilderten Pleromas beachtet. Dort bittet jeweils ein Äon um die Entstehung des nächstfolgenden, die Bitte wird ihm gewährt, und der Äon tritt in Erscheinung, und beide danken (28,5-29,8; 31,5-9). Im Unterschied zu diesem mehrfach geschilderten Geschehen wird die Bitte der Sophia nicht gewährt. D.h. aber: Der „Fall“ der Sophia ist nicht eigentlich ihre Schuld, denn ihr Handeln entspricht

⁵⁴ Vgl. Ev. Ver. [GT] 26,23ff.

⁵⁵ Ev. Ver. [GT] 26,4ff. Besonders eindrücklich ist das *rückblickende* Erschrecken des Erkennenden in der Kosmogonie Manis bei Theodor bar Konai geschildert, die mit folgenden Worten endet: „Da schrie und weinte Adam; furchtbar erhob er seine Stimme wie ein brüllender Löwe, raufte sich die Haare, schlug (sich die Brust) und sprach: ‚Wehe, wehe über den Bildner meines Leibes, über den Fessler meiner Seele und über die Empörer, die mich geknechtet haben‘“ (in der Übersetzung H. H. Schaeders, in: R. Reitzenstein und H. H. Schaefer, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Darmstadt 1965 [Nachdruck von 1926] 347).

⁵⁶ H. Jonas, „Typologische und historische Abgrenzung“ (s. oben Anm. 8), 631.

⁵⁷ So jetzt K. Rudolph, *Die Gnosis. Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion* (Leipzig 1977) 298f.

⁵⁸ Vgl. Irenäus, Haer. 1,2,4; Harvey I, 20,3ff.

durchaus ihrer Wesensart (so wie es dem valentinianischen Äon Sophia entsprach, nach Gotteserkenntnis zu verlangen). Der „Fall“ ist vielmehr darin begründet, daß sie auf ihren Wunsch hin nicht die Zustimmung und Gewährung des Geistes erhält. Gott ist also auch im Apokryphon des Johannes der, der nicht nur zustimmt (erwählt), sondern auch nicht zustimmt (nicht erwählt). Das realisiert sich im „Fall“ der Sophia. Die Fehlgeburt, die sie hervorbringt, ist erste Verkörperung und Sichtbarmachung dessen, dem Gott nicht zustimmt. Es ist das Nichtige (Böse), so wie Sein auch hier dadurch entsteht, daß Gott es „gewährt“. Die Überwindung des Nichtigen geschieht dann ganz entsprechend den valentinianischen Entwürfen;⁵⁹ besonders deutlich ist hier das Motiv der Selbstzugrunderichtung des Bösen.⁶⁰

2. Aber auch gänzlich andersartige Systeme lassen sich von den aufgezeigten Prinzipien her verstehen. So z.B. das des Basilides, das scheinbar gar keinen Fall enthält. Hier „will“ der—nichtseiende—Gott einen Kosmos schaffen.⁶¹ Ausdrücklich wird angemerkt, damit sei nicht diese in Raum und Zeit ausgedehnte Welt gemeint, sondern ein „Weltsamen“ (σπέρμα κόσμου), „nichtseiend“ wie der nichtseiende Gott.⁶² Das muß betont werden, um nicht das im gnostischen Sinne fatale Mißverständnis aufkommen zu lassen, Gott selbst habe die körperliche Welt direkt hervorgebracht. Diese ist vielmehr auch bei Basilides potenziertes, materialisiertes Nichtiges.⁶³ Im „Weltsamen“ ist aber dennoch „alles“ schon enthalten wie in einem Samenkorn die zukünftige Pflanze.⁶⁴ Genauer gesagt enthält der Samen eine dreifache „Sohnschaft“, von der die erste „fein“, die zweite „grob“, die dritte „der Reinigung bedürftig“ ist.⁶⁵ Wie daraus das Geschehen des Mythos entfaltet wird, ist bekannt. Worauf es hier ankommt, ist, daß die gesamte Sohnschaft, d.h. auch die reinigungsbedürftige, ausdrücklich als dem nichtseienden Gott ὁμοούσιος bezeichnet wird. Wie kann das sein? Es klärt sich m.E. von dem am Valentinianismus erkannten

⁵⁹ Vgl. z.B. BG 53,10ff.

⁶⁰ Vgl. BG 54,5ff. und 59,9ff.

⁶¹ Hippolyt, Haer. 7,21,1ff.

⁶² Haer. 7,21,4.

⁶³ Von hier aus läßt sich auch die sonst dunkle Parenthese aus Haer. 7,22,2 verstehen, die ich so übersetzen möchte: „Basilides scheut und fürchtet sehr [den Gedanken], das gewordene Seiende könne durch Hervorbringung [scil. Gottes] zustandekommen.“ Sie ist abgesetzt gegen eine vorhergehende Bemerkung Hippolyts, es sei unsinnig zu behaupten, aus einer *Hervorbringung* des nichtseienden Gottes (τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) sei Nichtseiendes (τὸ οὐκ ὄν) hervorgegangen.

⁶⁴ Haer. 7,21,3.

⁶⁵ Haer. 7,22,7.

Grundgedanken christlicher Gnosis her: Der Fall von Gottes Äonen wird bei Basilides zwar nicht als mythologisches Geschehen geschildert. Sein Sinngehalt ist aber nicht minder deutlich auch bei ihm damit gegeben, daß Gott in seinem ersten Gedanken eine reinigungsbedürftige Sohnschaft zuläßt. Der Fall ist also im Weltsamen impliziert. Ja, man könnte kaum deutlicher zum Ausdruck bringen, daß wirklich Göttliches fällt, als es Basilides mit dem unmittelbaren Nebeneinander von κατὰ πάντα τῷ οὐκ ὄντι θεῷ ὁμοούσιος und ἀποκαθάρσεως δεόμενον (7,22,7) tut. Die Ursachen für die Notwendigkeit dieses Falles, den der Demiurg dann nur sichtbarlich nachvollzieht⁶⁶, sind dieselben wie im Valentinianismus. Denn auch Basilides' Theologie gründet auf Erwählung⁶⁷—und damit ist Nicht-Erwählung (Nichtiges) mitgesetzt.

VI

Ob die hier vorgetragene Auffassung sich auch an anderen gnostischen Systemen bewährt, bedarf gewiß weiterer Überprüfung. Schon jetzt läßt sich m.E. aber als Ergebnis festhalten:

1. Die valentinianische Gnosis erweist sich als im Kern christlich. Das unverwechselbar christliche Element, das ihrer Spekulation zugrundeliegt, läßt sich in dem Satz zusammenfassen: Gott will dem Nichtigten verfallen, damit Gott das Nichtige überwindet. Der Satz impliziert eine Trennung von fallendem und rettendem Gott. Das ist ein häretischer Satz, aber er ist nicht ohne das Christentum denkbar.

2. Der Satz erwies sich auch als Grundlage anderer nichtvalentinianischer gnostischer Systeme. Ob er Grundlage aller bzw. welcher der „Gnosis“ zugerechneten Schriften ist, muß weiter untersucht werden. Allerdings ist denkbar, daß sich die Entfernung vom christlichen Zentrum (dem gekreuzigten und auferstandenen Gott), die schon in diesem Satz zum Ausdruck kommt, fortsetzt und dann Systeme hervorgebracht werden, die in letzter Konsequenz wieder völlig heidnisch sind. Diese Schlußfolgerung ist offensichtlich aber nicht umkehrbar. Denn es scheint mir auch kein Zufall zu sein, daß Hippolyt Systeme, auf die das u.U. zutreffen könnte, reichlicher zitiert als der ein Menschenalter früher schreibende Irenäus, der sie aus polemischen Gründen sicher auch gern erwähnt hätte, wenn sie ihm bekannt geworden wären.—

⁶⁶ Haer. 7,23,3-7; vgl. 26,1-4.

⁶⁷ Vgl. dazu Clemens, Str. 2,10,1.

Einen Endpunkt in der als möglich angedeuteten Entwicklung stellt Mani dar. Hier hat die Entfernung schon ein solches Ausmaß erreicht, daß im manichäischen System jetzt der Einfluß außerchristlicher Kulturen bestimmend sein kann.

3. Läßt sich so eine Entwicklungslinie von der christlichen Gnosis aus bis zu gnostischen Spätformen hin als möglich aufzeigen—und zwar in Übereinstimmung mit den einzigen sicheren Datierungskriterien, die wir in der Gnosisforschung haben (Gnostiker des Irenäus, des Hippolyt, Mani)—so scheint mir umgekehrt auch verstehbar, wie die christliche Gnosis ihrerseits aus zeitlich vor ihr liegenden Stadien christlicher Theologie erwachsen ist. Eine wichtige Stufe auf dem Weg zur christlichen Gnosis stellt m.E. das selbst gewiß noch nicht gnostische Johannesevangelium dar. Sobald nämlich die Herrlichkeit, mit der der johanneische Jesus ausgestattet ist, nicht mehr—wie es m.E. für das Johannesevangelium gilt⁶⁸—im am Kreuz überwundenen Tod begründet ist, sondern davon losgelöst wird, ist der Schritt zur Gnosis getan.⁶⁹ Die Unterscheidung von unantastbarem himmlischen Offenbarer⁷⁰ und Fleischgewordenem, die im Johannesevangelium zwar noch nicht vollzogen, aber als Möglichkeit angedeutet ist, bereitet dann unmittelbar die „christlich-gnostische“ Trennung von fallendem und rettendem Gott vor.

Folgt man diesem Gedankengang, so läßt sich der sachliche Grund für die Entstehung der Gnosis in folgendem sehen: Sie erwächst aus dem (menschlich verständlichen, theologisch vergebliehen, aber zweifellos nur innerchristlich möglichen) Versuch, das Ärgernis am Kreuz unter gleichzeitiger Aufrechterhaltung seiner Heilsbedeutung zu vermeiden.

4. Zu datieren wäre die Entstehung der Gnosis etwa auf das erste Viertel des 2. christlichen Jhs. In diesem Datum stimme ich mit der jüngst erschienenen Untersuchung „Zur Entstehung der Gnosis“ von Heinrich Kraft überein.⁷¹ Seine Datierung beruht auf dem Nachweis, daß die „Verwilderung“ der klassischen Philosophie und ihr „Kontakt

⁶⁸ Vgl. Joh. 12,27ff.; 19,11.

⁶⁹ Bzw. sobald, anders gesagt, in Jesus zwei Wirklichkeitsebenen, die des Fleischgewordenen und die des himmlischen Offenbarers, streng unterschieden und voneinander getrennt werden, wie es Frau Schottroffs Interpretation schon für das Johannesevangelium, m.E. nicht zu Recht, behauptet (s. oben Anm. 44). Die Möglichkeit dieser Interpretation zeigt aber, daß tatsächlich eine Tendenz dahin besteht.

⁷⁰ Vgl. Joh. 14,30.

⁷¹ In: *Die Einheit der Kirche. Festgabe Peter Meinhold zum 70. Geburtstag* (hrsg. von L. Hein; Wiesbaden 1977) 325-338.

mit den verschiedenen Wissenschaften zweiter Ordnung", die „erst im Verlauf des ersten christlichen Jahrhunderts" stattfanden, Voraussetzung der Gnosis ist.⁷²

Das gibt mir die Gelegenheit zu einem notwendigen Hinweis. Selbstverständlich will ich mit den vorgelegten Bemerkungen nicht leugnen, daß die gnostischen Systeme auch außerchristliche Voraussetzungen haben. Für die valentinianische Gnosis besonders wichtig ist beispielsweise jene von Kraft aufgezeigte „verwilderte" platonische Philosophie mit ihrer Konzeption einer erlösenden Selbstoffenbarung der Wahrheit, die der einzelne erwarten muß, weil er sie nicht selbst erreichen kann. Dennoch bestimmen solcherlei außerchristliche Einflüsse nur die Art der Interpretation des *christlichen* Kerns. Dieser ist für das Ganze bestimmend. Das zeigt sich, was das Beispiel der Philosophie betrifft, an einem charakteristischen Unterschied zwischen deren und der gnostischen Erlösungsvorstellung. Während nämlich dort das Erwarten der „Erleuchtung"⁷³ doch niemals von der eigenen Anstrengung des Erwartenden losgelöst wird, ist gnostischer Erlösungsempfang geradezu dadurch definiert, daß beides voneinander getrennt wird. „Denn nicht die Werke (πρῶξις) führen ins Pleroma, sondern der Same" (d.h. die Gabe) „der von dort ... ausgesandt wird. ..."⁷⁴

5. Abschließend ist festzuhalten: Datierungsfragen möglicherweise einer Lösung näher zu bringen, ist nicht der eigentliche Sinn einer Untersuchung über Gnosis und Christentum und war auch nicht der Anlaß für diesen Versuch. Ein Beitrag dazu ergibt sich nur gleichsam sekundär. Wichtiger scheint mir, daß die Gnosis für die Erforschung der Theologiegeschichte des 2. Jhs. erschlossen wird. Daß sie eine der stärksten Herausforderungen für Theologie und Kirche dieser so entscheidenden Zeit war, ist als historisches Faktum immer bekannt gewesen. Wenn damit zu rechnen wäre, daß sie eine innerchristlich entstandene, christliche Häresie ist, hätte dies Faktum aber eine ganz andere theologische Tragweite und Brisanz, als wenn es sich lediglich

⁷² a.a.O., 338. „Die Gnosis entsteht noch nicht da, wo die verbreiteten Anschauungen der Popularphilosophie zu gelegentlichem oder dauerndem Gebrauch in das Christentum eindringen. Von Gnosis können wir vielmehr erst dann sprechen, wenn die christliche Verkündigung in die religiöse Philosophie oder die heidnische Religion eindringt und dabei als Gnosis in dem beschriebenen Sinn aufgefaßt wird" (337f.).

⁷³ Dieser und andere ähnliche Begriffe vielfach nachgewiesen bei A. Wlosok: *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis. Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Terminologie der gnostischen Erlösungsvorstellung* (Heidelberg 1960) passim.

⁷⁴ Irenäus, *Haer.* 1,6,4; Harvey I, 58,4-6.

um eine heidnische Erlösungsbewegung handelte, die dem Christentum Konkurrenz machte. Denn der Theologehistoriker müßte sich dann Rechenschaft darüber geben, wie es zu dieser Häresie kommen und wie sie von den großen alkatholischen Vätern überwunden werden konnte. Gnosisforschung führte, so gesehen, zu den zentralen Themen christlicher Theologie.

DISCUSSION

BARBARA ALAND: I THINK one of the main difficulties in all discussions of the phenomenon of Gnosis—it turns up also in our seminar—lies in the fact that we not only base our understanding of Gnosis on quite different kinds of texts, but also base our interpretation of the texts on different kinds of presuppositions. I therefore want to try to point out exactly what my interest was in producing this paper. It consisted in asking whether Christian Gnosis contributes to the history of theology in the second century, and if so, what kind of contribution this is. The same interest also determined the texts from which I proceeded. Out of those writings which are reckoned to Christian Gnosis, I chose as a starting point the *Gospel of Truth*. After a rather lengthy analysis of its contents I came to the conclusion that its speculations can only be understood against the background of Christianity and as an interpretation of the Christ event or *Christusereignis*. The crucial point in this thesis is that in the *Gospel of Truth* God himself, and this means God's aeons, falls into nothingness in order to make possible the overcoming of nothingness by God. This I can only understand as an attempt to interpret the Christ event. In my opinion this idea cannot be explained from non-Christian mythology or philosophy. I have tried to indicate the consequences of such a view. It remains to be seen whether, and to what extent, this interpretation of Gnosis can also be applied to other Gnostic texts.

G. C. STEAD: Without distracting from the sharp outline of Valentinian teaching sketched by this paper, I would like to discuss some presuppositions natural in the ancient world which can help to make difficult points of this sketch more comprehensible.

First, I am disturbed by the exegesis of the notion that God jealously withheld knowledge of himself from all the aeons except one. Of course, there are Old Testament precedents for the portrayal of jealousy in

God, but God in the *Gospel of Truth* is so marked by self-giving generosity that I wonder if we can get more insight on this subject by exploring the consequences of the classical commonplace that like is known by like. Thus, only the aeons closest in likeness to God can understand him. His self-utterance in the aeons leads to progressively less perfect revelations of himself. He can reveal himself perfectly to $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$ because it is something like consubstantial to him. But the other aeons are by nature less perfect in their realizations of God, and so they are less capable of realizing their source. Thus, in a sense, God must withhold knowledge of himself from them in order to be what he is.

Second, I would note that the distinction of creation and emanation was less sharp in the ancient world than in later Christian tradition. In early Christianity, we don't commonly find a clear difference between God's letting forth genuine offspring and his molding things. Of course, in a way the distinction emerges in Gnosticism with the contrast of the true God and the demiurge. But often there was so strong a belief in man as a child of God who bears the seed of God within him that the distinction between a subsidiary divine emanation and a fallible human creature could be lost. It is in this way that I would understand Professor Aland's difficult notion that the tragedy of Sophia is the tragedy of every Christian and that the fall of Sophia is the Gnostic interpretation of the crucifixion of Christ. I confess that I find this hard, and I have described the only approximation to it which I can find.

ELAINE PAGELS: (*To Barbara Aland*) I have trouble with your statements that the Gnostics emptied the death of Christ and that the difference of Christianity from Gnosticism lies in whether or not Christ is seen as truly endangered. Is the Logos really in danger for Athanasius? I can't see that he is. Or I could as easily see that he is endangered in the *Gospel of Truth*, where there is an emotional outbreak of praise for his mercy which is related to his suffering and death on the cross.

ALAND: A Christian theology must presuppose that Christ is truly endangered at the cross. For Gnosticism and the *Gospel of Truth*, however, the body is only the $\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\mu\alpha$ of the fallen aeon, Sophia, as is the whole world of time and space. Death, then, is defined not by bodily dying but by not knowing God. Thus, Christ, who comes into the world knowing God, can't really die by definition, and his death

on the cross is not really death in the Gnostic sense. This is what I mean by the Gnostic emptying of Christ's death. While the Gnostics can speak of his suffering, it is only the *πλάνη* grabbing at what she can reach of Christ, and she can only touch the body. This is not a genuine Christian position.

HELMUT KOESTER: How is this really different from other Christian texts? I think that we must have a more specific argument for the genuine Christology from which the *Gospel of Truth* is said to deviate. It would be difficult to say that Christ is more threatened in John than in the *Gospel of Truth*. And even the synoptics speak of Christ's knowing the Father; only those to whom he gives knowledge can themselves know the Father. In addition, he predicts not only his death but also his resurrection. How is this different from the Christ who knows the outcome in the *Gospel of Truth*?

ALAND: I don't find it difficult to say that Christ is more threatened in John than in the *Gospel of Truth*—out of the reasons I just tried to explain. But of course this is a question of the interpretation of John. I can't agree with Mrs. Schottroff, for example, who separated two levels, two different *wirklichkeiten* in this gospel. Instead, I think, Christ's *δόξα* in John is grounded in his death on the cross, and there is no real separation of the two aspects of Christ.

KOESTER: No, but we don't need to affirm such a separation in order to see that John presents a Christ who knows what death will mean for him, who knows that it is not an ultimate victory either over him or over his disciples.

ALAND: But knowledge in the *Gospel of Truth* is a different thing. In *Gospel of Truth* 17, it says, "Error became powerful; it fashioned its own matter foolishly, not having known the truth. It set about making a creature, with all its might preparing, in beauty, the substitute for the truth." The entire *Gospel of Truth* is to be read in light of this sentence. All the world of time and space and death is said to be the creature of evil, materialized nothingness. Under this definition, Christ could not die. John never thought of such a position.

KOESTER: Yes, I see your point. But you have transferred a metaphysical, cosmological judgment to a Christological context in a way that the *Gospel of Truth* itself does not explicitly do. You have combined a statement which is not surprising in a Gnostic context, perhaps

not surprising in a Hellenistic context, and then drawn a conclusion with respect to Christ's relation to his body.

ALAND: Yes, I have.

KOESTER: What is typically Gnostic here isn't what grows from a Christological observation but is a metaphysical statement that can be made apart from Christology. The explanation of spirit and matter in general belongs to a much wider context of understanding the world and the relation of a person to his body. It need not be bound up with a particular Christology. Otherwise, all this dualist metaphysics would have to be explained as a deviation from a genuine Christology.

ALAND: My concern was not with this dualist view; of course, it is found in other traditions as well. Instead, I was concerned with the view which defines death in such a way that we can say that God's aeons fall and die, that God himself dies. And God overcomes death. I find this nowhere else. God is made the cause of evil, *causa permittens*, not the *causa efficiens*.

PAGELS: (*To Aland*) We have different readings of the passage from the *Gospel of Truth* which you just cited. The text speaks about the ignorance of the Father that occasions anguish and terror. Error is said to grow powerful and make a creature; then the text continues, "For they were nothing—the anguish and the oblivion and the creature of lying." I take the creature of lying to be involved with the anguish and the oblivion, not with materiality *per se*. I disagree with Birger Pearson's view that *πλάνη* is the demiurge; I think that the error is involved with the anguish and the oblivion in which one misconceives material experience as if it were the whole of reality. Thus, it is the illusory interpretation of matter, not matter itself, which is the creature of lying.

HANS JONAS: Where does *πλάσμα* fit into this reading?

PAGELS: I don't know, if it means what it often does in creation accounts. But I think that when the text says that error "fashioned its own matter foolishly, not having known the truth," it is referring to matter as it is used to obscure divine reality, not to the creation of matter itself.

HAROLD ATTRIDGE: Like Professor Koester, I also find difficulties in Professor Aland's claim for the centrality of Christology. It seems

to me that the *Gospel of Truth* contains both metaphysics and metaphor, and they must be distinguished. Aland says that it is distinctively Christian to say that God dies, but the devolution of spirits into matter is not a Christian idea. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, for example, the spirit becomes so involved with matter that it loses its self-identity; then it is open to the process of reintegration and ascent. This traditional pattern of the devolution of spirits is the metaphysical framework of the *Gospel of Truth*. The text applies this metaphysics to the metaphor of Christ's death and then in turn understands this death allegorically as purely ignorance. Thus, the metaphysical pattern of the work antedates both the Christian story and its allegorization. The Christ event is interpreted in existing terms, and Christological reflection is thus not the heart of Valentinian speculation but is only secondary.

JONAS: (*To Aland*) Your enthralling paper presents both a tribute and a challenge to me, to which I would like to respond rather fully. You come to the crucial conclusion that the *Gospel of Truth* is to be understood as fundamentally an interpretation and an elaboration of the experience of the Christ event. It is thus Christian in essence, notwithstanding its being a "heretical" interpretation of the Christ event: heretical is the "Gnostic" turn which, however, is itself motivated by the initial experience as an attempt to explicate or explain it, that is, to integrate it into a speculative, cosmo-theological framework of its own. The latter, then, which we call "Gnostic" and encounter also elsewhere, is Christian in its origin and nature, being a response—however deviant—to the Christological *erlebnis*. Now this understanding, taking the *Gospel of Truth* as paradigmatic for Gnosticism as such, clearly decides the choice between the two alternative possibilities of classifying Gnosticism you set forth at the beginning of your paper, to wit: *either* to see Christian and non-Christian Gnosis as substantively different, sharing only some kind of "Gnostic" gloss or trimming, which is all that the class name signifies; *or* to see Gnosticism as a substantive, self-identical whole, *and then* as essentially Christian, if indeed the *Gospel of Truth* is both essentially Christian and paradigmatic. You take your stand firmly in the second alternative.

But aren't there in fact three possibilities? There may be, as you say, (1) an irreducible plurality of *disjecta membra* only loosely related by peripheral resemblances, Christianity being the governing ele-

ment in some, and something else in others; or (2) a substantive unity in variety, the unity provided by the Christ experience at its source, even though this may be submerged in apparently non-Christian varieties: these are then to be understood as derivative from the Christian original, so that *all* Gnosticism, manifestly or not, is essentially Christian—your choice; or (3) modifying the thesis of unity: Gnosticism *is* substantively one, a formative principle of its own, but in its concrete formations receives Christian, Jewish, pagan (etc.) glosses—my choice, as you know. In other words, the predicate of “trimming” can apply either to what is Gnostic or to what is Christian, Jewish, etc.

How, then, do we decide? You are right that the *Gospel of Truth* is profoundly Christian. But you can't say the same of the *Apocryphon of John* (the naming of “Christ” among the aeons hardly suffices for that), and yet it is Gnostic. Is its Gnosticism to be seen as less genuinely Gnostic than that of the *Gospel of Truth*? Or are the works rather so related that what they have in common qua Gnostic is governing, and the Christian or non-Christian character is only a variation?

You have taken your stand on the first option; you have said that the whole scheme, not only some passages or twists, is understandable only with the Christian presupposition. You are forced, then, to say that the *Apocryphon of John* is Gnostic by grace of having borrowed from a primarily Christian conception while nominally minimizing the Christian appearance and dressing itself up with non-Christian myth. This is on its face an implausible position intrinsically and chronologically (it seems more archaic than Valentinian speculation), and this implausibility is a heavy weight for your theory to bear. [POSTSCRIPT: The burden is heavier still with such Nag Hammadi pieces as the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World* (CG II,5), and the Sethian tractates VII,1 and 2, which do entirely without Christ.—H. J.]

ALAND: Yes, I see the point of this. But I dare to contend that even the *Apocryphon of John* can be understood only by presupposing the Christian element.

JONAS: You have gone further than I realized.

ALAND: In this text also, there is the idea that God permits evil in order to overcome death; since God does not consent to Sophia's

wish to bring forth a creation, her fall is here too owing to God. This seems to me to be an idea understandable only by Christian thinking.

JONAS: You say that I have given no answer to the fundamental question of why God was bestirred from his eternal existence into activity. The answer must be that, in the nature of things, there can be no answer to such a primordial query. As Immanuel Kant said, the thought that the Godhead should have rested for aeons and then bestirred itself to the creation of a world staggers the human mind and makes it helpless. Once we accept that this ultimate puzzle defies solution, then we may freely speculate about why the world existing in consequence of this unfathomable beginning is this kind of a world, how it has come to be such. But we cannot ask why in the first place some part of eternity is no longer eternity or why time began. Think of Plotinus: he tried to make his theory ontological and timeless. The emanation of the hierarchy of being from God was said to be eternal. Yet, at the point where there is the passing into time, he spoke of an event, the *τόλμα* of the hypostasis *ψυχή*. Thus, he fell into the very mythological language he criticized the Gnostics for using.

The Gnostics devised ingenious answers about why a downward movement begins, but they don't explain it to any rational satisfaction. Their symbolism can show only that once there is plurality in or around God, something of the divine realm beyond the self-contained resting in itself, then there can be gradation, distance, difference, and the possibilities of selfhood, freedom, and even *τόλμα*. What the Valentinians explained, then, was not the cross; it was not that they were forced by the cross to evolve a theory of being. But, because there was a view of the world, of flesh and alienated soul, of sin and death, of the split between the world and God, they were able to give a symbolic theory of the origin of this split. Then, with this scheme, the overcoming of the split by the cross was one of the remedies allowed by the system: a downward movement in principle allows the possibility of a reversal. But it is turning things upside down to explain the whole scheme of the devolution from the godhead as a secondary function of accounting for the redemption in Christ. This is implausible in itself, and it is the more so as it makes all the other, less Christian Gnostic systems into inauthentic distortions.

You have made a bold effort at the vast task of reinterpreting the Gnostic evidence. As for the *Gospel of Truth* itself, you have given a marvelous interpretation, but then you concluded too much from it.

I could accept your conclusion that Gnosticism is understandable against the background of Christianity and often as an interpretation of the Christ event if only you did not say that it is exclusively and in all its forms understandable by that event. I am charging you only with the sin of overstatement!

ALAND: (*To Jonas*) You have said that the starting point for all Gnosis is in a scepticism, a disgust for this world. I don't believe that scepticism leads to Gnosis. Instead, I believe that the starting point for Gnosis is an infinite feeling of freedom, of redemption.

JONAS: I have not said "scepticism."

ALAND: This is true; it is Schenke's term. But you would say an anti-cosmic attitude, a feeling of a split, an estrangement between the self and the world.

JONAS: Between the world and God. Scepticism is not part of my argument now; I am talking about the split between the true being and the not-true-being in which we are involved here.

ALAND: I see the starting point for Gnosis in a boundless joy at being released. In the Gnostic writings, this is explained as a form of knowledge. When we have this knowledge, we can see that we have been in ignorance and death.

JONAS: Ah, retrospectively! You are saying that Yaldabaoth and the archons were conceived in retrospect, out of a new, jubilant feeling of being free. This is a new experiment in dealing intellectually with the Gnostic phenomenon, which puts first the joy of release and then the sense of past oppression and the picturing of its agents.

WAYNE MEEKS: (*To Aland*) What you have just said makes you seem much closer to Professor Pagels than your discussion of her paper seemed to indicate. It appeared to me then that you were addressing the material as if one answered the question of why people became Gnostics in the second century by uncovering the intellectual conundrum in their system, apart from consideration of practical problems and social formation. Pagels, in contrast, was asking about the social setting for Gnostic language. I can see now less difference than I had thought.

PAGELS: (*To Aland*) I also better understand your point now. When one looks at Nirvana from a Western philosophical viewpoint, it seems

nihilistic, and from this perspective it is. A Buddhist, however, can see a religious ecstasy there. So also we can look at the Gnostic writings as religious texts. On this view, even a Gnostic depreciation of the demiurge could reflect the joyous experience of freedom from constraints. This ecstatic expression is there in many texts. But I wonder if such an experience had to be Christian. Could it not have had different forms—Buddhist, pagan, Hermetic, etc.?

ALAND: (*To Pagels and Attridge*) To say not only that God dies but also that he dies to overcome death is distinctively Christian. Ecstatic expression, of course, is found elsewhere, but the Christian view of the death of Christ is something different. It also does not exist in older mythologies. Attis dies and is dead, Osiris dies, and rules the world of the dead. But in Christianity, with Christ's death, death itself is different.

ATTRIDGE: I was not speaking about mythological parallels for the story of Christ's death; instead, I was concerned with the metaphysical systems about $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$'s devolution into the material world and reintegration into the transcendent realm. These are earlier than Christianity. Christian Gnosticism simply put a level of metaphor over this earlier metaphysics: the death which Christ experiences is a metaphor for the process of going through ignorance and reattaining Gnosis. Both the physical and the epistemological expressions of this view are prior to Christian Gnosticism.

STEAD: To speak of the "death of God" requires qualification of one $\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\mu$ or the other. We can speak of the death of a divine being or of God passing through death without being annihilated by it, but there can be no literal Christian affirmation of the death of God. Thus, I agree with Professor Attridge that the phrase must be in some sense a metaphor. It need not, however, be interpreted simply as a laying down of the body and its passions so that a purified spirit emerges. Christ did not simply die; he exposed himself to the forces of evil and demonstrated their powerlessness. I cannot myself follow Professor Aland in interpreting the myth of Sophia as God's own encounter with the "death" of ignorance, and seeing it as a derivative of the passion story; but I do see this story as an original Christian theme, which some Gnostics admittedly trivialized, but which the *Gospel of Truth* expounds with much power in its own characteristic idiom.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

WAYNE MEEKS: What is the agenda for future work?

HELMUT KOESTER: I would like to speak about what I have learned at this conference, especially when confronted with Professor Aland's paper. First, we need to reorder the whole of our work. From Barth and Bultmann we have inherited a concept of ancient Christian theology which is now called into question. We have had inklings of this new situation before, but now we can no longer continue to find room in our old pigeonholes for the new evidence. In Aland's paper I first saw a renewal of Adolph von Harnack's thesis, and perhaps it is. But it is interesting that it came from a Barthian theological viewpoint to which I also feel akin. This gives me second thoughts. Now we must rewrite Christian theology to reflect a more radical newness. Also, as papers like Professor Tardieu's have shown us, we need to develop—even go overboard with—a new empathy for what is not Christian. We can't begin from the axioms of Christian theology; in our study of antiquity, we can't apply even appealing theological statements like, "After Christ's death, death is different." As a believing child of the church, I claim the privilege *not* to use this as a presupposition of historical research.

MEEKS: How far have we come toward a delineation of Valentianism?

ELAINE PAGELS: With pleasure, I can say we've regressed! Many of our presuppositions have been exposed for what they are, and we can be more critical about what we mean by Valentianism.

BARBARA ALAND: (*To Koester*) Do you really think that these new texts justify a rewriting of the entire history of Christian theology? Aren't they perhaps a little bit too "crazy"?

KOESTER: I don't believe that! Our old schemes of categorization, developed by the last century of scholarship, are not adequate for the new texts. We must not simply fit the new evidence into the old schemes but rather develop new schemes, to be discarded in their turn.

MEEKS: It also appears that "orthodox Christianity" at this time was crazier than we have thought.

ALAND: I am reminded of the parallel of Qumran. The texts discovered there represented the views only of a small, out-of-the-way group. Might not the situation be similar with the new Gnostic texts?

KOESTER: I don't think so. These texts can't be simply set on one side as only one aspect of the subject. They extend their influence into all aspects of research with other texts. They contribute to the reconceiving of fundamental questions and to the new evaluation of long-known texts like the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Thus, all our old answers are called into question. I must confess I no longer know the answers.

HANS JONAS: I would also join in Professor Aland's *caveat*. All of these documents are the voices of a hopeless and vanishing minority within the growing Christian community. The texts are significant for a rewriting of the history of theology in the early centuries. But they are not representative.

KOESTER: But Walter Bauer thought that this minority of the third and fourth centuries was the majority of the second century.

MEEKS: Perspective is surely needed in this study. Our orthodox writers also will need a new reading since we now know more about the context in which they were working. Several of our participants have suggested directions in which such revisions should move.

On the other hand, we have not come very far toward clarifying the stages in the evolution of Valentinianism itself, nor have we addressed systematically the preliminary question, which extant sources can confidently be taken as representative of Valentinianism. It was apparent from our papers that some participants in the seminar disagreed with others on these questions, but we have only peripherally talked of criteria for deciding them, though they obviously remain a major part of the continuing task. The ways we approach this task may be different for some of us, I believe, as a result of the candid way in which we have brought our diverging hermeneutical approaches into confrontation here.

One of the most productive parts of our discussion has dealt with relationships between Valentinianism and Middle Platonism. We have been reminded that the Platonic tradition also developed a broad spectrum of interpretations in this period, in some ways rather analogous to the spread within Christianity. Furthermore, by observing certain structural analogies in the kinds of problems addressed by catholic Christians, by Gnostics, by the more conventional and by

the more mythologically interested Platonists, we have made some progress toward a more adequate picture of the intellectual environment of all these movements. Further interaction of the sort we have experienced here among specialists in patristics, Gnostic studies, and the history of philosophy is clearly desirable.

PART THREE

RESEARCH PAPERS:
VALENTINIANISM, PLATONISM, ICONOGRAPHY

THE DESCENT OF THE SOUL IN MIDDLE PLATONIC AND Gnostic THEORY

BY

JOHN DILLON

PERHAPS the chief problem that faces any religious or philosophical system which postulates, as does the Platonic, a primary state or entity of pure and unitary perfection, is that of explaining how from such a first principle anything further could have arisen. Any further development, after all, from a perfect principle must necessarily be a declination of some sort, and it is not easy to see why the supreme principle, if omnipotent, should want this to occur.

