

THE GNOSTIC SCRIPTURES

— SECOND EDITION —

Translated with Annotations and Introductions by

BENTLEY LAYTON

with Additions and Revisions by

DAVID BRAKKE



THE
GNOSTIC
SCRIPTURES

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John J. Collins
GENERAL EDITOR

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In this book I have tried to make a readable, coherent collection of the scriptures of ancient gnostic religion and its relatives. The works in this collection are heretical—a heretical counterpart of the holy scripture of Christianity and Judaism (which gnostics also read). But despite their highly unorthodox character these works shed great light on the theology, atmosphere, and literary traditions of ancient Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism. The gnostic movement did not simply share in the culture to which early Christianity belonged. Gnostics in fact made up one of the earliest and most long-lived branches of the ancient Christian religion, as Map 2 makes abundantly clear; it was only after centuries of struggle that they could be eradicated by the established church. After the official Christianization of the late Roman empire (A.D. 313–81), theological objections to the gnostic scriptures were given the force of law, and most copies of these scriptures were banned and eventually perished. By a lucky accident of preservation and the careful efforts of modern scholars, the gnostic scriptures have now begun to be known again.

Orthodox Christian doctrine of the ancient world—and thus of the modern church—was partly conceived of as being what gnostic scripture was *not*. For this reason, a knowledge of gnostic scripture is indispensable for anyone who hopes to understand the historical roots of Christian theology and belief. Moreover, the gnostic myth grew up in an intimate dialogue—though often a hostile one—with Jewish learning of the Greek-speaking synagogue. Thus the gnostic scriptures cannot fail to increase, however obliquely, our knowledge of the foundations of classical Judaism.

Gnostics did not have a fixed bible, as church and synagogue do today: the selection of what to include in this book has had to be my own, based on principles set forth in the “General Introduction” that follows. Accordingly, a number of works sometimes labeled “gnostic,” though only in a vague and looser sense, have been deliberately omitted.

All English translations in this book are my own, made from revised editions of the original texts. My aim has been to translate all important terms in a similar way, so that readers can confidently compare the wording of one work with another. I have also tried, so far as possible, to avoid theological jargon or mere transcription of Greek terms in these translations. Except for a few deliberate

obscurities, gnostic scripture was coherent in antiquity; there is no reason why it should not be so today.

At the publisher's suggestion I have written this book for the general public as well as students and scholars, without the usual network of references to primary and secondary sources. Instead, the annotations are simply meant to help the reader understand the immediate sense of the text; such annotations are especially needed with gnostic literature. Although they lay a foundation for close study of the text, these annotations do not try to decide what gnostic scripture ultimately meant: readers must make that important decision for themselves.

The historical introductions to the five parts of this book and the introductions to individual works are meant to help interpreters, but not to impose any particular theological or philosophical point of view. Interpreters will also find help in the many select bibliographies, scattered throughout the book, which list scholarly studies that are accessible, broadly relevant, and sound in their manner of approach. But the general reader and the student must be cautioned that in a field as controversial as this one, where much of the evidence was published only in recent years, there are no standard or accepted lines of interpretation.

In particular, three famous questions about the works translated in this book still remain to be answered: (1) In which religious milieu (Jewish? Christian? other?) was classic gnostic myth and religion born? (2) Did such a thing as the gnostic myth exist in the day of St. Paul or St. John, and if so can it be seen reflected in their writings? (3) In what sense is a historian justified in speaking of a general pattern, whether psychological or philosophical, called *gnosticism*? These ultimate questions have troubled scholarship for more than two hundred years. Because the third question has never gotten a satisfactory answer I prefer *not* to start from a philosophical description of something called "gnosticism." Rather, I begin my exploration of this theme concretely, with the first coherent sect that actually called itself "gnostic," then trace its historical and ideological evolution into a later form. I believe that this essentially historical method of description takes the reader to the real heart of the gnostic phenomenon and that it sheds considerable light on the broader concepts of "gnosticism," "gnostic religion," and "*gnōsis*."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Because this book contains no footnote references to the scholarly literature, I must emphasize my great indebtedness to the colleagues and predecessors who laid its foundations by their own research. Most are mentioned by name in one or another of the select bibliographies, but their contribution to my understanding of the gnostic scriptures goes beyond the books and articles listed there. When biblical texts are quoted in the ancient scriptures in this book, I have conformed my translation to the Revised Standard Version insofar as the context allows. The fundamental historical thesis of this book—that Valentinus was a Christian reformer of the classic gnostic tradition—was enunciated sketchily in antiquity by St. Irenaeus (about A.D. 180) and in the twentieth century by Gilles

Quispel and others; it was the organizing principle of an International Conference on Gnosticism, at Yale University, which I directed in 1978. The coherence and identity of the classic gnostic sect are defended in essays by Hans-Martin Schenke, which should be read in combination with a recent article by Morton Smith. I have also been inspired by a Yale Ph.D. dissertation by Anne McGuire, in which these issues were explored in considerable detail.

My firsthand study of the ancient Coptic manuscripts was made possible by the generosity and cooperation of Egyptian and American colleagues over the seven years that I was able to work in Cairo. James M. Robinson and other members of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, H.-M. Schenke, and the Berlin (GDR) *Arbeitskreis* were always generous with information, support, and prepublication copies. Stephen Emmel cast a careful eye over all the material translated from Coptic and saved me from many slips. Professors Jonas Greenfield, Wayne A. Meeks, Hans-Martin Schenke, Mark Smith, and John Strugnell preserved me from error or ignorance at many points, as did Martin Bloomer and Alan Scott; various other friends have also made valuable suggestions here and there. Jane Greenfield gave me advice on the graphic planning of the illustrations. The extremely useful indexes to this book are the work of David Dawson. The maps were compiled and designed by myself and then drafted by Mr. Rafael D. Palacios. John A. Miles, Jr., formerly of Doubleday, is responsible for the original concept of the book; my New York editors, Theresa D'Orsogna, Viera Morse, and Glenn Rounds, have also contributed style and learning to this work. To all these people I express sincere gratitude.

Finally, it was the persistence of my students—including beginners without a specialist's training—that led me to see how gnostic scripture is in its own way coherent, beautiful, and possessed of an extraordinary kind of sense. May this book repay the debt I owe to them.

Bentley Layton

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Since its publication in 1987, Bentley Layton's *The Gnostic Scriptures* has served numerous students, scholars, and general readers as a clear introduction to the literature that survives from the gnostic school of thought and related movements of the first three or four centuries A.D. In preparing this second edition, I had three goals. First, I have corrected known errors, added missing references, and made a small number of revisions made necessary by developments of the past thirty years, especially the publication of Codex Tchacos. Second, I have updated the select bibliographies for each document. The number of publications has grown significantly, and scholars now have available to them multiple tools for discovering and obtaining sources. Therefore, the new bibliographies include primarily works in English that I recommend to students and general readers who wish to explore a source or subject further, as well as works in any language that contributed significantly to the translation of a source or its introduction. Third, I have added three ancient works either that have appeared since the publication of the first edition (*The Gospel of Judas*) or whose absence I and other teachers and users of the book have particularly noted (*The Tripartite Tractate* and Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpts from Theodotus*). In translating these sources, I have tried to follow the principles that guided Layton's work.

Otherwise, however, the book remains a collection of primary sources and testimonies that reflect a specific historical thesis about so-called gnosticism and the relationships among the persons and groups traditionally associated with it. Elaborations of that thesis since 1987 may be found in Layton's contribution to the Wayne Meeks Festschrift and in my own monograph, both listed in the select bibliography to the General Introduction.

It remains to thank those who have helped me during my work. The Ohio State University provided the necessary time and financial support. Dylan Burns, Ismo Dunderberg, Paul Linjamaa, Stephen Patterson, Einar Thomassen, and the anonymous reviewers of both the proposal and the manuscript offered constructive criticism and suggestions. Students in my classes on gnosticism at Indiana University and Ohio State tested earlier versions of my translations. Heather Gold, the editors of the Anchor Yale Bible, and the staff of Yale

University Press have shown remarkable support and patience; Dorothea Halliday, Susan Laity, and Joyce Ippolito gave exceptional care to a complicated manuscript. Above all, I am grateful to Bentley Layton, who trusted me to undertake this project, gave me critical advice as I worked on it, and taught me the skills that I needed to complete it.

David Brakke

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE CONTENTS OF THIS COLLECTION

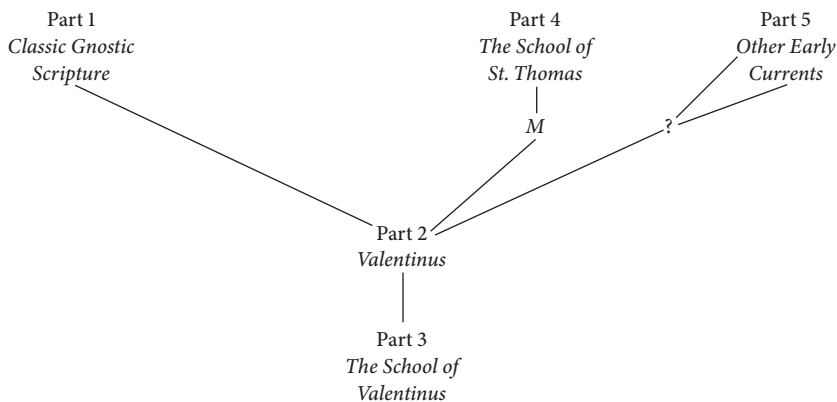
Five collections of scripture are included in this book: the classic gnostic (Sethian) scripture, the writings of Valentinus, the works by his followers, the scripture of the school of St. Thomas, and a selection of other, related writings. Each collection is preceded by a historical introduction that explains the circumstances of its composition and the nature of its contents. So far as possible, complete works have been chosen for inclusion. They are supplemented, where necessary, by fragments and summaries of important lost works, preserved for us by one or another writer of antiquity.