The solution resorted to in Platonism, and generally in Gnosticism as well, is the postulation of a female principle, either generated by or somehow arising beside the primal entity (which is invariably male). This is a principle of negativity, boundlessness and lack, and provokes the generation of the multiplicity of creation.

Arising out of this solution, however, is a further problem. Accepting that a world or universe of some sort is thus brought into being, how can we further explain the imperfect and disorderly nature of *our* world as it now exists? Something, surely, has gone wrong somewhere. There must at some stage, over and above the basic creation, have been a declination, a Fall.

Not necessarily, one may say. Plotinus, for instance, though he does give us in one tractate (4.8; and cf. 5.1.1) a rather vivid portrayal of the fall of the soul, also argues both elsewhere and in the same tractate, that the world has developed to its present state by a natural progression. There is nothing actually *wrong*. Since the first principle, the One, is supremely perfect, anything it produces must, since it must be different from it, necessarily be 'worse' than it, and the process of creation, once begun (though not of course at any point in time), must proceed through all possible stages of inferiority to the ultimate depth of nonbeing, which is unformed Matter. No specific *fall* is required. Such an attitude seems to Plotinus himself to derive its authority from Plato's *Timaeus* (4.8,1).

Yet Plotinus, as we know, entertained the idea of a fall of the soul,

and sees this belief also justified in Plato, particularly in the myth of the *Phaedrus*. What I wish to do in the present paper is to examine the various forms which this concept takes on in Middle Platonic thinkers, and then to direct a rather cursory glance at some Gnostic thinkers, such as Valentinus, who were more or less their contemporaries.

I will take as my point of reference the treatise *On the Soul* of the Neoplatonist Iamblichus,¹ composed around 300 A.D., as Iamblichus here sets out in a usefully scholastic form the heads under which the question of the descent of souls was normally discussed in later Platonism. He divides the question into various topics (p. 377.11 ff.): (1) the varieties of the descent of souls; (2) the varieties of the manners and purposes of descent; (3) the relation of the soul to the body, once descended; (4) times and modes of incorporation; (5) how the soul uses the body, (6) how the soul can be united with the Gods. Iamblichus refers to the views of a good many of his predecessors under these various heads, and I shall base myself on his account, confining myself, however, for the present purpose, to the first two subjects, namely, whence do souls descend, and why.

I would like to start with one Middle Platonic predecessor whom Iamblichus does not mention by name in this connexion, though he recognises the doctrine concerned (p. 378), namely Plutarch, and specifically the doctrine which Plutarch puts into the mouth of the Stranger whom his friend Sextius Sulla met in Carthage, in the dialogue *On the Face in the Moon*. Whether or not Plutarch himself stands over this account it is not essential for our purpose to decide; but I see no reason to doubt his basic endorsement of it. For the Stranger, the Moon is the repository of souls (943f.). After describing how souls reach the Moon, and what befalls them there, he describes the various ways in which and reasons why they descend thence (944cd). The first stage is for the *daimones*, as these disembodied, purified souls are termed, to come down as incorporeal administrators of the sub-lunar realm; but then it is envisaged that some, through the influence of some passion or other, will not perform their duties properly, and

¹ Preserved, in large fragments, in Stobaeus, *Anthologia* 49, p. 362ff. of Wachsmuth's edition (and, in short passages, elsewhere in the same work). There is a useful translation, with notes, by A.-J. Festugière, as Appendix I to vol. 3 of *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1953). I use Wachsmuth's pagination as a basis for reference.

these are condemned to be confined once again in mortal bodies. This is a notion which goes back at least to Empedocles, but which is still a live theory in Middle Platonism. Here the Moon is the point of origin, not any supercelestial realm, and the real fall takes place only after the descent, and not in all cases.

Other possibilities which Iamblichus considers are descent from the Milky Way (the view of Heraclides of Pontus, as he recognises), and descent from all the celestial spheres, a view for which he quotes no specific authorities. This probably refers to a belief that some souls descend from, and are in the 'chain' (*seira*) of, one planet, and some of another, but Iamblichus's reference is too brief and allusive for certainty to be possible.

However, we are not primarily concerned here with where the souls come from, but rather why. In the next section of his work (pp. 378-79), Iamblichus presents two bases of distinction as to the reason for the soul's descent, the first of which he attributes to 'the Platonists of the school of Taurus', the second of which he favours himself.

The Platonists of the school of Taurus [he says] say that souls are sent down by the Gods to earth—some of them, following the *Timæus*, declaring it to be for the completion of the universe [*eis teleiōsîn tou pantos*], so that there should be as many living things in the cosmos as there are in the noetic realm, others describing the purpose of the descent as being the manifestation of divine life [*theias zoês epideixis*]. For this, they say, is the will of the Gods, to make their divinity manifest through the medium of souls; for the Gods advance to a visible state and reveal themselves through the pure and uncontaminated life of souls.

Taurus and his followers thus represent what one might term the 'optimistic' wing of Platonism on the question of the descent of the soul, a tradition, as Plotinus notes, taking its inspiration from the *Timæus*. The second reason given, indeed, is curiously similar to what I take to be the Christian belief—certainly the belief I was brought up on—that God made us for his own honour and glory. Presumably the idea is that, although most souls, in their lives, will not reflect much glory on the Gods, yet enough will do so to make the effort worth while. No omelette without breaking eggs, after all.

Iamblichus's account here of Middle Platonic opinion needs some filling out, however. All Platonist tradition was not so 'world-affirming'. In Albinus's *Didaskalikos*, more or less contemporary with Taurus (mid-second century), we find a list of possible reasons why souls should descend into bodies, complementary to those attributed to Taurus and his followers (*Didasc.* 25).

1. *'arithmous menousai'*. I used to think I knew what this meant, but now I am not so sure. I would take it to mean 'waiting for their numbers', in the sense of 'answering the call when their number comes up', with a view to keeping up the number of souls in the universe; but I am not confident about this. At any rate, it sounds like a reason involving cosmic necessity rather than individual delinquency. Albinus unfortunately does not explain any of his very summary reasons, except to some extent the last.

2. *The will of the Gods (boulêsis theôn)*. Again, this needs amplification, and for this we can turn, I think, to Taurus. For him, we recall, the Gods wish to make themselves manifest through souls. Presumably that is what Albinus has in mind here. At any rate, once again no individual delinquency is envisaged.

3. *Wantonness (akolasia)*—that is, presumably, sinful wilfulness on the part of the individual soul. Here we are presented with a Fall, and it would seem from Iamblichus's evidence that we are close to Albinus's own view. Slightly earlier in the *De anima* (p. 375.2ff.) Iamblichus gives quite a doxography of reasons for the descent of the soul. As that of the Gnostics he gives 'derangement or deviation' (*paranoia é parekbasis*), and, immediately following this, that of Albinus as 'the mistaken judgement of a free will' (*hê tou autexousiou diêmartêmenê krisis*). This seems to place Albinus pretty squarely in what one may term the 'world-negating' tradition within Platonism, which is that which accords with the Gnostic vision of the world.

4. *Love of the body (philosômatia)*. This final reason does not sound very different from the previous one, and is also, at first sight, world-negating. But here Albinus adds a curious rider, suggesting that in fact some natural tendency is being envisaged. 'Body and soul', explains Albinus, 'have a kind of affinity (*oikeiôsis*) towards each other, like fire and asphalt'. If we press this simile, it would imply that when soul, in the course of its peregrinations through the universe, comes into a certain degree of proximity to a body, it must spring towards it and ensoul it, and this would happen without any forethought on the part of the soul in question. Embodiment would, thus, once again be a necessary consequence of the arrangement of the universe, and not a fault to be imputed to soul. It is not quite clear, however, whether Albinus wishes to exclude the notion of a Fall here.

Albinus presents all these possibilities as disjunctions, but he may

after all have recognised them as joint possibilities, or as true of different classes of souls. We do not know. Iamblichus himself (p. 379) wishes to make a distinction between two types of descent, one voluntary, 'the soul itself choosing to administer the terrestrial realm', the other involuntary, 'the soul being forcibly drawn to what is worse than it'. Iamblichus does not make clear here why this second class should be forcibly drawn down, but we can conclude from what follows that some element of previous sin is envisaged. What I am interested in here, though, is the distinction of two main types of descent, as this is a notion which seems to go back quite far in Platonism, drawing its ultimate inspiration, it would seem, from Plato's distinction in the *Phaedrus* myth between the fate of the philosophic soul and that of the others. Plato himself, though, it must be noted, does not make any distinction between modes or purposes of descent, such as we find later. Iamblichus goes on to distinguish two different ways of relating to the body practised by these two classes of soul.

The pure and perfect souls come to settle in bodies in a pure manner, without being subject to passions and without being deprived of the power of intellection; for souls of a contrary character, the opposite is the case.

A little further on, Iamblichus makes the distinction clearer, though he now envisages not two, but three possible classes of embodied soul.

Furthermore, in my opinion, the variety of purposes creates differences in the modes of descent of souls. For the soul that comes down for the purpose of salvation and purification and perfection of the material realm is immaculate in its descent; that soul, on the other hand, which has turned to bodies for the exercise and correction of its moral life will not be entirely free of passions, nor will it be left free [*apolytos*] on its own; while that soul which has come down here by way of punishment and judgement seems, as it were, to be dragged and driven along [p. 380].

Iamblichus goes on to criticise his predecessors for ignoring such distinctions, and maintaining that all entries of souls into bodies are evil, but mentions only Numenius, Cronius, and Harpocraton as holding this view. In turning to Numenius and the Neopythagorean tradition, he has fixed on the most world-negating and Gnostic wing of Middle Platonism, and he is not being quite fair to the whole Platonic movement. Plutarch, for instance, in the myth of the *De Facie* mentioned above, makes a clear distinction (591d) between some souls which 'sink entirely into the body' and others which 'only mingle in

part, leaving outside what is purest in them'. It is these latter whose intellects are seen in the vision riding quietly in the heaven above their souls, 'like the corks we observe riding on the sea to mark nets'.

But the figure I would like to dwell on, in conclusion, since he gives evidence of a still earlier date for these distinctions, is Philo of Alexandria, who seems to recognise already most of the ideas we have been discussing. Philo has certain difficulties with the concept of re-incarnation, which is an essential part of Platonic doctrine, but this does not prevent him from having quite developed notions about the soul's descent into body. At *Heres* 240, for example, he produces the doctrine of the soul's Fall as a result of 'satiety' (*koros*) with its happy state—not quite the same sin as the *tolma* envisaged by Plotinus, or as the restlessness and inquisitiveness of Sophia in Valentinianism, but analogous.²

Surely then we must suppose that misery wholesale and all-pervading must be the lot of those souls which, reared in air and ether at its purest, have left that home for earth, the region of things mortal and evil, through not being able to overcome a satiety with divine blessings.

Once fallen, these souls become prey to innumerable 'notions' (*en-noiai*) some voluntary, some arising out of ignorance (*kat' agnoian*). Such as become possessed by 'upward-flying' thoughts are lucky, and may win their way back to the heavenly and divine region, but those who are occupied by thoughts which tend downwards are doomed to wallow around down here forever.

Philo in this passage distinguishes two types of descended soul, but only on the basis of how they make use of their unfortunate lot once in the body. There is nothing here that cannot be derived from Plato, whether the *Phaedrus*, the *Republic* or the *Timaeus*. However, Philo does also make a distinction between different purposes of descent. I quote from *Conf.* 77-78:

That is why all whom Moses calls wise are represented as 'sojourners' [*paroikountes*]. Their souls never set out as colonists to leave heaven for a new home, but rather their way is to visit earthly nature as men who travel abroad to see and learn. So when they have stayed a while in their bodies, and beheld through them all that sense and mortality has to show, they make their way back to the place from which they set out at first, regarding as their fatherland the heavenly region where they exercise their

² Cf. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1963), 62-65, and the references there given.

citizenship, and as a foreign land the earthly region in which they have become sojourners [tr. Colson (LCL), slightly emended].

Philo does here make a strong distinction between two types of descent, prefiguring the distinctions made by Iamblichus in the passage quoted earlier. The notion of a distinction between the wise and the others is not entirely new, perhaps. It can dimly be discerned behind the theology of the *Somnium Scipionis*, for example, whether that be Posidonian Stoicism or Antiochian Platonism. There, in section 13, we find the view that only the souls of the great attain a definite place among the stars; the rest are presumably ploughed back into the world-soul. There, however, there is admittedly no suggestion that souls descended on different terms in the first place. One could perhaps conclude from the myth of *Republic* 10 that the choosing of different lots constitutes a distinction in conditions of descent, but no very clear distinction of classes is there made by Plato. Philo seems to me to be the first to suggest that souls may be going about in bodies for quite different reasons, and this suggestion is one which is certainly picked up in Gnosticism. Philo even comes to Iamblichus's distinction of three classes of embodied soul in an interesting three-way distinction which he makes at *Gig.* 60 between the sons of earth, the sons of heaven, and the sons of God, but he does not there suggest that these three classes descended originally on different terms.³

In conclusion, we have, I think, within the Platonism of the first few centuries A.D. a fairly wide spectrum of doctrines concerning the descent of the soul into body. Broadly speaking, either the soul is guilty of some transgression, or it is not. If it is not, it is still possible for it to acquire guilt (or merit) by its behaviour when in the body. As for the Gnostics, at least in Valentinianism, it is clear that Sophia, the transcendent world-soul, is guilty of a transgression in seeking to know more about her Father, and this inquisitiveness leads to the creation of the material world, and ultimately to our incarceration in it. The probably Valentinian *Exegesis on the Soul*, with rather prurient enthusiasm, represents the soul as falling among ruffians, who rape her repeatedly, and then as repenting and calling upon her father,

³ Three classes of embodied soul are of course attested also in Valentinianism, e.g., in Theodotus's system (Clement, *Exc. Theot.* 56.2), where the distinction is made between hylics, psychics, and pneumatics, these descending from Cain, Abel, and Seth respectively. Here, however, there is the suggestion that there are three types of soul, deriving their distinctions from their descent from these three archetypal souls.

but does not make it clear what leads to the original transgression.⁴ The individual soul is often allowed to reproach God with having thrust it into such a foul prison, but this is the rhetoric of repentance and salvation, not the higher theology. There does, however, seem to me to be in Gnostic theory, as in Platonism—represented most clearly by Plotinus—a tension between two views of the soul's lot, a conviction that a conscious transgression of some sort has taken place, and an equally strong conviction that somehow God willed all this, and that thus it is all, if not for the best, at least an inevitable consequence of there being a universe at all.

⁴ W. Foerster, *Gnosis* (tr. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) 2. 102-9. Here it is only stated that the soul 'fell into a body and came into this life'. We do not hear why.

GNOSTICISM AND THE MAKING OF THE WORLD IN PLOTINUS

BY

DOMINIC J. O'MEARA

In the description of the making of the world in Plato's *Timaeus*, much use is made of the image of a divine craftsman, or "demiurge," who models the sensible world after the pattern of the transcendent Forms. This image may help to explain how the things of the sensible world participate in the Forms.¹ Yet it provoked, along with other aspects of Plato's cosmological account, philosophical controversies which began already in Plato's school and were renewed again and again in later Greek philosophy.

Although Aristotle made much use of the analogy between natural and craftsmanly, or "demiurgic," processes (one recalls, for example, his frequent recourse to the process of statue-making in explaining the workings of nature), he was careful to distinguish between them. In particular, nature, unlike the craftsman, *does not deliberate* when producing things and achieves a perfection far surpassing what is attainable by craftsmanly processes.² Thus, in criticizing "those" who held that the world was generated, Aristotle also attacked their apparent assumption that the making of the world was little more than a mere matter of craftsmanly production:

Aristotle was surely speaking piously ... when he insisted that the world is ungenerated and imperishable, and convicted of grave ungodliness those who maintained the opposite, who thought that the great visible god,

In citations of Plotinus's *Enneads*, the number in square brackets is the number of the treatise in chronological order of composition.

¹ Cf. J. M. Rist, "The Immanence and Transcendence of the Platonic Form," *Philologus* 108 (1964) 225-32; on the concept of the demiurge in Plato, cf. W. Theiler, "Demiourgos," *RAC* 3. 696-97; L. Brisson, *Le même et l'autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon* (Paris, 1974) 71-84 (survey of modern interpretations of the demiurge).

² Cf. *Metaph. Z* 7, 1032a12ff.; *Ph.* 2.8, 199b28 (quoted by Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.8.8, 15-16); *Cael.* 2.4, 287b15ff.; J. Pépin, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne* (Paris, 1964) 502, who stresses the imperfection (doubting, uncertainty, lack of confidence) implicit in deliberation for Aristotle.

which contains in truth sun and moon ... is no better than the work of man's hands.³

Aristotle's distinction between natural and craftsmanly production and his subordination of the latter to the former were maintained in the Aristotelian tradition and are expressed, for example, by Alexander of Aphrodisias, a professor of Aristotelian philosophy not much more than a generation earlier than Plotinus whose works were read in Plotinus's school.⁴

Like Aristotle, the Stoics made much use of the analogy between natural and craftsmanly production, describing in particular their divine cosmic productive force as a "craftsmanly fire" (πῦρ τεχνικόν).⁵ However they also distinguished between the two forms of production and denied that the productive fire was a craftsman working externally upon matter. Rather, it was immanent in matter, forming matter from within.⁶ Alexander objected to this immanence of the Stoic divine principle: "For them to make God a craftsman of grubs and gnats, simply devoting himself like a modeler to clay" is to demean our concept of the divine.⁷ For the Epicureans also, to have God "crafting" the universe, as Plato does, with the burdens and worries this

³ *De philosophia*, fr. 18; tr. W. D. Ross, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 12 (Oxford, 1952). The common opinion that by "those" is meant Plato's *Timaeus* (cf. M. Untersteiner, *Aristotele Della filosofia* [Rome, 1963] 213-14; M. Baltes, *Die Weltentstehung des Platonischen Timaios nach den Antiken Interpreten* [Leiden, 1976] 1.11) has sometimes been challenged; cf. B. Effe, *Studien zur Kosmologie und Theologie der Aristotelischen Schrift "Über die Philosophie"* (Munich, 1970) 9, who takes "those" as referring to the Atomists. H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore, 1941) 603 ff., in discussing other apparent references to the demiurge of the *Timaeus* in Aristotle, argues that Aristotle dismissed the demiurge "as without significance in Plato's serious doctrine." We obviously cannot survey the evidence here. However there can be no doubt that Aristotle's theories in general, and the *De philosophia* in particular, undermine the concept of a demiurgic production of the world. Cf. also *De philosophia*, fr. 20: "The world never came into being, because there never was a new design [*novo consilio*: the deliberating demiurge!] from which so noble a work could have taken its beginning" (tr. Ross); infra n. 9.

⁴ Cf. *Fat.*, 168.11-18 Bruns (nature does not calculate when producing); *De an.*, 3.15-16 Bruns (craft imitates nature but nature does not imitate craft); cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.3.10, 17-19.

⁵ *SVF* 2. 1027, 1133, 1134; I. 85; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.6; 2.8, 18 ff.; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 8.50.

⁶ Alexander, *Mixt.* 11, 225.20 ff. Bruns; cf. the texts cited by Pépin, *Théologie*, 49, and the commentary by R. B. Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics* (Leiden, 1976) 223.

⁷ *Mixt.* 226, 24 ff. (tr. Todd); cf. Todd's commentary, pp. 226-27.

task would involve, is to reduce the divinity to misery.⁸ The Epicurean Velleius in Cicero's *De natura deorum* (1.8.19) ridicules the concept of the demiurge-god in the *Timaeus* by asking, "What tools and levers and derricks [would it need]? What agents carried out so vast an undertaking?"⁹ To this laboring god the Epicureans opposed their concept of a divinity unconcerned with this world and free to enjoy the blissful existence which can only belong to it. In any case, a pessimistic valuation of the world would make it inappropriate for the Epicurean to view the divinity as the maker responsible for such a faulty product (Lucretius 5.198-99):

nequaquam nobis divinitus esse paratam
naturam rerum; tanta stat praedita culpa.

These attacks on the demiurge image of Plato's *Timaeus* disregarded the fact that this image is part of a cosmological account which has the status of a "probable tale" (*Ti.* 29d). The Platonic tradition, beginning with Plato's own pupils, almost unanimously rejected such literalistic readings of the *Timaeus*.¹⁰ Yet how was one to explain the making of the world if the image of the divine craftsman could not be taken literally?

One approach, which Plotinus could find in a variety of forms in

⁸ Aetius, *Placita* 1.7.5-8 (Diels, *Doxographi graeci*, 299.22ff.); Pépin, *Théologie*, 49; Baltes, *Weltentstehung*, 129. The Pseudo-Aristotle *De mundo* (which reflects Aristotelian and Stoic ideas) makes an interesting attempt to free God from worries, pain, toil, weakness, and yet have him order and govern the world, by conceiving of his power as a royal authority whose directives are carried out by subordinates (chap. 6); cf. D. J. O'Meara, *Structures hiérarchiques dans la pensée de Plotin* (Leiden, 1975) 69.

⁹ Tr. H. Rackam (LCL). Cicero's Velleius also attacks the Stoic *deus laboriosissimus* (1.8.20). The Epicurean attack on the Platonic and Stoic demiurgic god made use of Aristotle's polemic in the *De philosophia*; cf. E. Bignone, *L'Aristotele perduto e la formazione filosofica di Epicuro* (2d ed.; Florence, 1973) 2. 74ff., 87ff.⁴; Baltes, *Weltentstehung*, 25-32. The Epicureans and Stoics also attacked the Platonic notion that the making of the world entailed the use by an agent of a preexistent model; cf. Lucretius 5.181ff. and Calcidius *In Ti.* 294 (referred to by R. Harder, R. Beutler, W. Theiler, *Plotinus Schriften*, vol. 3b, [Hamburg, 1964] 390).

¹⁰ Cf. Cherniss, *Criticism*, 421 ff.; Plutarch, *Moralia* (ed. Cherniss; LCL; Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1976) 13/1. 176, note a; W. Scheffel, *Aspekte der Platonischen Kosmologie* (Leiden, 1976) xiiff. (Cherniss and Scheffel also discuss modern literal readings of the dialogue). The rejection of a literal interpretation was provoked in particular by the insistence of Aristotle and others that the *Timaeus* maintained that the world was generated. The question of whether the world in the *Timaeus* is indeed generated or, as most Platonists maintained, eternal is related (as can be seen in the passages quoted above from Aristotle's *De philosophia* and in texts quoted below) to the question of how to interpret the demiurge image. The denial that the world is generated precludes notably a literal interpretation of the demiurge.

his Platonic predecessors, was to distinguish clearly between the highest god, who subsisted in a perfect transcendent existence with the Forms, and a lower principle, a subordinate god or World-Soul, to which were attributed the functions of the demiurge. The Middle Platonist Albinus (or Alcinous) maintains that when Plato says

that the world is generated, we must take this to mean not that there was a time when the world did not exist, but that the world is always becoming and reveals a more fundamental cause of its existence. And the Soul of the world, existing always, is not made by God, but ordered by him. *And God is said to make in this sense* (ταύτη λέγοιτ' ἄν καὶ ποιᾶν), that he awakens and turns the mind of the World-Soul to him ... so that she will contemplate his thoughts [sc. the Forms] and receive the Forms.

Once inspired and "informed" by its contemplation of the Forms, the World-Soul proceeds toward the organization of the world.¹¹ This approach clearly frees God from implication in craftsmanly, or demiurgic, processes, but it does not eliminate them. They are merely attributed to another, albeit inferior, cosmological principle. Another approach current in Middle Platonism was to envisage the production of the world in terms of "outflowings" or emanations deriving from the transcendent Forms and giving birth to the sensible world.¹² If this approach has the advantage of not resorting to the demiurgic image in describing the production of the world, it does no more, however, than replace this image with another image which, if taken literally, would be more suited to a Stoic than to a Platonic cosmology.¹³

The first treatises which Plotinus composed show an awareness of the by now long history in the philosophical schools of criticisms and interpretations of the concept of a "demiurgic" production of the

¹¹ *Didasc.* 14 (ed. Hermann, p. 169.26ff.); 10 (p. 164.35ff.); a similar system can be found in Plutarch (*De an. proc.* 1026f-1027a [ed. Cherniss, p. 260]), who denies, however, that the world was not generated; in Numenius (frs. 12, 13, 16, 17, and 18 des Places); in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (frs. 5, 33 des Places); and is attributed to the Gnostic Peratae: cf. O'Meara, *Structures*, 29-30; Theiler, "Demiourgos," 701. For the texts in Plato which could be construed to suggest this system, cf. Cherniss, *Criticism*, 603ff.

¹² Cf. O'Meara, *Structures*, 24, 36-37 (where it is noted that a textual justification of this approach could be found in *Ti.* 50c).

¹³ Strictly speaking, emanation implies the Forms have corporeal existence and causality. The "corrective dialectic" which Plotinus uses in connection with his use of the image of emanation is well described by H. F. Müller, "Plotinische Studien I," *Hermes* 48 (1913) 408-25; cf. H. Dörrie, "Emanation," *Parusia: Festschrift J. Hirschberger* (ed. K. Flasch: Frankfurt, 1965) 136.

world. He accepts the Aristotelian position that natural production, unlike craftsmanly production, does not involve deliberation and calculation.¹⁴ He also agrees that natural production cannot entail "pushing" or any of the gross manual methods such as had been imputed by the Epicureans to Plato's demiurge.¹⁵ Like some of his Platonic predecessors, he relegates demiurgic functions to Soul and also resorts to emanative processes in describing the constitution of the world.¹⁶ It hardly seems, however, as if in the first treatises Plotinus goes beyond these traditional ideas in the direction of a coherent and defensible Platonic cosmology. Yet there are some notable developments in these works.

In *Ennead* 4.8[6], chap. 2, Plotinus distinguishes between a universal and a particularized cosmological role of Soul.

This is why Plato says that our soul, if it be with that perfect soul [sc. universal soul], is perfected and "travels on high and orders the whole world" [*Phdr.* 246c]; as long as it desists from being in bodies and of a body, so long will it, like the soul of the whole, easily govern the whole ... There is a double care of the whole, that exercised by universal soul by means of a royal authority which commands but does not do, and that exercised by particular souls by means of a personal productive action (αὐτουργῶ τινι ποιήσει), by contact with the subject of the action.¹⁷

If this rescues universal soul from involvement in the actual work of cosmic demiurgic making, it appears to do this only by transferring demiurgic functions to lower principles, descended souls. These functions are not, however, removed. Yet the process whereby descended souls are produced by universal soul, according to Plotinus, suggests the elements of a non-demiurgic mode of production. The production of descended souls by Soul resembles (but is not identical to) the production of Soul from Intellect (Nous) and the production of Intellect from the One.¹⁸ The production of Intellect and (from it) of Soul involves the following process. A secondary activity, which

¹⁴ *Ennead* 4.8[6].8,15-16, alluding to the *Physics* (cf. supra n. 2: denial of deliberation, βουλή; cf. also supra n. 4: Alexander's denial of calculation, λογισμός); 5.7[18].3.7-12.

¹⁵ *Enn.* 5.9[5].6,20-24.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.; and *Enn.* 4.8[6].8,11ff.; other texts cited in O'Meara, *Structures*, 35-36.

¹⁷ *Enn.* 4.8[6].2,20-30; cf. the following lines and 4,5-10; it is noteworthy that the Pseudo-Aristotle *De mundo* (chap. 6) is especially concerned not to have its imperial god involved in personal action (αὐτουργεῖν): 397b20-24, with D.J. Furley's note (LCL edition); Theiler, "Demiourgos," 703.

¹⁸ Cf. O'Meara, *Structures*, 47-51, 102.

accompanies and is different from the essential unchanging activity of the producing being,¹⁹ is "formed" in a contemplative orientation to its producer to constitute an image of its origin.²⁰ This process is non-demiurgic in the sense that the producing principle makes without changing, by virtue of its product, a secondary activity of it, being formed through contemplation of it.

If in the cases of the constitution of Intellect, Soul, and particular souls the elements of a non-demiurgic contemplative mode of production are present already in Plotinus's first compositions, the formulation of such a mode of production in relation to the constitution of the sensible world is found, however, only in Plotinus's later treatises and *in the context*, it seems, *of a direct confrontation with Gnosticism*. We may thus raise the following question: What role did this confrontation play in Plotinus's attempt to develop a non-demiurgic account of the making of the world?²¹ Some important aspects of such an account can be found in treatises 4.3-4[27-28] which slightly predate the explicit polemic with Gnosticism in 2.9[33] and in which this polemic has been thought already to be present.²²

In *Enn.* 4.3-4 Plotinus discusses a series of philosophical problems relating to Soul. One of these problems has to do with whether or not Soul, taken in itself, has memory. It seems that the demiurge, in "contriving and comparing and calculating" when ordering things, must have a memory (4.4[28].9,1-9). The demiurge can be interpreted as either Intellect²³ or universal Soul. In the latter case, it would appear that Soul must have memory. However, Plotinus denies the

¹⁹ In *Enn.* 5.4[7].2,27-33, Plotinus gives as an example: fire (the producing being); the heat which fills its being (essential activity); another heat produced by the heat essential to fire (secondary activity). The emanationist implications of this example are corrected in 5.1[10].3,9-12.

²⁰ *Enn.* 5.4[7].2,21-33; 5.2[11].1,9-11; cf. O'Meara, *Structures*, 47-48; the "contemplative" part of the process recalls the cosmologies of Albinus, Numenius, et al. (*supra* n. 11).

²¹ In connection with other Plotinian theories, H.-Ch. Puech has suggested that the confrontation with Gnosticism led to changes in these theories; cf. *Les sources de Plotin* (Fondation Hardt, Entretiens 5; Vandœuvres-Geneva, 1960) 182-85.

²² C. Schmidt, *Plotins Stellung zum Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christentum* (TU 20; Leipzig, 1901) 64 n. 1, found anti-Gnostic polemic in 4.4, chap. 12, followed by E. Bréhier, *Plotin Ennéades* 4 (Paris, 1927) 114 n. 1, who also refers (p. 111 n. 2) to the Gnostics in relation to chap. 10.26ff.; Bréhier is followed by Puech, *Sources*.

²³ Plotinus frequently insists that the demiurge of the *Timaeus* is to be identified with Intellect, but it is clear that the functions of the demiurge are carried out by Soul; cf. Harder, Beutler, Theiler, *Plotins Schriften* vol. 2b (Hamburg, 1962) 511 (ad 4.4.10,1); Theiler, "Demiourgos," 703.

premise that Soul, as maker, must calculate concerning what she should make. Rather, the order according to which things are made is already established and *it is the maker* (10,1-11). Using Aristotelian terms, we might say that the formal cause is the efficient cause, an identity which removes the difference between model and agent in which calculation by the agent would become possible.²⁴ This maker/order is itself an activity of Soul.²⁵ As Soul stands in an unchanging contemplative dependence on unchanging Wisdom (Intellect), so her activity is unchanging. This unchanging contemplative relation to Intellect, in excluding calculation, uncertainty, vacillation, weakness, also removes the basis for predicating memory of Soul taken in her demiurgic role (10,12-29).

It has been thought that the concept of demiurgic activity which Plotinus rejects here and in chap. 12—an activity which involves calculation, uncertainty, weakness, error, difficulty—is Gnostic.²⁶ However, these imperfections are the consequences for Plotinus of postulating a deliberating and calculating demiurge and *need* not have been intended by him to represent specifically a Gnostic demiurge.²⁷ In

²⁴ Cf. also *Enn.* 4.4.16,11-19. This represents a radical revision of the images of model and agent in the *Timaeus* (cf. supra n. 9).

²⁵ *Enn.* 4.4.13 implies that the lowest level of this activity is Nature; cf. O'Meara, *Structures*, 71.

²⁶ Cf. supra n. 22; of course a calculating, laboring, craftsmanly, weak, erring demiurge is a common feature of Gnostic and Hermetic systems; cf. *NHLibEng*, 38 (*GTr* 17); 153-154 (*HypArch* 86-89); 446 (*Allog* 51); F. Sagnard, *La Gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée* (Paris, 1947) 180ff.; *Corpus Hermeticum* (ed. Festugière) 4.4ff., 81ff. Whatever are the origins of the Gnostic demiurge (cf. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies* [Istanbul, 1974] 1.213-20), the possibility that Gnostics might have made use of conceptions developed in the philosophical debate over demiurgic cosmogony should not be discounted; cf. *NHLibEng*, 56 (*TriTrac* 53; tr. H. W. Attridge and D. Mueller): "Nor is there a primordial form which he uses as a model in his work; nor is there any difficulty which accompanies him in what he does" (one would expect in Valentinian, or Valentinian-influenced, Gnosis an awareness of the Platonic reaction to attacks on the demiurge of the *Timaeus*).

²⁷ *Enn.* 4.4.12,5-18; cf. supra n. 2. It can be doubted on similar grounds if there are any specifically anti-Gnostic references in the passages in treatises earlier than 4.4 which are listed by Puech as containing anti-Gnostic polemic (*Sources*, 182-83; Puech lists 4.8[6].4 and 8; 3.9[13].6). Puech's list of anti-Gnostic references in later treatises could also be shortened somewhat. Since the *Enneads* must represent but a fraction of the discussion in Plotinus's school, a smaller incidence of anti-Gnostic references need not be seen as conflicting with Porphyry's report of frequent critiques made of the Gnostics by Plotinus in his lectures (*Plot.* 16.9-10). In relation to Porphyry's report it should be noted, however, that he composed the *Vita* over thirty years after Plotinus's death, partly on the basis of use (cf. infra n. 37) and misuse of texts in Plotinus (cf., for example, A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus I* [Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1966] 32 n. 1;

fact, the demiurgic weaknesses and difficulties which Plotinus refers to had already been emphasized by the Epicureans in their critique of what they took to be the demiurgic systems of Plato and the Stoics.²⁸ It appears, then, that there are no strong reasons for maintaining any more than that the development of aspects of a non-demiurgic production of the world in 4.3-4[27-28] relates to the long debate in the philosophical schools concerning demiurgic accounts of the constitution of the world and represents an attempt to formulate a non-demiurgic account in the light of that debate.

There can, however, be no doubt that Plotinus has the Gnostics in mind in a slightly later work, 2.9[33]. R. Harder has shown that 2.9 is in fact the last segment of one work ("die Gross-Schrift"), constituted of *Enn.* 3.8[30]; 5.8[31]; 5.5[32]; 2.9[33], which Plotinus's pupil and editor, Porphyry, broke up and dispersed throughout his edition.²⁹ In the recovered "Gross-Schrift," the polemic with Gnosticism surfaces only toward the end (2.9). However, the developments which concern us in particular here, those having to do with non-demiurgic making, appear in the earlier part of the work (3.8 and 5.8). Our earlier question might thus be rephrased as follows: Did the Gnostic doctrines attacked at the end of the work (2.9) provide the stimulus to the composition of the whole work, constituting the context of the ostensibly nonpolemical developments concerning non-demiurgic making in

O'Meara, *Mnemosyne* 27 [1974] 239-44) and in a manner reflecting especially his own interests (he was in particular much more interested in religions than was Plotinus).

²⁸ Cf. supra p. 367; Harder, Beutler, Theiler, *Plotinus Schriften*, vol. 2b, 513 (ad 4.4.12, 40). Elsewhere (*Structures* 71), in following Schmidt and Bréhier. I have suggested that the theme of *μῆμις* (finding fault with the world), which is central to Plotinus's explicit polemic with Gnosticism in 2.9[33], might be detected already in 4.3[27].16,25. This is also suggested by F. Bazán, "Gnostica. El Capítulo XVI de *La Vida de Plotino* de Porfirio," *Salesianum* 36 (1974) 477. Against this, however, it should be noted that this theme was prominent in the Stoic defense of the order and beauty of the world against, in particular, Epicurean dissatisfaction with it ("tanta stat praedita culpa"): cf. Chrysippus apud Plutarch. *De Stoic. repugn.* 37.1051b, Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.6; Marcus Aurelius 2.16; 4.29; 6.41; 7.14; 9.1 and its presence in 4.3.16 need not be taken as a sign of a specifically anti-Gnostic polemic in 4.3-4.

²⁹ Harder, "Eine neue Schrift Plotins," *Hermes* 71 (1936) 1-10; D. Roloff, *Plotin, Die Gross-Schrift III.8-V.8-V.5-II.9*, (Berlin, 1970) attempts to work out in detail the structure of the recovered work; cf. also C. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins* (Berlin, 1975) 12-13, 56ff. Porphyry fragmented this (and other Plotinian writings) with a view to obtaining the numerologically desirable fifty-four treatises (six times nine) which make up his enneadic edition of Plotinus, reallocating the treatises in terms of a thematic and epagogic order (*Enn.* 1 ethics; *Enn.* 2 and 3, physics; *Enn.* 4, Soul; *Enn.* 5, Intellect; *Enn.* 6, the One; cf. Porphyry, *Plot.* 24-26; P. Hadot, *Plotin* [2d ed.; Paris, 1973] 166-67).

the earlier parts of the work? Or did the work develop independently of such a context of confrontation, taking Gnosticism into account at the end merely as a contemporary perversion of truths explored earlier in the work? This problem has emerged in a more general form (without reference specifically to non-demiurgic making) in recent studies.³⁰ I will attempt a solution here to the problem only insofar as it concerns non-demiurgic making, beginning with a summary of the chief moves made by Plotinus in 3.8 and 5.8 toward the formulation of a non-demiurgic account of the constitution of the sensible world.

Plotinus asserts in 3.8 that Nature, as a "power which makes," does not need to reason or inquire, for such an inquiry implies that Nature does not yet possess the knowledge on the basis of which it makes. But, rather, Nature has that knowledge, and it is because it has that it makes: "Making, for it, means being what it is, and its making power is coextensive with what it is."³¹ This identification of "making" with "being" in a producing principle had been suggested before by Plotinus, in a similar context.³² In 3.8 and 5.8, however, it is exploited more fully. It appears in the meditation on wisdom (*sophia*) in 5.8, where wisdom, understood as the principle guiding all making (4,44-46; 5,1-3) is shown in its various manifestations to be dependent on the wisdom of the Intellect (5,3-15). This wisdom does not use calculation; it does not have the deficiency in which inquiry becomes necessary (4,37-39); and it is identical with the true being which is Intellect: "True wisdom is being, and true being is wisdom" (5,15-16). The denial of deliberation in the making of the world and the identification of this making with the being of the maker mean that if we can give reasons

why the earth is in the center, why it is spherical and the ecliptic thus, there [sc. in the intelligible] it is not the case that because things must be so arranged, this is why it had been planned thus, but that it [the intelligible] is as it is, is why things are well [arranged].³³

³⁰ Cf. Elsas, *Weltablehnung*, 284-99.

³¹ *Enn.* 3.8.3,13-18 (passages from 3.8 and 2.9 are quoted in Armstrong's translation, with some slight changes).

³² Cf. *supra* p. 371, and especially 4.3[27].10,13ff.: "Whatever comes in contact with Soul, is made according to the being of the nature of Soul. And Soul makes without an acquired plan and without awaiting deliberation or inquiry {σκέψις; cf. 3.8.3,14-16 σκοπεῖσθαι}, for this would be to make not according to Nature but according to acquired craft. Craft is posterior to Nature and imitates it, producing obscure and weak imitations of it. ..."; 5.4[7].2,20-21.

³³ *Enn.* 5.8.7,36-40; here also Plotinus is developing themes already found in 4.3-4; compare 5.8.7,23-25 with 4.4.16,15-19.

Why (διότι) things are made in the way they are resolves into the fact *that* (ὅτι) things are made in function of *what* the being of their maker is.³⁴

The identification of the "making" with the "being" in productive principles is part of a further move made by Plotinus in 3.8, which is to identify the being of these principles as *contemplative*. Since, in Nature, making is being, and since Nature's being is contemplative, then "it makes by being contemplation."³⁵ Nature does no more than contemplate and it is in its contemplating that its product, the world, is made. The contemplation which is Nature is the product consequent on higher contemplations, Soul and Intellect. There is thus a continuous contemplative progression from the One, each contemplation being the image consequent on a higher contemplation. The sensible world is constituted as a product consequent on the last contemplative being, Nature.³⁶

Reference was made earlier, with respect to Plotinus's first compositions, to the non-demiurgic character of the contemplative process whereby Intellect and Soul are produced from the One. Here in 3.8 Plotinus generalizes the process so that it is found at all levels of production down to an including the production of the sensible world. The spectre of a deliberating and laboring demiurgic maker of the world is definitively replaced by a psychic principle, Nature, which functions in terms of a quite different mode of making, in which to make and to be are one, to be and to contemplate are one, and to contemplate is to be an unchanging link in a contemplative chain existing in its orientation to the One. Was the demiurgic spectre banished in 3.8 and 5.8 the old spectre which had haunted the history of interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* and with which Plotinus had already contended in his earlier treatises? Was it a less traditional spectre which had entered the discussions of Plotinus's school through the Gnostic leanings of some of Plotinus's friends? Let us consider briefly at this point Plotinus's own attitude to Gnosticism and to his polemic with Gnosticism.

In 2.9, chap. 6, Plotinus suggests that the Gnostics took their

³⁴ Cf. also *Enn.* 6.7[38].2,3-27; O'Meara, *Structures*, 75-76.

³⁵ *Enn.* 3.8.4.23-24. For a helpful exposition of the theory of "contemplative" making in Plotinus, cf. J. N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation and the One* (Toronto, 1967).

³⁶ *Enn.* 3.8, chaps. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8; on the later history of some of these ideas, cf. P. Hadot, "L'apport du néoplatonisme à la philosophie de la nature en Occident," *ErJb* 37 (1968) 91-132.

principles, "the plurality in the intelligible, being, and Intellect, and the demiurge different from Intellect, and Soul" from a passage in the *Timaeus* (39e). According to him, however, they did not understand (οὐ συνέντες) the passage, misinterpreted it and falsified "Plato's account of the manner of the making of the world (τὸν τρόπον τῆς δημιουργίας)," debasing Plato's thought as if they, and not he, "understood the intelligible nature."³⁷ A little later he asserts that the Gnostics, in having their demiurge revolt from its mother Sophia, debase the world produced by this demiurge (10,31-33). The Gnostic "debasement" of the world recalls their "debasement" of Plato's views and their "falsification" of the Platonic account of the way in which the world is made. Behind all this Plotinus finds an arrogant and purposeful refusal to learn from the ancients (cf. chap. 6,11-12; 26-27; 36ff.; chap. 10,11-14). In an apostasy which reminds us of the apostasy toward ignorance of their own evil deities (10,14: τολμῶντας), the Gnostics willfully cut themselves off from receptivity to the truth. The same characterization of the Gnostics is to be found earlier, I believe, in the "Gross-Schrift":

They are wrong, therefore, who have the world go out and come into being, while the intelligible world remains, as if the maker at one time decided to make the world. What the *manner is of the making of the world* (τρόπος ποιήσεως) *they do not want to understand* (συνιέναι), nor do they know that as long as the intelligible shines, the rest will never lack, but exists as its source exists, which "always was and always will be." The desire to express our meaning makes us use these words.³⁸

If Plotinus, then, has the Gnostics already in mind in the earlier part of the "Gross-Schrift," it does not follow that the whole work is simply a direct polemic with Gnostic theories. We are given a valuable

³⁷ *Enn.* 2.9.6,14-28 (Porphyry used lines 26-28 in his report on the conflict with Gnosticism in his *Plot.* 16.8-9). *Enn.* 5.8 and the first chapters of 5.5 are directed toward cultivating understanding (σύνεσις) of the intelligible world; cf. 5.8.13,22-24. Cf. *infra*, p. 377.

³⁸ *Enn.* 5.8.12,20-26 (the words "always was and always will be" are not appropriate when applied to the atemporal existence of the intelligible); Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1959) ad loc., suggest that the word "they" here refers to the Stoics (*SVF* 1. 98). Harder, Beutler and Theiler, *Plotini Schriften*, vol. 3b, ad loc., take the reference to be to the Gnostics (referring to 2.9.4,5ff.), as does P. Hadot, *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études V^e Section* 84 (Paris, 1976) 287. The mention of an unchanging intelligible world makes reference to the Stoics implausible, and the mention of an order in which the world goes out and (then) comes into being (an order which would only be possible in a theory of world-cycles as found especially in Stoicism) need not be taken too strictly.

indication of Plotinus's attitude to his polemic with Gnosticism in 2.9, chap. 10:

There are many other points, or rather all the points of their [sc. the Gnostics'] doctrine, which if one investigated, one would have ample opportunity of showing the real state of the case. ... [But we will not continue] for we feel a certain regard for some of our friends who happened upon this doctrine before they became our friends, and, though I do not know how they manage it, continue in it. ... But we have addressed what we have said so far to our own intimate pupils, not to the Gnostics, for there would not be any progress made toward convincing them (10,1-10).

The implications of this famous text with respect to the interpretation of Plotinus's polemic have not been sufficiently considered. It is not Plotinus's intention simply to criticize the Gnostics. Given their attitude, as he understands it (a willful refusal to understand), this would be futile ("there would not be any progress ..."). Rather, he argues against them as a way of educating some of his friends (who, by implication, *are* open to learning) away from Gnostic error.³⁹ It is clear also that for him the *best* argument against this influential ignorance must be the cultivation of deeper understanding which is, in any case, the normal aim of Plotinus's investigations and which is sought with serenity in 3.8, 5.8 and 5.5.

If, then, we seek to identify the intentions which led to the composition of the work constituted by *Enn.* 3.8, 5.8, 5.5 and 2.9, we can point to a need felt by Plotinus to develop certain themes the study of which would be of general value and also of value in particular to those members of his school who inclined toward Gnostic positions. The selection of themes studied might reflect in part this particular concern. However, the origination and development of these themes are not inspired by Gnosticism, being no more than further reflections on problems which had concerned Plotinus before (in contexts where no polemic with Gnosticism is apparent) and which were very much

³⁹ V. Cilento, *Paideia antignostica* (Florence, 1971) 244, reads our text differently. Developing some of Puech's speculations (*Sources*) he opposes the "friends" ("non piu amici") to the "intimate pupils" and assumes there must have been a rupture between these two groups in Plotinus's school. However, we are not told that these "friends" are friends no longer, and they are presented more as under the influence of, than as responsible for, the Gnostic λόγος (compare 2.9.10,4 and 2.9.10,7-8). The theory of a developing crisis and rupture in Plotinus's school is highly speculative and goes beyond what is warranted by a careful study of the evidence (cf. also *supra* n. 27). Cf. Roloff, *Gross-Schrift*, 189.

alive in the philosophical schools.⁴⁰ These reflections also provide, however, a context of understanding in function of which Gnostic ideas entertained by some of Plotinus's friends could be dispelled. Three examples might be given in illustration of this.

(1) In 3.8,4, in response to a possible questioner—a Gnosticizing friend?—who might ask Nature *why* it makes, Plotinus has Nature reply: "You ought not to ask, but to understand (συνιέναι)" (4.1-3). What must the questioner understand? That his question concerning *why* Nature makes should be replaced by an understanding of *what* Nature is (a contemplation), and that what it produces is a function of what it is, just as it itself a product of the contemplations of higher principles (4.5ff.). The very *same* question reappears in 2.9.8,1-2:⁴¹ "To ask why Soul made the universe is like asking why there is a Soul and why the maker makes." Such a question indicates a failure of the Gnostics to understand *what* the nature of Soul is: "They must be taught, if only they would endure the teaching with a good will, what is the nature of these beings" (8,6-7). However, the members of Plotinus's school, already prepared by the extensive discussions in 3.8 and 5.8, which I have summarized above (pp. 373-74), will know the being of Nature and Soul and will realize the ignorance implicit in the Gnostic "Why."

(2) In 5.8, chap. 7, Plotinus suggests the absurdity of thinking that the maker of the world plotted in sequence each stage in its construction of the world. This conception depends on the demiurgic model of natural production whose difficulties are explored in some detail in 3.8 as well as in 5.8. The particular sequence of stages Plotinus mentions in 5.8 is not the sequence ascribed to the Gnostics in 2.9, chaps. 11-12. The critique in 5.8,7 applies, in fact, specifically to the demiurgic system implicit in a literal reading of the *Timaeus*.⁴² However, the critique in 5.8 prepares the Gnosticizing member of Plotinus's school for a realization of the absurdities, which Plotinus attempts to expose in 2.9, of the Gnostic version of a sequential production.

(3) In 2.9, chap. 4, Plotinus puts this question to the Gnostics: "If it made the world by discursive reasoning and its making was not in its nature, and its power was not a productive power, how could it have

⁴⁰ In the present paper I have tried to show this with respect to the problem of demiurgic making as explored in the early compositions, in 4.3-4, and in the "Gross-Schrift."

⁴¹ This is noted by Cilento, *Paideia*, 244.

⁴² Cf. Bréhier, *Ennéades*, ad loc.

made this universe?" (4.15-17). This question is one of many questions in the chapter which are assumed to confound the Gnostics. It is meaningful and effective, however, only for the listener (or reader) who would have been led by the reflections in 3.8 or 5.8 to an understanding of natural making in terms of which only a making which is a function of the nature of productive principles and which has no need to deliberate is conceivable in relation to the constitution of the sensible world. Such a listener we can plausibly identify as a friend of Plotinus, tempted by Gnosticism but open to enlightenment.

The conclusions which emerge, then, from our study of the development of Plotinus's thought⁴³ and of his polemical intentions are the following. The full formulation of a contemplative non-demiurgic manner of making the world in 3.8 and 5.8 arises out of reflections continuous with and completing Plotinus's earlier attempts to deal with the problems traditionally associated with the interpretation of the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. These reflections serve to provide an understanding dispelling misinterpretation of the *Timaeus*, not merely the traditional philosophical parodies of the demiurge, nor merely what he took to be the Gnostic parody. And yet what seems to have stimulated (in part at least) these reflections in 3.8 and 5.8 was Plotinus's desire to counteract Gnostic tendencies in his school by developing a philosophical understanding of natural making in 3.8 and 5.8 in terms of which his specific criticisms of the Gnostic demiurge in 2.9 would become more intelligible to friends and members of his school who, without such preparation, would see less reason to abandon Gnostic ideas. It seems reasonable to expect that these conclusions might apply also to other themes developed in 3.8, 5.8 and 5.5, to their relation to Plotinus's thought in earlier works, and to their function in respect to Plotinus's distinctive polemical intentions in the "Gross-Schrift."

⁴³ Referring to "development" here only as regards thought as expressed in the treatises and leaving open the problem of whether Plotinus's thought itself developed or whether it is merely the expression of it that did (cf. O'Meara, *Structures*, 125-28).

GNOSTIC MONISM AND THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

BY

WILLIAM R. SCHOEDEL

THE *Gospel of Truth* (*GTr*), as has generally been recognized, is remarkable for the absence of mythic elements regularly associated with Gnostic texts. Equally striking is the emphasis on God as the Father of All who encloses everything that possesses true being.¹ In spite of these peculiarities there has been little hesitation in classifying *GTr* as basically Gnostic, and a strong case (though by no means an uncontested one) has been made for regarding it as specifically Valentinian.² The gap between *GTr* and the Valentinianism known to us from the church fathers has been accounted for by the possibility that *GTr* was written by Valentinus himself while still closely associated with catholic Christianity³ or that it represents a demythologized version of Valentinianism intended for the uninitiated.⁴ An attempt is made here to move the discussion forward by connecting the theology of *GTr* with a debate between Irenaeus and some of his Valentinian opponents as recounted in the second book of the *Adversus haereses* (*Haer.* 2). For reasons that will become clear later, I regard this debate as relevant to *GTr* even if it should seem best to minimize or deny the link between *GTr* and Valentinianism.

¹ S. Arai (*Die Christologie des Evangelium Veritatis* [Leiden: Brill, 1964] 61) notes the special emphasis on "die Vorstellung des Vaters als Existenzgrund der Menschen." Cf. E. Haenchen, "Neutestamentliche und gnostische Evangelien," in *Christentum und Gnosis* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969) 44.

² For the Valentinianism of *GTr* see especially the commentaries by M. Malininc, H.-Ch. Pucch, and G. Quispel (*Evangelium Veritatis* [Zürich: Rascher, 1956]), K. Grobel (*The Gospel of Truth* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1960]), and J.-E. Ménard (*L'Évangile de vérité* [NHS 2; Leiden: Brill, 1972]). The Valentinianism of *GTr* has been called into question especially by H.-M. Schenke (*Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959]), E. Haenchen ("Literatur zum Codex Jung," *TRu* 30 [1964] 47-55, 62-82), and K. Rudolph ("Gnosis und Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht," *TRu* 34 [1969] 194-204).

³ W. C. van Unnik, "The 'Gospel of Truth' and the New Testament," in *The Jung Codex* (ed. F. L. Cross; London: Mowbray, 1955) 90-104.

⁴ Leipoldt, "Das 'Evangelium der Wahrheit'," *TLZ* 82 (1957) 831; H. Jonas, "Evangelium Veritatis and the Valentinian Speculation," *Studia Patristica* (TU 81; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962) 96-111.

A particularly important point of contact between *GTr* and *Haer.* 2 is the formula in *GTr* 22: 25-26, that speaks of "the depth of the one who encircles all places while there is none that encircles him."⁵ I shall first discuss the formula and its importance in the theology of the early church, then explore its role in the debate between Irenaeus and the Valentinians, and finally show that the theology of *GTr* reflects the influence of this debate.

1. THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING GOD

This is not the place to develop the theology of the all-encompassing God in full. The following points depend on a more detailed discussion that appears elsewhere.⁶

First, that God encloses all and is enclosed by none is a theme of fundamental importance in the doctrine of God in the early church. It is to be found scattered throughout the writings of both the Greek and Latin fathers and represents one of the most important ways in which God's relation with the world is understood. That God "contains all" (πάντα χωρῶν) and is alone "uncontained" (ἄχωρητος) appears at the heart of the Christian teaching about God already in *Hermas* (*Man.* 1.1). Its continued importance is suggested by (among others) Augustine, who in his *Confessions* looks first to just such a formula to set his spiritual odyssey in proper theological perspective (1.2), returning to it often throughout the work.

Second, there are many variations as far as terminology is concerned. Most commonly, however, we are told that God "encloses" (περιέχειν) all or that he "contains" (χωρεῖν) all. The Latin verb (*continere* or *circumcontinere*) in Irenaeus's discussion of the theme represents the Greek περιέχειν or ἐμπεριέχειν.⁷ *Hermas*, as we have seen, employs the verb χωρεῖν. The two words are often used interchangeably in later writers. The qualitative of the Coptic verb *kto* used in *GTr* 22: 25-26, can stand for the Greek περιτοχή (Crum, 128b) and probably represents περιέχειν here.

⁵ With slight modifications I follow the translation of George MacRae (*NHLibEng*, 37-49). For *maei* as "places" see Ménard (*L'Évangile de Vérité*, 99, 110-11, 113, 134).

⁶ W. R. Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology and Some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig* NHS 3; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 88-108.

⁷ Retroversion of the Latin into Greek is based here and elsewhere on B. Reynders, *Lexique comparé de l'Adversus haereses de Saint Irénée* (CSCO 141-42, Subsidia 5-6; Louvain: Durbecq, 1954).

Third, interest in the divine element as enclosing all can be traced as far back as the pre-Socratics. And there is some evidence to suggest that the antithesis "enclosing, not enclosed" was known in Hellenism apart from Judaism and Christianity. But it is first in Philo that the formula is most richly attested, and its importance there suggests that the church fell heir to Hellenistic Judaism at this point.⁸

Fourth, the formula has many uses, one of the most important of which is to counter anthropomorphic conceptions of the deity. It is not surprising, then, that Irenaeus enriches it by antianthropomorphic motifs derived from Xenophanes (*Haer.* 2.13.3; 2.13.8; 2.28.4; cf. Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9.144). The same union of themes is found in other sources of the period, including Clement of Alexandria (*Str.* 7.5.5) and the Nag Hammadi treatise *Eugnostos the Blessed* (73: 2-11).

Fifth, the frequency of the view in the *Corpus Hermeticum* that God encloses all things (11.18-20; 16.12; exc. 6.3; 14.1; 15.1; 23.7) and the appearance of the formula "enclosing, not enclosed" in one fragment (fr. 26) suggest the inevitability of its appeal to Gnostics. The first editors of *GTr* noted the Valentinian parallel to the formula in Epiphanius, *Haer.* 31.5.3 (ὁ Αὐτοπάτωρ ... ὃς πάντοτε περιέχει τὰ πάντα καὶ οὐκ ἐνπεριέχεται).⁹ The same background of ideas is presupposed in *Haer.* 1.1.1; 1.2.1; and 1.2.5, where the Valentinians refer to God as ἀχώρητος—that is, contained by none and incomprehensible (except to Nous). It is important to observe, however, that the Valentinian sources use such language of the Pleroma—not of the cosmos—and do so to underscore the essential unity of the Pleroma with the Father of All and at the same time to emphasize the inability of the Aeons to fathom the depth of his being.

2. THE DEBATE IN HAER. 2

No doubt Gnostics found it possible to speak of the Father as containing all because in their view nothing outside the Pleroma truly existed. It is understandable, however, that Irenaeus found a logical contradiction between the acceptance of the formula by the Gnostics

⁸ H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1947) 1. 247-51, 317-22.

⁹ Malinine et al., *Evangelium Veritatis*, 54. They also cite Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.5: πάντα χωροῦντα πατέρα, ἀχώρητον δὲ ὑπερχοντα (Marcus). But it seems more likely that this phrase along with others in the passage are definitions inserted by Irenaeus to highlight the absurdity of the teachings of Marcus (cf. Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology," 91).

and their exclusion of the cosmos from the sphere of the divine. In its simplest terms the argument is this: If God is "the Father of All" (as the Gnostics declare), how can it be that he does not in fact contain all things (*Haer.* 2.1.1-3)?

Elsewhere I have shown that Irenaeus's elaboration of the point draws on arguments derived from pre-Socratic philosophers of the Eleatic school (especially Melissus) which had been fused in Graeco-Roman times with the antianthropomorphic themes of Xenophanes referred to above.¹⁰ Here we need not pursue this side of the matter. But two related points are of importance.

First, Irenaeus's argumentation is either part of an older tradition or itself set a style in the anti-Gnostic debate. For the catholic defenders of the faith continued to use arguments against Gnostic dualism that demonstrated the impossibility of anything existing outside of him who encloses all things.¹¹

Second, some of the Valentinians confronted by Irenaeus were prepared to concede the force of such arguments. They do not think of "vacuity and shadow"¹² as existing "outside" God but say "that the Father of All encloses (*continere*) all things and that there is nothing outside the Pleroma"; consequently "they speak of what is 'without' and what 'within' in reference to knowledge and ignorance and not with respect to local distance"; and they teach that the world, whether created by the demiurge or by angels, is "in the Pleroma or in those things that are enclosed by the Father," for it is "enclosed by the unutterable greatness as the center is in a circle or a spot is in a garment" (2.4.2; cf. 2.31.1). Elsewhere in *Haer.* 2 we learn that (according to some Valentinians) when God cast the Mother outside the Pleroma, he merely "separated her off from knowledge" (2.5.1); that "being within and without the Pleroma" refers to "knowledge and ignorance" respectively (2.5.2); that things formed "in the belly of the Pleroma" were presently "dissolved" in accordance with the Father's will; that he permits (or "as some say" permits without approving) "productions of defect and works of error"¹³ and allows the mixture of temporal things with eternal things, corruptible with

¹⁰ Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology," 99-102.

¹¹ Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 1.3; Adamantius, *Dial.* 2.1; 3.12-13; Methodius, *De autexous.* 5.1-5; *Acta Archelai* 16 (14); Augustine, *Conf.* 3.7; 5.10; 6.4; John of Damascus, *Man.* 2 (PG 96. 1321c).

¹² *vacuum et umbrā* (= κένωμα καὶ σκιά; cf. *Haer.* 2.3.1; 2.4.3; 2.8.2-3).

¹³ *labis prolationes et erroris opera* (= ὑστερήματος προβολαὶ καὶ πλάνης ἔργα).

incorruptible and "things which are of error"¹⁴ with things which are of truth"¹⁵ (2.5.3); that though "enclosed" by the supreme God, inferior beings "were very far separated from him through their descent"¹⁶ (2.6.1); that because of their distance from the father his light cannot penetrate everywhere and will not be seen "in those places which are characterized by emptiness"¹⁷ (2.8.2); that emanations may be said to take place "within the Father" and yet may be "ignorant of the Father" and may sink into "a state of degeneracy or degradation" (2.13.6-7).

It is difficult to disentangle the thoughts of Irenaeus's opponents from his own, especially since he often presents his criticism as a matter of logical options. Yet he frequently assures us that "some" of them say such things, and in his formal summary of the Valentinian positions under review he explicitly mentions as a distinct group those who "maintain that the Father no doubt encloses all things but that the creation to which we belong was not formed by him ..." (2.31.1). I have attempted to be as careful as possible in the selection of material presented above. It is hardly possible to eliminate entirely the church father's distortions of his opponents' thought.

It is perhaps safe to say, however, that Irenaeus confronted a group of Valentinians willing to present a resolutely monistic interpretation of their theology and to stress the epistemological significance of the spatial language of their mythology. They could imagine a realm of "vacuity and shadow" or of "defect" within the Father presumably because it was felt to be merely epiphenomenal to the reality of spirit. It is this interpretation of Valentinianism that appears to be relevant to the theology of *GTr*.

3. THE MONISM OF THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

The debate about the literary form of *GTr* is itself of interest here. There is wide agreement that we have to do with a "homily" or "meditation" of some kind. The implication is that the audience understands itself as addressed in the opening words as among "those who have received from the Father of truth the gift of knowing him" (16: 32-33) and that what follows has direct relevance to its self-

¹⁴ *error* (= πλάνη).

¹⁵ *veritas* (= ἀληθεια).

¹⁶ *descensio* (= κάθοδος).

¹⁷ *in his quae sunt vacuitatis locis* (= ἐν τοῦτοις τοῖς τοῦ κενώματος τόποις).

knowledge. The relation of men in this world to the Father above would seem to be what the author has in mind when he speaks of the all-encompassing God. To be sure, attention at first seems to be focussed on the Aeons and their relation with the Father, but it is important to observe how statements about their nature and destiny merge imperceptibly with remarks that have a direct bearing on life in this world.

Consider the first major section of the meditation, which begins at 17: 4. "The All," we are told, "went about searching for the one from whom it (pl.) had come forth" (17: 5-6). "The All" is best understood not as the universe (as Grobel was inclined to think)¹⁸ but as the Pleroma.¹⁹ The statement that the Pleroma "had come forth" from the Father is not intended to emphasize the distinction between the two since it is coordinated with another to the effect that "the All was inside of him, the incomprehensible and inconceivable one²⁰ who is superior to all thought" (17: 6-9). More striking is the fact that the whole Pleroma is evidently what the author has in mind when he goes on to speak of "ignorance of the Father" bringing about "anguish and terror" and says that anguish coalesces, error²¹ becomes powerful, and matter is fashioned in the void²² (17: 9-21).

We are not told that the material creation was thrust out of the Pleroma as we might expect. And it is probably for this reason that we are immediately assured that this represented no "humiliation" for the Father. "Anguish," "oblivion," and "the creature of lying," we are told, "were nothing" (17: 21-29). Here as elsewhere in *GTr* it becomes clear that ignorance and all its consequences pose no fundamental threat to spirit because they have no true being.²³ It is unnecessary, then, to emphasize their location outside the Pleroma.

The next paragraph (17: 29-18: 11) picks up the theme of "error" again. We hear of "those of the middle" (lower Aeons?)²⁴ being enticed, and much is made of "oblivion." But special emphasis is put

¹⁸ Grobel, *Gospel of Truth*, 39.

¹⁹ Ménéard, *L'Évangile de vérité*, 79.

²⁰ Ἀχρόρητος and ἀκαπληρητός as in *Haer.* 1.2.1, 2, 5 (Ménéard, *L'Évangile de vérité*, 79-80).

²¹ πλάνη (see notes 13 and 14 above).

²² *petshoueit* (= κένωμα). Malinine et al. (*Evangelium Veritatis*, 51) note the parallel in *Haer.* 2.4.3 (see note 12 above). Arai (*Christologie*, 55-56) advances another translation of the Coptic text.

²³ Cf. Ménéard, *L'Évangile de vérité*, 83, 134, 166.

²⁴ Schenke, *Herkunft*, 17.

on the fact that the Father is not the cause of oblivion. We are assured that oblivion did not come into existence "under" him, although it is granted that it "did indeed come into existence because of him"—apparently because the sheer incomprehensibility of the Father produced in the Pleroma the anguish that gave rise to the material world (cf. 17: 8-20). It is then announced that the effects of oblivion can be reversed by coming to know the Father. The importance of this formula has rightly been stressed by Jonas.²⁵ Its presupposition, I am inclined to think, is this: What is learned about the Father is that he is incomprehensible—just as Irenaeus tells us that Sophia was thought to be restored "when she became persuaded that He is unsearchable" (*Haer.* 2.18.2). In any event, knowledge—however defined—is regarded by *GTr* as negating oblivion.

Now it should be obvious that almost all of this has direct bearing on the state of the Gnostic in this world, and it is in fact likely that the author has turned his attention to his Gnostic audience somewhere after his opening reference to the All that "went about searching for the one from whom it had come forth" (17: 5-6). What is important to observe, however, is that there is no sharp line of demarcation between the anguish of the Pleroma and the oblivion of the lower world. Moreover, the "searching" of the All for the Father is presently seen as finding its fulfilment in the revelation to the perfect. For "this (is) the gospel of the one who is searched for, which (was) revealed to those who are perfect through the mercies of the Father ..." (18: 11-15). And it is the perfect who are enlightened and released from oblivion (18: 16-19). Now all of this happens through Jesus Christ who is persecuted by error because of the revelation. Here no doubt is left that this is something that has to do with this world since there is a clear reference to the crucifixion (18: 21-29) and shortly after to the teaching activity of the historical Jesus (19: 10-20: 14). His revelation brings knowledge to men. The Father discovers the perfect in himself and they discover him in themselves—the Father who is "the incomprehensible, inconceivable one," the "one who made the All, while the All is within him and the All lacks²⁶ him since he retained its (pl.) perfection within himself which he did not give to the All" (18: 29-38). The fate of the Gnostic, then, is closely bound up with that of the All. What is effected through them is the perfection of the

²⁵ See note 4 above.

²⁶ *efshaat* (= ἑστραπέει; cf. Ménard, *L'Évangile de vérité*, 90; Crum, 592b). See note 13 above.

All. At the end of this section we again hear that "it is he who fashioned the All, and the All is within him, and the All had need of him" (19: 7-10). The clear impression is left that the drama of salvation is an event that goes on "within" the Father and that what separates us from him is ignorance alone. Again, precisely in describing the teaching activity of the historical Jesus (19: 10-27) the parenthetical question is raised, "for what did the All have need of if not knowledge regarding the Father?" (19: 15-17).

Other passages also suggest that *GTr* has abandoned interest in a realm outside the Pleroma. It is from the Father that "all places come forth" (20: 21-22; cf. 27: 11). No doubt the reference again is to the Aeons. Yet almost immediately we are told that when Jesus descended, he "entered the empty places of terrors"²⁷ and "passed through those who were stripped naked by oblivion" (20: 34-38). The same theme is taken up again shortly after (22: 20-33). "He [presumably Christ] has brought many back from error" by going "before them to their places." It is said that "they had moved away" from their places "when they received error on account of the depth of the one who encircles all places while there is none that encircles him." Here again the transcendence of the Father is the presupposition of the fall. For "it was a great wonder that they were in the Father, not knowing him, and (that) they were able to come forth by themselves, since they were unable to know the one in whom they were" (22: 27-33). Here "they" who fall are those "inscribed in the book of the living" (21: 4-5). This same book is revealed in the heart of the "little children" who listened to the historical Jesus (19: 27-20: 14); and yet the letters in the same book are also written for the Aeons that they should know the Father (23: 11-18). It follows, then, that there is a close connection between Gnostics and the Aeons. Indeed, it appears that Gnostics are Aeons taken captive in this world.²⁸ Precisely that fact makes it likely that the fall is conceived of as taking place within the sphere of the Father. To be sure, there is a movement away from the "places," but the line between Aeons and fallen Aeons still seems very fluid. Christ, it appears, is pictured as penetrating to the center of the places encircled by the Father—that is, to "the empty places of terrors." Moreover, it seems to be as true of Gnostics in this world as of the Aeons above that they are in the Father without

²⁷ For "empty" (*etshoueit*) see note 22; and for the whole expression see note 17.

²⁸ Schenke, *Herkunft*, 17; Arai, *Christologie*, 57-58.

knowing it. It is for this reason that we soon learn that "when the Father is known, from that moment on the deficiency²⁹ will no longer exist" (24: 30-31) and "in time unity will perfect the places" (25: 9-10). It is likely, of course, that gross matter and hylic men are conceived of as being still further removed from the Father.³⁰ But there is little to suggest that they are seen as existing "outside" the Father. It is interesting that the individual Aeon is said by knowledge to "purify himself from multiplicity into unity, consuming matter *within himself* like fire, and darkness by light, death by life" (25: 12-19). Even matter, it appears, somehow vanishes as the divine life penetrates and overcomes the deficiency within itself.

The direct relevance to Gnostics of what is said about Aeons is made clear by what follows: "If indeed these things have happened to each one of us, then we must see to it above all that the house will be holy and silent for the unity" (25: 19-20). Yet who are the objects of redemption? When the Word came "all the places were shaken" (26: 15-16) and "error was upset" (26: 19). "Truth came into the midst; all its emanations (?) knew it" (26: 28-29). The revelation under discussion has been made "to his Aeons" (27: 5-8) by the Father from whom emanate "all the places" (27: 11), the Father who "knows every place within him" (27: 24-25). And they (it appears) are still the subject of the following paragraphs that tell how they came into existence in the Father (27: 34-28: 31), how they experienced existence like a bad dream (28: 32-30: 26), and how they heard and were instructed by the beloved Son (30: 27-31: 35). Again we observe the fluidity of the line between the world above and the world below.

It seems reasonable to expect that if the Aeons are encircled by the Father even though ignorant of him, all that arises from that ignorance should likewise be conceived of as enclosed by him. The failure of *GTr* to speak of the lower world as outside the Pleroma and its emphasis on the complete unreality of deficiency suggest that precisely this conclusion had been reached. If so, some relation with the argument in *Haer.* 2 is likely. A few additional points of contact can possibly be found.