Part One is classic gnostic scripture, authoritative works read by an ancient group that called themselves “gnostics”—“people fit to have acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with god.” The name “gnostic” most properly applies to members of this group. In modern scholarship they are sometimes called “Sethians,” “Barbeloites,” “Barbelognostics,” “Ophians,” or “Ophites.” Most of their scripture comes down to us in an obviously Christian or Christianized form. The received Christian form is what is translated here. Some scholars consider the Christian elements to be foreign to the original text.

Part Two consists of writings by Valentinus (A.D. ca. 100–ca. 175), the great Christian reformer of gnostic theology. *The Gospel of Truth* is included here, and its attribution to Valentinus is accepted, following B. Standaert. Valentinus revised classic gnostic tradition in the light of another, quite different form of Christianity (represented in Part Four, The School of St. Thomas), consciously adopting some of the language of the New Testament and stamping the result with his own rhetorical genius (see Table 1).

Part Three illustrates at some length the various kinds of literature written by the followers of Valentinus. It is not feasible in a book such as this to make a complete survey of the Valentinian school in its Eastern and Western branches, since much of the evidence consists of fragments or excerpts whose significance is best conveyed by a detailed discussion of the original Greek. Instead, complete works (in one case a long ancient summary) have been selected, to demonstrate the brilliance of Valentinian scholasticism and the character of Valentinian Christianity. The select bibliographies in Part Three provide the means for interested readers to pursue the history of Valentinian theology in even greater detail.

TABLE 1
Historical Relationships of the Writings in This Book



NOTE: *M* = the doctrine of mystical salvation through acquaintance with the self and Jesus, now exemplified by the Thomas Scripture and probably known to Valentinus by reading works of that school.

Part Four presents traditional Christian scripture from northern Mesopotamia, whose patron saint was St. Thomas (Didymus Jude Thomas). Despite their Mesopotamian origin, the works included here enjoyed a wide international circulation in several languages, starting in the second century A.D. In itself the Thomas scripture shows no influence of the gnostic sect. But it expresses a mystical concept of salvation through self-acquaintance, which is identical with one of the main Christian components in Valentinus's revisionism. In modern discussion, this mystical component seems to be what some scholars mean by "gnosticism," but in any case it has no direct connection with the gnostics of Part One. *The Hymn of the Pearl* has been included in this part because it comes down to us as part of the Thomas scripture and because its story and language correspond to the myth presupposed by *The Gospel According to Thomas* and *The Book of Thomas*.

Part Five illustrates two other early currents that probably had an influence on the young Valentinus: the system of Basilides (according to St. Irenaeus's summary) and the Hermetic writings, a non-Christian esoteric philosophy somewhat resembling gnostic myth and imagery. Unlike the Hermetic writings, Basilides' Christian philosophy is very different from the other scripture translated in this book; its historical relevance lies in a very shadowy connection with Valentinus. It was during his education in Alexandria, A.D. ca. 120, that Valentinus could have encountered these two currents. Further components of his education, including the exegesis of the Jewish Platonist Philo Judaeus and other aspects of Middle Platonic philosophy, are referred to in the appropriate bibliographies.

The five parts thus fit together in a hypothetical family tree (see Table 1) whose focal point is the great reformer Valentinus.

GNOSTIC SCRIPTURE AND THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

One of the major watersheds in the vast terrain of ancient Christian history is the accession of the pro-Christian emperor Constantine the Great to the throne in A.D. 306. From this time on, Christianity was more and more clearly adopted as the religion of the Roman imperial government. In the course of these events the idea and reality of a single, unified, and orthodox church gradually became more established. But in the three centuries before the reign of Constantine it is harder to find anything resembling one mainstream church or one central tradition: instead of a mainstream one finds many tributaries.

The scriptures translated in this book were written before the time of Constantine or the establishment of an orthodox Christianity. Thus in order to understand their original place in the ancient churches we must begin by putting ourselves back into Christianity of the second and third centuries A.D., without the illumination of orthodox hindsight. Our exploration can usefully begin with the concept of “scripture.”

Scripture, Canon, and Diversity

Scripture (“writing”)—in the general sense of the word—means a body of written religious literature that members of a religion or group consider authoritative in matters such as belief, conduct, rhetoric, or the running of practical affairs. Scripture often contains a system of symbols within which readers can orient themselves and make sense of their relationship to the world, the divine, and other people. Such a system is sometimes expressed in story form and is then technically called *myth*. Sometimes it also tells where the religion and its members came from and explains why they are distinct and special.

When Christianity was born it had little or no scripture that was uniquely its own. The new religion was an offshoot of the Judaism of its day, and many of the earliest Christians had once been Jews. Like Jesus, they read, accepted, and interpreted scriptural works of Judaism—books of the Jewish Bible, which they would later come to call “the Old Testament,” along with various other books.¹ But after Jesus’ death and with the beginning of faith in his resurrection, Christians changed the way in which they read those books, now interpreting them in particularly Christian ways to bring out the meaning of Jesus’ coming and death.

Early Christians lived in urban, and sometimes economically comfortable, settings; a proportionally high number of them must have been able to read and write. Thus small collections of Christian writings quickly accumulated in one place or another, and it was in these writings that the inspired insights of interpreters and leaders of the religion were often set forth. These works served many different purposes and so were written in many literary forms, appropriate to their functions within the churches that used them.

1. Some of these “other” books are readily available in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; J. H. Charlesworth, ed.; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1983–85). Still others can be found in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (G. Vermes, ed.; 7th ed.; London: Penguin, 2012).

A vast quantity of this early Christian “scripture” (in the general sense) from the first, second, and third centuries still survives today, though sometimes only in fragmentary form—not only the twenty-seven books of the New Testament but many other books as well: epistles, wisdom books, revelations, biographies and journey literature, accounts of Jesus’ passion, rules for Christian congregational life, polemics, and theological treatises.

When a group of early Christians agreed in recognizing the presence of inspired authority in a particular writing or collection of writings, the work in question effectively rose to the status of scripture, sometimes equaling or even surpassing the authority of Jewish scripture. In some cases works written for very specific purposes—for example, St. Paul’s letter to Philemon about a runaway slave—later acquired scriptural status. In other cases, new books were deliberately composed as scripture. In a few instances these works were even meant to attack or replace parts of the already accepted body of scripture (“It is not . . . as Moses wrote . . .,” says the author of the gnostic *Secret Book According to John*, 22:22f).

Early Christian scriptures, then, sometimes presented messages or points of view that conflicted with one another. This is not surprising, for in the first three centuries there was only sporadic coordination among the various Christian groups and certainly no centralized uniformity. It was therefore only natural that in one group a particular book might be shown the respect due authoritative scripture, while another group elsewhere might accept it with less respect or even reject it.

In fact, the lack of uniformity in ancient Christian scripture during the early period is very striking, and it points to a substantial diversity within the early Christian religion, probably going back to a time just after Jesus’ death in about the year 30. Although it is historically correct to speak of early Christianity as one religion, it can also be described as a complex network of individual parties, groups, sects, or denominations. To some extent the diversity of scripture resulted from accidental differences in cultural, social, and linguistic milieus—between, say, the usual forms of religious expression in Mesopotamia and those in the city of Rome. It also came from the coexistence of essentially different theological opinions and traditions about the significance of Jesus, some of which seem to be as old as Christianity itself—traditions about Jesus as miracle worker, wisdom incarnate, revealer, Messiah of Israel, prophet, emanation from another world, etc. Furthermore, it reflected the different philosophies and symbolic systems on which the writers might base their religious thought (Platonism, Jewish apocalyptic, etc.). In the range of possibilities that ancient Christian theologians actually hit upon, some of the results will now seem familiar to the modern reader, while others seem bizarre.

Gnostic scripture belongs to this second category, the bizarre. Most readers will find it takes them into a breathtaking world of fantastic symbols, beautifully intricate myths, weird heavenly denizens, and extraordinary poetry—a world that resembles neither modern Christianity and Judaism nor today’s secular culture. Of course, the unfamiliarity of the gnostic world is partly a function of our

distance from all the conventions of ancient literature. But even more it is due to the audacity of ancient gnostic theologians, who attempted nothing less than to chart the whole mind of god (see Fig. 1, pp. 12–13) and from that chart to show the origin both of the world's beauty and of its imperfection. The unfamiliarity is due also to the ambitious mystical agenda that gnostic writers, and especially Valentinians, set for themselves: about this, more is said below.

Finally, gnostic scripture now seems strange because it rebels against important beliefs shared by many early Christians and their Jewish predecessors, beliefs which even now belong to the core of ordinary Western Judaism and Christianity—especially belief in the goodness and omnipotence of the Creator: gnostics believed that Satan made the world. From the ordinary modern perspective, then, gnostic scripture may seem both Christian and anti-Christian, both Jewish and anti-Jewish: the strength of this paradoxical ambiguity eventually made it the classic example of heretical scripture.