First, Grobel observed that *GTr* 35: 9-14, though obscure, seems "to argue (against unspecified opponents) that the lack cannot be the creation of the Father because while lack is in full effect the Father

²⁹ *shta* (= ὑστέρημα). See notes 13 and 26 above.

³⁰ For some possibilities see Arai, *Christologie*, 54-61.

comes to abolish the lack” (cf. 18: 1-3: “oblivion did not come into existence under the Father, although it did indeed come into existence because of him”; 35: 16-18: “the thought of error did not exist with him”).³¹ Ménard noted that here *GTr* apparently lays itself open to Irenaeus’s criticism in *Haer.* 2.17.10 that in Valentinianism “the greatness and power of the Father” are seen as “causes of ignorance.”³² We can now be more precise: *GTr* represents the kind of monistic Gnosis known to Irenaeus and its author was seeking to avoid misunderstanding or to respond to criticism by distinguishing between the Father’s active and permissive will (as in *Haer.* 2.5.3: “the Father permitted these things without approving of them”).

Second, Schenke has argued that the interpretation of the parable of the lost sheep in *GTr* (31: 35-32: 34) is not Valentinian on the grounds that it is only Irenaeus himself in *Haer.* 2.24.6 and not the Marcosians in *Haer.* 1.16.2 who connect the parable with speculation about the number ninety-nine.³³ There certainly seems to be a significant difference between the two texts.³⁴ Yet it may be better to view *Haer.* 2.24.6 as reflecting a Valentinian variant now represented by *GTr*. Note the apparent contradiction discovered by Irenaeus in the fact that the “lost sheep” in being transferred to the right hand (counting passed from the left to the right hand after ninety-nine in antiquity) was said to join “the ninety-nine sheep that were in safety and perished not ... yet were of the left hand”—that is, they had passed over and yet were still immersed in matter. That looks like a misrepresentation of the sort of thing presented in *GTr* where we are told that the ninety-nine “were not lost” and at the same time that when the one is found, “the entire number passes to the right (hand)”; and thus “the entire right ... draws what was deficient and takes it from the left-hand side and brings (it) to the right, and thus the number becomes one hundred” (32: 7-16). That is not as coherent as might be hoped, but we can see what the author is trying to say. Irenaeus would not have been disposed to be so lenient. If that is correct, we have a striking instance of a close connection between *GTr* and the Valentinian teaching reflected in *Haer.* 2.

Irenaeus’s discussion leaves the impression that he confronted monistic Valentinianism already well developed.³⁵ Thus it is possible that

³¹ Grobel, *Gospel of Iruith*, 159.

³² Ménard, *L’Evangile de vérité*, 165

³³ Schenke, *Herkunft*, 20 n. 10

³⁴ Haenchen, “Literatur zum Jung Codex,” 64-68

³⁵ Irenaeus does say: “If driven to despair in regard to these points, they confess

this version of Gnostic teaching was old, going back perhaps to an early form of Valentinus's own teaching.³⁶ Alternatively, it may represent a response to catholic Christians before or after the time of Irenaeus who raised questions of the kind now preserved for us in *Haer.* 2. Perhaps it is most likely that a school of Valentinians refurbished an older way of thinking to meet such criticism. In such a conflict we can well imagine that they would minimize their dualism and set aside the mythology of Sophia and the demiurge associated with it. And in fact it appears from Irenaeus's discussion that his opponents talked more about ignorance, error, and deficiency than about the Creator and the Mother.

These links between *GTr* and *Haer.* 2 increase the likelihood that the "Gospel of Truth" mentioned in *Haer.* 3.11.9 is none other than our gospel. No objection to this drawn from the use of titles in antiquity or the literary character of *GTr* has proved decisive.³⁷ And it would seem artificial to deny a connection between *GTr* and the "Gospel of Truth" mentioned by Irenaeus if in fact our view of the relation between *GTr* and *Haer.* 2 proves persuasive. Though Irenaeus apparently had not seen the "Gospel of Truth," it is likely that he heard of it from the very sources who presented the alternative form of Valentinian theology discussed in *Haer.* 2.

In spite of all this, it must be admitted that we do not have enough information in *Haer.* 2 to be sure. Two things in particular tell against our view. First, it is hard to read *GTr*'s teaching about the Aeons as a modification of Valentinian views on the subject (though at the same time something close to it may be read out of *Haer.* 2.13.6).³⁸ Second, *GTr* does not contain the striking images referred to by Ire-

that the Father of All encloses all things ..." (*Haer.* 2.4.2); but they seem to have been relatively well prepared for him.

³⁶ In this connection van Unnik emphasizes the importance of what Tertullian has to say in *Adv. Val.* 4.2: "Ptolemy afterward followed the same path by distinguishing the names and numbers of the aeons into personal substances but set off apart from God (*extra deum*), whereas Valentinus had included them in the very essence of the deity (*in ipsa summa divinitatis*) as senses, affects, (and) motions."

³⁷ See now B. Standaert, "'Evangelium Veritatis' et 'Veritatis Evangelium': la question du titre et les témoins Patristiques," *VC* 30 (1976) 138-50.

³⁸ We can perhaps disentangle the following points from Irenaeus's discussion in *Haer.* 2.13.6 of what some Valentinians say: Nous, Logos, and other emanations are sent out "within" the Father; the Aeons nevertheless suffer "ignorance of the Father" and fall away from him in a gradually descending series (like circles within a circle or square within a square) until "the smallest and last" is reached who is "far separated from the Father" and fully ignorant of him. It may be significant that neither Sophia nor the demiurge are mentioned.

naeus when he says (more than once) that according to his opponents defect is enclosed by the Father "as the center is in a circle or a spot is in a garment."

These and other considerations make caution necessary. But even if we doubt (or deny) the Valentinianism of *GTr*, the parallels from *Haer. 2* are not necessarily irrelevant. For as we have seen, arguments of the kind found in Irenaeus have a long history in the early church; and as Irenaeus himself suggests (*Haer. 2.31.1*) they can be adapted to any form of Gnosticism. Consequently the theology of a semi-Valentinian or non-Valentinian (or even anti-Valentinian)³⁹ *GTr* could also have been shaped by the kinds of questions discussed in *Haer. 2*.

A standard element in the interpretation of Valentinianism and similar forms of Gnosticism is the recognition that they are fundamentally monistic. For in the last analysis everything arises directly or indirectly from one source. This renders it all the more understandable that a resolutely monistic version of Gnosticism of the kind found in *GTr* and *Haer. 2* should emerge. And debate about the all-encompassing God is the natural catalyst for the development.

³⁹ C. Colpe in H. Langerbeck *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (ed. H. Dörries; *AbhAkGöttingen* 3/69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) 42 n. 1.

VALENTINISME ITALIEN ET VALENTINISME ORIENTAL : LEURS DIVERGENCES A PROPOS DE LA NATURE DU CORPS DE JESUS

PAR

JEAN-DANIEL KAESTLI

IL a existé, au sein du valentinisme, deux écoles professant des opinions divergentes à propos de la nature du corps de Jésus : telle est la donnée, fournie par l'auteur de l'*Elenchos*,¹ que je me propose d'analyser et d'interpréter dans les pages qui suivent. La notice de l'hérésiologue soulève en effet plusieurs questions qui n'ont à mon sens pas encore reçu de réponses satisfaisantes.

Considérons-la d'abord pour elle-même. Pour l'école italienne, le corps de Jésus était psychique, alors qu'il était pneumatique pour les Orientaux. Mais le texte ne se contente pas d'énoncer cette différence fondamentale. Il prétend aussi en donner les raisons :² les deux écoles situent à des moments différents de la vie de Jésus l'événement décisif de la descente de l'Esprit-saint ou du Logos céleste. Pour les Italiens, il se produit à l'heure du baptême dans le Jourdain, ce qui semble bien impliquer que jusque-là Jésus était un être purement psychique. Chez les Orientaux, l'Esprit descend dans le sein de Marie et fournit la substance du corps de Jésus — corps dont le « modelage » est confié à l'art du Démiurge.³

Plusieurs points font difficulté dans cette manière d'expliquer la divergence entre les deux écoles. Dans la thèse italienne d'abord : que recouvre l'expression « le Logos de la Mère d'en-haut, de la Sagesse », employée ici comme synonyme de l'Esprit ? Est-il concevable que Jésus n'ait rien eu en lui de pneumatique jusqu'à son baptême ?⁴ Dans la christologie orientale ensuite : le Sauveur était-il un être spirituel parfait

¹ *Elenchos* [*Haer.*] 6,35,5-7 (p. 165,2-17 Wendland).

² Cf. le *διὰ τοῦτο* en 6,35,6 (p. 165,7) et le *γὰρ* en 6,35,7 (p. 165,15).

³ L'interprétation de la parole de l'ange de Luc 1,35 apparaît déjà dans *Elenchos* 6,35,3-4, qui reflète donc aussi l'enseignement oriental.

⁴ Il semble bien en effet que l'auteur de l'*Elenchos* identifie l'Esprit descendu au baptême (Italiens) avec l'Esprit donné à Marie (Orientaux), « le Logos de la Mère d'en-haut, de la Sagesse » (6,35,6) avec le « Logos céleste issu de l'Ogdoade, engendré à travers Marie » (6,35,4). Pour l'école italienne, Jésus n'aurait donc reçu le germe pneumatique provenant de la Sagesse qu'au moment de son baptême.

dès sa naissance, puisque la descente de l'Esprit au Jourdain n'est pas mentionnée?⁵ Et comment comprendre l'intervention du Demiurge dans la genèse du corps de Jésus, si celui-ci était de nature pneumatique, donc infiniment supérieure à celle du «Père des psychiques»?⁶

Ces difficultés apparaissent encore plus clairement lorsqu'on compare la notice de l'*Elenchos* avec les autres sources valentiniennes. Pour la christologie propre aux disciples italiens de Valentin, la comparaison peut table sur des textes suffisamment nombreux et explicites.⁷ Trois passages retiennent spécialement l'attention, car ils donnent une vue systématique des divers éléments qui constituent la personne de Jésus.⁸ Ces éléments sont au nombre de quatre. Deux d'entre eux sont de nature psychique et relèvent du règne du Demiurge : le Christ psychique, annoncé par la Loi et les prophètes, fils du Dieu créateur ; le corps, de substance psychique lui aussi, préparé à l'intention de ce Christ afin qu'il devienne visible, palpable et capable de souffrir. Les deux autres composantes sont de nature pneumatique et tirent leur origine du monde divin : le germe spirituel provenant de Sophia-Achamoth ; le Sauveur issu du plérôme ou l'Esprit, descendu sur Jésus sous forme de colombe au Jourdain. L'information de l'*Elenchos* [*Haer.*] 6,35,6 est ainsi confirmée sur un point essentiel : le corps de Jésus est bien un corps psychique.⁹

⁵ C'est bien ainsi que J. E. Ménard (*L'Évangile selon Philippe* [Paris, 1967] 200) semble comprendre la notice de l'*Elenchos* : «l'école orientale soutenait que c'était dès le sein de la Vierge qu'il (= le Christ) avait été le parfait pneumatique».

⁶ Il me semble en tout cas exclu que le Demiurge ait conféré à la substance pneumatique une formation au sens gnostique du terme. D'une part, la réalité pneumatique ne peut que lui échapper (cf. par ex. Iren. *Haer.* 1,5,6; 1,7,2). D'autre part, la Sagesse elle-même est incapable de former (μορφώσει) les êtres pneumatiques dont elle est la Mère, bien qu'elle soit de même nature qu'eux (cf. Iren. 1,5,1). Seul le Pneumatique parfait (le Sauveur, les Anges mâles) est en mesure d'apporter la gnose formatrice au pneumatique imparfait (Sagesse, les semences femelles).

⁷ Nous sommes relativement bien informés à son sujet grâce aux fragments d'Héracléon (cités d'après la numérotation de A. E. Brooke [*Texts* 1,4; Cambridge, 1891]), et surtout grâce aux exposés parallèles d'Irénée (*Haer.* 1,4,5-1,7,5; l'ouvrage est cité d'après l'édition de W. Harvey, Cambridge, 1857) et des *Extraits de Théodote* 43-65, (cités d'après l'édition de F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Extraits de Théodote* [SC 23; Paris, 1948]). Ces deux écrits proviennent de la même source (ainsi F. Sagnard, *La Gnose valentiniennne* [Paris, 1947] 227-32 et 526-37) ou expriment deux systèmes très voisins (cf. L. Schottroff, «Animae naturaliter salvandae», dans *Christentum und Gnosis*, éd. W. Eltester [1969] 86-90). Leur rattachement à l'école de Ptolémée ne me semble pas faire de doute.

⁸ Il s'agit d'Irénée, *Haer.* 1,6,1, *Haer.* 1,7,2 et de *Exc. Thdot.* 58-62.

⁹ Iren. 1,6,1 : ἀπό δὲ τῆς οικονομίας περιτεθεῖσθαι σῶμα, ψυχικὴν ἔχον οὐσίαν, κατεσκευασμένον δὲ ἀρρήτῳ πύχνη πρὸς τὸ ὄρατὸν καὶ ψιλαφητὸν καὶ παθητὸν γενέσθαι. Cf. aussi *Exc. Thdot.* 59,3-4.

Mais deux précisions doivent lui être apportées. Tout d'abord, l'application des paroles de l'ange Gabriel (Luc 1,35) à la genèse du corps de Jésus dans le sein de la Vierge n'est pas propre à la branche orientale. C'est ce qu'indique *Exc. Thdot.* 59,3-60.¹⁰ Dans ce passage, comme dans *Elenchos* 6,35,3-4.7, l'ombre de la puissance du Très-Haut se réfère à l'activité formatrice du Démonstrateur s'exerçant sur la substance du corps de Jésus, tandis que la descente de l'Esprit-saint sur Marie indique l'origine non terrestre de cette substance. Mais le πνεῦμα ἅγιον ne désigne pas la même réalité dans les deux cas : pour les Orientaux de l'*Elenchos*, l'Esprit est identifié à la Sagesse, il est un λόγος ἐπουράνιος provenant de l'Ogdoade ; dans *Exc. Thdot.* 60, il s'agit de l'Esprit du Démonstrateur, de cette substance psychique qui «flotte sur les eaux» lors de la création du monde¹¹ et qui va être «tissée» dans le sein de la Vierge «par la puissance d'une divine préparation».¹²

L'autre point sur lequel la notice de l'*Elenchos* sur la christologie italienne doit être précisée concerne la semence pneumatique procédant de Sagesse : descend-elle sur le Christ psychique au moment de son baptême, comme semble le suggérer l'expression ὁ λόγος ὁ τῆς μητρὸς ἄνωθεν τῆς Σοφίας en *Elenchos* 6,35,6? Ou bien est-elle présente en Jésus dès le sein de la Vierge? Irén. 1,6,1 et *Exc. Thdot.* 58-59,2 montrent que la seconde solution est seule compatible avec la christologie du valentinisme italien : en effet, c'est dans un même mouvement que Jésus a successivement revêtu «les prémices» des deux natures qui doivent être sauvées, à savoir l'élément pneumatique issu de Sagesse et le Christ psychique né du Démonstrateur.¹³ Puisque le second «est passé à travers Marie comme l'eau à travers un tube»,¹⁴ il s'ensuit que le premier, qui a été revêtu d'abord,¹⁵ est aussi parvenu dans le monde sensible par la même voie. Seul donc le Sauveur, «le Fruit

¹⁰ *Exc. Thdot.* 60: Τὸ οὖν «Πνεῦμα ἅγιον (ἐπελεύσεται) ἐπὶ σέ», τὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Κυρίου (οὐσίαν) λέγει : «Δύναμις δὲ ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι», τὴν μὲν μορφοῦσιν δηλοῖ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν ἐνετύπωσεν τῷ σώματι ἐν τῇ Παρθένῳ. L'adjonction de οὐσίαν est préférable au γένεσιν proposé par Sagnard, car le terme fait pendant à la μὲν μορφοῦσιν.

¹¹ Voir l'utilisation de Gen 1,2 dans *Exc. Thdot.* 47,3.

¹² *Exc. Thdot.* 59,4: Σῶμα τοίνυν αὐτῷ ὑφαίνεται ἐκ τῆς ἀφανοῦς ψυχικῆς οὐσίας, δυνάμει δὲ θείας ἐργατασκευῆς εἰς αἰσθητὸν κόσμον ἀφιγμένον. Sur ce point, je fais mienne l'interprétation de A. Orbe, *Cristologia gnóstica* 1 (Madrid, 1976) 340-41, 402, qui distingue judicieusement entre les différents sens possibles du terme *pneuma*.

¹³ Cf. Irén. 1,6,1; *Exc. Thdot.* 58-59,2.

¹⁴ Cf. Irén. 1,7,2 (début) et *Exc. Thdot.* 59,2.

¹⁵ Noter le πρῶτον de *Exc. Thdot.* 59,1.

commun du plérôme», descend sur Jésus à l'heure du baptême. Le Logos s'unit alors au germe spirituel provenant de la «Mère d'en-haut» ou de Sagesse, son épouse.¹⁶ En interprétant de cette manière les données de l'*Elenchos* 6,35,6 et les textes ptoléméens, on obtient une vision à peu près cohérente de la position italienne. Son principal trait distinctif par rapport à l'école rivale réside dans sa conception d'un Christ psychique revêtu d'un corps psychique, et non pas dans le fait que Jésus n'aurait rien eu en lui de pneumatique avant l'événement du Jourdain. Cette caractéristique va de pair avec la sotériologie propre aux Valentinien italiens, pour qui le Démonstrateur échappe à son ignorance¹⁷ et la nature psychique qu'il a créée parvient aussi au salut.¹⁸

La vérification et la critique de la notice de l'*Elenchos* sont plus difficiles en ce qui concerne la conception de l'école orientale. La recherche bute ici contre deux types d'obstacles. (1) Les sources disponibles sont plus rares et surtout moins explicites que dans le cas du valentinisme italien. On est alors amené à les compléter et à les éclairer à partir des autres textes valentiniens ou à partir d'autres enseignements gnostiques, ce qui peut conduire à des harmonisations abusives.¹⁹ (2) Le partage des sources entre les deux écoles valentiniennes demeure conjectural, et il arrive qu'un même texte reçoive une assignation différente d'un savant à l'autre.²⁰ Pour ma part, outre le témoignage de Tertullien à propos de Valentin,²¹ je tiens les documents suivants pour des expressions caractéristiques de l'école orien-

¹⁶ En Iren. 1,7,2, il faut donc rapporter le «*en lui* (ἐν αὐτῷ) se trouvait aussi le germe pneumatique provenant d'Achamothe» au Christ psychique, fils du Démonstrateur, et non au Sauveur descendu en forme de colombe.

¹⁷ Cf. Iren. 1,7,4; 1,8,4; *Elenchos* 6,36,2.

¹⁸ Cf. Iren. 1,6,2; *Exc. Thdot.* 61,8; 63,1.

¹⁹ On a surtout tendance à les assimiler aux textes de la branche italienne. C'est ainsi que Sagnard projette dans Iren. 1,15,3 (Marc le Mage) la doctrine typiquement italienne du corps psychique, préparé par le Démonstrateur (*Exc. Thdot.* pp. 218-19; *Gnose valent.*, pp. 375.386.649).

²⁰ Parmi les textes dont l'attribution est flottante, on citera la notice d'Irénée sur Marc le Mage, communément assignée à l'école orientale à cause de sa parenté avec Théodote (cf. par ex. Sagnard, *Exc. Thdot.*, pp. 6-7), mais que A. Orbe considère, de façon étonnante, comme un témoin de l'enseignement italien (*Cristol.* I. 340). A l'inverse, Iren. 1,7,2, généralement rattaché à l'école de Ptolémée, est attribué par D. A. Bertrand (*Le Baptême de Jésus* [Tübingen, 1973] 71 n. 3) à l'école orientale.

²¹ Tertullien, *Carn.* 15: Licuit et Valentino ex privilegio haeretico carnem Christi spiritalem comminisci. Comme le relève justement J. P. Mahé (*De Carne Christi* [SC 216] 51ss.), Tertullien confirme très clairement la divergence des deux écoles. Il distingue en effet entre la position personnelle de Valentin, pour qui la chair du Christ est *spiritalis* (15,1) et celle d'autres Valentinien, pour qui elle est *animalis* (10,1).

tale: (1) la première partie des *Extraits de Théodote* (1-42), mis à part les développements dûs à Clément; (2) Irénée, *Haer.* 1,13-16 et 1,21, qui rend compte de l'enseignement de Marc le Mage et des Valentiniens sacramentalistes; (3) l'*Évangile de Philippe*, au moins pour une part du matériel qu'il réunit.²² Ces trois textes me semblent témoigner d'une même conception du corps pneumatique de Jésus, qui permet de mieux comprendre les indications fournies par *Elenchos* 6,35,4.7.

Un témoignage capital, jusqu'ici négligé, figure dans l'exposé d'Irénée sur Marc le Mage.²³

De la Tétrade en effet sont issus les éons. Il y avait, dans la Tétrade, l'Homme et l'Eglise, le Logos et la Vie. Ce sont des puissances émanées de ces (quatre éons), dit-il, qui ont engendré le Jésus qui est apparu sur la terre.²⁴ L'ange Gabriel a tenu la place du Logos, le saint-Esprit celle de la Vie, la puissance du Très-Haut celle de l'Homme, alors que la Vierge a révélé la place de l'Eglise. Ainsi est engendré, chez Marc, l'homme selon l'économie au travers de Marie. Cet (homme) qui a passé à travers la matrice, le Père de toutes choses l'a élu, par l'intermédiaire du Logos, en vue de la connaissance dont il (= le Père) doit être l'objet.²⁵

Plusieurs points méritent d'être mis en évidence dans ce passage :

(a) Le récit de l'Annonciation (Luc 1,26-38) est bien mis en relation avec la genèse de l'homme qui est né à travers Marie. Mais, à la différence de *Exc. Thdot* 60 et d'*Elenchos* 6,35,4.7, l'exégèse de Marc ne s'intéresse pas seulement aux deux figures mentionnées en Luc 1,35: elle tient aussi compte de l'ange Gabriel et de la Vierge. Les quatre grandeurs ainsi retenues sont le symbole des quatre puissances, émanées de la Tétrade divine, qui ont engendré le Jésus visible. Ces quatre puissances sont associées dans une seule et même œuvre de création (γενεσιουργεῖν). La distinction entre οὐσία et πλάσις ουκὸμορφωσις, typique des deux textes précités, est ici absente.

(b) Le rapport établi entre la Tétrade et la personne de Jésus ne

²² La parenté de l'*EvPh* avec le valentinisme oriental, plus ritualiste que son pendant italien, ressort notamment de l'importance donnée aux sacrements (cf. par ex. *EvPh* 68 et Irén. 1,21,2-3).

²³ Irén. 1,15,3.

²⁴ Ἀπὸ τούτων οὖν δυνάμεις, φησὶν, ἀπορρυεῖσαι ἐγενεσιούργησαν τὸν ἐπὶ γῆς φανέντα Ἰησοῦν.

²⁵ Οὕτως τε ὁ κατ' οἰκονομίαν διὰ τῆς Μαρίας γενεσιουργεῖται παρ' αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπος, ὃν ὁ Πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων διελθόντα διὰ μήτρας ἐξελέξατο διὰ Λόγου εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν αὐτοῦ.

doit pas être compris à la lumière d'Irén. 1,7,2 (dans les quatre éléments qui le constituent, le Seigneur «conserve le symbole de la Tétrade originaire et première»). En effet, les quatre puissances figurées dans le récit de l'Annonciation n'ont en tous les cas rien à voir avec le Sauveur descendu sous forme de colombe, qui ne peut avoir «passé à travers la matrice». ²⁶ Il faut donc voir dans ces δυνάμεις des puissances appartenant au plérôme divin, et non à la sphère psychique du Démiurge. Elles sont des effluves de la Tétrade, de la même manière que la semence pneumatique est un effluve de l'élément mâle et angélique. Le terme ἀπορρεῖν implique certes l'idée d'une certaine imperfection, mais aussi celle d'une identité de nature entre la réalité émanée et sa source. ²⁷ Les puissances qui donnent naissance au Jésus visible sont donc de nature pneumatique, mais elles souffrent d'un manque et s'apparentent en cela à Sagesse, la Mère de toutes les semences spirituelles.

(c) Le Jésus qui naît à travers Marie est un être pneumatique imparfait, destiné à recevoir la pleine formation que donne la gnose. C'est dans ce sens qu'il faut comprendre l'expression ὁ κατ' οἰκονομίαν ἄνθρωπος et l'allusion à son élection par le «Père de toutes choses». Chez Marc en effet, l'οἰκονομία ne désigne pas le règne du Démiurge, mais elle se rapporte à la volonté du Dieu suprême de détruire la mort et d'amener les hommes à la connaissance. ²⁸ Si Jésus est appelé «l'homme κατ' οἰκονομίαν» ou «l'homme ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας», ce n'est pas parce que son corps psychique a été préparé avec un art indicible par le Démiurge, mais bien parce qu'il a été élu par le Père de toutes choses, qu'il a été constitué «conformément à sa volonté, à l'image de la Puissance d'en-haut», ²⁹ qu'il a été établi «pour recevoir

²⁶ Contre Harvey, *S. Irenaei Adversus Haereses* t. 1, p. 150, n. 5, qui suggère de rapprocher les 4 puissances d'Irén. 1,15,3 et les 4 composantes de la personne du Christ mentionnées en Irén. 1,7,2.

²⁷ Cf. *Exc. Thdoi.* 2,1-2: τὸ σπέρμα (δ') ἀπόρροια ἦν τοῦ ἄρρενος καὶ ἀγγελικοῦ. Une idée analogue est exprimée en Irén. 1,4,5, où la Sagesse enfante les semences pneumatiques à l'image des Anges du Sauveur. On relèvera encore, à l'appui de notre interprétation, que chez Héracléon (fr. 16, sur Jean 2.20) la Tétrade, symbolisée par le chiffre 40, est aussi mise en rapport avec le germe pneumatique qui a été insufflé dans le corps matériel de Jésus (πλάσμα), symbolisé par le nombre 6.

²⁸ Cette οἰκονομία est inaugurée par l'envoi ici-bas du «dernier Homme» (Irén. 1,14,6) ou du Sauveur, symbolisé par la lettre *lambda* (Irén. 1,16,2).

²⁹ Irén. 1,15,2 (fin): Τεθειληκέναι γὰρ τὸν Πατέρα τῶν ὄλων λύσαι τὴν ἄγνοιαν καὶ καθελεῖν τὸν θάνατον. ἀγνοίας δὲ λύσις ἢ ἐπίγνωσις αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐκλεχθῆναι τὸν κατὰ τὸ θελημα αὐτοῦ κατ' εἰκόνα τῆς ἄνω δυνάμεως οἰκονομηθέντα ἄνθρωπον. Cette dernière phrase précède immédiatement le passage cité plus haut. Elle introduit donc le développement sur la création de Jésus, l'homme

la ressemblance et la forme de l'Homme qui devait descendre sur lui». ³⁰ L'homme qui naît à travers Marie est donc le pneumatique, l' élu par excellence, et sa destinée préfigure celle de l'ensemble des gnostiques.

(d) Comme l'indique la suite du texte d'Irén. 1,15,3, le baptême est l'événement décisif où l'être pneumatique inachevé de Jésus s'unit à l'Esprit venu d'en-haut, où l'image qu'il portait en lui se réalise pleinement. Jusque-là, il n'était que l'émanation de la Tétrade divine. Désormais, il a en lui la plénitude des huit premiers éons. Marc le Mage lie donc étroitement la génération de Jésus «à travers Marie» et le baptême au Jourdain, qui correspond à une seconde naissance. L'importance ainsi donnée au baptême, que confirment d'autres documents du valentinisme oriental, nous oblige à corriger la notice d'*Elenchos* 6,35,7, qui ne souffle pas mot de la descente de l'Esprit sur le corps pneumatique de Jésus.

Le texte d'Irén. 1,15,3 fournit donc des éléments essentiels pour la compréhension de la doctrine orientale du corps pneumatique de Jésus. Les puissances qui interviennent dans la création du Jésus visible n'ont rien à voir avec le Démiurge et les réalités psychiques qu'il gouverne. Emanant directement de la Tétrade divine, elles engendrent un être de nature pneumatique, une semence féminine imparfaite, aspirant au salut. C'est lors du baptême au Jourdain que se produit l'acte rédempteur capital grâce auquel Jésus devient un parfait spirituel : il y reçoit la plénitude de la puissance divine à l'image de laquelle il avait été engendré.

La nature spirituelle du corps de Jésus ressort aussi très clairement de l'enseignement de Théodote. *Exc. Thdot.* 26,1 nous apprend que «l'aspect visible de Jésus» était constitué par «la Sagesse et l'Eglise des semences supérieures, qu'il a revêtue par le moyen de l'élément charnel». ³¹ Ce σαρκίον est également cité en *Exc. Thdot* 1, où il est

κατ'οικονομίαν. La puissance d'en-haut n'a rien à voir ici avec la puissance du Démiurge. Elle désigne plutôt le Dieu suprême, que certains Valentiniens, proches de Marc le Mage, appellent d'ailleurs Homme (Iren. 1,12,4: ἡ ὑπὲρ τὰ ὄλα δύναμις καὶ ἐμπερικεκτικὴ τῶν πάντων Ἄνθρωπος καλεῖται). L'homme Jésus, conforme à la volonté du Père, est donc à l'image de l'Homme du plérôme.

³⁰ Iren. 1,15,3 (fin): Εἶναι οὖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὄνομα μὲν τοῦ ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας ἀνθρώπου λέγει, τεθεῖσθαι δὲ εἰς ἐξομοίωσιν καὶ μὴ ὄμοιωσιν τοῦ μέλλοντος εἰς αὐτὸν κατέρχεσθαι Ἄνθρώπου...

³¹ *Exc. Thdot.* 26,1: τὸ ὄρατὸν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἡ Σοφία καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἦν τῶν σπερμάτων τῶν διαφερόντων, ἦν ἐστολίσθητο διὰ τοῦ σαρκίου, ὡς φησιν ὁ Θεόδοτος. On rapprochera «l'aspect visible de Jésus» du «Jésus qui est apparu sur la terre» d'Iren. 1,15,3.

expressément identifié au *pneuma*, ou semence pneumatique, que la Sagesse a émis pour le Logos. En d'autres termes, la chair dont le Sauveur s'est enveloppé comme d'un manteau est une réalité pneumatique,³² le corps visible de Jésus est consubstantiel à l'Eglise (*Exc. Thdot.* 42,3), à la totalité des semences pneumatiques (*Exc. Thdot.* 1,2). L'expression ἡ τοῦ Λόγου σάρξ en *Exc. Thdot* 16 doit être comprise dans le même sens que le σαρκίον: la colombe du baptême, appelée «l'Esprit de la Pensée du Père» par les Valentiniens, descend corporellement sur la chair spirituelle du Logos. Dès lors, il existe une parfaite unité corporelle entre le Sauveur venu du plérôme et le corps pneumatique jusque-là déficient.³³ Comme chez Marc, le baptême vient donc combler la déficience de l'être spirituel du Jésus visible: le Nom descend sur lui et lui donne la rédemption dont il avait besoin pour ne pas rester prisonnier de «l'Ennoia de déficience» (*Exc. Thdot.* 22,6-7; cf. 26,2).³⁴ La signification sotériologique de la doctrine du corps pneumatique est particulièrement mise en évidence chez Théodote. Le σαρκίον, le germe spirituel que le Sauveur a revêtu et qu'il a arraché au pouvoir du monde inférieur a valeur de «prémices»; il représente en fait la masse entière des élus gnostiques.³⁵ En le sauvant, le Christ sauve du même coup toute l'Eglise.³⁶

Les données christologiques fournies par l'*Évangile de Philippe* s'accordent pour une part avec les témoignages étudiés jusqu'ici, mais elles présentent aussi des particularités originales. Ainsi, l'apocryphe souligne clairement que la seule chair authentique (ἀληθινός) est celle du Christ, par opposition à la chair inauthentique que les hommes revêtent ici-bas et qui ne peut pas hériter du Royaume de Dieu. Les éléments de l'eucharistie font participer l'homme à la chair et au sang véritables du Christ, qui sont respectivement le Logos et l'Esprit-saint

³² *Exc. Thdot.* 1,1: Ὁ προέβαλε, φησί, σαρκίον τῷ Λόγῳ ἢ Σοφία, τὸ πνευματικὸν σπέρμα, τοῦτο στολισμένος κατέλθεν ὁ Σωτήρ.

³³ Il est significatif que le texte qui suit cette mention du baptême (*Ex. Thdot.* 17,1) fasse état de la parfaite unité corporelle unissant Jésus (le Sauveur venu du plérôme), l'Eglise et la Sagesse (le corps pneumatique).

³⁴ On rapprochera ce texte d'Iren. 1,15,2: pour Marc le Mage, le Nom insigne, qui contient la plénitude du monde divin, s'est enveloppé de chair pour descendre jusqu'à la sensibilité de l'homme (ὅτε δὲ ἐφανερώθη τὸ ἐξαγράμματον ὄνομα ὡς σάρκα περιβάλλετο...). L'emploi du verbe περιβάλλειν indique que l'«incarnation» est représentée à l'aide de la métaphore du vêtement, comme dans *Exc. Thdot.* 1,1 et 26,1 (στολιζειν). La chair dont le Nom s'est enveloppé, c'est l'homme κατ'οἰκονομίαν.

³⁵ *Exc. Thdot.* 1,2.

³⁶ *Exc. Thdot.* 42,3.

(*EvPh* [*GPh*] 23). Le corps de Jésus est donc bien une réalité pneumatique, constituée par la réunion des deux aspects, sotériologique et anthropologique, de l'Esprit divin. Ce corps a été produit le jour du baptême au Jourdain, lorsque «le Père du Tout s'est uni à la Vierge qui était descendue», c'est-à-dire lors des noces du Logos-Sauveur et de la Sagesse (*EvPh* 82). Comme dans *Exc. Thdot.* 22,6-7, Jésus a besoin du baptême pour être «régénéré, acquis comme Fils, oint, racheté» et pour procurer ainsi le salut à tous les pneumatiques (*EvPh* 81).

Jusque-là, l'*EvPh* ne dit rien qui ne soit en accord avec les autres témoins du valentinisme oriental, si ce n'est qu'il situe la véritable naissance du corps de Jésus au baptême. Mais dans d'autres passages, il rejette l'idée de la conception virginale et parle de Joseph comme du père terrestre de Jésus (*EvPh* 17 et 91).³⁷ Ces éléments de type ébionite ne s'accordent évidemment pas avec la doctrine valentinienne selon laquelle Jésus est né *per Mariam*. On est tenté d'expliquer leur présence à partir du caractère composite des traditions réunies dans l'*Évangile selon Philippe*.³⁸ Mais il n'est pas exclu que certains Valentiniens aient fait de Jésus un homme comme les autres, né de parents terrestres, jusqu'au moment de sa véritable naissance au bord du Jourdain.³⁹ Quoi qu'il en soit, l'*Évangile selon Philippe* reste plus proche de l'école orientale que de l'école italienne en ce qu'il insiste sur la signification sotériologique du seul corps pneumatique de Jésus.⁴⁰

Le corps du Sauveur était-il psychique ou pneumatique? La divergence a des implications plus larges que ne le signale l'auteur de l'*Elenchos*. L'une de ces implications, étonnamment négligée jusqu'ici, concerne la manière dont les deux écoles interprètent les données

³⁷ *EvPh* 17: «Plusieurs disent que Marie a conçu de l'Esprit-Saint. Ils sont dans l'erreur... Le Seigneur n'aurait pas dit: 'Mon Père qui est dans les cieux', s'il n'avait pas eu un autre père, mais il aurait dit simplement: 'Mon Père'.» *EvPh* 91: «L'apôtre Philippe racontait que Joseph le charpentier planta un jardin, parce qu'il avait besoin de bois pour son métier. C'est lui qui a fait la croix avec les arbres qu'il a plantés, et sa semence était suspendue à ce qu'il a planté. Sa semence était Jésus, et la croix était la plante».

³⁸ Sur le problème complexe de la composition de l'*EvPh*, voir l'état de la question de K. Rudolph dans *TRu* 34 (1969) 150-55.

³⁹ C'est l'interprétation que propose A. Orbe (*Cristof.* 1. 369-79; 432-42). Il voit dans l'*EvPh* l'expression d'une tendance ébionisante au sein du valentinisme, distincte aussi bien de l'école orientale que de l'école italienne.

⁴⁰ On évitera donc d'interpréter notre apocryphe à la lumière de la doctrine du Christ psychique, ainsi que le fait J. E. Ménard (*EvPh*, p. 146): «seul apparaît aux hommes mortels le Christ psychique, image du Père de toutes choses».

évangéliques sur la passion, la mort et la résurrection de Jésus. Là encore, on a tendance à attribuer à tous les Valentinieniens la conception exprimée en *Iren.* 1,7,2, qui en réalité est propre à l'école italienne.⁴¹ Selon cette notice, le Sauveur descendu sous forme de colombe et la semence pneumatique sont par nature invisibles et impassibles. En revanche, le Christ psychique et le corps psychique doté de facultés sensibles qu'il a revêtu subissent les souffrances du Calvaire. Certes, ces événements concrets sont d'abord des symboles qui renvoient à la passion mythique de la Sagesse⁴² et à la «crucifixion» du Christ supérieur sur la Croix-Limite.⁴³ Mais ils gardent aussi une certaine valeur sotériologique, comme le montre *Exc. Thdot.* 58-62 : grâce à la passion, à la mort et à la résurrection du corps revêtu par le Christ psychique, c'est toute la nature psychique qui échappe à la mort et parvient au salut dans le Lieu intermédiaire, en compagnie du Demiurge.⁴⁴

Pour les Valentinieniens orientaux, au contraire, les événements concrets de la passion n'ont rien à voir avec la rédemption, même pas avec celles des psychiques. En effet, à la différence du corps psychique des Italiens, le corps pneumatique ne peut ni souffrir, ni mourir, ni ressusciter. Preuve en soit la manière très différente dont les deux écoles interprètent la parole prononcée par Jésus en *Luc* 23,46. Pour les Italiens, c'est l'âme (= le Christ psychique) qui s'est remise elle-même entre les mains du Père (= le Demiurge) pendant que son corps souffrait (*Exc. Thdot.* 62,3). Pour les Orientaux, c'est le Sauveur qui remet à son Père son corps pneumatique (σαρκίον) et avec lui l'ensemble des élus (*Exc. Thdot.* 1).⁴⁵ De même lorsque Théodote parle

⁴¹ La remarque vaut tout particulièrement pour A. Orbe (cf. «La Pasión según los gnósticos», *Gregorianum* 56 [1975] 5-43). Pour lui, la plupart des gnostiques, et notamment les Valentinieniens, échappent à l'accusation de docétisme en ce qu'ils admettent pleinement la réalité des souffrances de Jésus. «Quoi qu'il en soit, les disciples de Valentin n'ont jamais nié l'existence, dans le corps 'économique' de Jésus, d'un substrat (psychique ou pneumatique) non seulement réel, mais 'visible, palpable et passible' (cf. *Iren.* 1,6,1)» (A. Orbe, «La Encarnación entre los valentinianos», *Gregorianum* 53 [1972] 229).

⁴² Cf. *Iren.* 1,8,2.

⁴³ Cf. *Iren.* 1,7,2.

⁴⁴ Voir notamment *Exc. Thdot.* 61,8: Τὰ ψυχικά μὲν οὖν οὕτως ἀνίσταται καὶ ἀνασφᾶζεται · πιστεύσαντα δὲ τὰ πνευματικά ὑπὲρ ἐκεῖνα σφᾶζεται, ἐνδύματα γαμῶν τὰς ψυχὰς λαβόντα. Cf. aussi *Exc. Thdot.* 63-65.

⁴⁵ Il ne me semble pas possible de voir dans *Exc. Thdot.* 62,3 «un simple doublement ou reflet de 1,1 sur le plan psychique, suivant le mécanisme normal de la gnose», comme le suggère Sagnard (*Exc. Thdot.*, p. 185 n. 1), ou d'harmoniser les deux passages en supposant qu'en *Exc. Thdot.* 1,1 le Sauveur remet au Père son âme en même temps que son *pneuma*, ainsi que le fait Orbe (*Cristol.* 2. 471-73; cf. 2. 311-12).

de la passion du Sauveur (*Exc. Thdot.* 31,1), il ne peut pas s'agir d'une allusion aux événements matériels survenus au Calvaire.⁴⁶ La seule passion qui puisse affecter le Sauveur et le corps dont il s'est revêtu est d'ordre spirituel. Dans un sens positif, elle désigne la «compassion» du Dieu ineffable qui accepte de s'infléchir pour que sa compagne *Sigè* puisse saisir quelque chose de lui et le révéler aux autres éons.⁴⁷ C'est aussi la «compassion» du Sauveur et de ses Anges qui s'exilent loin du plérôme et consentent à subir la loi de la multiplicité pour faire connaître aux hommes leur origine divine.⁴⁸ Dans un sens négatif, anthropologique, la passion a pour archétype le drame de la Sagesse qui désire saisir le Père et en est incapable par elle-même.⁴⁹ Il n'y a donc plus rien de commun entre la passion véritable du Sauveur et la passion du Calvaire.

Une dernière question reste en suspens : que devient, dans ce type de christologie, l'homme qui souffre et meurt sur la croix ? Les sources examinées jusqu'ici ne nous fournissent pas de réponse explicite. Il faut pourtant bien admettre «qu'il reste quelque chose sur la croix» après que le Sauveur a remis son σαρκίον au Père.⁵⁰ J'ai essayé de montrer qu'il est exclu d'identifier ce «quelque chose» avec le corps psychique de l'école italienne.⁵¹ Rien n'indique non plus que les

Les interprétations contenues dans ces deux passages s'excluent mutuellement et ne peuvent pas refléter une même tendance doctrinale.

⁴⁶ Deux raisons s'opposent à une telle interprétation, défendue par Orbe (*Cristol.* 2. 283-88). Le contexte d'abord : les deux autres exemples de passion et de compassion cités par Théodote (*Exc. Thdot.* 29-31) sont d'ordre mythique et purement spirituel. La formulation ensuite : ὁ κατελθών est un terme technique qui ne peut s'appliquer qu'au Sauveur divin issu du plérôme, lequel est par définition étranger aux souffrances dont parlent les évangiles. L'expression τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ σπέρματα s'applique elle aussi à une réalité spirituelle : elle renvoie à la fois aux Anges mâles qui accompagnent le Sauveur lorsqu'il quitte le monde divin (cf. *Exc. Thdot.* 35 et *Iren.* 1,15,3), et aux semences pneumatiques femelles, aux élus, assumés et sauvés dans le corps de Jésus (cf. *Exc. Thdot.* 1,2 ; 26,1 ; 42,2-3).

⁴⁷ *Exc. Thdot.* 29-30,1. Cf. aussi Epiphane, *Haer.* 31,5,5.7.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Exc. Thdot.* 35-36 ; 26,2-3.

⁴⁹ Cf. par ex. *Exc. Thdot.* 30,2b ; 31,2-4.

⁵⁰ Sagnard, *Gnose*, p. 525 n. 2.

⁵¹ C'est la solution suggérée par Sagnard, *ibid.*, et *Exc. Thdot.* p. 27 : «Enfin, comme tous ces éléments sont invisibles, le Demiurge, 'avec un art inexprimable', lui façonne un élément psychique, qui est son corps visible et passible. Il semble bien qu'il faille maintenir ce dernier élément même dans l'école orientale». L'explication proposée par Orbe dans *Gregorianum* 53 (1972) 206-07 est encore moins convaincante : les Orientaux auraient dédoublé l'élément pneumatique en Jésus ; à côté d'un *pneuma* générique (le σαρκίον consubstantiel à l'Eglise), remis au Père à l'heure de la passion, ils auraient aussi attribué au Sauveur un *pneuma* individuel «introduit dans le corps de la Vierge pour devenir le corps passible de Jésus». Cette hypothèse est trop commandée

Valentiniens orientaux aient eu recours au motif de la substitution de personnages (Simon de Cyrène crucifié à la place de Jésus).⁵² Une autre explication me semble possible, que j'aimerais soumettre à la discussion : le véritable corps de Jésus, de nature pneumatique, a coexisté avec une réalité charnelle, purement extérieure, jusqu'à l'heure de la crucifixion. Une telle hypothèse permet de rendre compte du rôle joué par le Démonstrateur dans le « modelage » du corps de Jésus d'après *Elenchos* 6,35,3-4.7.⁵³ Elle rend aussi moins étonnantes les affirmations « ébionites » de l'*EvPh* : l'homme charnel né de Joseph est cloué à l'arbre de la croix, planté par le même Joseph (*EvPh* 91), mais n'a rien à voir avec son véritable corps, né au Jourdain (*EvPh* 82). Enfin, une telle conception n'est pas sans analogie dans d'autres traditions gnostiques, proches à plusieurs égards du valentinisme oriental. Dans l'*Apocalypse de Pierre*, le Jésus vivant, le « corps incorporel » du Sauveur, se sépare de l'image charnelle faite à sa ressemblance et il se tient debout à côté de la croix, impassible et souriant. Le crucifié y est désigné par une série d'expressions dépréciatives : il est « la maison des démons et le vase où ils habitent », « l'(homme) d'Elohim », « l'(homme) de la croix », « celui qui est sous la Loi », « le passible ». ⁵⁴ De même, dans la notice de l'*Elenchos* sur les Docètes (8,10,7), la chair revêtue par le Christ est assimilée aux « ténèbres extérieures ». Au moment où le « grand Archonte » (le Démonstrateur) condamne à la mort sur la croix ce corps qu'il avait lui-même façonné (τὸ ἴδιον πλάσμα), l'âme du Christ abandonne ce corps à son sort et revêt à sa place un autre corps : celui qui avait été formé dans l'eau du Jourdain, le τόπος καὶ σφράγισμα du corps né de la Vierge. Une même dissociation radicale entre le Seigneur véritable et le crucifié se retrouve aussi dans le discours de révélation des *Actes de Jean* (ch. 94-102),⁵⁵ un texte qui présente d'ailleurs des analogies

par l'idée que, même chez les Valentiniens orientaux, Jésus a souffert *réellement* dans son corps.

⁵² Voir la notice d'Irénée sur Basilide (*Haer.* 1,24,4) et le *Deuxième Logos du Grand Seth* [*GrSeth*], NHC VII,2, p. 56,9-11.

⁵³ Comme nous l'avons relevé plus haut (cf. note 6), le Démonstrateur ne peut rien ajouter d'essentiel à la substance pneumatique du corps de Jésus. Son activité, qualifiée de πλάσις ou de κατασκευή, peut très bien se limiter à la confection d'une enveloppe extérieure, dépourvue de toute valeur soteriologique. Cela expliquerait pourquoi Marc, qui ne s'intéresse qu'à l'homme « selon l'économie », ne fait pas intervenir le Démonstrateur dans la création du Jésus visible (Iren. 1,15,3).

⁵⁴ *Apoc. Petri* [*ApocPet*], NHC VII,3, p. 81 ss.

⁵⁵ Ces chapitres forment un ensemble à part, indépendant à l'origine du reste des *Actes de Jean*. La disqualification de la passion terrestre est particulièrement nette dans le passage suivant : « Cette croix (de lumière) n'est pas la croix de bois que tu vas voir en redescendant d'ici, et moi, je ne suis pas celui qui est sur la croix (οὐτε ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ

frappantes avec le valentinisme oriental.⁵⁶ L'association temporaire du Sauveur et de son corps pneumatique avec une image charnelle, créée par le Démon, et vouée à la destruction, n'apparaît donc pas incompatible avec une christologie gnostique, dans la mesure où cette réalité matérielle est demeurée totalement étrangère à l'être pneumatique de Jésus.⁵⁷ Elle ne contredit pas non plus la doctrine du corps spirituel propre aux Valentiniens orientaux, puisque seul ce corps spirituel est véritablement assumé par le Sauveur et que seul il possède une signification sotériologique.

ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος), moi que tu ne vois pas en ce moment, mais dont tu entends la voix» (ch. 99, p. 200,19-21, éd. Bonnet).

⁵⁶ Cette parenté fera l'objet d'une étude détaillée dans l'édition des *Actes de Jean* que je prépare en collaboration avec Eric Junod.

⁵⁷ Voir à ce sujet l'ouvrage de L. Schouff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (WMANT 37; 1970) où la christologie du quatrième évangile est précisément interprétée dans une perspective analogique.

CONFLICTING VERSIONS OF VALENTINIANISM? IRENÆUS AND THE *EXCERPTA EX THEODOTO*

BY

JAMES F. McCUE

THE study of gnosticism in recent years has rightly been dominated by Nag Hammadi; and as detailed study of the "newly" discovered texts has developed, the question has arisen as to how useful, if useful at all, are the older accounts of gnosticism provided by the early anti-gnostic writers. Specifically, the question has been raised whether or not the oldest extensive account that we have of "the so-called gnosis," that of Irenæus, can reasonably be used for an understanding of second-century gnostic Christianity. A generation ago, François Sagnard compared Irenæus's account of Valentinian gnosticism with the other available sources, and gave Irenæus high marks for accuracy even while recognizing his obvious polemical interests.¹ More recently, however, Elaine Pagels has examined one particular but important part of the Irenæan account and judged it to be a serious distortion of the materials available to Irenæus.

Irenæus' *Treatise against the Heresies* is not to be mistaken for a fairly straightforward presentation of Valentinian theology that essentially parallels the *Excerpts from Theodotus*. Those who have taken it as such have underestimated Irenæus' ability to "subvert and destroy" the theology of those he considers a serious threat to the unity of the church.²

In this brief study I wish to examine Pagels's analysis of Irenæus and his sources. My argument will be that her case against Irenæus does not hold. In the texts at issue, Irenæus's account of the Valentinians is fairly accurate, even though obviously unfriendly. It is indeed "a fairly straightforward presentation." This does not establish (or does not go any great distance toward establishing) Irenæus's *overall* reliability as an interpreter of gnosticism; it does, however,

¹ François Sagnard, *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée* (Paris: Vrin, 1947) 562-63.

² Elaine Pagels, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenæus and the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*," *HTR* 67 (1974) 35-53.

suggest that the wholesale scepticism implied by Pagels's remark is premature.

It is Pagel's argument that Irenaeus's account of Valentinian eschatology and soteriology in *Adversus haereses* (*Haer.*) can be shown to be distorted by comparing it with Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (*Exc. Thdot.*), both of which are judged to be based on a common source. Pagels lists the specific distortions as follows:

1. Irenaeus describes the relation of the elect to the rest of mankind only *divisively*, omitting mention of the *unifying* function of the "elect seed";

2. Irenaeus represents Sophia as Mother of the elect alone, and the *ecclesia* as the exclusive community of the elect—omitting mention of Sophia's relation to *psychics*, and of their inclusion within the "total *ecclesia*";

3. Irenaeus identifies the term "pneumatic seed" exclusively with the elect, omitting mention of the "twofold emission of seed" that describes a portion of the "seed" implanted within *psychics* as well;

4. Irenaeus indicates that the "economic" distinctions between *psychics* and *pneumatics* are sustained eschatologically, omitting what Theodotus describes as the primary feature of the eschatological "marriage feast"—the *equalization* of "all who are saved";

5. Irenaeus identifies the *psychics* and *pneumatics* (ψυχικοί/πνευματικοί) with the *psychic* and *pneumatic elements* (ψυχικά/πνευματικά) in order to claim that only "pneumatics" enter the *pleroma*. By this change in terminology, he is able to deny that *psychics* can participate in the final process of transformation into the *pleroma*.

How important are these details to our understanding of Valentinianism? Pagels takes them to be central.

Irenaeus' representation of Valentinian eschatology has so conditioned its subsequent interpretation that to challenge his interpretative structure requires nothing less than to reconceive our whole understanding of Valentinian soteriology.³

I shall try to establish two points: 1) *Much* of Pagels's argument is based on parts of *Exc. Thdot.* that are not, by anyone's account, based upon the same source as the *Haer.* passage in question; and 2) that even these texts, as well as those that are based upon the common source, give basically the same account of matters as does *Haer.* 1.7.1.

³ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

(1)

To criticize *Haer.* 1.7.1 because it disagrees with *Exc. Thdot.*⁴ requires that there be a very close relationship between the two works. Pagels begins her investigation by observing:

For more than a hundred years the *Excerpts from Theodotus* (especially 42-65) and Irenaeus' *Treatise* have served as primary sources of Valentinian eschatology. Since Dibelius' article appeared in 1908, discussion of Valentinian eschatology has followed his premise that these two sources contain essentially the same teaching, and may be derived from a common source.⁵

Dibelius is, indeed, less tentative than "may be derived" suggests; but he is also more specific: Clement had as a source for sections 43-65 of the *Exc. Thdot.* the same Valentinian writing that Irenaeus used for the description of the Valentinian system at the beginning of his work.⁶ As to the relationship between Irenaeus and the rest of *Exc. Thdot.*, Dibelius can establish nothing.⁷

It is always difficult to establish that two documents are derived immediately from a common source. Yet that is what is required here, since if one allows intermediate stages all manner of differences can be attributed to the intermediaries. Though I am not altogether comfortable with Dibelius's thesis,⁸ for present purposes I accept the thesis as stated. It should be noted, however, that it does not cover the whole of *Exc. Thdot.* Moreover, it is *also* a scholarly commonplace that *Exc. Thdot.* falls into several sections, and that these sections are

⁴ Pagels also claims that there are discrepancies *within* Irenaeus, but this is decidedly secondary in her argument. In this paper I have focused on what is primary, the comparison between Irenaeus and the *Exc. Thdot.*

⁵ Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 35.

⁶ Otto Dibelius, "Studien zur Geschichte der Valentinianer: I. Die *Excerpta ex Theodoto* und Irenäus," *ZNW* 9 (1908) 230.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 242: "Zu den übrigen Stücken des Irenäus und der Exzerpte weiss ich quellenkritisch nichts zu sagen."

⁸ It is difficult to establish immediate dependence on a common source. That the sections in question of Irenaeus and the *Exc. Thdot.* ultimately go back to a common partial source seems quite certain. But exact verbal parallels are neither numerous nor extensive. Different NT materials are incorporated into the two texts. It is difficult to see how one can confidently rule out either orthodox or Valentinian intermediaries between the *Urtext* and either Irenaeus or Clement. And if one cannot rule this out, then even if there were theological differences between Irenaeus and the *Exc. Thdot.*, these could be explained in a variety of ways.

doctrinally not altogether homogeneous. At least as far back as Henrici, 1871, scholars have for the most⁹ part distinguished sections 43-65 from what precedes and from what follows; and this distinction is in part based upon doctrinal differences within *Exc. Thdot.*¹⁰ As we shall see, Pagels often compares *Haer.* with material from other sections of *Exc. Thdot.* In principle we might argue that these are irrelevant to the question of how Irenaeus used his common source. However, because it turns out that even these texts do not support the interpretation given to them, we too shall look at these as well as the more obviously germane texts.

(2)

Let us then look at the specific criticisms.

A. "Irenaeus describes the relation of the elect to the rest of mankind only *divisively*, omitting mention of the *unifying* function of the 'elect seed.'" It is, I think, quite clear that Irenaeus recognizes that the elect have a salvific role to play vis-a-vis those who are only called, the Valentinians vis-a-vis the psychics. It is also clear that Irenaeus teaches that the salvation possible for the psychics is secondary, less than that which awaits the pneumatics. This does not deny all unity to pneumatics and psychics, and consequently can be termed divisive only in comparison with the kind of unity which Pagels will try to show was the teaching of *Exc. Thdot.* and the common source. We shall return to this below.

The only *Exc. Thdot.* text cited here by Pagels which seems to stand in tension with Irenaeus is 1.3.

The "elect seed" (essentially identical with the Savior) is called the "leaven" that "unites in faith the *genē* that seemed to be divided" (*Exc. Thdot.* 1.3). What are the "*genē* that seemed to be divided"? The passages that describe their reunification, indicate that they are the *two* elements of the "ecclesia" which consists (as Theodotus explains, *Exc. Thdot.* 58.1.3) of "the *elect* and the *called*".¹¹

⁹ W. Foerster, *Von Valentin zu Herakleon* (BZNW 7; Giessen, 1928) 85, considers 29-68 to be a single body of material.

¹⁰ For details see F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote* (SC 23; Paris: Le Cerf, 1948) 28, 33-49. I have used Sagnard's text. The few places at which he differs from Stählin's text are irrelevant to the argument of this paper.

¹¹ Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 38.

This text has a triple disadvantage. First, it is not part of the common source material. Secondly, recent editors have assigned this passage to Clement, and it seems to me that they are correct in doing so.¹² Thirdly, immediately after this passage the “*genē* that seemed to be divided” is explained for us: the *genē* are the soul and the body (2.2).

B. “Irenaeus represents Sophia as Mother of the *elect alone*, and the ecclesia as the exclusive community of the elect—omitting mention of Sophia’s relation to *psychics*, and of their inclusion within the ‘total ecclesia.’” Here again Pagels takes a position which will be fully justified only in what follows. Two points in Irenaeus’s description of the Valentinian divine marriage (1.7.1) are taken to betray polemic distortion. First, he has the Valentinians describe Sophia as “their mother”; and secondly, he calls her “Achamoth.”

As to the first, there is no need to interpret *Haer.* 1.7.1 (τὴν μητέρα αὐτῶν) as absolutely excluding that the psychics or psychic principle are also in some way derived from Sophia.¹³ Moreover, it is worth noting that in the *relevant* section of *Exc. Thdot.*, the Mother is never referred to except in relation to the pneumatics.

As to the second, *Exc. Thdot.* does not call Sophia Ecclesia in the relevant section, 43-65. Moreover, the two texts which Pagels does cite as examples of Valentinian usage in *Exc. Thdot.* (21.3; 41.2) speak simply of the church, and it is not at all clear that this is being used as a name for Sophia. Hence we seem not to have anywhere in *Exc. Thdot.* an example of the usage which Irenaeus is alleged to have altered for polemical purposes.

C. “Irenaeus identifies the term ‘pneumatic seed’ exclusively with the elect, omitting mention of the ‘twofold emission of seed’ that describes a portion of the ‘seed’ implanted within psychics as well.”

Two remarks are appropriate at the outset. 1) Irenaeus is not alone in failing to mention the twofold emission of seed; *Exc. Thdot.* 43-65 has the same omission, and consequently there would seem to be no reason to suppose that it was in the common source. 2) *Exc. Thdot.* 1.2 equates πᾶν πνευματικὸν σπέρμα with τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς. This is not of course from the common material. It is however commonly grouped with those materials in which Pagels does find the twofold emission of seed, and it at least casts some doubt on her interpretation.

¹² See Sagnard, *Extraits*, 9 and 55: the passage is introduced by φημὲν καί, and the next section begins Οἱ δ’ ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου ... φασί.

¹³ Furthermore, there need be no contradiction between *Haer.* 1.8.3 and 1.8.4, Pagels (“Conflicting Versions,” 39) to the contrary notwithstanding.

The text in question begins with *Exc. Thdot.* 21, and is an explanation of Gen 1:27: "In the image of God he made them; male and female he made them." This is taken to refer to the best emission of Sophia (τὴν προβολὴν τὴν ἀρίστην), from which the males are the elect, the females the calling. The males they call angelic, the females, that is themselves, they call the dispersed seed.¹⁴

This seems simple enough on the face of it: Gen 1:27 is interpreted to refer to the angelic and to the embodied-gnostic creation. Though I think that this, in fact, turns out to be correct, it is not problem free. In particular, the elect (ἡ ἐκλογή) and the calling (ἡ κλήσις) do not fit quite as it might seem they should. Common Valentinian use ascribes these terms to the pneumatics and psychics, respectively. However, Clement is explicit in saying that the Valentinians call themselves (in contrast to the male angelics) females and the calling. And this interpretation is corroborated by what follows.

The male element (τὸ ἀρρενικόν) remained with Adam, while the entire female seed became Eve. So the male elements (neuter plural) stay together with the Logos while the female elements, having been made male, are united to the angels and enter the Pleroma. The church below is changed into angels (masculine plural).

And when the Apostle says: "Otherwise, what are they doing who are baptized for the dead?" it is for us, he [Theodotus] says, that the angels [masculine plural] are baptized, whose members we are. For we are dead, we who are dying in this our present condition. The males [masculine plural], however, are the living, they who do not share in this present condition.¹⁵

The φησὶν is here as throughout *Exc. Thdot.* taken to refer to Theodotus; and there seems no good reason not to understand the contrast being made here to refer to the nonincarnate angels. The "we" is the Valentinian "we."

We cannot attend to all of the details of these often difficult texts. I would note, however, that *Exc. Thdot.* 22.5 once again shows

¹⁴ After citing Gen 1:27 the text goes on: τὴν προβολὴν τὴν ἀρίστην φασὶν οἱ Οὐαλεντινιανοὶ τῆς Σοφίας λέγεσθαι, ἀφ' ἧς τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἢ ἐκλογή, τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ἢ κλήσις. Καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἀγγελικὰ καλοῦσι, τὰ θηλυκὰ δὲ ἑαυτοῦς, τὸ διαφέρον σπέρμα. The last phrase, τὸ διαφέρον σπέρμα has been variously translated. Sagnard's "superior seed" has little to recommend it. My translation agrees with Pagels's "borne apart," in "Conflicting Versions," 42.

¹⁵ *Exc. Thdot.* 22.1: ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν γάρ, φησὶν, οἱ Ἄγγελοι ἐβαπτίσαντο, ὧν ἔσμεν μέρη. Νεκροὶ δὲ ἡμεῖς οἱ νεκρωθέντες τῇ συστάσει ταύτῃ ζῶντες δὲ οἱ ἀρρενες οἱ μὴ μεταλαβόντες τῆς συστάσεως ταύτης.

Clement's (or an intervening non-Valentinian) hand: "... in the laying on of hands they say 'for angelic redemption,' that is, the redemption which the angels also have ..." Here the contrast is still between the angels and "them," not between two worldly embodiments of the pneumatic seed. Thus though it may be, as Pageis asserts, that the twofold emission of the seed is "an essential Valentinian doctrine,"¹⁶ in this section of *Exc. Thdot.* that doctrine does not teach that there are two incarnated emissions. It does not unify psychics and pneumatics.

An apparently similar line of thought is developed in *Exc. Thdot.* 32-41.¹⁷ Does it support or render indefensible the interpretation thus far developed here?

Exc. Thdot. 32-41 is a difficult sequence, and polemical bias is not the only possible source of misunderstanding. I wish here to consider only one question: Is this sequence about the salvation of the Valentinians (or the pneumatic Christians), the non-Valentinian Christians (let us provisionally call them the orthodox), or an element common to both?

Sophia brings forth the Christ. This Christ is an image of the Pleroma and of the Father. Leaving the Mother he rises to the Pleroma, where he becomes the elect vis-a-vis the Pleromata and the first-born vis-a-vis things here.

The sequence in what follows is difficult to define precisely. According to *Exc. Thdot.* 33.3, the generation of the Archon of the Economy follows the flight of Christ; but according to 39ff., after the Christ abandons the Mother, she brings forth the nonintegral seed, keeping with her that which is able, has possibilities (τὰ δυνατόν). It would seem that this seed has the possibility of becoming integral. These are the angelic elements¹⁸ of the Topos and of the called, which the Mother keeps by herself, whereas the angelic elements of the elect had already been brought forth by the male. The elements of the right were brought forth by the Mother before she prayed for light. The seeds of the church, however, were brought forth after the prayer for light. The angelic elements of the seed had already been brought forth

¹⁶ "Conflicting Versions," 40.

¹⁷ A certain amount of repetition is unavoidable, given the character of *Exc. Thdot.* It is not a systematic work, developed consecutively from beginning to end, but most probably it is several sets of excerpts with occasional commentary by Clement.

¹⁸ Throughout I use "elements" to translate the neuter plural.

by the male. The dispersed seed, according to Theodotus, were not brought forth as passions, but rather like children, and they are related to the light. The Archon, on the other hand, is brought forth like a passion.

It would seem that the angelic elements of the seed would be the same as the angels (masculine plural) of the dispersed seed of *Exc. Thdot.* 35.1, the same as the angelic, male, elect of 21 ff. The angelic elements of the Topos would refer to the pneumatic elements present in this material order. Unity, or potential unity, exists between the angels and those who possess this element, and not between two different groups of humans.

How the dispersed seed takes on bodiliness is nowhere described in this sequence. However, the texts presuppose at many points that the seed has been deformed, and that it presently exists in the realm of the Topos of fire, from which it must be shielded, from which it is to escape and enter the Pleroma.

How fit together the various schemes of left-right and just-unjust with this? The powers of the left, the first emission of the Mother, are not formed by the presence of the light, but are left to the Topos to be formed. The elements of the right also come before the prayer for light. Both, therefore, are presumably brought forth like passions. The just, those derived from Adam, make their way among created things and are held by the Topos; the others—presumably they are not just—dwell in the region of the left, in the place made for darkness, and they suffer fire.

Exc. Thdot. 32-41 is therefore not talking about the two incarnations of the pneumatic seed, that is, about the Valentinians and the orthodox. It is rather, like 21 ff., describing the supracosmic angels, the imperfect angelic element temporarily embodied in this world, and the powers or elements of the left and of the right, the former of which goes to punishment and fire while the latter remains with the Topos. The Topos will eventually assume the power and the rank presently held by the Mother, and it seems reasonable to presume that those on the right will share in his promotion; but by then the Mother and the perfected seed will, together with the angels, have entered the Pleroma.

Does this interpretation hold up against a final bloc of material from the section that is presumably derived from the common source? I think that it does, though as we shall see there is one difficulty. In the

course of considering this final bloc of material, we shall also deal with Pagels's final two criticisms:

D. "Irenaeus indicates that the 'economic' distinctions between psychics and pneumatics are sustained eschatologically, omitting what Theodotus describes as the primary feature of the eschatological 'marriage feast'—the *equalization* of 'all who are saved.'"

E. "Irenaeus identifies the *psychics* and *pneumatics* (ψυχικοί/πνευματικοί) with the *psychic* and *pneumatic elements* (ψυχικά/πνευματικά) in order to claim that only 'pneumatics' enter the pleroma. By this change in terminology, he is able to deny that psychics can participate in the final process of transformation into the *pleroma*."

Exc. Thdot. 43-65 does not describe the earliest phases of the divine genesis. The Angel of Counsel has already abandoned Sophia, and in his return to her is already accompanied by the male angels. He brings her form according to gnosis, separates her passions from her, and makes these into realities (εἰς οὐσίαν) of the second dispensation. Much of 43-65 is given to a description of the structure of this creation. The Angel of Counsel changes Sophia's passions into incorporeal matter, then into mixtures and bodies (46), and is the first and universal demiurge. After this, Sophia brings forth a god, image of the Father, through whom she makes heaven and earth, i.e., those of the right and those of the left (47). This god brings forth first the psychic Christ, then the archangels and angels, from the psychic and light-filled substance.

The cosmic demiurge then gives form to the two elements which he has brought forth, but does not know that Sophia is working through him. He takes dust (50), and makes of it an earthly soul (ψυχὴν ὑλικήν), irrational, like in nature to the beasts: this is man "the image." Into this he breathes something, like himself in nature, by means of angels: man "the likeness." Thus there is man within man: the psychic within the earthly, not as a part, but a whole joined to a whole. In paradise, the fourth heaven, there is no earthly flesh; for the divine (i.e., demiurgic, psychic) soul, the earthly soul is like the flesh. The Savior advises fighting against this psychic flesh (or earthly soul) so that it will be separated off and not survive the fire (52).

Adam (the man in paradise, presumably, the one still lacking earthly flesh) does not know it but Sophia sows the pneumatic seed in his soul, by means of the male angels. The pneumatic seed has been brought into existence by Sophia, to the extent that it can come into being. Thus Adam's bone—the rational and heavenly soul—is

filled with pneumatic marrow. In addition to the three immaterial elements, Adam puts on a fourth, the garment of skins (54).

Adam generates not from the spirit or from the breathed-in element. They are both divine and are sent forth *through* Adam, not *by* him. Only the earthly part of Adam generates, and only in this sense is Adam our father, the first man of the earth (56). For if Adam sowed from the psychic and the pneumatic elements, we would all be born equal and just, and the teaching would be in all—i.e., we would all be psychic and pneumatic. That is why earthly men are numerous, but psychic men are not numerous and pneumatic men are rare indeed.

The pneumatic element is saved by nature; the psychic is self-determining and can go toward faith and incorruption or toward unbelief and death; the earthly element is destined by nature for destruction. When the psychic element has been saved through the pneumatic, then will the pneumatic, that which is to see God, be saved. The pneumatic race (γένος) undergoes forming—μόρφωσις; the psychic, transition from slavery to freedom.

Let me interject here that when *Exc. Thdot.* talks about pneumatic men (masculine plural) it is talking about those individuals walking this earth who possess a pneumatic, a psychic, and an earthly element; psychic men are those who possess only the latter two; earthly men are those who possess only the last. Though *Exc. Thdot.* does use the masculine and neuter plurals in regular ways, it is not to differentiate between psychic men and the pneumatic element within them. The masculine plural is used to speak of a class of individual humans; *which* masculine plural is determined by the highest and characteristic element contained within the particular class of individuals. Thus, pneumatic men (masculine plural) are those whose highest reality is the pneumatic element (neuter); psychic men have nothing higher than the psychic element.

Jesus Christ takes upon himself the church, the elect and the called (neuter singular) elements, the former derived from the Mother, the latter from the economy. These elements he saves, as well as all that are of like nature to these (58).

The psychic elements are raised and saved by the work of the Savior. The pneumatic elements which have believed have a higher salvation (ὕπὲρ ἑκείνα σώζεται), having received their souls merely¹⁹ as wedding garments (61).

¹⁹ The point of "merely" is that at the end these garments are laid aside.

The Rest of the pneumatics takes place with the Mother in the Ogdoad. They still have their souls as garments. The other believing souls are with the demiurge, but at the time of the consummation they too enter the Ogdoad. Then there is the marriage feast common to all the saved, until all are made equal and know one another. Next, while the Mother receives the bridegroom, and when the pneumatic elements have put off their souls and received their spouses, the angels, they enter the bridal chamber within the limit and go forth to the vision of the Father, to the noetic and eternal wedding feast (64).

And the master of ceremonies of the feast, the friend of the groom, remains outside the bridal chamber and hears the voice of the groom and rejoices. For him this is the fulness of joy and of rest (65).