The diversity of ancient Christian scripture, then, covered a very broad spectrum, which included the Christian works translated in this book; the viewpoints it expressed were often in conflict with one another. Because a person could travel quickly and easily along the major international roads and sea lanes of the Roman empire, Christians in one city or social setting could quickly learn of Christians elsewhere who held quite different views. As Christian scripture of diverse kinds circulated throughout the empire, it multiplied the options open to those who could read or listen and gave rise to tensions as very different groups began to communicate. This is confirmed by all that historians can learn about the ancient spread of Christian literature, the places where manuscripts have been found, and the languages into which scriptures were eventually translated.

Some Christian leaders therefore began to shield the members of their groups from exposure to unwelcome outside ideas and literature by drawing up authoritative lists of the scriptural books that should be accepted and those that should be rejected. The original motivation for such lists had been constructively theological. But an important implication of their formal acceptance was that nothing else should be added, at least to the collection of works with full scriptural authority. Thus *a closed list of fully authoritative scripture* could also be a powerful weapon in the conflict between rival factions within early Christianity. It should be noted that a great many works of Christian scripture ended up in a third category—neither authoritative nor rejected, but merely edifying. Today the neutral term “early Christian literature” is often applied to such edifying works.

In modern parlance, a list of the fully authoritative scripture read by a particular group or religion is called its *canon* (“yardstick”) of scripture. Modern Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, for example, officially accept the books of the Old Testament, taken from Judaism, and twenty-seven books of Christian scripture (the New Testament) as their canon of scripture. Although there is still no full agreement on the exact contents (Catholics and Protestants politely disagree over some fifteen books and parts of books in the Old Testament), the outlines of the main modern Western Christian canon were already being drawn

in at least some churches by the end of the second century. From today's vantage point, such churches of the second century can be seen as *proto-orthodox* (anticipating later orthodoxy) in their canon of scripture.

It is hard to know what number of second- and third-century Christian congregations shared in this proto-orthodoxy, but probably not very many (the evidence is slim; the canons of a few individual churches can be pieced together from circumstantial evidence and passing remarks). If a traveler had set out to visit Christian churches throughout the Roman empire in A.D. 200 or thereabouts, he or she would have been struck mainly by the great variety of canons then in use—some quite self-conscious; others informal, fluid, and simply reflecting local customs. Let us imagine a female traveler, since women played an active and mobile role in ancient Christian affairs. In Rome, and almost everywhere else, our traveler would find churches affiliated with a famous movement that read a fixed canon consisting of a very short bible (constructed about A.D. 145 by Marcion), which contained an abridgment of the Gospel of Luke, a modified version of the letters of Paul, *no* Old Testament—and nothing else. Also in Rome she would find yet other canons in use by other Christian groups. On reaching Alexandria in Egypt, she would discover several factions of Christianity, one of them being a wealthy, aristocratic, and well-educated community that read as scripture not only the Old Testament and most books of today's New Testament canon, but also (with the same authority) the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, *Revelation of Peter*, *Preaching of Peter*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Epistle of Clement*, *Traditions of Matthew*, *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, *Gospel of Peter*, *Acts of Pilate*, *Clementine Recognitions*, *Epistles of Ignatius*, *Acts of Paul*, and *The Shepherd* (about the last two works more is said below). When she got to northern Mesopotamia she would meet Syrian Christians who venerated St. Thomas as their founding apostle and saw in his life a model for wandering ascetics. She would find them reading about Jesus' teachings in an authoritative *Gospel According to Thomas* (translated in Part Four of this book). However, for stories about Jesus' life they would be reading a single *Harmony* (*Diatessaron*) of the gospels made by skillfully combining Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, together with *The Gospel According to Thomas*. Published in two languages, it would seem, about A.D. 170 by the bilingual theologian Tatian, the *Diatessaron*, along with separate gospels, was to remain in canonical use by Syriac-speaking churches until the fifth century. Other scriptural books in this region recorded the "acts" or exploits of St. Jude Thomas as an archetypal wandering missionary, as well as his conversations with Jesus (cf. *The Book of Thomas*, translated in Part Four).

These three geographical samples give us a glimpse of the great variety of canons that were in simultaneous use about A.D. 200. Some of the works being read as scripture had been written before the idea of a limited Christian canon emerged, and had simply survived in the usage of particular groups. But even after the idea of a closed canon emerged, Christian authors continued to claim the inspiration to produce new works meant to have canonical authority and thus to be added to Christian scripture (indeed, as can be seen in certain modern branches of Christianity, this process has never ceased). Sometimes these texts

were titled as though they were the work of some respected authority of the past. Others reported the contents of a vision granted to a seer by god.

Thus, for example, about A.D. 150, a certain Greek-speaking freedman at Rome named Hermas—according to tradition, the brother of Pope Pius I—recorded five allegorical visions in a work called *The Shepherd*, which was rounded out by chapters of moral instruction. *The Shepherd* was widely accepted as fully canonical scripture by important Greek-speaking churches down to the fourth century and is found in bible manuscripts of that time. So also a second-century presbyter living near Ephesus (now in Turkey) composed what he claimed was a firsthand biography of Paul, even incorporating a pseudo-Pauline “Third Epistle to the Corinthians,” and passed it off as genuine. The theology of this work has been described as anti-gnostic. As it happened, after their publication these *Acts of Paul According to the Apostle Himself* were unmasked, and the presbyter punished. Yet many users seem to have been unaware of this embarrassing fact, or refused to accept it, among them being Saints Hippolytus and Cyprian and the learned Origen. Although the *Acts* were eventually rejected as spurious in Greek-speaking churches, they were translated into Coptic for use by Egyptian Christians; and even today, *Third Corinthians* is found in old printed bibles of the Armenian church.

Gnostic Scripture

Such is the context in which gnostic scripture—as a kind of Christian scripture—must be evaluated. There is no evidence, either direct or circumstantial, for the exact contents of a canon read in gnostic churches, nor is it known how formal or informal that canon was. But the gnostic scriptures themselves provide a partial answer, because they are held together by a distinctive type of scriptural myth, a coherent symbol system that enabled gnostics to orient themselves and make sense of their relationship to the world, the divine, and other people. Like the book of Genesis, this symbol system was meant to tell where the gnostics and their religion had come from and to explain why they were distinct and special. The details of the myth were parallel to the system of Genesis but quite incompatible with it. Thus the scriptures in Part One of this book form a loose cycle that tells a distinctive gnostic myth of origins. From a few passing remarks (IrSat 1.24.2 [end], IrUnid 1.30.1 If [note 1 Co 15:50 at 1.30.13], RR 86:20f) one can also gather that gnostics read many books now belonging to the Old and the New Testament and accepted them as a necessary—or perhaps unavoidable—basis for interpretation.

Any modern evaluation of gnostic scripture therefore ought to take account of the following facts.

1. None of the works composed by gnostics is today in the authoritative canon of any Christian group. Hostility to them began in proto-orthodox quarters as soon as they were written, and to some degree proto-orthodox theology was conceived of as being what gnostic theology was *not*.

2. When originally written, gnostic scripture was one of many competing bodies of Christian scripture, corresponding to one of the options or denominations open to ancient Christians everywhere.
3. The fact that gnostic scripture was being written as late as the second and third centuries, in traditional styles and meant to be added to authoritative scripture, is not unusual within the ancient context.
4. Likewise, the attribution of gnostic scripture to authoritative figures of the past or metaphysical beings and its claim to record authoritative visions are not unusual within the broad context of ancient Christian literature.
5. What *is* first and foremost in gnostic scripture is its doctrines and its interpretation of Old and New Testament books—especially its open hostility to the god of Israel and its views on resurrection, the reality of Jesus' incarnation and suffering, and the universality of Christian salvation. But also, gnostic scripture is distinctive because the gnostic myth competes strongly with the book of Genesis, thus rivaling the basic system used by other Christians to orient themselves to the world, the divine, and other people. On these points, the gap between gnostic religion and proto-orthodox Christianity was vast.

Valentinian Writings

Valentinus, though essentially a gnostic, tried to bridge this gap. He and his followers consciously limited themselves to a proto-orthodox Christian canon, taking care not to invoke classic gnostic scripture in their theological writings. For example, *The Gospel of Truth*, though Valentinian, is also one of the earliest witnesses to the contents of the proto-orthodox canon—in it Valentinus takes pains to express himself by paraphrasing and alluding to New Testament passages, sometimes almost gratuitously. Thus in *The Gospel of Truth* the books of Mt, Jn, Ro, 1 Co, 2 Co, Ep, Col, Hb, 1 Jn, and Rv are used in this way; very significantly, Valentinus boldly paraphrases Genesis as well, as though signaling the abandonment of works hostile to Genesis such as BJn and RAd. Seen as a work of gnostic literature, *The Gospel of Truth* is a testimony to Valentinus's power as a writer, for in it he manages almost completely to obliterate the characteristic rhetoric, imagery, and atmosphere of gnostic style in favor of a tone that is distinctly proto-orthodox but unmistakably his own. Yet Valentinus and his school in fact used a version of the gnostic myth of origins as their main system of orientation (it even shows through in a few passages of GTr). By the process of allegorical interpretation (whose principles are discussed in the Historical Introduction to Part Three), they claimed to find their version of gnostic myth hidden in the authoritative canon of scripture that was being read by the proto-orthodox church and would later become the New Testament. Allegory seems to have provided heavy armor against the weapon of the canon list: opponents found it infuriatingly difficult to destroy Valentinian cells within the proto-orthodox and orthodox churches, and complaints about their presence continued to be made for centuries (see Map 1).

From this it follows that Valentinian canonical scripture in the proper sense was simply the proto-orthodox canon. Thus the works collected in Parts Two and Three of this book were probably edifying scripture, not canon.

Conclusions

It is clear that the five parts of this book contain bodies of scripture whose formal authority differed from case to case. Classic gnostic scripture (Part One) was a supplementary body that constituted a challenge to the proto-orthodox canon. The writings of Valentinus and his school (Parts Two and Three) were ostensibly just edifying scriptural works. The Thomas literature (Part Four) was probably authoritative scripture for the ordinary church of northern Mesopotamia, along with other works such as the *Harmony (Diatessaron)*, *The Odes of Solomon*, and possibly separate gospels as well. These works would have been treated as normal canonical scripture and would have presented no sectarian challenge to the early Mesopotamian church. Finally, the Hermetic writings in Part Five are non-Christian, and therefore not Christian scripture at all, while the summary of Basilides' myth (also in Part Five) has an unknown relationship to Christian authoritative scripture.

THE NATURE OF THE PRIMARY SOURCES

All the works translated in this book were composed in Greek, a language used to some extent all over the Mediterranean world (*The Hymn of the Pearl* may be an exception, since it may have been written first in Syriac). The textual evidence or *primary source material* for these works survives partly in the original Greek and partly in the form of ancient translations done in two other languages of the Roman empire, Latin and Coptic. To these, Syriac must be added if the Syriac text of *The Hymn of the Pearl* is translated from a Greek original.

Sources in Greek

The evidence in Greek is of three types:

1. scripture manuscripts
2. verbatim citations in ancient Greek authors
3. summaries and descriptions by ancient Greek authors

1. Almost no Greek *scripture manuscripts* of the works in this book now survive, indicating that by some crucial moment in the transmission of Greek literature Greek-speaking copyists no longer had any incentive to copy them. Official pressure to cease copying such manuscripts began as early as the fourth century A.D., when gnostics, Valentinians, readers of the Thomas literature, etc., began to be officially condemned at the instigation of the established orthodox church, and exclusive canon lists began to be promulgated more universally.

The Hermetic writings (cf. Poim, CH7) were able to escape extinction owing to the respect in which “Hermes Trismegistus” was universally held. The Hermetic corpus continued to be copied down to the time of the Italian Renaissance, when its publication was enthusiastically patronized by Lorenzo de’ Medici. As can be seen from the two tractates included in this book, the Hermetica are by no means as starkly heretical as classic gnostic scripture. Apart from the Hermetica, no Greek scripture manuscripts of the other complete works in this book have been found, save for scraps of three papyrus manuscripts that contained *The Gospel According to Thomas*, and a single Greek manuscript of *The Acts of Thomas* that includes *The Hymn of the Pearl* (as against seventy-four others that omit it!). The massive loss of these writings in the language of their composition is striking evidence of the dominating power of orthodoxy in Western history.

2. *Verbatim citations* in ancient Greek authors have preserved in their entirety two short but extremely precious works—Valentinus’s *Summer Harvest* and Ptolemy’s *Epistle to Flora*. In addition, short fragments of lost works by Valentinus (VFrA–H) and Basilides (BasFrA–H) are also preserved in this manner, as is a passage of a Ptolemaean commentary on the Gospel of John (IrPt 1.8.5). Other fragmentary citations of related types, especially Valetitianian, have also been preserved but are not translated here.

3. The *summaries and descriptions* of gnostic, Valentinian, and Basilidian teachers and descriptions of their doctrines by ancient Greek authors are much more extensive than the citations listed above; they account for nearly a dozen substantial items translated in this book. Six such authors and works have been drawn upon:

1. St. Irenaeus of Lyon (A.D. ca. 130–ca. 200)
2. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. ca. 150–ca. 215)
3. *The Refutation of All Heresies* (soon after A.D. ca. 222)
4. Origen of Alexandria (A.D. ca. 185–ca. 254)
5. Porphyry of Tyre, the pagan Neoplatonist (A.D. 232/3–ca. 305)
6. St. Epiphanius of Salamis (A.D. ca. 315–403)

In addition, a passing remark is excerpted (VFrB) from a treatise by the Christian theologian Marcellus of Ancyra (died A.D. ca. 374).

Three of the authors—Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and the author of the *Refutation*—stand in the same literary tradition, as polemical writers of the history of ideas. They set out to define Christian orthodoxy by writing a genealogical history of error, as they understood it, in a literary genre often called the “catalogue of heresies” and are for this reason known as “heresiologists.”

The three heresiologists’ attitude to all the material they describe is openly and consistently hostile. Often their style is ironic or mocking (a traditional tone still found in some modern treatments of the gnostics), for their ultimate goal is not to describe but to destroy. Needless to say, the historian has to assess very cautiously the precision and truth of such sources. Porphyry of Tyre, a pagan openly hostile to all that is Christian, also belongs in the polemical camp, though he marches under a different flag.

Sources in Other Languages

(a) Irenaeus

The text of St. Irenaeus's catalogue of heresies presents a special problem. It was composed in Greek, in the European West, at a time when Christians of Irenaeus's diocese in Gaul (southern France) still used Greek as a language of learning and religion. But within a hundred years or so, Latin had virtually replaced Greek in the Christian churches of the western Mediterranean. Then, not surprisingly, the Greek text of Irenaeus ceased to be transmitted by Western copyists; while in the eastern Mediterranean it eventually was replaced by more up-to-date heresy catalogues in Greek, which to some extent were based on Irenaeus. As a result, what comes down to us of St. Irenaeus's catalogue is mainly an ancient Latin version made very early for use by West European (and North African) Christians who spoke Latin. The original Greek text can sometimes be found in Irenaeus's Greek successors of the East, who to some extent plagiarized or cited his text. Except where such citations exist, the ancient Latin version has to be used.

(b) Ancient Translations of Scripture Manuscripts

The replacement of Greek by Latin in the Western churches and the eventual translation of Irenaeus into Latin were part of a much larger, international pattern in which the spoken languages of various peoples began to be used instead of Greek for the transmission of Christian literature—for example, Coptic, the native Egyptian language (used by Christian writers since A.D. ca. 250); and Syriac, an important dialect of Aramaic centering in Edessa (Urfa, Turkey, east of Gaziantep) and western Mesopotamia (since before 200). On the periphery of the empire other native languages were eventually put to the same use: Gothic (since ca. 350), Armenian (406), Georgian (ca. 425), Ethiopic (ca. 500), and Old Nubian (ca. 550). Not only books of the Old and the New Testament were translated into these languages, but also liturgies, prayers, and a great deal of the rest of Christian literature, including many other works of scripture that were not to become part of the official canon of established orthodox Christianity.

Among these other works were the scriptures of the gnostics and Valentinians, Hermetic writings, Thomas literature, and similar or related works. The translations of such works must surely have been made to meet the demand of native congregations or for missionary purposes.

Generally speaking, after the fourth century A.D. the official suppression or nonpublication of unorthodox Christian literature extended to all regions and languages of the Roman empire. The result for our times is that, just as unorthodox scripture manuscripts in Greek have now disappeared almost without a trace, so too have the translations of these same scriptures made in parts of the empire that used Latin or regional languages.

The outstanding exception to this rule was southern, Coptic-speaking Egypt: there, for reasons of climate and settlement pattern, ancient manuscripts have been able to survive virtually forever if buried in the dry soil (the annual rainfall in well-inhabited parts of Egypt a bit south of Cairo is about zero).

TABLE 2
Published Manuscripts of the Coptic Gnostic Library

<i>Present Location</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Date of Discovery or Acquisition</i>	<i>Number of Codices</i>	<i>Number of Works Attested</i>	<i>Date of Copying (A.D.)</i>
Berlin (Staatsbibliothek)	P. Berol. 8502 (“Berlin Codex”)	1896	1	4	400–500?
Cairo (Coptic Museum)	Nag Hammadi Codices I–XIII	December 1945	13	Ca. 51	Just before 350
New Haven, Conn. (Yale Beinecke Library)	P. Yale inv. 1784	1964	(Fragment of Nag Hammadi Codex III)	Fragment	Just before 350
Cologne Switzerland (Bibliotheca Bodmeriana)	Codex Tchacos	Ca. 1978	1	5	300–350?
London (British Library)	MS Add. 5114 (“Askew Codex”)	1773	1	3	Ca. 350–400
London (British Library)	MS Or.4926(1) (“Oeyen Fragments”)	1895	1 (Fragmentary)	1	Before ca. 350
Oxford (Bodleian Library)	Bruce MS 96 (“Bruce Codex,” actually two codices)	Ca. 1769	2	6	300–500?
Summary:		1769–1980	19 codices	Ca. 70 works	300 to 400/500

NOTE: Statistics based on published data as of 2019.

For these reasons unorthodox scripture manuscripts hidden or abandoned in southern Egypt at or before the time of official suppression are still being discovered today. Some of the discoveries are in the original Greek (and these, unfortunately, are merely fragments); but no fewer than nineteen unorthodox scripture manuscripts containing works in Coptic translation have been found and published. Thus far, almost all that have been found contain one or more works of the gnostic sect or the school of Valentinus, and many of them are quite well preserved.