This is obviously a complex myth, and the interpretation is at points difficult. Disagreement may arise not only out of polemical bias but just as easily from the difficulties of the text. Some points, however, are fairly clear. *Exc. Thdot.* 43-65, like *Haer.* 1.6-8, omits "mention of the 'twofold emission of the seed.'"²⁰ Also, like *Haer.* 1.6-8, *Exc. Thdot.* 43-65 identifies the pneumatic seed and the pneumatic elements with the elect: there is not a hint that the psychics contain within themselves a pneumatic element. The psychics contain as their highest element souls that come forth from and are in nature like the demiurge. The pneumatics contain as their highest element a pneumatic element or seed that comes forth from Sophia and that transcends the demiurge. The pneumatics in addition contain a psychic element, and both, of course, possess a bodily element that is to perish.

The "distinctions between psychics and pneumatics are sustained eschatologically"²¹ not only by Irenaeus but by *Exc. Thdot.* 43-65 as well. The anthropology of the text would seem to require it, and the eschatology, except for a single troublesome detail, confirms this.

The pneumatic is instrumental in the salvation of the psychic, but the salvations awaiting the two are different. The penultimate stage in the process comes on the day of the Lord. The pneumatics are with the Mother in the Ogdoad, still wearing their souls as wedding garments. The other faithful souls enter into the Ogdoad. At this point the interpretation advanced here encounters its principal difficulty. "Then comes the common wedding feast of all those who are to be saved, until all are made equal and know one another" (63.2). Frankly,

²⁰ Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*

I do not quite know what to do with this text. It seems to me better to read this text in light of everything that has gone before rather than to force an interpretation on the other texts that at many points simply will not fit. Therefore, I suggest the following, aware that a certain straining may be apparent. First, the wedding feast is only the penultimate stage. It is not the bridal chamber. All those who are to be saved are assembled: the pneumatics and the psychics. They come to know each other and are made equal. An interpretation of this passage that limits all who are to be saved to the pneumatic element is unduly limiting and runs into the many texts that speak of the salvation of the psychic element. The equalization must take place among all those who are to be saved, the psychics as well as the pneumatics. Given the radical difference between the psychic and pneumatic elements, which Pagels does not contest, the only sense that I can make of this is that *at this penultimate stage*, i.e., at the wedding feast, they are equal; they sit down, so to speak, as equals.

But immediately after, they are again differentiated. The wedding feast over, the pneumatic elements, having put off their souls, receive the angels as their spouses and enter the bridal chamber. In *Exc. Thdot.* 63.1 we read that the pneumatics in the Ogdoad still have their souls; then they are joined by the other souls for the wedding feast (63.2), after which the pneumatics put off their souls and enter bliss (64). It seems reasonable to suppose that the pneumatics who take off their souls in 64 are identical to those who are still wearing them in 63.1, and that additional pneumatic elements have not been smuggled in in 63.2.

After the description of the final ecstasy of the pneumatics, we are told that the master of ceremonies, the friend of the groom, remains outside the ultimate bridal chamber. His joy and rest are fulfilled as he hears the voice of the groom. Who is this figure? It seems most economical to assume that this is the demiurge. It further seems most appropriate to suppose that the ultimate fate of the demiurge is shared by those who are of the same nature as he. These last, however, are inferences.

I conclude, therefore, with a very traditional interpretation of Valentinianism. The differences between Irenaeus and *Exc. Thdot.* seem inconsequential; the differences alleged, nonexistent. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that in the material under consideration here Irenaeus is a reasonably accurate though undeniably hostile re-

porter. This is, obviously, not enough to establish his general reliability, but it should make us cautious about assuming too quickly that he has set out to “subvert and destroy” through distortion and is in consequence generally unreliable.

LES «MYTHES» VALENTINIENS DE LA CRÉATION ET DE
L'ESCHATOLOGIE DANS LE LANGAGE D'ORIGÈNE :
LE MOT *HYPOTHESIS*

PAR

MARGUERITE HARL

DANS plusieurs ouvrages de sa période «alexandrine», Origène attaque l'interprétation «hérétique» des Écritures en faisant allusion aux mythes par lesquels ces hérétiques racontent la création.¹ Dans ce contexte il lui arrive d'employer le mot *hypothesis* dont je voudrais établir le sens précis. Voici d'abord deux de ces textes :

(A) Les hérétiques, dit Origène, croient que certains passages de l'Ancien Testament viennent d'un Créateur imparfait et méchant : «ils se sont séparés de lui et se sont consacrés à des fictions; ils se sont inventé des *hypotheses* conformément auxquelles, pensent-ils, sont venues à l'existence les choses visibles ainsi que d'autres choses non visibles, dont leur âme s'est formé des images».²

(B) «Ceux qui se sont séparés du Créateur du monde et ont pris refuge auprès du Dieu qu'ils se sont inventé doivent résoudre les difficultés que nous venons de leur objecter, ou bien alors qu'ils persuadent leur conscience, après l'audace d'une telle impiété, de se mettre au repos ... conformément à leurs *hypotheses*».³

Dans ces passages, comme en plusieurs autres, le mot *hypothesis*

¹ Composés avant 233 : *Traité des principes, Commentaire des 25 premiers psaumes, Commentaire sur la Genèse*, les cinq premiers *Tomes sur l'Évangile de Jean*. Des extraits de ces ouvrages, où apparaît la méthode herméneutique d'Origène et sa prise à parti de trois sortes d'adversaires (les Juifs, les «hérétiques», les «simpliciores» de l'Église), sont regroupés dans les quinze premiers chapitres de la *Philocalie* d'Origène, dont je prépare une édition. Les références qui suivent sont données à l'édition de J. A. Robinson, *The Philocalia of Origen* (Cambridge, 1893). Origène emploie habituellement l'expression οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν αἰρέσεων pour désigner les Gnostiques, confondus sous une même appellation.

² ...καὶ ἀπᾶς ἀποστάντες τοῦ δημιουργοῦ...ἀναπλαστοῖς ἑαυτοῦς ἐπιδεδώκασιν, μυθοποιούντες ἑαυτοῖς ὑποθέσεις, καθ' ἃς οἴονται γεγονέναι τὰ βλεπόμενα καὶ ἕτερα τινὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα, ἅπερ ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτῶν ἀνειδωλοποίησεν, *Princ.* 4,8, p. 15,19-23 Robinson (= 4,2,1, p. 307,15-308,4 Koetschau).

³ ...μετὰ τὸ ἀποστῆναι τοῦ κτίσαντος τὸν κόσμον καὶ ᾧ ἀνέπλασαν ὡς θεῶ προστρέχειν λυέτωσαν...ἢ...πειθέτωσαν...ἀναπεπαῦσθαι συμφώνως ταῖς περ'αὐτοῖς ὑποθέσεσι..., *Ps.* 1, p. 40,8-14 R.

figure dans un ensemble lexical évoquant l'invention de mythes, avec notamment des verbes du type *plassein*, *anaplassein*, *mythopoiein*, *eidōlopoiein*⁴ : au lieu de le comprendre comme on le fait trop souvent au sens philosophique de «présumé», de «principe» mis à la base d'un raisonnement⁵ je crois qu'il faut le prendre en conformité avec l'ensemble dans lequel il se situe, au sens également bien attesté de «sujet» pris pour base d'un récit fictif, de «fable». Par ce mot, Origène renvoie non pas à une *doctrine* hérétique mais à *des textes* qu'il assimile aux inventions du théâtre. Peut-on alors comprendre de façon plus précise ses allusions aux *eidōla* dans le premier texte et son conseil de mise au *repos* dans le second texte?

L'emploi du mot *hypothesis* au sens de «sujet fictif d'un récit», de «fable», est très bien attesté dans la littérature grecque depuis les premiers élèves d'Aristote, notamment chez les *grammairiens*.⁶ Je donnerai des exemples pris dans des textes païens des 2^{ème} et 3^{ème} siècles, tout à fait contemporains des textes d'Irénée et d'Origène que nous avons à examiner.

Sextus Empiricus, au moment de mettre en question la méthode des «géomètres» qui utilisent les «présupposés» (*hypothesis*), rappelle que ce mot peut également désigner le sujet d'une pièce de théâtre, tragique ou comique, la trame des péripéties.⁷ Et lorsqu'il s'adresse aux «*grammatikoi*», il précise les trois formes principales des récits littéraires : l'histoire, la fiction, les mythes ; l'histoire fait le récit d'événements qui ont eu lieu ; la fiction (*plasma*) fait le récit de faits qui n'ont

⁴ *Comm. in Gen.* 3, p. 69,6-28 R., *Jo.* 2,14 (8), 100, p. 70,3-7 Preuschen. Pour les verbes du type *πλάσσειν*, voir encore *ibid.* 2,24 (19), 155, p. 81,1-3 Pr.; 2,28 (23), 171, p. 84,29-32 Pr.; 5,7, p. 48,16-18 R., etc...

⁵ P. Nautin, *Origène*. (Paris, 1977) 267, traduit notre texte B en disant : «...trouver un repos conforme à leurs principes» ... Il est bien entendu qu'Origène emploie couramment ailleurs *hypothesis*, dans des expressions du type *καθ' ὑπόθεσιν* ou *ἐξ ὑποθέσεως*, au sens philosophique de «principe», «présupposé», «hypothèse».

⁶ A la période hellénistique les savants comme Aristophane de Byzance ont rédigé les *hypotheses* des œuvres classiques (voir R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* [Oxford, 1968] 192-195) mais la réflexion sur «le sujet» pris comme fondement d'une suite de péripéties remonte à la *Poétique* d'Aristote : W. Trimpi, «The Ancient Hypothesis of Fiction : An Essay on the Origin of Literary Theory», *Traditio* 27 (1971) 1-78, spécialement p. 43-55. On notera dans les chapitres 9 et 17 de la *Poétique* la distinction établie par Aristote entre «le sujet» général que se donne le poète, «les noms» des personnes qu'il choisit ensuite, et le développement des «péripéties».

⁷ *Pros Geometras* (= *M.3*) 3, 697,26-29 : *καθ' ἓνα μὲν τρόπον ἢ δραματικῆ περιπέτεια, καθὼ καὶ τραγικὴν καὶ κομικὴν ὑπόθεσιν εἶναι λεγόμεν καὶ δικαίάρχου τινὰς ὑποθέσεις τῶν Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους μύθων, οὐκ ἄλλο τι καλοῦντες ἢ τὴν τοῦ δράματος περιπέτεια.*

pas eu lieu mais qui ressemblent à des faits réels; les mythes (*muthoi*) racontent des événements qui n'ont pas de rapports avec la réalité. Dans la catégorie de la «fiction», Sextus range les *hypotheseis* comiques et les mimes: ce sont les sujets fictifs servant de base aux pièces de théâtre, les «scenarios» de ces pièces.⁸

Plutarque atteste le même rapprochement entre les *hypothesis* et les mimes: les spectacles que l'on appelle «mimes», dit-il dans ses *Propos de table*, s'appellent soit des *hypotheseis*, soit des «farces», *paignia*: les *hypotheseis* sont des mimes dont l'action est plus longue et demande plus d'équipement.⁹

Bien d'autres auteurs de l'époque qui nous intéresse attestent l'emploi courant du mot *hypothesis*, dans la langue de la critique littéraire, pour renvoyer au sujet d'une pièce de théâtre ou d'un mime; on trouvera en note des références à Philon d'Alexandrie, à Lucien, à Athénée, à Philostrate, à Aristide Quintilien,¹⁰ et d'autres références encore dans les dictionnaires. Mais le fait le plus important est qu'Irénée, avant Origène, a utilisé le mot *hypothesis*, en ce sens, pour ridiculiser les textes gnostiques.

Irénée, en effet, emploie avec insistance le mot *hypothesis*, notamment dans sa grande notice du livre 1, pour combattre les textes gnostiques. A côté de passages où le mot peut signifier «théorie», «système», d'autres prennent plus de relief si l'on restitue au mot ses connotations dramatiques, théâtrales.¹¹ Pour Irénée, le drame de Sophia est vrai-

⁸ *Pros Grammatikous* (=M.1), 263-264, 658,22-659,5: ...πλάσμα δὲ πραγμάτων μὴ γενομένων μὲν ὁμοίως δὲ τοῖς γενομένοις λεγομένων, ὡς καὶ κωμικαὶ ὑποθέσεις καὶ οἱ μῖμοι...

⁹ *Conviv.* 7,4, 712e. Le commentaire de ce passage a été fait par E. Wust, PW s.v. *Mimos*, col. 1739.

¹⁰ Philon d'Alexandrie, *Post.* 2 et peut-être *Vita Mos.*, 1,69: Lucien, *Nigr.* 8; Athénée, *Le banquet des sophistes* 14, 621 CD (=Aristoxène, fr. 110 Welhfi); Philostrate, *Im.* 1,3 (les fables d'Esopé); Aristide Quintilien, *De musica* 2, 10, p. 74,7s. Winnington-Ingram (à propos des poèmes homériques); Chariton (ap. R. Hercher, *Erotici* 2, p. 3). Dans la plupart de ces textes, le mot *hypothesis* est péjoratif: fables, bouffonneries, scenarios comiques.

¹¹ Les emplois d'*hypothesis* par Irénée ont été étudiés par R. Hefner, «Theological methodology and St Irenaeus», *JR* 44 (1964) 294-309 (Je remercie G. Vallée de m'avoir indiqué cet article): Irénée, d'après le Lexique de Reynders, aurait employé 55 fois ce mot, que Hefner analyse comme un «concept opérant», principalement au sens de «règle», «fondement» d'un système: à l'*hypothesis* des Gnostiques, Irénée oppose l'*hypothesis* de la foi de l'Eglise, qu'il ne faut pas changer (1,10,3 p. 94-96 Harvey). Hefner n'a pas dégagé le sens théâtral d'*hypothesis* en certains passages, sens en revanche signalé par W. C. van Unnik, «An Interesting Document of Second Century Theological Discussion (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1,10,3)», *VC* 31 (1977) 196-228, spécialement p. 206-208. Le traducteur latin d'Irénée a traduit tantôt par *regula*, tantôt par *argumentum*.

ment «une grande tragédie» et il ironise sur l'*hypothesis* qui raconte que les pleurs de Sophia ont donné naissance aux eaux de toute la terre.¹² Particulièrement intéressant est le passage où, après avoir montré que les hérétiques «mettent en scène» (*skênopègia*) une ogdoade fabriquée avec les *noms* qu'ils prennent dans les Ecritures,¹³ Irénée compare leur *hypothesis*, leur «fable», à ces compositions fictives que sont les centons homériques : les hérétiques prennent çà et là dans les Ecritures des mots et des noms propres, ils les transposent pour leur propre sujet ; ils agissent comme ces gens qui se donnent un sujet de fable (*hypothesis*), puis le traitent à l'aide des poèmes d'Homère, mettant bout à bout des vers qu'ils empruntent à divers chants : le public non averti peut croire qu'Homère a écrit ces vers pour traiter ce sujet-là, mais les connaisseurs ne s'y trompent pas, ils connaissent les «sujets» d'Homère, ils rendent chaque vers au personnage qui convient. De la même façon, le chrétien orthodoxe reconnaît dans l'*hypothesis* hérétique les mots, les noms propres, les paraboles, qui viennent des Ecritures et il n'accepte pas le *sujet mythique* traité à l'aide de ces emprunts, l'*hypothesis* gnostique. Le sens de ce passage est tout à fait clair : les *hypotheseis* gnostiques sont les sujets que les hérétiques se donnent, puis qu'ils traitent en choisissant (dans les Ecritures) des *noms* propres, qui peuvent tromper le public. Les écrits gnostiques sont comparés aux «fables» mises en scène dans le théâtre tragique ou comique : un sujet fantaisiste, des noms de personnages connus, des péripéties. En employant le mot *hypothesis* dans son sens théâtral, Irénée renvoie moins à une doctrine qu'au traitement dramatique et fallacieux d'un sujet qu'il ridiculise : les poèmes gnostiques sont comme des farces... Un autre passage précise cela à propos du récit de la création : les hérétiques ont démarqué la théologie mythique des Grecs, celle même que certains auteurs comiques montraient au théâtre (on songe à la théogonie comique rapportée par Aristophane dans les *Oiseaux*) : ils ont pris les noms de Nuit, de Silence, de Chaos, d'Amour, etc... et ils ont ainsi désigné leurs Eons, transposant la fable grecque pour leur propre *hypothesis*, leur propre fable.¹⁴ On retrouve

¹² *Haer.* 1,4,3 Massuet (p. 36 H.).

¹³ *Ibid.* 1,9,3 M. (p. 85 H.). Le mot *σκηνοπηγία* (rappelé plus loin par le mot *σκηνή*) me semble bien appartenir au vocabulaire du théâtre et ne pas se référer le moins du monde au terme de *Jean* 1,14 (note ap. Harvey). La comparaison avec les centons homériques, puis avec les changements de figures opérés avec des gemmes (les morceaux d'une figure d'un roi deviennent figure de renard), occupent les pages 85-89 de l'édition Harvey.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 2,14,1 M. (=p. 287-288 H.). Le mot *hypothesis* est ici représenté par le latin *argumentum*. Voir encore d'autres passages d'Irénée : 2,14,3 M. (=p. 292-293 H.);

dans ces attaques d'Irénée les trois points qu'Aristote distinguait dans sa *Poétique* : le choix d'un sujet fictif (c'est proprement l'*hypothesis*, la « fable »), puis le choix des *noms* des personnages qui joueront dans ce scénario (les Gnostiques empruntent ces *onomata* à la Bible ou aux Grecs), enfin le développement des péripéties. Dans une même phrase, Irénée accumule les termes techniques de la fiction théâtrale, *plasma*, *skènè*, *mimos*, *muthos*, et semble considérer son travail de dénonciation comme le substitut d'un « dénouement » qui viendrait renverser la situation, comme au théâtre : la façon de « dénouer » le drame raconté par les Gnostiques, c'est d'en faire une réfutation.¹⁵

A la suite d'Irénée, en dépendance de lui, les chrétiens orthodoxes emploieront le mot *hypothesis* pour désigner globalement le grand récit mythique de la création, ce que nous pouvons appeler « l'argument » général qui forme le scénario de la création selon les Gnostiques. Clément d'Alexandrie et l'auteur de l'*Elenchos* nous en fournissent plusieurs exemples évidents¹⁶ et, après Origène, nous en trouverons encore chez Epiphane, toujours en dépendance d'Irénée.¹⁷ Mais il convient de reprendre les deux textes d'Origène cités en tête de cette étude, puisque nous voulons à leur propos examiner de plus près les

2,14,8 M. (=p. 302 H.); 3,16,6 M. (=p. 87 H.). Parfois le traducteur latin a juxtaposé *regula* et *argumentum*, sans doute pour traduire l'ambiguïté du mot *hypothesis* : 4, Préface, p. 144 H.

¹⁵ Nous basardons cette interprétation du texte cité plus haut, 1,9,5 M. (=p. 89 H.) : ἐπει δὲ τῇ σκιρῆ τῆς λείπει ἢ ἀπολύτρωσις, ἵνα τις τὸν μῖμον αὐτῶν περαιώσας τὸν ἀνασκευάζοντα λόγον ἐπενέγκῃ, καλῶς ἔχειν ὑπελάβομεν ἐπιδείξαι πρότερον κ.τ.λ. Le mot ἀπολύτρωσις, dont on ne connaît pas d'exemple dans le vocabulaire du théâtre, semble bien cependant correspondre à ce qu'Aristote appelle, dans la *Poétique*, ch. 18, la λύσις des nœuds du sujet, le dénouement. Ces quelques pages d'Irénée fondent le contraste qu'il veut établir entre l'*hypothesis* gnostique, mensongère, déformant les textes réemployés, et la prédication ecclésiastique, qui ne déforme pas l'*hypothesis* de la foi.

¹⁶ *Hypothesis* au sens de « sujet général » des fables gnostiques chez Clément : *Strom.* 4, 83,2 et 88,2; *Strom.* 5, 4,2; *Strom.* 6, 53,5. En *Strom.* 7, 108,2, Clément fait allusion au fait que certaines sectes gnostiques tirent leur nom (« Caïnistes », « Ophites ») de leurs *hypotheses* et des êtres qu'elles vénèrent : tel personnage (Caïn, le Serpent) est le sujet central de leurs « fables ». De même, chez Hippolyte, *Elenchos* [*Haer.*] 5,7,2 (« Adamas est leur sujet principal », leur *hypothesis*). Autres exemples dans l'*Elenchos* d'*hypothesis* au sens de « récit mythique » de la création et de la fin du monde : 6,21-22; 4,51 (avec le même reproche que chez Irénée au fait que les hérétiques ont utilisé des « noms » déjà connus pour traiter leur propre *hypothesis*).

¹⁷ Epiphane, *Haer.* 31,3-4 (et reprise du mot τραγωδία dans les sections 8 et 17). On trouve aussi chez lui, comme chez Irénée, les mots σκιρῆ et μῖμος (31,24.29.30.31 etc...). Nous ne faisons pas un relevé complet du mot *hypothesis* dans les réfutations de la gnose hérétique.

allusions d'Origène aux «fables» hérétiques de la création et de l'eschatologie.

Dans le premier texte, à quoi fait allusion Origène lorsqu'il parle du mythe de la création «des choses visibles et d'autres choses non visibles» «dont leur âme s'est formé des images», ἄπερ ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτῶν ἀνειδωλοποίησεν? Quel est le sens du verbe ἀνειδωλοποιεῖν dans ce contexte et que sont ces «choses non visibles» que les hérétiques se représentent en image? Le verbe ἀνειδωλοποιεῖν ne signifie pas uniquement, comme on le croit trop souvent, «vénétrer», «idolâtrer»; les *eidōla* sont aussi les images mentales, les formes que nous imaginons, par exemple dans les rêves. Le verbe ἀνειδωλοποιεῖν évoque la création d'images, la représentation sous forme d'images, ce que nous appelons dans les textes littéraires la «personnification», la mise en scène comme personnages d'abstractions.¹⁸ Ce verbe me semble convenir à la création par les Gnostiques des personnages des Eons, qui sont, dans la création universelle, ces «invisibles» opposés aux «visibles». Un texte de Clément d'Alexandrie est proche de notre passage : la fausse gnose, dit-il, consiste à diviniser des créatures, «ou même à personnifier des choses qui n'existent pas», ἢ καὶ ἀνειδωλοποιῶν τι τῶν μὴ ὄντων.¹⁹ La pointe finale de cette phrase (ils font cela parce qu'ils veulent aller «au-delà de la connaissance») vise bien les hérétiques, et ces «non-êtres» qu'ils personnifient, ces abstractions, peuvent être les Eons. Irénée reprochait déjà aux Gnostiques d'avoir pris aux Grecs, et notamment à Platon, le fait de «nommer» «ce qui n'est pas», *quod non est*, d'avoir créé des personnages fictifs portant des noms propres, considérés par eux comme les images des réalités célestes.²⁰ On retrouve la même accusation : les fables gnostiques usent d'une *falsa nominatio*, elles distribuent *des noms connus* à des personnages *fictifs* (les membres du Plérôme, les personnages du grand drame de la chute...),²¹ ce que vise Origène lui aussi lorsqu'il parle de ces «choses non visibles dont leur âme forme des personnages».

¹⁸ Philon d'Alexandrie, parlant des rêves capables de «représenter ce qui n'est pas comme si c'était», τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα : *Jos.* 126. (L'*hypothesis* gnostique est présentée par Irénée comme le produit d'un rêve mensonger qui déforme les Ecritures : texte cité supra, 1,9,3, avec le verbe ὀνειρώττειν). Pour la personnification d'entités abstraites par les poètes, voir Plutarque, *Adv. Col.* 1113 A (Discorde, Tumulte, Trépas, dans le poème d'Empédocle, mots empruntés à Homère), ou Clément d'Alexandrie, *Protr.* 26,4 et 64,1 (les païens personnifient les passions, les éléments).

¹⁹ *Strom.* 6,146,3.

²⁰ Irénée, *Haer.* 2,14,3 M. (=p. 291-293 H.).

²¹ *Ibid.* 2,14,8 M. (=p. 301-302 H.).

C'est une allusion, extrêmement vague à nos yeux, au mythe de la création, avec le drame du Plérôme et de ses membres.

Dans le deuxième texte, que veut dire Origène lorsqu'il conseille à ses adversaires, incapables de répondre à ses objections, de mettre leur conscience *au repos*, «conformément à leurs *hypotheses*»? Le texte me semble prendre plus de sens si l'on voit dans les *hypotheses* non pas des «principes» (quel serait le principe gnostique selon lequel il faudrait «se reposer»?) mais les fables qui racontent le repos eschatologique des membres du Plérôme. C'est avec ironie qu'Origène renvoie les hérétiques à leurs récits mythiques, annonçant *le repos* des Eons, celui des pneumatiques. Pour Origène, comme déjà pour Clément, les hérétiques poussent trop loin la recherche : il y a une démesure, une impiété, dans leur volonté de tout comprendre dans les textes, même lorsque ceux-ci sont difficiles, voire impossibles à comprendre.²² Ils posent aux textes des questions «impies».²³ Ils en arrivent à des «inventions» (leurs *ἀναπλάσματα*) parce qu'ils font preuve d'une «subtilité» intellectuelle excessive, comme certains Grecs.²⁴ A cet excès de recherche, Origène oppose plaisamment «le repos» des Eons : faute de savoir attendre patiemment le sens des textes difficiles, que seul le Verbe Révélateur fait apparaître,²⁵ que les Gnostiques se mettent donc «au repos», comme leurs histoires racontent que le font les Eons! Qu'ils cessent leurs vaines questions! Origène renvoie les hérétiques à leurs propres histoires. Le thème du «repos» est important dans la gnose hétérodoxe,²⁶ sous une forme plus mythique que celle qu'il avait dans la gnose orthodoxe, par exemple chez Clément d'Alexandrie.²⁷ La phrase d'Origène me semble se comprendre au mieux si l'on voit une allusion *ironique* à des passages comme celui de l'*Évangile de Vérité* où l'on peut lire : «Le Père... manifeste ce qui

²² La limite de la recherche exégétique est un point fondamental de la théorie herméneutique d'Origène. Voir, par exemple, Fragment sur le psaume 1, dans la *Philocalie*, p. 40,8 R.; Fragment sur le psaume 50, *ibid.* p. 35,5-22 R.

²³ Fragment du *Commentaire sur Ezéchiel*, dans la *Philocalie*, p. 61,16 R. (δύσφημοι ἐπαπορήσεις).

²⁴ Les *ἀναπλάσματα* des hérétiques sont analogues aux veaux d'or introduits par les Hébreux dans le Temple de Dieu (1 *Rois* 12,28); ils résultent d'une ἐντρέχεια : *Lettre à Grégoire*, dans la *Philocalie*, p. 66,20-26 R.

²⁵ Fragment sur le psaume 50, dans la *Philocalie*, p. 35,15-16 R. Le thème d'un excès de «recherche» chez les Gnostiques se trouve déjà chez Irénée : Préface p. 2,1 H.; 2,13,9 M. (=p. 286 H.); 3,24,1 M. (=p. 132 H.), etc... et chez Hippolyte, *Elenchos* 6, 35-36.

²⁶ Voir J. E. Ménard, «Le repos, salut du gnostique», *RevScRel*, 1977, p. 71-88.

²⁷ Le «repos» comme terme de la connaissance : Clément, *Paed.* 1,29,3 et *Protr.* 88,3. Voir aussi entre autres textes : *Strom.* 5.106; 7,57; 6,121,4.

de Lui est caché...afin que...les Eons le connaissent et *cessent de peiner à la recherche du Père*, afin qu'ils se reposent en Lui, etc...». ²⁸ Ou encore : «...ainsi sont ceux qui ont quelque chose d'en-haut...Ils ne descendent pas dans l'Hadès. Il n'y a pour eux ni envie, ni gémissement, ni mort, mais ils se reposent dans Celui qui se repose, *sans peiner ni sans tourner, embarrassés, autour de la Vérité*, etc...». ²⁹ Sans doute l'annonce d'un «repos» après la fatigue de la «recherche», l'ἀνάπαυσις après le κόπος, est-elle aussi connue d'Origène par les paroles de Jésus (notamment par celle qui est rapportée en *Matthieu* 16,28 : «venez à moi, vous tous qui peinez...et moi je vous ferai reposer»), mais lorsqu'il prend à parti les hérétiques pour leur excès de recherche exégétique, lorsqu'il leur dit «reposez-vous conformément à vos *hypotheses*», cela renvoie beaucoup plus vraisemblablement à leurs spéculations sur l'eschatologie qu'à leur lecture des *Evangelies*. La récurrence du repos des pneumatiques, figure du repos eschatologique, est importante dans les textes valentiniens. Dans le commentaire d'Héracléon sur l'Evangelie de Jean, Origène lisait plusieurs passages où l'on voyait les pneumatiques, ceux qui adhéraient sans hésitation à la gnose, par la foi, atteindre aussitôt «le repos». ³⁰ Peu de chose sépare la conception orthodoxe du «repos» (par la foi) de la conception hérétique; mais la distinction est essentielle : Héracléon attribue le «repos» des pneumatiques à leur «nature», Origène maintient la libre décision de chacun, la προαίρεσις. ³¹ Son ironie n'en est que plus forte, lorsqu'il conseille aux hérétiques de mettre «leur conscience» au repos, conformément à leurs «fables».

En insistant, comme je viens de le faire, sur l'emploi du mot *hypothesis* dans le vocabulaire théâtral, j'ai voulu attirer l'attention sur un aspect de la polémique des orthodoxes contre l'exégèse valentinienne des Ecritures : il est reproché aux hérétiques d'utiliser abu-

²⁸ *Evangelie de Vérité* [GTr] p. 24, 12-20, traduction J. E. Ménard (Paris, 1962) (= traduction G. W. MacRae, *NHLibEng*, p. 41). Voir aussi p. 36, 36-39 (Ménard, p. 70 = MacRae, p. 46) : le paradis comme lieu de repos.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 42,11-43,1 (Ménard, p. 81-82 = MacRae, p. 48).

³⁰ Origène, *Jo.* 13,41,271, p. 267,13 Pr., (διὰ πίστεως εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν, dit Héracléon); 13,44, 294, p. 270,30-32 Pr. Ces deux textes forment les fragments 32 et 33 du recueil de W. Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1932). L'expression διὰ πίστεως a fait penser à une exégèse gnostique de l'*Épître aux Romains* : E. Pagels, «The Valentinian Claim to Esoteric Exegesis of Romans as Basis for Anthropological Theory», *VC* 26 (1972) 241-258.

³¹ *Jo.* 13,10, 63-64, p. 234-235 Pr. (= fr. 17 d'Héracléon chez Völker) : il s'agit de la foi «sans examen» de la Samaritaine (ἀδιάκριτος).

sivement des *noms* scripturaires (ou parfois des noms empruntés aux Grecs) pour désigner les personnages de leurs fables, en un scénario complètement différent du scénario authentique des Écritures. Leurs grands récits mythiques de la création et de l'eschatologie sont choquants : ils se parent d'un vocabulaire emprunté et présentent des péripéties analogues à celles des mimes, des farces. Ils sont ridicules : fabriqués artificiellement et frauduleusement, comme les centons homériques utilisés par les auteurs de mimes, ils offrent à lire une longue suite tragico-comique de péripéties qui n'ont rien à voir avec le sujet fondamental de la création et du salut enseigné par la foi orthodoxe. Le sujet de leurs écrits, leur *hypothesis*, résulte d'imitations hypocrites, c'est une farce. En employant un langage emprunté au théâtre, et plus particulièrement au théâtre des «mimes», les écrivains chrétiens veulent discréditer les textes de leurs adversaires. Ils ont été choqués par ces récits dramatiques, qui se parent de noms scripturaires, pour mettre en scène des personnages avec des unions, des chutes, des pleurs, des passions, des descentes et des remontées dans le Plérôme. Irénée est le premier à avoir insisté sur cet aspect de la littérature gnostique. Sans aucun doute, sur ce point, Origène dépend de lui.³² Dans son langage, lorsqu'il fait allusion aux théories gnostiques de la création et de l'eschatologie, le mot *hypothesis* est l'équivalent de l'autre terme plus fréquemment employé, *mythos*, et doit se traduire par «fable».

³² Voir déjà A. Le Boulluec, «Y a-t-il des traces de la polémique antignostique d'Irénée dans le *Peri Archôn* d'Origène?», *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977) 138-147.

«VRAIE» ET «FAUSSE» GNOSE D'APRES CLEMENT D'ALEXANDRIE

PAR

ANDRE MEHAT

Le problème des relations entre Clément d'Alexandrie et le gnosticisme a été renouvelé par M. Salvatore Lilla dans son remarquable livre, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford, 1971). L'auteur a donné à beaucoup de passages de Clément un grand nombre de parallèles tirés de Philon, du moyen et néo-platonisme, et des documents gnostiques.

De cette recherche, il croit pouvoir conclure: «Christian gnosticism must be regarded as *the source* (C'est moi qui souligne) of the Christian element which enabled Clement to give a satisfactory solution to his Neoplatonic problems». Selon lui, Pantène, le maître de Clément «was not exempt of the manifold influence of the various gnostic systems».

En quoi se manifeste cette influence chez Clément? Selon Lilla, «that the highest divinity was completely unknown, and that Jesus had come down on earth to give origin to an esoteric tradition was a fundamental idea of all gnostic systems. Clement adopted it entirely».

Ainsi selon Lilla, Clément dépendrait des gnostiques: 1) pour l'idée du «Dieu inconnu»; 2) pour la croyance à une tradition ésotérique chrétienne. Ces deux thèses sont liées, mais nous les distinguerons pour la commodité de la discussion. Il faut ajouter un autre motif auquel l'auteur accorde une grande place dans le cours du livre: 3) le thème du *Himmelsreise* (en allemand dans le texte anglais).

Que ces motifs soient communs à Clément et au gnosticisme hérétique, c'était une chose certaine, que les parallèles cités par Lilla ne font que confirmer. Mais en affirmant que le gnosticisme est *la source* de Clément, Lilla a tiré une conclusion qui est loin de s'imposer. Les matériaux mêmes qu'il a rassemblés montrent au contraire:

(1) Que la doctrine du «Dieu inconnu» est une doctrine de Philon, du moyen platonisme, du néo-platonisme; on pourrait ajouter: de beaucoup d'autres.

(2) Que l'ésotérisme est à l'époque une loi générale de beaucoup de groupes et d'écoles, spécialement des écoles platonicienne et pytha-

goricienne. Mais les plus ouvertes des écoles antiques elles-mêmes avaient une tendance à l'ésotérisme : la distinction entre *ta esôterica* et *ta exôterica* vient de l'école aristotélicienne, et pour le stoïcien Chrysippe, la physique était une partie initiatique de la philosophie. Quant à l'enseignement de Jésus, la recherche et la conservation des traditions des *presbyteri* était une affaire importante pour beaucoup de millieux et d'écrivains ecclésiastiques, Papias, et Irénée entre autres. Il est vrai que pour Irénée, cette tradition n'était pas secrète, et qu'elle l'est pour Clément et les gnostiques, mais sur des bases différentes. Pour les hérétiques, l'ésotérisme est un moyen de réserver la gnose à ceux qui *par nature* sont capables de la recevoir ; pour Clément c'est une méthode *pédagogique* destinée à stimuler la recherche, et à préserver ceux qui ne sont *pas encore* capables de la recevoir des dangers qu'elle peut comporter pour de simples fidèles.