All nineteen of the published manuscripts and manuscript fragments can be loosely called “gnostic,” and in fact in modern discussion they are designated the “Coptic Gnostic Library” (see Table 2). Copied in them together with gnostic and Valentinian works are other, more or less related ones—Thomas literature, Hermetic writings, etc. All are in the format of codices—that is, books gathered and bound like the printed book of today rather than scrolls, which were the older form of books.

These published manuscripts are all now in famous museums or libraries. Several were purchased from dealers and middlemen who gave no hint as to their original source. But the most spectacular are a hoard of thirteen early codices discovered all together by an Egyptian peasant in 1945, close to the site of ancient Pbou on the east bank of the Nile opposite the town of Nag Hammadi (see Map I). The Nag Hammadi codices, as they are often called, were manufactured just before A.D. 350 and buried in a sealed pot in the low desert sometime thereafter by unknown persons. The reason for their burial is not specifically known. An archeological survey of the region has provided no context with which the hoard can be definitely associated; nothing in the manuscripts or in their construction materials suggests their exact source or identifies their users (despite occasional reports to the contrary). The variety of handwritings, codex sizes, writing materials, and even dialects in the codices suggests that they had come from several places along the Nile Valley and had been collected (at no small cost) by an interested person or group. It is mainly thanks to the Nag Hammadi codices that the works translated in this book can now be known (see the list of “Ancient Sources and Manuscripts of Works in This Collection”).

It must be stressed that the works themselves were not composed in Coptic and that their date of composition in Greek is earlier—in some cases considerably earlier—than the Coptic manuscript witnesses; the possible date of composition is discussed in the introduction to each work. The fact that the manuscripts were preserved in Egypt is largely an accident of climate and human geography; the individual works themselves may have been composed anywhere in or near the Roman empire, subsequently transported to Egypt, and translated there into Coptic. There is no way to ascertain the exact date of the translation of each of them into Coptic.

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EDITORIAL METHOD

The translations in this book are based on fresh revision of the ancient texts. Before translating any text I have critically reviewed the variants reported in the best modern edition. In the case of texts preserved in Coptic, I have also compared them with the manuscript or manuscripts in photographic facsimile. If a text has survived in two ancient languages, I have examined both versions, though the Syriac version of HPr1 has not been restudied in detail. Any textual revisions that seemed necessary have been adopted silently, since the plan of this book does not permit philological notes. Colleagues in textual criticism can easily spot these changes by comparing my translation with the critical edition cited in the introduction to the work.

As editor-translator I viewed my task as being threefold:

1. where the manuscript was physically damaged, to ascertain whether or not the missing text could be restored with certainty;
2. to discover any ancient copyist's errors in the manuscript (there are always some) and if possible to correct them, or to accept a correction already proposed by some modern critic;
3. to ensure that Greek literary, rhetorical, and philosophical traditions were taken into account in translating the text into English.

My aims as I performed these three tasks were the following:

1. to adopt a factual approach to the restoration of lacunae, rejecting mere speculation and admitting only restorations that are certain (always enclosed in square brackets []);
2. to recompare carefully the details and systems of related gnostic myths—which has sometimes led me to reject modern critics' emendations in favor of the received reading of one of the manuscripts;
3. to be flexible in translating from the ancient Coptic, taking account of the text's original composition in Greek as a product of Hellenistic-Roman culture.

Needless to say, I am deeply dependent on the editorial research of my predecessors, who for the most part established the original text of these works.

I have used square brackets [] conservatively; often a word enclosed in brackets is significantly intact in the manuscript and so is virtually a preserved reading.

EXPLANATION OF TYPOGRAPHICAL AND REFERENCE SYSTEMS

The ancient manuscripts contain no headings, detailed numbering systems, or (in most cases) other marks to indicate divisions of text. The Coptic manuscripts also contain no punctuation corresponding to the kind that is used in English and Byzantine Greek.

Boldface numbers in the text

Boldface numbers which appear within the text indicate

- (a) *in works translated from the Coptic (Nag Hammadi MSS)*, manuscript page numbers according to the standard Leiden facsimile edition (e.g., **1** = MS page 1);
- (b) *in works translated from the Greek or Latin*, book, chapter, and section numbers (e.g., **1.24.1** = book 1, chapter 24, section 1) or, in Porphyry, chapter and section numbers.

Marginal numbers

Marginal numbers, set in small ordinary type, are the manuscript line numbers of the Coptic (Nag Hammadi) MS or, in Porphyry, the line numbers of the critical edition.

Dots • in the text are coordinated with these marginal numbers.

Line numbers are given only at the beginning of important sentences or phrases. Not every line of the Coptic manuscript is indicated in the text and margin.

The important sentences and phrases numbered in the English translation usually begin in the middle of a manuscript line of Coptic.

Boldface headings in the text

Boldface headings in the text have been added by the modern translator, as an aid to readers. They are not a part of the original text, and should be omitted when any part of this translation is quoted.

Italics

Italics are used only in the text of BJn, EgG and ClExc. Their use is explained in the introductions to those three works, under “Text.”

Use of parentheses ()

Words in parentheses () have been added by the modern translator, as an interpretive supplement implied by the text but not literally present within it. They may be retained whenever the translation is being quoted.

Vertical lists in the text

When a vertical list of items appears in the text (e.g., BJn 6:5f) this typographical arrangement has been added by the modern translator. Such vertical lists do not appear in the ancient manuscripts.

Footnotes

In each division of a text, footnotes are lettered serially. Footnotes for each page of text are printed at the bottom of the page.

Marginal references

Marginal references direct the reader’s attention to other passages that can contribute immediately to an understanding of the text—sources of quotations and allusions; use of special terms, phrases, and images in related scriptures collected in the same part of *The Gnostic Scriptures*; and, rarely, comparable use of such a term, phrase, or image in an *earlier* body of scripture (see Table 1). Biblical parallels of mere terminology and imagery have almost never been noted. The references often occur in groups, all relating to one text line; in such cases, the position of the first reference indicates the line to which the whole group applies. If two groups of references have to be run together in one place, they are separated by a boldface reference to the new verse number. The symbol f (“and following line or lines”) is usually omitted in marginal references.

Within a group of references, the order of items is:

1. Cross-references within the same work, in the appropriate order (these are *not* preceded by the abbreviated name of the work)
2. References to books of the Old and the New Testament
3. References to other works in *The Gnostic Scriptures*

Reference to works translated from the Coptic (Nag Hammadi MSS) takes the form of “50:3,” i.e., “page 50, line 3, of the manuscript.”

Symbols in Marginal References

- f “and following line (section) or lines (sections).” Either one or many lines (sections) may be represented by this symbol.
- par. “and parallels in the other gospel(s)”

- + “principal reference.” A marginal reference followed by this symbol (e.g., 9:9 +) indicates a passage in whose margin further references to the same item are listed. References carrying this symbol may be especially useful to the interpreter.

How to cite passages of this translation

Full titles of works should be preferred to the abbreviations used in this book. Note the list of “Other Accepted Names for the Works in This Collection”; these names may be used if desired.

(a) *For works translated from the Coptic (Nag Hammadi MSS and Codex Tchacos)*, cite the MS page number (boldface, in the text) and the line number preceding the citation (ordinary type, in the margin) joined by the symbol : (colon) and written solid. Unless the Coptic text has been consulted it is safest to write the symbol f (“and following line or lines”) after the line number; the Coptic lines of text are short. For example, “*Revelation of Adam* 64:6f”; “*Revelation of Adam* 64:6–16f.” It is unnecessary to specify the Nag Hammadi codex numbers except with *The Secret Book According to John* (Codex II) and *The Egyptian Gospel* (mostly Codex IV, but sometimes Codex III). For example, “*The Secret Book According to John* (Codex II) 1:5f”; “*The Egyptian Gospel* (Codex IV) 50:1–21f”; “*The Egyptian Gospel* (Codex III) 55:22f.”

The Gospel According to Thomas should be cited by saying (logion) number, but *The Gospel According to Philip* by page and line.

(b) *For works translated from the Greek or Latin*, cite the full boldface number or numbers found in the text. For example, “St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* 1.24.1”; “St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against Heresies* 39.1.4–39.3.5.” Citations of the *Hymn of the Pearl* should specify “Greek,” and for precision the traditional (Syriac) verse numbers printed in the margin may be added to the Greek paragraph numbers: “*Hymn of the Pearl* (Greek) 108–109, verses 11–19.”

Editorial symbols representing the state of the ancient text

- [of the] Missing because of physical damage (text conjecturally supplied by the modern editor)
- [. . .] One or more words missing because of physical damage
- <not> Inadvertently omitted by the ancient copyist (text conjecturally supplied by the modern editor)
- < . . . > One or more words inadvertently omitted by the ancient copyist
- * * * Passage omitted by the modern translator

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OTHER ACCEPTED NAMES FOR THE WORKS IN THIS COLLECTION

<i>Adam, The Apocalypse of</i>	RA <i>d</i>
<i>Allogenes</i>	Fr
<i>Apocalypse of Adam</i>	RA <i>d</i>
<i>Apocryphon of John, The</i>	B <i>Jn</i>
<i>Archons, The Hypostasis of the</i>	RR
<i>Archons, The Nature of the</i>	RR
Barbelognostics, The	I <i>rG</i>
Barbēlites, The	E <i>pG</i>
Barbeloites, The	I <i>rG</i>
Basilides. Frag. 2, ed. Völker	BasFr <i>G</i>
———. Frag. 3 Vö.	BasFr <i>F</i>
———. Frag. 4 Vö.	BasFr <i>D</i>
Basilides' Myth	I <i>rBas</i>
<i>Book of Thomas the Athlete (Contender)</i>	
<i>Writing to the Perfect, The</i>	B <i>Th</i>
Borborites, The	E <i>pG</i>
Colophon to NHC (or CG) I, so-called	P <i>P1</i>
Corpus Hermeticum 1.	P <i>oim</i>
Corpus Hermeticum 7	C <i>H7</i>

<i>Egyptians, The Gospel of the</i>	EgG
<i>Epistle to Rheginus on Resurrection, The</i>	TRs
<i>Gospel of the Egyptians, The</i>	EgG
<i>Gospel of Philip, The</i>	GPh
<i>Gospel of Thomas, The</i>	GTh
<i>Gospel of Truth, The (as anonymous work)</i>	GTr
<i>Hermetic Corpus, Tractate 1</i>	Poim
<i>Hermetic Corpus, Tractate 7</i>	CH7
<i>Hymn of Jude (Judas) Thomas the Apostle in the Country of the Indians, The</i>	HPrl
<i>Hymn of the Soul, The</i>	HPrl
<i>Hypostasis of the Archons, The</i>	RR
<i>Invisible Spirit, The Holy Book of the Great</i>	EgG
<i>John, The Apocryphon of</i>	BJn
<i>Jung Codex, Colophon (so-called)</i>	PP1
<i>Letter to Rheginus, The</i>	TRs
<i>Licentious Gnostics, The</i>	EpG
<i>Logia Iēsou, The</i>	GTh
<i>Nature of the Archons, The</i>	RR
<i>Philip, The Gospel of</i>	GPh
<i>Phibionites, The</i>	EpG
<i>Pimander</i>	Poim
<i>Prayer of the Apostle Paul, The</i>	PP1
<i>Rheginus, The Epistle (or Letter) to</i>	TRs

<i>Rulers, The Nature of the</i>	RR
Satornilos (or Saturnil)	IrSat
<i>Seth, The Three Steles of</i>	3Tb
Stratiōtics, The	EpG
<i>Thomas, The Gospel of</i>	GTh
<i>Thomas the Contender (Athlete), The Book of</i>	BTh
<i>Three Steles of Seth, The</i>	3Tb
<i>Thunder, Perfect Mind</i>	Th
<i>Trimorphic Protennoia, The</i>	FTh
<i>Triple Protennoia, The</i>	FTh
Valentinus. <i>Harvest</i>	VHr
———. Frag. 1, ed. Völker	VFrC
———. Frag. 2 Vö.	VFrH
———. Frag. 3 Vö.	VFrE
———. Frag. 4 Vö.	VFrF
———. Frag. 5 Vö.	VFrD
———. Frag. 6 Vö.	VFrG
———. Frag. 7 Vö.	VFrA
———. Frag. 8 Vö.	VHr
———. Frag. 9 Vö.	VFrB

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ANCIENT SOURCES AND MANUSCRIPTS OF WORKS IN THIS COLLECTION

<i>Acts of Thomas</i> (= <i>Acta Thomae</i>), 108–13 L.–B.	HPrl
Anthimus of Nicomedia, Pseudo-. <i>On the Holy Church</i> (= <i>De Sancta Ecclesia</i>) 9.	VFrB
Berlin Gnostic Codex, pp. 19–77.	BJn
Berol. 8502, pap. (or p.), pp. 19–77	BJn
BG, pp. 19–77.	BJn
CG (Codex Cairensis Gnosticus). <i>See</i> Nag Hammadi Codices	
Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens), <i>Excerpts from Theodotus</i>	ClExc
<i>Miscellanies</i> (= <i>Stromateis</i> = <i>Stromata</i>)	
2.36.2–4.	VFrC
2.114.3–6.	VFrH
3.59.3.	VFrE
4.81.2–4.83.2.	BasFrG
4.86.1.	BasFrD
4.89.1–3.	VFrF
4.89.6–4.90.1.	VFrD
4.153.3.	BasFrH
4.162.1.	BasFrA
4.165.3.	BasFrE
5.3.2–3	BasFrC
5.74.3.	BasFrB
6.52.3–4.	VFrG
Codex Tchacos, pp. 33–58.	GJd

Corpus Hermeticum. *See* Hermetic Writings

Epiphanius of Salamis (Constantia), Saint, *Against Heresies*
(= *Panarion* = *Adversus Haereses*)

25.2.1–26.17.9	EpG
33.3.1–33.7.10	PtF
39.1.1–39.5.3	EpS
40.1.1–40.8.2	EpA

Hermetic Writings (Corpus Hermeticum)

Tractate 1 (<i>Poimandrēs</i>)	Poim
Tractate 7	CH7

Irenaeus of Lyon (Lugdunum), Saint, *Against Heresies*
(= *Adversus Haereses* = *Elenchos* = *Detectio*)

1.1.1–1.8.5	IrPt
1.11.1	IrV
1.24.1–2	IrSat
1.24.3–7	IrBas
1.29	IrG
1.30–31	IrUnid

Marcellus of Ancyra, *On the Holy Church* (= *De Sancta Ecclesia*) 9 VFrB

Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC or CG)

Cod. I, pp. A–B	PPI
Cod. I, pp. 16–43	GTr
Cod. I, pp. 43–50	TRs
Cod. I, pp. 51–138	TrTr
Cod. II, pp. 1–32	BJn
Cod. II, pp. 32–51	GTh
Cod. II, pp. 51–86	GPh
Cod. II, pp. 86–97	RR
Cod. II, pp. 138–45	BTh
Cod. III, pp. 1–40	BJn
Cod. III, pp. 40–69	EgG
Cod. IV, pp. 1–49	BJn
Cod. IV, pp. 50–81	EgG
Cod. V, pp. 64–85	RAAd

Cod. VI, pp. 13–21	Th
Cod. VII, pp. 118–27	3Tb
Cod. VIII, pp. 1–132 (excerpts)	Zs
Cod. XI, pp. 57–68	Fr
Cod. XIII, pp. 35–50	FTh
NHC. <i>See</i> Nag Hammadi Codices	
Origen of Alexandria, <i>Commentary on Romans</i> , Migne PG 14.1015A–B	BasFrF
pap(yrus) Berol(inensis) 8502, pp. 19–77	BJn
pap(yrus) Oxyrhynchus 1, 654, and 655	GTh
Porphyry (or Porphyrius) of Tyre, <i>Life of Plotinus</i> (= <i>Vita Plotini</i>) 16	Porph
<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i>	
(= Pseudo-Hippolytus of Rome, <i>Against Heresies</i> = <i>Elenchos</i>)	
6.37.7–8	VHr
6.42.2	VFra

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ABBREVIATIONS

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

ca.	circa
f	and following line (section) or lines (sections)
lit.	literally
MS	manuscript
MSS	manuscripts
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex (Cairo Coptic Museum)
par.	and parallel(s)
plur.	plural
sing.	singular
+	principal reference

ABBREVIATIONS OF BIBLICAL BOOKS

Ac	Acts of the Apostles
2 Ch	2 Chronicles
1 Co	1 Corinthians
2 Co	2 Corinthians
Col	Colossians
Dn	Daniel
Dt	Deuteronomy
Ep	Ephesians
Ex	Exodus
Ga	Galatians
Gn	Genesis
Heb	Hebrews
Is	Isaiah
Jb	Job
Jg	Judges
Jm	James
Jn	John
1 Jn	1 John
Jos	Joshua

1 K	1 Kings
Lk	Luke
Lv	Leviticus
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
Nb	Numbers
1 P	1 Peter
Ph	Philippians
Pr	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
Rm	Romans
Rv	Revelation
1 S	1 Samuel
1 Th	1 Thessalonians
1 Tm	1 Timothy
2 Tm	2 Timothy

ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES WITH PAGE NUMBERS

BasFrA	619	Basilides. <i>The Octet of Subsistent Entities</i>
BasFrB	621	———. <i>The Uniqueness of the World</i>
BasFrC	623	———. <i>Election Naturally Entails Faith and Virtue</i>
BasFrD	625	———. <i>The State of Virtue</i>
BasFrE	627	———. <i>The Elect Transcend the World</i>
BasFrF	629	———. <i>Reincarnation</i>
BasFrG	631	———. <i>Human Suffering and the Goodness of Providence</i> (<i>Commentaries</i> , 23)
BasFrH	635	———. <i>Forgivable Sins</i>
BJn	25	<i>The Secret Book According to John</i>
BTh	589	<i>The Book of Thomas: The Contender Writing to the Perfect</i>
CH7	657	<i>Hermetic Tractate 7</i>
ClExc	501	Clement of Alexandria. <i>Excerpts from Theodotus</i>
EgG	137	<i>The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit</i> (<i>The Egyptian Gospel</i>)
EpA	243	Epiphanius. <i>On the Archontics</i>
EpG	253	———. <i>On the Gnostics</i>
EpS	237	———. <i>On the Sethians</i>
Fr	186	<i>The Foreigner</i>
FTh	118	<i>First Thought in Three Forms</i>
GJd	62	<i>The Gospel of Judas</i>
GPh	459	<i>The Gospel According to Philip</i>
GTh	555	<i>The Gospel According to Thomas</i>
GTr	308	Valentinus. <i>The Gospel of Truth</i>
HPrl	543	<i>The Hymn of the Pearl (The Hymn of Jude Thomas the Apostle in the Country of the Indians)</i>