(3) Le «voyage céleste» eschatologique est un motif presque universel, le type même de l'archetype dans la psychologie de Jung. Les parallèles apportés par Lilla ne sont pas suffisants pour décider si Clément doit quelque chose de particulier aux gnostiques sur ce point. De l'Iran à l'Égypte, en passant par les mythes «orphiques» on peut trouver des parallèles. Il est difficile de dire quels sont ceux qui sont réellement des sources pour Clément, étant donné qu'il a cherché lui-même à montrer, sur ce point particulier comme sur d'autres, la convergence des traditions, en particulier de la Bible et de Platon. Les parallélismes entre Clément et le gnosticisme, s'expliquent mieux par des sources communes que par une dépendance mutuelle. S'il faut indiquer celles qui me paraissent les plus probables, je renverrais avec feu le cardinal Daniélou, aux apocalypses judéo-chrétiennes, en particulier à l'«Ascension d'Isaïe».

Pour être convaincante, la thèse de Lilla devrait s'appuyer sur une définition de la gnose hérétique et de la gnose de Clément. Lilla s'en est prudemment abstenu : c'est une question désespérée, en ce qui concerne Clément.¹ Quant à définir le gnosticisme, c'est aussi une question controversée. La meilleure méthode pour établir les rapports entre les deux est encore d'étudier la manière dont Clément traite les

¹ J'ai proposé en 1965 dans une communication à Oxford et en 1966, dans mon livre sur les Stromates une hypothèse : la gnose est une doctrine ayant pour centre la croyance que Dieu est amour. J'espérais que cette hypothèse serait discutée. Mais ma communication était donnée en français, et dans mon livre la question arrivait à la page 485. Elle n'a guère retenu l'attention. Je ne la tiens pas pour certaine ; mais je n'en ai pas de meilleure à proposer.

hérétiques gnostiques. Cette question attend encore une étude exhaustive. L'esquisse que j'en ai donnée dans mon livre² est toute provisoire. Mais on peut dès maintenant considérer comme acquis les points suivants :

(1) Clément connaissait personnellement des hérétiques licencieux «qui se disaient gnostiques».³ Il les rejette entièrement, plutôt par des sarcasmes et des dénonciations indignées que par une réfutation en règle. Il entend n'avoir et en fait il n'a que peu de choses en commun avec eux.

(2) Avec les Encratites et les Marcionites, la controverse est surtout exégétique ; au reste il ne semble pas qu'ils se réclament d'une gnose. Mais, comme M. Bolgiani l'a montré⁴ Clément suppose, à tort ou à raison, derrière l'éthique de ce genre d'adversaires, des pré-supposés métaphysiques dualistes, et cherche à les assimiler aux suivants.

(3) Le symbole de l'hérésie est la triade Marcion, Basilide, Valentin, les deux derniers représentant ce que nous appelons le gnosticisme philosophique. Clément semble ne les connaître que par leurs écrits. Il serait étonnant qu'il n'en ait pas rencontré des séctateurs ; mais ce parti-pris est significatif de sa méthode ; c'est une discussion serrée, dialectique, fondée sur la citation d'extraits et la définition de *dogmata*. Il faut prendre le mot au sens ancien et philosophique : de courtes phrases où se condense une doctrine. Dans les subtilités et les détours de la discussion, on reconnaît les *dogmata* : ceux que Clément attribue aux hérétiques et ceux qu'il leur oppose.

On peut rassembler les principaux dans le tableau suivant :

HÉRÉTIQUES	CLÉMENT
La <i>genesis</i> (aux trois sens : le devenir, la création, la procréation) est mauvaise ; elle est l'œuvre d'un demiurge mauvais ou inférieur. (<i>Strom.</i> 3.12.1).	La <i>genesis</i> est sainte (<i>Strom.</i> 3.103.1) ; elle est l'œuvre du Dieu suprême et de son logos, qui sont bons.
Le Dieu de l'A.T. est différent de celui du N.T. et il lui est inférieur.	Un seul Dieu et un seul logos, de l'A.T. et du N.T.
Le corps est mauvais.	Le corps est inférieur à l'âme mais il est bon (<i>Strom.</i> 4.163.1).

² *Etude sur les Stromates* (Paris, 1966) 398-420.

³ P. ex. *Strom.* 2.117.6.

⁴ F. Bolgiani, «La confutazione dell'encratismo di Clemente Alessandrino», *Atti dell'Accademia ... di Torino* 96 (1961-1962), p. 1 ss.

Les hommes sont divisés par nature en :

gnostiques,
psychiques,
hyliques.

Le gnostique est tombé du Plérôme et doit y retourner (*Excerpta ex Theodoto passim*)

La crainte, étant une passion, n'a pas de place devant Dieu.

Gnose et Foi sont marques de deux natures.

La Gnose est découverte subitement.

Le Mariage est une fornication (*Strom. 3.9.1*).

Pas d'élection par nature : tout dépend du libre-arbitre, de l'ascèse et de l'étude, avec la grâce de Dieu.

Dieu ne produit pas de régression, mais toujours fait progresser d'un état bon à un état meilleur (*Strom. 4.94.2*).

La crainte de Dieu est nécessaire dans les commencements.

La Gnose est la perfection de la Foi.

La Gnose s'acquiert avec du temps et de la peine (*Strom. 1.16.3*).

Le mariage est licite (*Strom. 4.147.1*).

Cette méthode de recherche des *dogmata* éclaire ce qui est dit au 6^e Stromate (*Strom. 6.119.3*) de la manière dont il faut procéder avec les hérétiques, par une greffe violente (*meta bias*) : «On gratte chaque bois avec un fer tranchant jusqu'à le dénuder, mais on ne le coupe pas, puis on les lie». Mais la polémique tranchante ainsi décrite n'est pas la seule forme de relation avec la gnose. Il arrive que la ligature se fasse sans violence, et que Clément accepte des hérétiques des propositions ou des suggestions. C'est la méthode qu'il emploie par exemple avec les philosophes, de chercher l'accord à la limite du possible, en se faisant «tout à tous», Juif avec les Juifs, Grec avec les Grecs, en parlant le langage de l'interlocuteur. C'est ce qu'il appelle *oikonomia*, et que dans le français le plus moderne, on pourrait appeler une récupération.

J'en donnerai seulement quelques exemples. L'un, remarquable parce que, d'une manière exceptionnelle, il touche à une question de doctrine.

Au 4^e Stromate, Clément traitant «du martyr» et «qui est le parfait», rencontre les «sophismes de la couardise» par lesquels Basile et Héracléon, le disciple de Valentin, pensaient pouvoir se dispenser de la confession devant les juges terrestres en temps de persécution. Il maintient contre eux la nécessité d'affronter s'il le faut le martyr sanglant. Mais le premier, ou l'un des premiers dans la grande Eglise, il affirme que la perfection, des œuvres et de la gnose, a autant de valeur que le martyr proprement dit. Il affirme sans détour être

d'accord sur ce point avec ses adversaires.⁵ Cette idée était promise à une longue carrière, puisqu'elle deviendra un élément fondamental de la spiritualité monastique. Elle a des antécédents dans la morale aristotélicienne et stoïcienne de l'intention, et elle doit peut-être quelque chose à l'idée du sage, témoin (*martus*) de Dieu selon Epictète. Il n'y a pas de raison décisive de supposer que la convergence entre Clément et un certain gnosticisme traduise un rapport de dépendance. Mais il faut remarquer la manière dont Clément avoue, et souligne même, cette convergence.

En général, sur les points de doctrine, la pratique des *dogmata* lui sert de guide et de garde, et je ne crois pas qu'on puisse le trouver en contradiction avec les siens, même pour des raisons d'*oikonomia*. Mais dans le détail, les réutilisations de données provenant des hérétiques abondent. Ainsi Clément trouve, sans doute chez Irénée, une interprétation arithmologique de la péricope de la transfiguration; il la transpose, en en modifiant d'ailleurs subtilement le sens.⁶ Il accepte, ailleurs, avec les Basilidiens, de placer Justice et Paix dans l'Ogdoade.⁷ Un passage du 3^e Stromate me paraît particulièrement significatif. Il cite⁸ d'après Cassien le Docète, hérétique proche selon lui du valentinisme, une réponse de Jésus à Salomé: «Quand vous foulerez aux pieds le vêtement de honte et que les deux deviendront un et le mâle avec la femelle ni mâle ni femelle...».

Clément remarque d'abord que «dans les quatre évangiles transmis par la tradition, nous ne trouvons pas ce *logion*, mais nous le trouvons dans l'Évangile selon les Égyptiens». Cette remarque devrait suffire à rejeter le *logion*. Mais Clément continue: «Ensuite Cassien ne semble pas avoir remarqué que le texte exprime mystérieusement la tendance irascible comme mâle, et la tendance concupiscible comme femelle, etc.». Ainsi, bien qu'il n'admette pas l'autorité du *logion*, il en donne une interprétation allégorique, de type philonien, acceptable selon lui. Il a cherché à le «récupérer». A mon sens c'est dans cette voie qu'il faut chercher l'explication de l'Évangile secret de Marc, dont un fragment est inséré dans la lettre de Clément découverte par M. Morton Smith. Je crois à l'authenticité clémentine de la lettre, mais, évidem-

⁵ P. ex. *Strom.* 4.15.3; 16.3; 73.1.

⁶ *Strom.* 6.140.3; cf. Irénée, *Haer.* 1.14.6.

⁷ *Strom.* 3.3.3.

⁸ *Strom.* 3.92.3.

ment, non à celle du fragment d'évangile. Les douze lignes sont un *centon* fait à partir d'extraits des évangiles canoniques, autrement dit une fabrication, une «forgerie». Quel en est l'auteur? Ne serait-ce pas Clément lui-même? Il se trouvait, supposons, en présence d'une fabrication carpocratienne. S'il avait été possible, il lui aurait donné un sens orthodoxe. Mais la sexualité, en l'espèce l'homosexualité, était trop apparente, et sans doute trop blasphématoire pour supporter cette opération. Il aura donc corrigé le texte de manière à le rendre acceptable et, se fondant sur des rumeurs qui couraient dans Alexandrie (il est alors sans doute à Jérusalem près de son ami et disciple l'évêque Alexandre), il rattache ce texte corrigé à un mythique évangile secret conservé dans l'église d'Alexandrie.

Clément a la réputation d'une âme candide, et pour cette raison les chercheurs évitent de lui attribuer des fabrications. En fait, il est peut-être plus rusé que candide. Mais si l'on est soucieux de sa réputation, on peut supposer qu'il aura trouvé la fabrication déjà insérée dans une réfutation des Carpocratians, et qu'il l'aura utilisée telle quelle. Quoi qu'il en soit, elle relève de cette tactique de la «récupération» que j'ai indiquée.

On pourrait donner aussi comme exemple de «récupération» l'usage des mots «gnose» et «gnostique» chez Clément. Il est probable en effet que l'une des raisons de cet usage est que ces mots avaient du prestige dans les milieux où évoluait Clément, et où le gnosticisme avait un certain succès. Voilà pourquoi sans doute il préfère le mot «gnostique» à des synonymes qu'il emploie moins souvent : spirituel (*pneumatikos*), par exemple, qu'on trouve dans Saint Paul et chez Irénée. Il remplace encore bien d'autres, en particulier le «gnostique» est un substitut du «sage», dont le nom n'apparaît guère, sauf en quelques passages où il est rapporté à la doctrine stoïcienne.⁹ De même le titre de «maître», ou «docteur» (*didaskalos*) n'est presque jamais donné à un homme, sauf en relation avec le Maître par excellence, le Logos. Ceci pourrait bien être le plus important parmi les traits caractéristiques du «gnostique». Celui-ci serait alors l'héritier légitime d'un des charismes pauliniens, celui du didascale.¹⁰

Dans le même sens, la «gnose», au sens transcendant du terme, qui détermine en grande partie le concept de «gnostique», n'est pas du tout un mot emprunté au vocabulaire de ce qu'on est convenu

⁹ P. ex. *Strom.* 3.19.4ss.

¹⁰ P. ex. *Strom.* 5.63.1-6.

d'appeler le gnosticisme. L. Bouyer, dans une communication à Oxford¹¹ a rappelé que le mot est fréquent chez les Pères apostoliques. Il faut souligner l'importance spéciale de l'*Épître de Barnabé*, qui entend déjà sous le mot une doctrine secrète. Or «Barnabé» est une des références majeures de Clément, et l'un des chaînons de sa tradition secrète. Le mot se réfère aussi par exemple à *Sap. 7, 17-20* (*Strom. 2.5.1*) et à la *gnosis* de Saint Paul, en particulier au charisme du *logos gnoseôs* et du *logos sophias* (1 Cor. 12, 8). Sans doute son commentaire sur 1 Cor. 12, 7-14, est-il confus,¹² mais dans la liste des charismes qu'il en tire, la gnose apparaît en tête, et le développement qui suit traite du gnostique comme parfait.

Sans doute il y a loin du charismatique paulinien au gnostique clémentin; mais le second réclame l'héritage du premier.

Parmi les autres raisons qui ont joué, il faut sans doute citer la réaction contre une exaltation excessive des «simples» et la méfiance contre toute recherche d'ordre intellectuel. Bref, l'influence du gnosticisme, et la volonté de lui reprendre un héritage paulinien sont loin d'être les uniques explications pour l'usage de ce vocabulaire. Mais elles ont eu leur part.

Pour conclure, nous pouvons dire que si le gnosticisme n'est pas la source principale de Clément, il n'en a pas moins eu des relations avec lui.

Sa distinction entre la «vraie» et la «fausse» gnose doit être prise au sérieux. Il a tiré des écrits hérétiques des *dogmes*, auxquels il a opposé la «gnose ecclésiastique»¹³ elle-même condensée en *dogmes*. Sur cette base ferme, il a essayé de reprendre une partie de ce qu'ils avaient accaparé à ses yeux, et même de réemployer tout un matériel d'expressions, de traditions, etc. qu'il trouvait dans les écrits généralement désignés comme gnostiques. C'est une habileté fréquente chez lui et chez les écrivains¹⁴ de réutiliser ses notes de lecture. C'est en particulier pour lui une amorce à employer pour cette manœuvre de séduction qu'il dirige vers les hérétiques comme vers les «Grecs». Les spécialistes du gnosticisme peuvent donc retrouver chez lui, outre de précieuses citations de leurs auteurs, des restes de gnosticisme,

¹¹ Publiée dans *JTS*, N.S. 4 (1953).

¹² *Strom.* 4.132.3.

¹³ *Strom.* 6.97.5, cf. 125.2, 141.3, etc.

¹⁴ L'exemple type en est donné par Théodoret reprenant dans sa *Thérapeutique* les citations et références de Clément et d'Eusèbe pour en faire un ouvrage tout nouveau.

même dans les développements les plus orthodoxes et les moins «gnostiques». En fait, ils en ont trouvé.¹⁵

La publication des écrits de Nag Hammadi permet d'espérer dans ce domaine une abondante moisson. Mais il sera souvent difficile de distinguer entre cette utilisation d'un matériel gnostique et l'utilisation de sources communes aux hérétiques et aux orthodoxes, qu'elles soient scripturaires, philosophiques, ou extraites des apocryphes et des pseudépigraphes, telles que sont les apocalypses judéo-chrétiennes. Si l'on peut espérer atteindre ces sources, on aura fait un grand progrès dans la connaissance d'une période capitale, et obscure, dans l'histoire de l'Eglise, dans l'histoire de la théologie, et peut-être dans l'histoire de l'humanité, celle qui va du règne de Néron au règne de Marc-Aurèle ou, pour prendre des références chrétiennes, de l'Apôtre Paul au martyr Justin.

¹⁵ A titre d'exemple A. van Eijk, «The Gospel of Philip and Clement of Alexandria», *VC* 25 (1971).

DID GnostICS MAKE PICTURES?

BY

PAUL CORBY FINNEY

IRENAEUS says that Carpocratian Gnostics had images and venerated them (*Haer.* 1.24.6 [Harvey 1. 210]). He does not specify their subject matter, but writes only that they worshipped these images together with those of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and others. This account implies that Carpocratian Gnostics had their own distinct form of iconography. Elsewhere Irenaeus mentions images in connection with Basilidians and magic (*Haer.* 1.24.5 [Harvey 1. 201]), but this account is not useful for history.¹

If some Gnostics did make images, as Irenaeus claims for the Carpocratians, what kind of images were they, what was their subject matter, in what media were they executed and on what scale? Do any examples survive? The latter is a reasonable expectation, if we consider that a parade of Gnostics is said to have marched through Rome during the years of the early Principate, and that our archaeological knowledge of the city is good: Rome ought to be a good place to hunt down material traces left by Gnostics. But what should we be looking for? Discontinuity in the material record is surely the key, but what kind of discontinuity makes us suspect the presence of Gnostics? And where are we likely to find this discontinuity? If we should use behavior as a guide, we might be able to find the Gnostics: did they

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¹ Cf. my "Gnosticism and the Origins of Early Christian Art," *Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana* (Rome 21 27.ix.75), in press. Justin, 1 *Apol.* 26, 56 (ed. Otto I/1. 78, 79, 154) confuses a sculptural dedication to the Sabine Semo/Sancus (*CIL* VI i 567, 568; in the Vatican's Galleria Lapidaria) with one to Simon. Irenaeus repeats the error, *Haer.* 1.23.1 (Harvey 1. 190, 191); also Eusebius, *H.E.* 2.13.3 (ed. Schwartz, *GCS* 9/1, 134) and Tertullian, *Apol.* 13.9.38ff. (ed. Dekkers, *CCL* 1, 112). Among these authors none says anything about a specifically Gnostic form of iconography; cf. *Haer.* 1.23.4 (Harvey 1. 194): Simonians worship a statue of the master as Jupiter, one of Helen as Minerva, i.e., old bottles filled with new wine. *CIL* VI i 567, 568: R. P. Garrucci, *Relazione generale degli scavi e scoperte fatte lungo la Via Latina ...* (Rome, 1859) 80ff.

behave as groups in special ways that set them off from their neighbors? For example, did Gnostics have special cults² that required unusual furnishings or spaces? Did they dispose of their dead in unusual ways, perhaps using grave goods marked with Gnostic subjects? Unfortunately the premise of distinct Gnostic group behavior cannot be demonstrated from the sources, and hence the archaeological search is in vain.

We can be sure that Gnostics were different and distinct only in one culture trait: thought. The literature that they produced proves the point. The material and social context which accompanied the production of this literature is lost, but the distinctness of the literary product cannot be gainsaid. Gnostic answers to questions of cosmogony, cosmology, ethics, anthropology, and history are attested abundantly. Although they borrowed freely from the store of Greco-Roman and Near Eastern wisdom, Gnostics combined traditional themes in new unusual ways.

Did Gnostics translate any of their unusual myths and beliefs into pictures? Irenaeus hints that the Carpocratians did, but in Origen we have a clear-cut, positive answer. In *Cels.* 6.24-38 (ed. Koetschau, GCS 3, 94-107), he discusses an Ophite ideograph which he claims to know at first hand. Unfortunately he does not reproduce the diagram, but modern scholars have attempted reconstructions, some of them plausible.³ Apparently the ideograph of the Ophite cosmos was inhabited by images of archontic demons who made up the Ophite

² Marcossian cult (the locus classicus): *Haer.* 1.13.2, 3; 1.21.3-5 (Harvey 1. 115; 183ff.) = Epiphanius, *Haer.* 34.2.1; 34.20.1 (ed. Holl, GCS 31, 6ff., 36ff.). *Haer.* 1.21.5 creates a cultic context for the recitation of a Marcossian creed, fragments of which appear in a noncultic setting, Codex V.3 from Nag Hammadi (A. Böhlig and P. Labib, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi* [Halle/Saale, 1963]):

Irenaeus, <i>Haer.</i> 1.21.5	<i>1 Apoc Jas</i> 33: 16-24
	16 ἀνακ
υἱὸς ἀπὸ	17 οὐρανῶν ἀπὸ οὐρανόθεν ἔρχεται
πατρὸς	18 πῶτ . . .
πατρὸς προόντος	22 πῶτ ἐτῶ ὡρπῆ [ἠψοοῖ]
υἱὸς δὲ ἐν τῷ	23 οὐρανῶν δε ἐφῆρμ πετ[ῶ]
πάροντι	24 ὡρπῆ ἠψοοῖ

Which is the correct setting? Naassene cult: Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.6ff. (ed. Wendland, GCS 26, 90). Phibionite cult: Epiphanius, *Haer.* 26.4ff. (GCS 25, 280ff.). Mandaean cult: E. S. Drower, *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Leiden, 1959); there the older literature. Theodotian Valentinianism: R. P. Casey, *The Excerpta of Clement of Alexandria* (SD 1; London, 1934) 36ff., 91ff. *Gospel of Philip*: H. G. Gaffron, *Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium ...* (Bonn, 1969) 71-99.

³ H. Chadwick, *Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 1953) 358, 359.

hebdomad. Origen says he had seen pictures of these demons and that their details accorded with the description of them transmitted by Celsus: monsters with composite attributes, both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic. Although lost, these pictures surely constituted Gnostic iconography.

Beyond the evidence of Irenaeus and Origen there is the Bruce Codex, the only extant Gnostic document containing pictorial marginalia. The Sahidic codex is late and fragmentary and the product of several hands, but these are not reasons to doubt that the pictures were in the Greek prototype(s). The first forty leaves, to which Schmidt assigned the title *First and Second Books of Jeu*, contain a total of sixty-nine pictorial schemata, some simple, others rather complex. Basically these pictures fall into two classes. The first are linear ideographs schematizing the *typos* of the true god, Jeu, his emanations, and seals marking the identity of emanations. The second class of pictures consists in seals apart from a linear matrix: there are eight examples at the end of the so-called *First Book of Jeu* (chapters 33-38, 40) and twenty-three further examples in the so-called *Second Book of Jeu*. The former group of eight have names and numerical equivalents, whereas the twenty-three have names only. Eight of the twenty-three seals (*Second Book of Jeu*, chapters 45-48) appear in a very interesting narrative framework where Jesus performs a magical initiation of his disciples, as in these two examples:

Jesus stood near the sacrifice and spread out linen garments. On them he placed a wine beaker and enough bread for his disciples. He laid olive branches on the place of sacrifice and crowned the disciples with olive

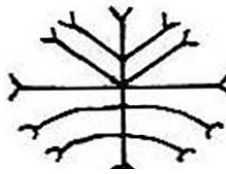


Fig. 1. Bruce Codex. Gnostic seal. (Drawing by J. Steczynski.)

branches. And Jesus sealed his disciples with this seal [see fig. 1]. Its explanation is this: thezozaz. And its name: sazapharas (after the trans. of Schmidt, GCS 45 [13] 308).

Now thereafter it happened that Jesus spoke to his disciples: "Look, you have received the baptism of the holy spirit." He laid out the censer of baptism in the holy spirit, and placed on it grape sprays, juniper berries, *casdalanthos*, remains of saffron, the resin of a mastich tree, cinnamon, myrrh, balsam, honey. And he laid out two vessels of wine, one to

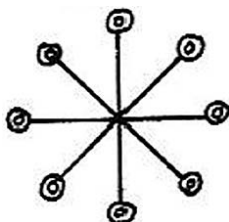


Fig. 2. Bruce Codex. Gnostic seal. (Drawing by J. Steczynski.)

the right of the censer and the other to the left. And he laid out enough bread for the disciples. And Jesus sealed the disciples with this seal [fig. 2]. This is the name of the seal: zakzoza. And this its explanation: thozonoz. (GCS 45 [13], 311)

Many of the seals in the Bruce Codex excluding those that mark emanations sent forth by Jeu) consists in some combination of the following three elements:



Fig. 2a. Hastae common in late Roman monogrammatic ligatures. (Drawing by Carol Sneed.)

Although we cannot pursue this detail here, it is probably worth looking into: these three linear elements appear with great frequency in late Roman and Byzantine ligatures, especially monogrammatic ligatures. This could point to an interesting connection between Gnostics and non-Gnostics in the conventions by which both sealed. Gnostic sfragistics could borrow from late Roman sigillography.

The pictures in the Bruce Codex have nothing to do with the world as we know it. They are conceptual images, abstracted from nature and nonrepresentational. This is just as we might expect, since the pictures follow a text that is itself several times removed from ordinary experience. The only exception in the text falls in chapters 45-48 where Jesus is made to perform a rite of magical initiation which has parallels in ancient cult and literature, notably in the magical papyri.⁵ Anthro-

⁴ Cf. my article "A Monogrammed Byzantine Garnet from Carthage," *Carthage Excavations 1975, Punic Project, First Interim Report* (ed. L. E. Stager; Chicago, 1978), in press (there the literature).

⁵ *PGM* 7. 222ff.; 8. 65ff.; F. J. Dölger, *Sphragis* (Paderborn, 1911), and by the same author: *AC* 1 (1929) 66-78, 88-91, 197-201; 2 (1930) 100-41, 297-300; 3 (1932) 204-9; O. Lassaly, *ARW* 29 (1931), 130ff.; H. Lietzmann, *An die Galater* (Tübingen, 1932): cf. Gal 6:17.

pology and ethnography also provide parallels, as does a broad spectrum of Greco-Roman religious practice. The literary scenario, depicting a leader initiating an inner circle of disciples in a rite that culminated in a magical sealing, connects at least a section of the codex with common non-Gnostic practice, but there is no pictorial illustration of Jesus the magician performing the rite. Instead the pictures remain consistently abstract, linear schematizations of an imaginary world inhabited by concepts, not people.

The Ophite monsters reported by Celsus are also abstractions, Goyaesque creatures of fantasy, removed from ordinary experience. But they are not so far removed as are the pictures in the Bruce Codex. In the first place, the Ophite creatures have anthropomorphic and zoomorphic attributes. True, these attributes are combined in unnatural and fantastic combinations; however, the details are immediately recognizable. But more importantly, the joining of diverse attributes in one subject is a practice that has ancient roots, as we know from Homer and Hesiod and, even earlier, from Iron and Bronze Age iconographies. The parallels from the Greco-Egyptian environment contemporary with Gnosticism number in the dozens. In other words, just as the shaman marking and sealing his inner circle is a familiar figure in antiquity and in prehistory, so also is the composite demon, part man, part animal, a familiar creation in ancient (and modern) iconography. Naturally, the crucial question is whether the Gnostics ever invented their own special pictorial equivalents of composite demons. A well-known example in a nonliterary setting seems to suggest that they did.

In the Brummer Collection, an oval pendant of green jasper clouded with red and fashioned like a cabochon shows on its reverse six of the seven names in the Ophite hebdomad described by Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.5; 1.30.11 (Harvey I. 230, 237). On its obverse the exergual letters show Aariel and Ialdabaoth, the latter being the seventh member of the Gnostic sphere. Also on the obverse is the image of a lion-headed man, in three-quarter view, dressed in a brief Egyptian apron, with a staff in the right hand and a situla in the other (fig. 3). This figure is probably the visual counterpart of Ialdabaoth, described in *Cels.* 6.31 (GCS 2, 100ff.) and *Pistis Sophia* 31 (tr. Schmidt and Till, GCS 45, 28ff.). We do not know when or where this stone was cut, or for whom. Nor do we know who conceived the idea of translating the literary description into its visual equivalent. The owner of the stone could have belonged to any one of several religions, or to none. But



Fig. 3. Lion-headed demon on a gemstone in the Brummer Collection. C Bonner, *SMA*, Plate IX. 188. (Drawing by J. Steczynski.)

surely the most likely explanation is that he or she was a Gnostic and that the iconographic conception was Gnostic from the start. The demonic image on this gemstone is probably not an isolated example. No doubt there are others like it, and within the corpus of magical iconography there may be different examples of iconographic equivalences which point to Gnostic inspiration.

But before we turn to that subject, we need to look briefly at the other areas within ancient iconography where Gnostics are said to have left their mark. Due to the limitations of the present format, I can do little more than name the sources and comment in highly abbreviated form without pictorial documentation.

Five kinds of figured artifacts are sometimes labelled Gnostic: (1) inscriptions; (2) papyri; (3) sculptures; (4) paintings; (5) gemstones and related small finds (lamellae, lead defixiones, small bronze and terracotta plaques). The first and second groups do not concern us here. Though the inscription of Flavia Sophe and the intriguing metrical fragment in the Capitoline Museum (Inv. No. 2276) were surely inspired by Valentinian ideology and possibly executed for Roman Gnostics, neither is accompanied by pictures that have any claim to Gnostic inspiration.⁶ And as noted, excepting the Bruce

⁶ Flavia Sophe (*CIG* 4. 959a, ed. Curtius and Kirchoff): R. P. Garrucci, *Via Latina*, 43 (circumstances of discovery); A. Ferrua, *RivAC* 21 (1944) 176-93; G. Quispel, *Mélanges Ghellinck* 1 (Gembloux, 1951) 201-14; M. Guarducci, *MDAIR* (1973) 182-86. On the fragment in the Capitoline: M. Guarducci, *MDAIR* 59, 169ff.; also *MDAIR* 81 (1974) 341-43. Marcionite inscription of Deir-Ali: A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig, 1924; reprinted, Darmstadt, 1960) 341. The Gnosticism of Julia Evaresta's epitaph is doubtful: I. B. de Rossi, *ICUR* 2/1. XXVIII; A. Ferrua, *RivAC* 21, 165-76 (there the literature); also M. Guarducci, *MDAIR* 80 (1973) 186, 187 (author notes the proximity of the find spot to that of the dedication

Codex, the Gnostic papyri are devoid of pictures. As we would expect, throughout the Gnostic corpus the copyists joined uncials in ligatures, but none of the hands reflects any distinctness which might lead us to suspect that their combinations were intended to be pictorial or were inspired by Gnostic concepts. Besides, paleographic ligatures are only one possible step (though surely an important one: witness the cross) in the evolution of thought from words to pictures. Again the exception is the Bruce Codex, which contains important ideographic and sphragistic inventions (or are they borrowed conventions?): a subject worthy of full-scale investigation, but not here. Thus, eliminating epigraphy and papyri from the present discussion, we are left with three possible candidates for inclusion within the category "Gnostic" art: sculpture, painting, and gemstones. The first two promise little for our understanding of Gnosticism.

I. "GNOSTIC" SCULPTURE

The Khirbet Qilqis collection and the alabaster phiale formerly in the collection of Jacob Hirsch are the artifacts contemplated within this grouping. In 1960-61, the Franciscans of the Monastery of the Flagellation in Jerusalem acquired (under conditions that strain the limits of credibility) a collection of limestone artifacts, some resembling miniature stelae with occasional cruciform and anthropoid projections, some statuettes, and some crosses.⁷ Many pieces are marked with linear incisions said to be an esoteric Semitic script, and some of the symbols etched onto these stones are believed to carry cosmic meaning. The find spot, Khirbet Qilqis (coordinates 159.100 on the 1:100,000 British Survey Map of Palestine, 1942 edition), is tied to the Gnostic secretaries whom Epiphanius calls Archontics (*Haer.* 40.1.1-40.8.2 [ed. Holl, GCS 31, 80-90]). The sculptures are said to

to Flavia Sophe and concludes, "L'epigrafe di Giulia Euaesta è dunque, un misto di ortodossia e di gnosticismo ...". The epitaph to Julia Euaesta has a pictorial accompaniment, namely, a bird with a twig in its beak, certainly not a "Gnostic" motif; cf. P. Bruun, *AIRF* 1/2 (1963) 86ff., and H. Instinsky, *CIL* VIII Suppl. 5.2 (Berlin, 1865) 240ff. ("Anaglypha cristiana").

⁷ E. Testa, *Il simbolismo dei giudei cristiani* (Jerusalem, 1962). Testa's work was popularized and made to support a "new" chapter in the history of doctrine: J. Daniélou, *Les symboles chrétiens primitifs* (Paris, 1961). Also B. Bagatti, *La Terra Santa* 40 (1964) 264-69. Archontics: H.-Ch. Puech, *RAC* 1. 633-43. Criticism: R. le Déaut, *Biblica* 47 (1966) 283-89; J. Starcky, *RB* 75 (1968) 278-80; R. North, *CBQ* 24 (1962) 441-43. Also useful is J. T. Milik's review, *Biblica* 48 (1967) 450, 451, of E. Testa, *L'Huile de la foi* (tr. O. Englebert; Jerusalem, 1967). On Khirbet Qilqis (Caphar Baricha): M. Avi-Yonah, *Qedem* 5 (1976) 46.

exhibit Archontic ideology. But the authenticity of the entire Khirbet Qilqis assemblage is seriously in question, and until that issue is clarified, discussion of the Archontic hypothesis is superfluous.

The alabaster phiale, by contrast, is probably ancient, though its date and provenience are unknown.⁸ The interior of the bowl shows a cult scene in which naked devotees of both sexes, the males infibulated, worship a reptilian sun deity wound about an egg-shaped omphalos⁹ at the bowl's center. The exterior of the bowl shows an arcade of columns and unidentified male figures, perhaps erotes, heralds of the snake god, or winds. On the exterior lower base rim is a metric inscription in raised uncials. Three of the inscription's four lines derive from an Orphic poem that first circulated in Cornelius Labeo's lost *De Oraculo Apollinis Clarii*,¹⁰ preserved in fragments by Macrobius. The fourth line gives a fragment from Euripides' monologue of Melanippe the Wise who recites the Orphic cosmogony from a world egg. In short, the phiale's iconography and epigraphy point unmistakably to Orphism. Leisegang¹¹ wanted to go beyond Orphism: he saw on the vessel's interior Epiphanius's Ophite eucharist (*Haer.* 37.56ff. [GCS 31, 57]), and called the bowl Gnostic. But the Orphic connection is the right one.

If there are further pieces of sculpture that scholars want to call Gnostic, they are unknown to me. Doresse mentioned the well-known bronze statuette wrapped in snakes and laid on the ground with seven chicken eggs beneath the altar of the third temple to Jupiter Helio-politanus, presently on the Sciarra-Wurts property in Rome.¹² Ap-

⁸ The bowl appears in *Bedeutende Kunstwerke aus dem Nachlass Dr. Jacob Hirsch* (auction catalogue, 5.xii.57, Hotel Schweizerhof, Lucerne) no. 105: "Orphische Schale. Alabaster. D. oben 22 cm., unten 19 cm., H. 7 cm." (Tafel 49). Published by R. Delbrueck and W. Vollgraf, *JHS* 54 (1934) 120-39.

⁹ Navel stones and φιάλαι: A. A. Barb, *JWarb* 16 (1953) 200; H. Luschey, *PlWSup* 7 (Stuttgart, 1940) 1026-30; also N. Himmelmann, *Marburger Winkelmann-Programm*, 1960, 13-40. A black steatite amulet (formerly?) in the Collection de Clercq (A. de Ridder, *Catalogue méthodique et raisonné* 7/3 [Paris, 1885] no. 3514) shows a snake coiled about an omphalos. The amulet bears an inscription which may read: שרץ הרררררלפרענחפפרץש [ד] (שרץ = πρῶξις?). E. Goodenough, *GRBS* 1 (1958) 71-80 (adds nothing but more bad photos and unnecessary speculation).

¹⁰ Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.18.21 (ed. J. Willis [Leipzig, 1963] 106): "... huius oraculi vim, numinis, nominisque interpretationem, qua Liber Pater et sol Ἴουδ significatur, exsecutus est Cornelius Labeo in Libro cui titulus est *De oraculo Apollinis Clarii* ..." The phiale's metrical fragments paralleled in Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.18.12; 1.23.21 (Willis, 104, 127); A. Nauck, *TGF* fr. 484.