IrBas	611	Irenaeus. On Basilides' Myth
IrG	213	———. On the Gnostics
IrPt	341	———. On Ptolemy's Myth
IrSat	209	———. On Saturninos
IrUnid	220	———. On "Other" Gnostic Teachings
IrV	281	———. On Valentinus's Myth
Poim	643	<i>Poimandrēs</i> (Hermetic Tractate 1)
Porph	234	Porphyry. On the Gnostics
PPI	375	<i>A Prayer of Paul the Apostle</i>
PtF	436	Ptolemy. <i>Epistle to Flora</i>
RAd	77	<i>The Revelation of Adam</i>
RR	93	<i>The Reality of the Rulers</i>
3Tb	196	<i>The Three Tablets of Seth</i>
Th	108	<i>The Thunder—Perfect Intellect</i>
TRs	448	<i>Treatise on Resurrection (Epistle to Rheginus)</i>
TrTr	379	<i>The Tripartite Tractate</i>
VFrA	287	Valentinus. The Divine Word Present in the Infant
VFrB	289	———. <i>On the Three Natures</i>
VFrC	291	———. Adam's Faculty of Speech
VFrD	293	———. Adam's Name
VFrE	295	———. Jesus' Digestive System (<i>To Agathopous</i>)
VFrF	297	———. Annihilation of the Realm of Death
VFrG	299	———. The Source of Common Wisdom (<i>On Friends</i>)
VFrH	301	———. The Vision of God (<i>Epistle on Attachments</i>)
VHr	304	———. <i>Summer Harvest</i>
Zs	162	<i>Zōstrianos</i>

ADDITIONAL ANCIENT WORKS

Plato *Ti.* Plato. *Timaeus*

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GNOSTIC
SCRIPTURES

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Part One

CLASSIC
GNOSTIC
SCRIPTURE

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

CLASSIC GNOSTIC SCRIPTURE

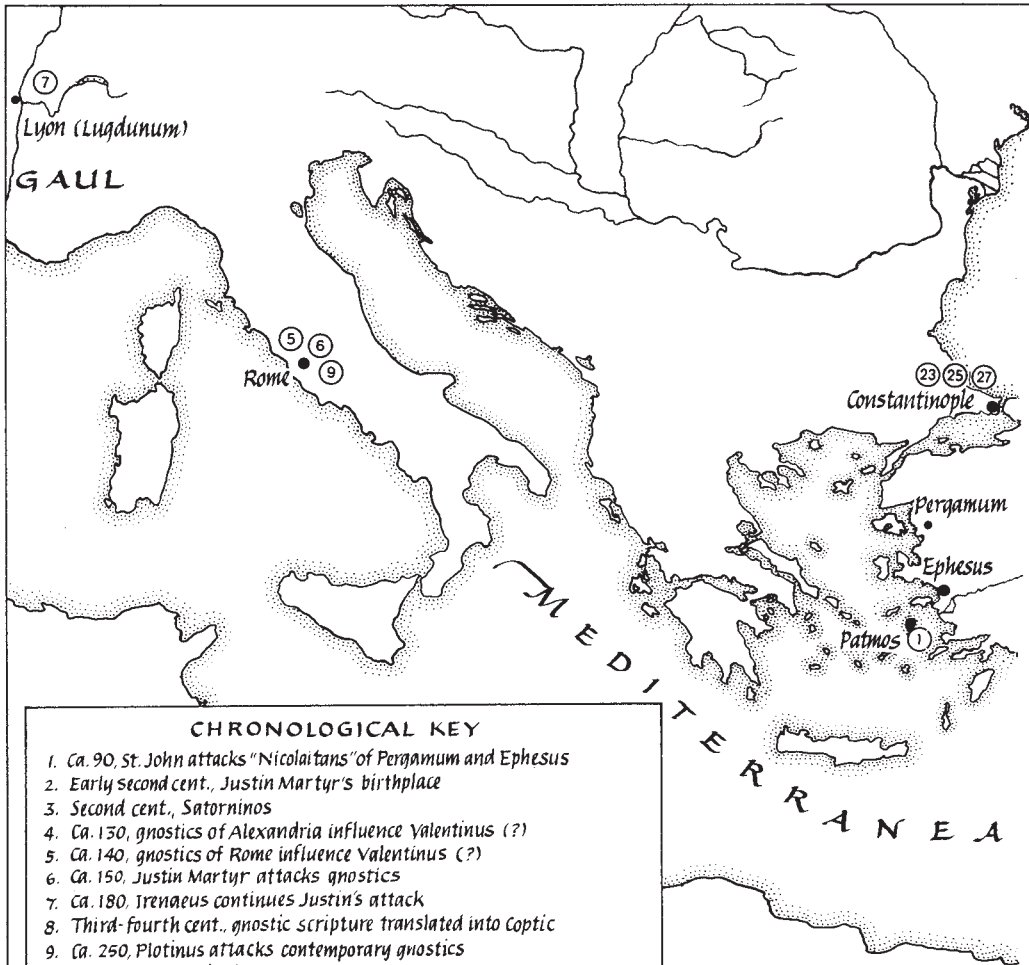
The word “gnostic” has two meanings. One is a broad meaning, denoting all the religious movements represented in this book, and many more besides. The elusive category (“gnosticism”) that corresponds to this broad meaning has always been hard to define.

The other meaning of “gnostic” is narrow and more strictly historical: it is the self-given name of an ancient Christian sect, the *gnōstikoi*, or “gnostics.” Because the ancient sect of the gnostics is relatively early, indisputably gnostic—even lending its name to the broader category—and a historical source of other important movements, it deserves a primary place in any general study of gnostic religion. In this book the word “gnostic” is mainly restricted to the narrow, historical meaning, and Part One is devoted to gnostic works in this classic sense of the word.

THE DATE OF THE GNOSTIC SECT

The gnostics were active in the mid-second century A.D. (see Map 1) and beyond. Greek was the basic language of the sect, as it was of non-gnostic Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism of that period. The earliest surviving reference to the sect is by St. Irenaeus, writing in Lugdunum (modern Lyon, France) about A.D. 180; compare IrG 1.29.1. According to Irenaeus the gnostics were a major influence on the Christian theologian Valentinus. This may have been before Valentinus arrived in Rome to begin his career of teaching, between A.D. 136 and 140 (cf. “Historical Introduction” to Part Two), or not long thereafter.

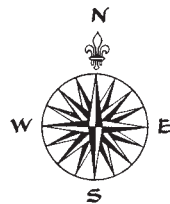
How much older might the sect actually be? There seems to be no direct answer to this question. However, an indirect answer might be obtained by considering the philosophical character of classic gnostic scripture within the context of Greek philosophy. In such a context, the characteristic gnostic myth of creation turns out to resemble philosophical mythic speculation already current in the time of Jesus. The formulation of the gnostic myth ultimately drew on Platonist interpretations of the myth of creation in Plato’s *Timaeus*, as combined with the book of Genesis. Speculation of this kind—from the period of “Middle