¹¹ H. Leisegang, *ErJB* 7 (1939) 151 ff.

¹² J. Doresse, *Les livres secrets des Gnostiques d'Égypte* (Paris, 1958) 96-102; also *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 32 (1949) 364, 365. Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Helio-

parently Doresse saw some (unexplained) connection between this Syrian solar deity and Gnosticism.

2. "GNOSTIC" PAINTING

In modern history the idea of a Gnostic iconography dates to the seventeenth-century works by Chiflet and l'Heureux.¹³ In the present century, the notion gained a lot of ground after the important discovery (November, 1919) of the Tomb of the Aureli in Rome's Viale Manzoni. The seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century studies of Gnostic iconography focused correctly on small finds and papyrological evidence. By contrast, the literature since 1919 turns to wall and ceiling paintings.

Mainly a study of Roman funerary painting, Cecchelli's book¹⁴ popularizes this unlikely shift of focus and confirms the notion which had apparently become historical orthodoxy between the two world wars: Gnostics coined new pictorial currencies, especially in the realm of painting, and the decoration in the Tomb of the Aureli is the Gnostic *pièce de résistance*. While we can thank Cecchelli for bringing this monument to a larger audience, the manner of presentation, namely by subsuming it under the rubric Gnostic, advances neither our understanding of the hypogaeum's complicated iconography nor our understanding of Gnosticism.

Burial activity in the tomb spans the second and third centuries down to 270-272. The funerary complex consists in an upper chamber, mostly destroyed, and two lower chambers joined by a gallery of

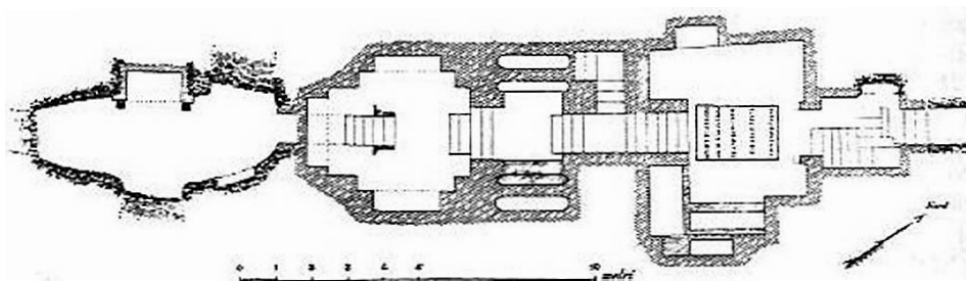


Fig. 4. Rome. Tomb of the Aureli. Plan. (From G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28 [1922].)

politianus (*CIL* VI 422): N. Goodhue, *The Lucus Furrinae and the Syrian Sanctuary on the Janiculum* (Amsterdam, 1975); also V. von Graeve, *AA* 87 (1972) 314-47.

¹³ J. Chiflet and J. L'Heureux (= Macarius), *Abraxas seu Apistopisus* (Antwerp, 1657).

¹⁴ C. Cecchelli, *Momenti Cristiano-Eretici di Roma* (Rome, 1944); cf. A. Ferrua, *CivCau* 95 (1944) 388-92.

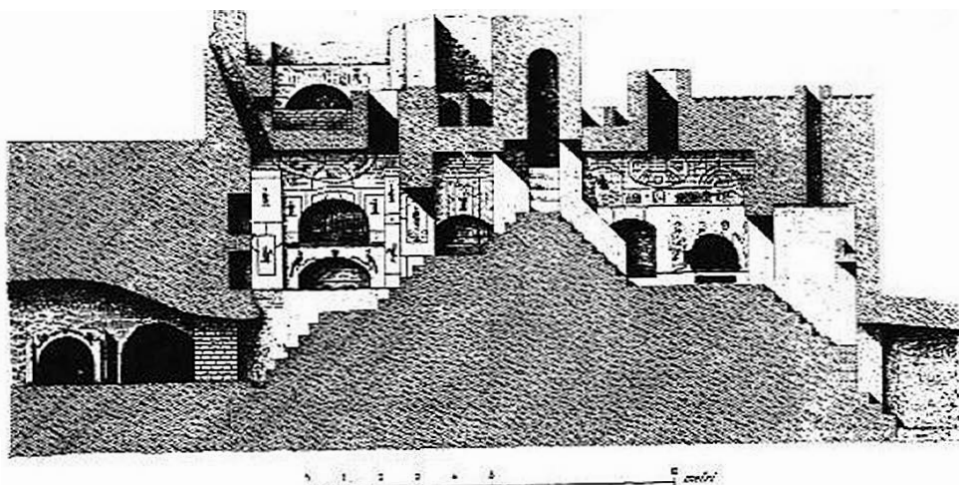


Fig. 5. Rome. Tomb of the Aurelii. Elevation (looking west.)

stairs and platforms (figs. 4 and 5). Arcosolia, formae, and loculi indicate that the Aurelii inhumed their dead, but recessed niches painted with showers of rose petals and resembling the urn emplacements in Roman columbaria suggests that a few of the Aurelii cremated.¹⁵ The dedicatory inscription and two other epigraphic fragments do not advance our understanding of the occupants' religion.¹⁶

The west wall of the upper chamber contains a loculus burial flanked by two fragmentary paintings that are thought to connect with Gnosticism. The one to the left shows a fragmentary standing male figure and small fragments of a second figure (fig. 6). There is also a snake that rises from the ground. The iconographic components suggest Adam and Eve. Jason and Medea have been contemplated, as has Hercules,¹⁷ but the details, insofar as we can make them out,

¹⁵ G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28 (1922), 371-73 and fig. 34: "... decorazione pittorica delle nicchiette di testata. Questa consiste di semplici macchie di colore rosso e verde, sparse irregolarmente sull'intonaco, a rappresentare una caduta di foglie e di petali di rosa. ..." Parallels in the Vatican necropolis (Tombs E, I, O, T): B. M. Apollonj Ghetti et al., *Esplorazioni sotto la confessione di San Pietro in Vaticano* (Vatican City, 1961) passim. Symbolism of the rose petals: P.-A. Février, "Le culte des morts dans les communautés chrétiennes durant le III^e siècle," *IX.CIAC* (Rome, 21-28.ix.75), in press. My thanks to Paul Février for a galley proof copy of his useful study. J. Carcopino, *De Pythagore aux Apôtres* (Paris, 1953) 86: "Il n'y a nulle part traces de tombes à incineration" (*sic!*); cf. J. M. C. Toynebee, *Gnomon* 29 (1957) 261 ff.

¹⁶ Dedicatory inscription: G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28, 320, fig. 15; Aurelia Myrsina: *ibid.*, 426, 427, and G. Wilpert, *AttiPARA* (Serie 3, Memorie I/II; Rome, 1924) 5, fig. 2; dipinto of R(em)meus Celerinus who apparently celebrated a refrigerium in the lower north chamber: G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28, 369.

¹⁷ N. Himmelmann, "Das Hypogäum der Aurelier am Viale Manzoni," *AbhAkMainz* (1975) 1-27.



Fig. 6. Rome. Tomb of the Aurelii. Upper chamber West wall. Reconstruction of the panel to the left of the loculus burial. (Drawing by C. Sneed.)

suggests neither the Argonaut nor the Hercules cycles. Archaeological and iconographic context are no help. The Gnostic theory builds on the panel's irregularities and departures from the iconographic "convention": there is no tree separating the figures, the snake is in the wrong place, and the male figure does not cover his genitals. From

these details it is argued that the scene must be heterodox, representing, according to Wilpert,¹⁸ an Ophite revelation discourse. The snake seduces Eve with its "lingua bifida" rather than with the apple. Wilpert could find no documentary prototype of this scene, but more important, the fundamental premise (iconographic irregularity = heterodoxy) is anachronistic. There existed no pictorial canon at this early date. The translation of biblical subjects into pictures was still at the stage of experimentation.¹⁹

The panel to the right of this same loculus shows a seated male figure and the head and shoulders of a second male (fig. 7). The setting is an orchard or garden. Wilpert identified this scene as the pictorial equivalent of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.6 (Harvey 1. 232), in which Ialdabaoth and six other members of the Ophite hebdomad create "hominem immensum latitudine et longitudine." On the model of Prometheus,²⁰ we would expect a creator to touch his creation, a detail for which the pictorial evidence is wanting. The other members of the hebdomad are missing also. And the diminutive figure which could well be a common garden-variety herm, hardly evokes the presence of the Ophite giant.

In the lower south room of the Tomb, philosophy and magic²¹ clearly have the upper hand. Which philosophy and what kind of magic we cannot specify, but the generic themes are clear. The symbolism in the north room is more difficult. Philosophy and magic are present, but it is not clear that they are intended as the unifying themes. The shepherd-criophoros appears four times. There is also a seated philosopher-shepherd,²² an unusual adventus

¹⁸ G. Wilpert, *AttipARA* 3, I/II, 10; J. Carcopino, *Pythagore*, 112 (follows Wilpert).

¹⁹ I will treat this subject in my forthcoming book. My Ph.D. thesis (Harvard University, 1973) contains the full bibliography. Chronology of early Christian painting (very uncertain): I. Reekmans, *RivAC* 49 (1973) 271ff.

²⁰ G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28, 311, 312 (does not mention any material connection between the two figures); J. Carcopino, *Pythagore*, 110 (misreads Bendinelli). Prometheus: K. Bapp, in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (ed. W. H. Roscher; Leipzig, 1884ff.) 2. 3032ff., especially 3103-10.

²¹ The main clue is the *kerykeion-virgula*: G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28, 472, 473 (denies the magical connection); N. Himmelmann, "Hypogäum," 16 (unnecessarily circumspect); H. Achelis, *KuK* 2 (1926) 69 (sees the magical connection). Cf. F. J. M. de Waele, *The Magic Staff or Rod in Graeco-Italian Antiquity* (The Hague, 1927) (there the literature).

²² Shepherd-criophoros: G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28, 335-43, fig. 20-23; G. Wilpert, *AttipARA* 3, I/II, 34ff., tav. 19, fig. 8; J. Carcopino, *Pythagore*, 133-37 (Gnostic interpretation). Cf. Th. Klauser, *JAC* 1 (1958) 20ff.; 3 (1960) 112ff.; 5 (1962) 113ff.; 7 (1964) 67ff.; 8;9 (1965) 126ff.; 10 (1967) 82ff. Criticism: V. Buchheit, *RQ* 69

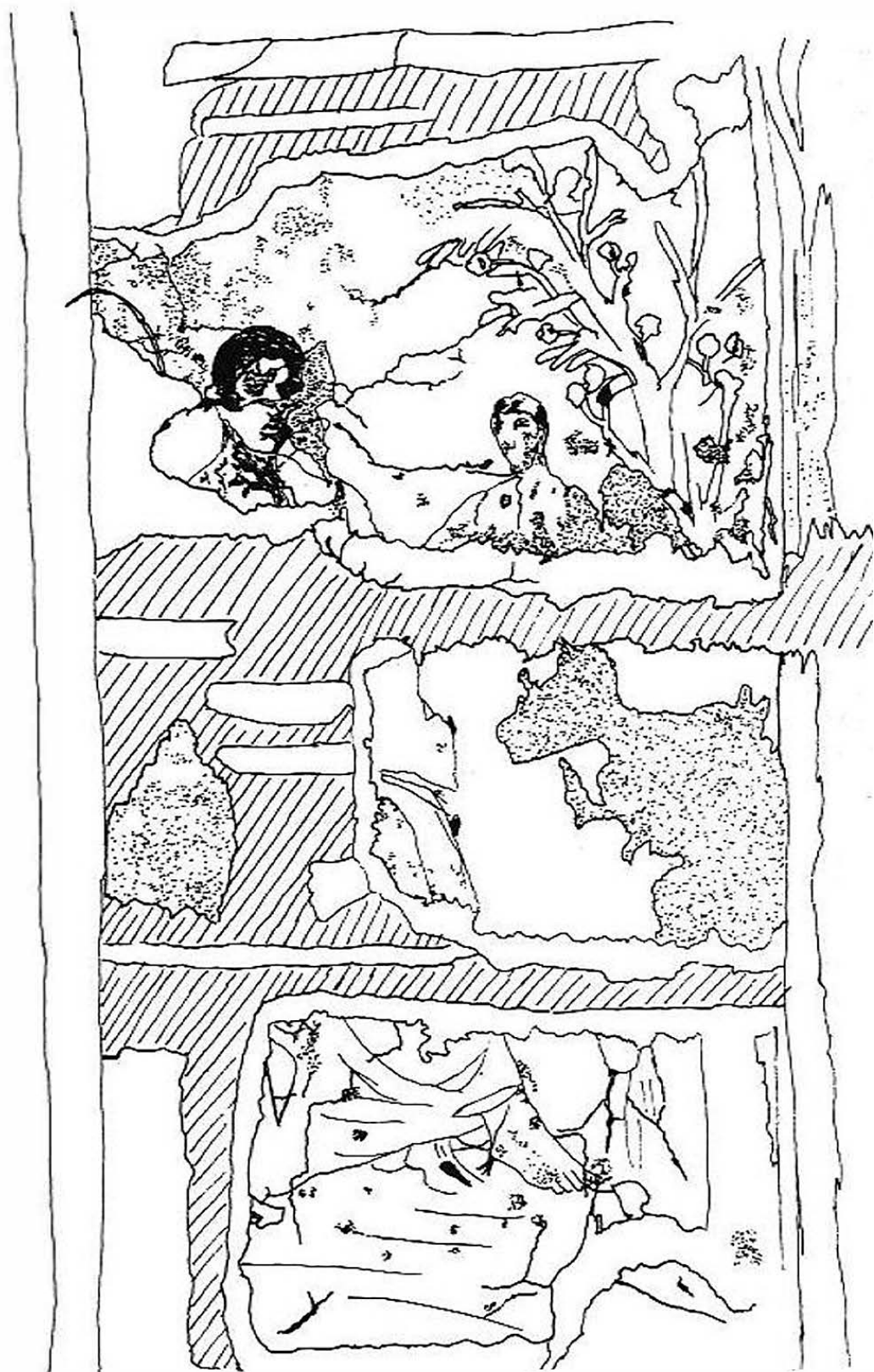


Fig. 7. Rome. Tomb of the Aurelii. Upper chamber. West wall. Panel to the right of the loculus burial. (Drawing by C. Sneed.)

narrative,²³ a scene apparently from Odysseus's homecoming,²⁴ a meal sequence, and a lunette showing an enclosed garden connected to a courtyard crowded with people, including a seated magician. Eleven standing philosophers dressed in tunica laticlava and bearing scrolls adorn the room's lower registers. And finally, on the east wall of the gallery that connects the two lower rooms is the famous green Latin cross, Wilpert's Valentinian *horos*, but in truth the surviving fragment of a decorative garland.²⁵ In short, the iconography at the lower level of the hypogaeum bears no relationship to Gnosticism.

The second funerary complex containing iconography said to exhibit

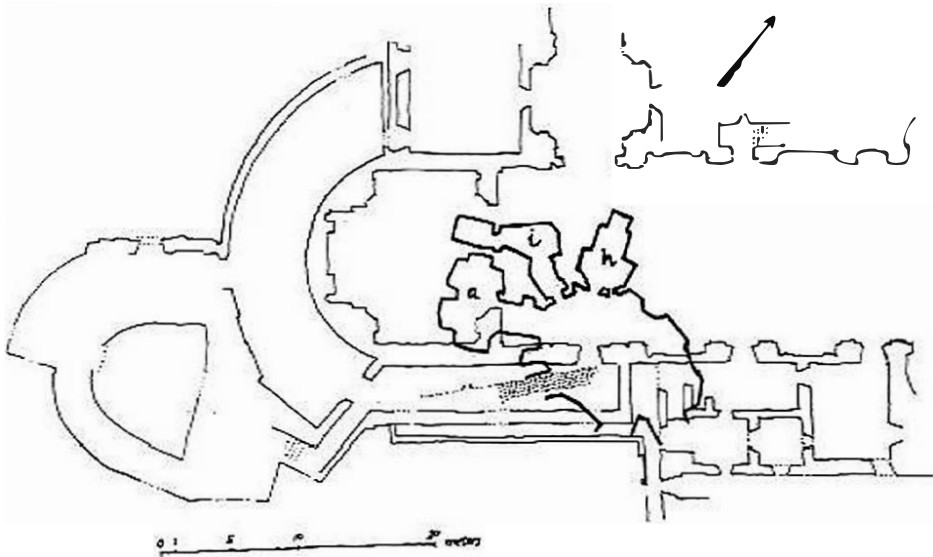


Fig. 8. Rome. San Sebastiano. Plan of the west end of the church showing (in dark outli.) the position of the Piazzaola. (Drawing by J. Steczynski.)

(1974) 133f. and my thesis, 306ff.; also A. Provoost, *Iconologisch onderzoek van den laatantieke herdervoorstellingen* (Proefschrift, Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven, 1976). My thanks to Arnold Provoost for a copy of his monumental work, otherwise inaccessible to me. Philosophy and shepherding: N. Himmelmann, *RhM* 115 (1972) 342-56.

²³ E. Kantorowicz, *AriB* 26 (1944) 207ff. (important numismatic parallels); J. Carcopino, *Pythagore* 167-75 (Gnostic adventus).

²⁴ Ch. Picard, *CRAIBL*, 1945, 26ff.

²⁵ G. Bendinelli, *MonAnt* 28, 380, 381; G. Wilpert, *AttiPARA* 3, I/II, 24, tav. X.1; J. Carcopino, *Pythagore*, 113 (follows Wilpert; the scene = Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.31.1 ff. [GCS 26, 158 ff.]); N. Himmelmann, "Hypogäum," 23.

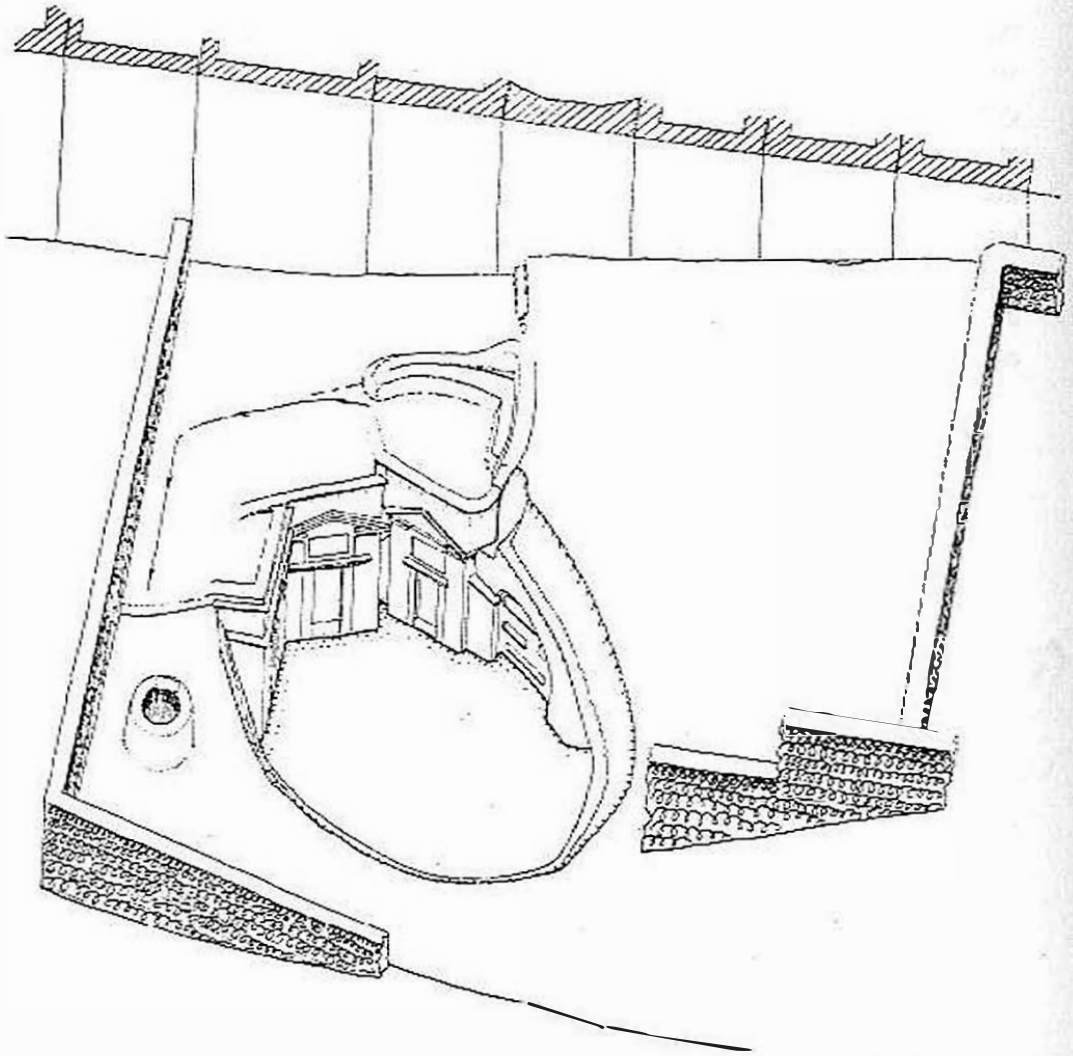


Fig. 9. Rome San Sebastiano. Axionometric reconstruction showing the facades of Tombs h, i, and a in the Piazzuola. (From F. Tolotti, *Memorie degli Apostoli in Catacumbas* [Vatican City, 1953] fig. 31.)

Gnostic inspiration is the so-called Piazzuola,²⁶ representing the second phase of occupancy beneath the church of San Sebastiano on the Via Appia Antica (figs. 8 and 9). Burial activity in the Piazzuola continued for approximately a century and a half, ca. 100/125-250 A.D.

²⁶ Excavation of the Piazzuola: G. Mancini, *Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 20 (1923) 3-79. Interpretation: F. Tolotti, *Memorie degli Apostoli in Catacumbas ...* (Vatican City 1953) 66ff. (Tolotti argues diachronic continuity of Christian occupancy at the site: the thesis is wrong, but the book is good). Gnostics: H. Lietzmann (with A. von Gerkan), *Petrus und Paulus in Rom* (Leipzig and Berlin, ²1927) 160ff. (Cecchelli and Carcopino follow this dead end). Literature: *CBCR* 4 (Vatican City 1970) 99; J. Ward Perkins and J. M. C. Toynbee, *The Shrine of St. Peter ...* (London, 1956) 167ff.

The most important funerary installations introduced during this second phase are the three mausolea on the Piazzuola's north/northwest perimeter, from east to west, Tombs h, i, and a. Loculi were also dug outside of the mausolea in adjacent galleries and in the Piazzuola's vertical tufa which opened to the sky.

Iconography on the attic of Tomb h, consisting in shepherd-criophoroi, meals, and pastoral scenes, could connect with Christianity, if we knew that the tomb's occupants were Christians. The paintings on the interior of Tomb h include a Medusa-Gorgo's head, a prothesis, a seated figure with bystanders, a standing figure, perhaps Hermes Psychopompos, and numerous birds, garlands, flowers, and fruits. Tomb i is distinguished by a nicely stuccoed representation of a conch and a peacock with its tail coverts erect. Noteworthy in Tomb a is the image of the fossor's axe²⁷ on the tympanum over the doorway. Pictorial motifs associated with inhumations outside of the mausolea are equally neutral in character, with the exception of the curious iconography (unexplained) accompanying the burial of the eight-year-old Atimetus.²⁸ Excepting the evidence in Tomb i, the epigraphy in the Piazzuola is equally indistinct: Tomb i's accumulation of theophoric and philanthropic epithets, its possibly distinctive (?) onomastic usages, and the fish acrostic²⁹ point to Christian occupancy. But where are the Gnostics?

The assumptions which underlie the Gnostic interpretation of this iconography (and occasionally other pieces, for example, the Tomb of Trebius Justus)³⁰ are four: (1) like other religions in the ancient world, Gnosticism created a distinct religious iconography (possibly true, possibly false); (2) Gnostic iconography was painted onto walls and ceilings (probably false); (3) Gnostic iconography was of a narrative sort: pictures illustrating stories (probably false); (4) Genesis 1-3

²⁷ A disputed subject. For Carcopino, *Pythagore*, 366-73 (and in numerous other publications: cf. *RivAC* 31 [1955] 298), *ascia* = Irenaeus's *crux dissimulata*, [*Haer.* 5.17.4 (Harvey 2. 371)]. Carcopino's thesis is mostly indefensible; cf. P.-L. Couchoud and A. Audin, *RHR* 142 (1952) 36-66; H. J.-J. Hatt, *La tombe gallo romaine* (Paris, 1951) 85-107.

²⁸ *ICUR* 5. 12892.

²⁹ P. Styger, *Die römischen Katakomben* (Berlin, 1933) 339; *Römische Märtyrergrüfte* 1 (Berlin, 1935) 41: "Selbst das Graffito ITXΘYC ist nicht als christlich anzusprechen." In the annals of early Christian archaeology, this is a classic counsel of despair, matched only by Th. Klauser's treatment of Jesus the shepherd-criophoros in the Dura baptistery, *JAC* 10 (1967) 105-7. ITXΘYC paralleled in IX†ΘYC at Qanawât: F. J. Dölger, *IXΘYC* 1 (Münster, ²1928) no. 89 (also nos. 3 and 12).

³⁰ Trebius Justus: C. Cecchelli, *Monumenti* 135-46 (there the literature).

was the probable point of departure (a reasonable guess, if no. 3 were true, but lacking evidence).

The first point remains just as unresolved today as it was yesterday. As for the second point, the bits of evidence that we can assemble favor an iconography executed on small artifacts or papyri. With the third point, the improbabilities obtrude. True, Gnostics had their stories and told them (at least to one another), but the contents were quite unlike other ancient myths and narrations, in setting, in *dramatis personae*, in plots, themes, time sequence, unfolding of events and resolutions. Christian (or Jewish) illustrations of the biblical text are not an appropriate analogue in the search for a Gnostic iconography. There exists no iconographic equivalent of a Gnostic Genesis.³¹ If Gnostics made pictures, they were probably esoteric and fantastic, laconic signs and symbols devoid of narrative context, and no doubt executed on an intimate scale.

Goodenough called Gnosticism "that limbo of lost causes."³² The phrase fits well the study of "Gnostic" painting since 1919. Gnosticism has become a kind of iconographic dumping ground, a place to discard miscellaneous *ignota*, the pieces that cannot be harmonized with the archaeological typologies established for the religions of the Empire: toss them into the Gnostic wastebasket and forget them. Since we do not know what Gnostic iconography is, or if one ever existed, this method of labelling artifacts by their relationship to Gnosticism amounts to explaining one unknown by another. The results are unedifying. A more sensible approach, one consistent with real possibilities in the sources, is long overdue.

3. "GNOSTIC" ICONOGRAPHY ON GEMSTONES AND RELATED SMALL FINDS

In an important article published in 1929 Arthur Darby Nock called for a corpus of magical drawings on papyri and a corpus of the so-called Abrasax (Latin Abraxas) gems.³³ In the intervening half-century no one has taken up Nock's challenge, which remains the basic point of departure for the study of "Gnostic" iconography. Why, in looking for a Gnostic iconography, should one compile a corpus of magical

³¹ Gnostic Genesis exegesis: B. Pearson, *Ex Orbe Religionum: Studia Geo Widengren I* (Leiden, 1972) 457-70 (there the literature).

³² E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period 2* (New York, 1953) 154.

³³ *JEA* 15 (1929) 219ff.

images?³⁴ Because the task ahead is to separate magical images from those possibly conceived and executed in other environments, such as Gnosticism. Naturally it is possible that Gnostics invented no new pictorial clichés. The search for a Gnostic iconography could be illusory, based altogether on false premises. But we will not know until the magical images have been sorted out and ordered according to traditional critical categories. The place to begin is magical drawings on dated papyri. Once this corpus is compiled, the evidence which dated magical images afford may help us to move ahead with some sense of bearings into the unknown territory, namely the *materia magica* in small finds. The latter survive almost entirely apart from their original context: without context, especially chronology, small finds together with the images executed on them are virtually lost for history.

All images that accompany magical texts (including the “aggressive magic”³⁵ of the curse tablets) appear in a context that requires us to classify them under the rubric magical iconography. But this does not tell the whole story. As with Gnosticism, so also with magic, we must distinguish carefully between primary and secondary impulses. The well-known fourth century Oslo Papyrus,³⁶ for example, shows a snake-footed, cock-headed Seth, a rendering certainly derived from an earlier prototype (fig. 10). It is very unlikely that the original was

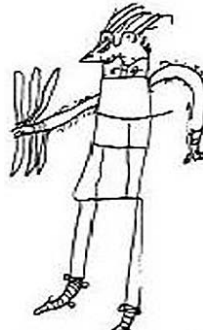


Fig. 10. Oslo Papyrus. Cock-headed, snake-footed Seth. (Drawing by J. Steczynski.)

³⁴ The scholarly presupposition seems to be that magic and Gnosticism are radically different: A. D. Nock, *JEA* 15, 232; H. Lietzmann, *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 9 (1933) 154ff. (= *Kleine Schriften* 1 [ed. K. Aland; TU 67; Berlin, 1958] 84ff.).

³⁵ C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950) 103ff.; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.69: Black magic used against Germanicus; C. Bonner, *TAPA* 63 (1932) 34ff.: black magic against Libanius (a mutilated chameleon hidden in his classroom); curse tablets: A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris, 1904); R. Wünsch, *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig, 1898); cf. Bonner, *Studies* 110ff., and B. Pearson, *SBLSP* 1977 28, 29; R. Mousterde, *MUSJ* 15 (1930) 106ff. (no. 34).

³⁶ S. Eitrem, *Papyri Osloenses* 1 (Oslo, 1925) = *PGM* 36.

not conceived as the pictorial equivalent of Seth: the prototype could have been executed in some environment other than a magical one. But where and when was this image first executed and what was intended? For the moment the answers to these questions are beyond our reach: all critical queries attendant upon the conception and execution of this image are shrouded in uncertainty.

The cock-headed, snake-footed monster is more than just an example chosen at random. Before Campbell Bonner's magisterial study, students of late Roman glyptic asumed that Gnostics invented this pictorial convention. Bonner doubted the connection but did not prove the point conclusively. As an iconographic cliché the composite monster with cock's head, human torso, and snake feet is very common on small finds. I give here in line drawing an exceptionally well modelled example that survives on a gemstone in Kassel (fig. 11). Often (but



Fig. 11. Kassel (*Antike Gemmen in Deutsche Sammlungen* [Munich/Wiesbaden: 1968 seq.] 3. 127a). Cock-headed anguiped from a gemstone. (Drawing by J. Steczynski.)

not invariably) this composite creation appears together with the word *Abrasax*, a conjunction of image and word that has led scholars to infer the Gnostic origin of the pictorial type.

The key link connecting the word *Abrasax* with Gnosticism is the second-century heresiological literature. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.7 (Harvey 1. 203), and Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.26.6 (ed. Wendland, GCS 26, 204, 205), make *Abrasax* a Basilidian power, not just any power, but the strongest of 365 archons. Neither heresiologist tells us how *Abrasax* functions within the system, other than being on top, nor do we learn the form (if any were known) by which one might recognize *Abrasax*. According to Irenaeus, as chief of the 365 Basilidian heavens *Abrasax* subsumes all others. Hippolytus agrees: the Basilidians have a very large book, and in it is written that there are 365 heavens and that their ruler is *Abrasax*. Because the numerical equiv-

alent of the word's letters is 365, there are that many days in the year: Hippolytus makes Abrasax the subject of a simple (if not simple-minded) aetiology. Both heresiologists clearly understand the word as the name of a heaven or archon, and both accept the isopsephic interpretation: Abrasax = 365. If these reports are reliable, we may conclude that the word Abrasax had become the personification of a cosmic power in the Basilidian system known to the heresiologists of the later second century A.D. It might even be possible to argue greater precision in situating Abrasax within the Basilidian cosmos. If analogies with Μετρώς and Νεῦλος (also isopsephisms) are relevant, Abrasax may point to solar associations. In any case, the word is unusual for the following three details: it is firmly attested in a second-century context; it is attributed to Gnostic usage, probably reliably so; and it appears often in a nonliterary setting together with a very popular iconographic commonplace.

Bonner argued that the word Abrasax was only a word of power, like IAO/IAHU.³⁷ The word should not be construed, he maintained, as the proper name of the cock-headed anguiped. To give only one of many examples, the Oslo Papyrus, Bonner's interpretation finds support. There the monster is identified, as we have seen, with Seth (more precisely with Typhon-Seth Ζαγούρη), and a string of magical names and names of power are appended to the papyrus's several ἀγῶγαι. There are numerous other examples which complicate the equation cock-headed anguiped = Abrasax. In some the word appears alone with no accompanying image, or vice versa. The details of the image change in other instances: the image becomes, for example, simocephalic, oncephalic, cynocephalic or ithyphallic. And in still other examples the word appears with a completely different image.

While it is tempting to conclude with Bonner that Abrasax is simply another magical word of power, not a personal name, and not a word that bears any necessary relationship to the iconographic convention, this conclusion is premature. First the sources must be collected, published, classified, and dated, however provisionally. Why does the word appear so often in conjunction with the image, and why do the heresiologists make the word the personification of a Basilidian archon?

³⁷ Iao: Bonner, *Studies* 134ff.; W. Fauth, *Der kleine Pauly* 2 (ed. K. Ziegler and W. Sontheimer; Stuttgart, 1967) 1314-19. Abrasax: M. Nilsson, *HTR* 44 (1951) 61-64; M. Pieper, *MDAIK* 5 (1934) 119-43; A. A. Barb, *Hommages à Waldemar Deonna* (Brussels, 1957) 67ff.; Nag Hammadi library: *GEgypt* III 52:26, 53:9, 65:1; *ApocAd* 75:22; *Zost* 47:13.

Are they guilty of still another caprice (as surely they are in imputing image worship to Gnostics), or is there a kernel of history here? If it could be shown that the iconographic convention became a common currency in the second century, and if further its provenience could be fixed in Egypt (a likely setting), we would have to deal with the probability that Basilides, or Isidore, or some other members of the Basilidian circle, were more than just casual bystanders. If on the other hand, it could be shown that there are no pre-Constantinian attestations, we should probably rule out the direct involvement of Basilidians in the conception and execution of the image or in its common conjunction with the word *Abrasax*.

In dating images on small finds, the major pitfall is the absence of context and the concomitant necessity that we rely exclusively on internal criteria: style, iconography, epigraphic types. This kind of evidence is likely to promote circular reasoning. Whenever possible, the student of the subject should turn to external guides, the stratified sediments (sealed loci and not secondary fills) in which these small artifacts were deposited in antiquity. Of course it is impossible to rely on external evidence unless the field archaeologist considers gemstones and other small finds important enough to warrant proper excavation and recording. Even if we had only a few examples of magical gemstones in dated sediments, we would be better off than we are at present.

Finally, aprioristic reasoning must be laid to rest. The presumption that Gnostics could not have used figured and sphragistic talismans to achieve their goals, because Gnosticism's methods and objectives differed so widely from those of magic, is mistaken. Origen's report proves the point. So, apparently, does the pictorial evidence in the Bruce Codex.