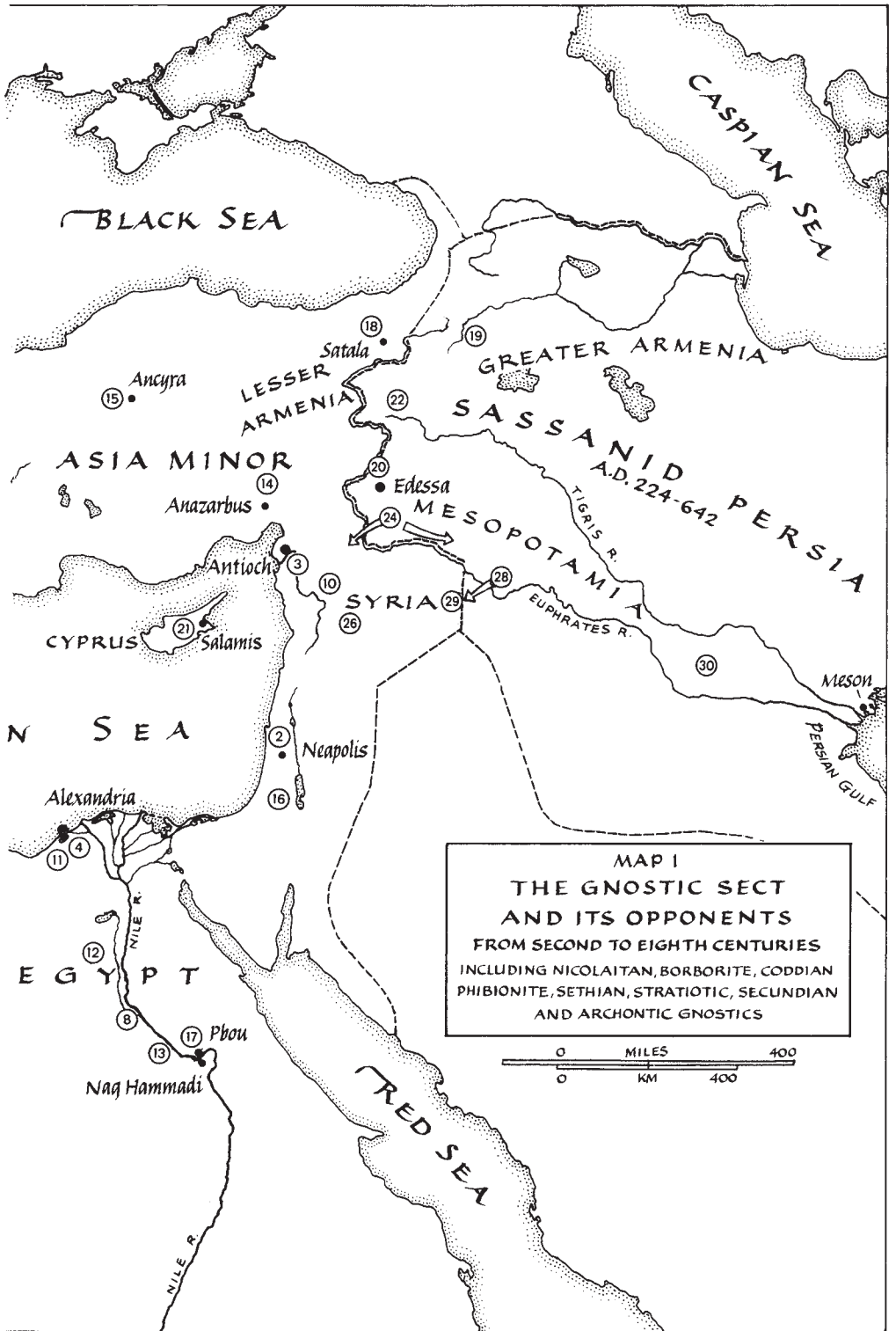
CHRONOLOGICAL KEY

1. Ca. 90, St. John attacks "Nicolaitans" of Pergamum and Ephesus
2. Early second cent., Justin Martyr's birthplace
3. Second cent., Saturninos
4. Ca. 150, gnostics of Alexandria influence Valentinus (?)
5. Ca. 140, gnostics of Rome influence Valentinus (?)
6. Ca. 150, Justin Martyr attacks gnostics
7. Ca. 180, Irenaeus continues Justin's attack
8. Third-fourth cent., gnostic scripture translated into Coptic
9. Ca. 250, Plotinus attacks contemporary gnostics
10. Ca. 330-340, Borborites and Coddians
11. Ca. 330-340, eighty gnostics expelled
12. Ca. 330-340, gnostic women entice Epiphanius; Borborites, Phibionites, Sethians, and Stratiotics active
13. Ca. 330-340, Secundians
14. Ca. 340, Aetius the Arian debates a Borborite
15. Ca. 350, Borborites
16. Ca. 350, Archontics (see also map 3)
17. Ca. 350, gnostic scripture manuscripts in Coptic buried near Pbou
18. Ca. 360, Eutaktos converts Armenian nobility to Archontic Christianity
19. Ca. 360, Archontic missionaries arrive from Satala
20. Ca. 363, Borborites
21. Ca. 375, Bp. Epiphanius publishes an exposé of gnostic Christianity
22. Ca. 400, expulsion of Borborites by Bp. Mesrob
23. 406-425, Borborites attend orthodox services
24. 412-436, Borborites expelled by Bp. Rabbula
25. May 30, 428, Borborites forbidden by law to build churches
26. Ca. 480, Borborite baptism invalidated by orthodox bishops
27. 531, legal testimony of Borborites held invalid
28. 565-578, Borborites flee persecution by King Chosroes I
29. Ca. 590, Persian Borborite refugees occupy abandoned monasteries
30. Seventh-eighth cent., Mandaean sect opposes Borborites

LIBYA



Authority: S. Gerö (1966)
After van der Meer (1966)



MAP I
THE GNOSTIC SECT
AND ITS OPPONENTS
FROM SECOND TO EIGHTH CENTURIES
 INCLUDING NICOLAITAN, BORBORITE, CODDIAN
 PHIBIONITE, SETHIAN, STRATIOTIC, SECUNDIAN
 AND ARCHONTIC GNOSTICS



Platonism”—was popular with learned Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria at the time of Philo Judaeus (ca. 30 B.C.—ca. A.D. 45). Such speculation was also fashionable in pagan philosophical circles of the first and second centuries A.D., and beyond. Since the gnostic myth seems to presuppose this speculative tradition, it *might* be as old as Philo Judaeus. Yet nothing proves that it *must* be so old. Scholars are therefore unable to say exactly how much older than Irenaeus (A.D. ca. 180) the gnostic sect actually must be.

Gnostics continued to flourish in the third and fourth centuries A.D. (cf. Porph, EpS, EpA, EpG). But in A.D. 381, legislation of the emperor Theodosius I officially recognized a single branch of Christianity as catholic orthodoxy in the Roman empire and opened the way for sanctions and violence against the “heretics,” who then included gnostics. Thereafter, gnostics are mainly heard of in Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, with references to them continuing to crop up in medieval sources (see Map 2). Whether all such medieval sources are based on actual encounters with living members of the sect is not entirely clear. To a great extent, gnostic Christianity may have already been absorbed by the Valentinian church (see Parts Two and Three), and after A.D. 250 by the Manichaean world religion, which showed certain resemblances to the Gnostics (cf. EpG).

By the middle of the fourth century, gnostic Christianity (apart from its Valentinian branch) was known by several different names, perhaps indicating that it had split into denominations: “Archontics” (from *arkhōn*, “heavenly ruler”), “Sethians,” “Barbēlites,” etc.; see EpG 25.2.1, 26.3.7. In recent scholarship gnostic Christianity is often called “Sethian Gnosticism” because of its particular interest in Seth, son of Adam, as ancestor and prototype of the individual gnostic. Indeed, there is no point in arguing too much over which name should be used today.

THE NAME “GNOSTIC”

The original self-designation of the sect—*gnōstikos*, “gnostic”—was a very striking name; it must have sounded new and slightly odd to Greek speakers of the second century A.D. As a mere word, the Greek term *gnōstikos* goes back as far as the time of Plato. It was a rare technical word with philosophical overtones; it meant something like “leading to knowledge” or “capable of attaining knowledge.” In normal usage the term was never applied to human beings; that is to say, normally a *person* would not be called “gnostic.” Rather, the word “gnostic” regularly referred to disciplines of study, human faculties, capacities, and the like. Thus, for example, the Platonist philosopher Plutarch could write, “Human souls have a faculty that is *gnōstikos* (leads to knowledge) of visible things.”

So when a social group in the early second century A.D. began to call itself *gnōstikoi*, or “gnostics,” this usage would have sounded like odd sectarian jargon—as though a modern club began to call itself the Perceptives or the Epistemologicals.

THE MEANING OF GNŌSIS

Gnostic scripture describes the salvation of the individual by the Greek word *gnōsis*, and the self-given name of the “gnostic” sect refers to their ability to attain *gnōsis*. The meaning of *gnōsis* is easy to grasp. Unlike its odd derivative *gnōstikos*, the word *gnōsis* was an ordinary part of Greek, both in daily life and in religion (including Judaism and Christianity). The basic translation of *gnōsis* is “knowledge” or “(act of) knowing.” But the ancient Greek language could easily differentiate between two kinds of knowledge (a distinction that French, for example, also makes with ease).

One kind is propositional knowing—the knowledge *that* something is the case (“I know that Athens is in Greece”). Greek has several words for this kind of knowing—for example, *eidenai* (French *savoir*).

The other kind of knowing is personal acquaintance with an object, often a person (“I know Athens well”; “I have known Susan for many years”). In Greek the word for this is *gignōskein* (French *connaître*),¹ and in English one can call this kind of knowledge “acquaintance.” The corresponding Greek noun is *gnōsis*. If, for example, two people have been introduced to one another, each one can claim to have *gnōsis* or acquaintance of the other. If one is introduced to god, one has *gnōsis* of god. The ancient gnostics described salvation as a kind of *gnōsis* or acquaintance, and the ultimate object of that acquaintance was nothing less than god.

Readers should note that in this book the English word “acquaintance” always translates *gnōsis* or its equivalent in Coptic or Latin.

SECTARIAN FEATURES IN GNOSTIC LITERATURE

Social information about the gnostics is very hard to come by. Most of the ancient gnostic literature consists of “pseudepigrapha”—that is, works attributed to the authority of a respected figure of the past such as Adam, Seth, or John the apostle; this literary convention does not leave much room for direct description of sectarian activities. The other records are brief and biased descriptions of gnostic teaching and practice left by Christian opponents; these give much less data than a historian and sociologist needs.

Nevertheless, an observer can find in gnostic scripture certain features that are typically sectarian, thus helping to confirm the cohesiveness of the gnostics as a group. First, a *complex and distinctive myth of origins* runs throughout the surviving records. It is the distinguishing mark of gnostic literature; without it, classic gnostic scripture could not be recognized. Second, this myth expresses a *strong sense of group identity*, which is backed up both by genealogies and by psychological analysis of humanity, with the conclusion that there are two

1. Ordinary language is not a rigid system, of course, and thus in natural usage the distinction between the two kinds of knowledge is sometimes blurred.



MAP 2
**DATED EVIDENCE
 FOR GNOSTICS AND VALENTINIANS
 TO THE EIGHTH CENTURY**

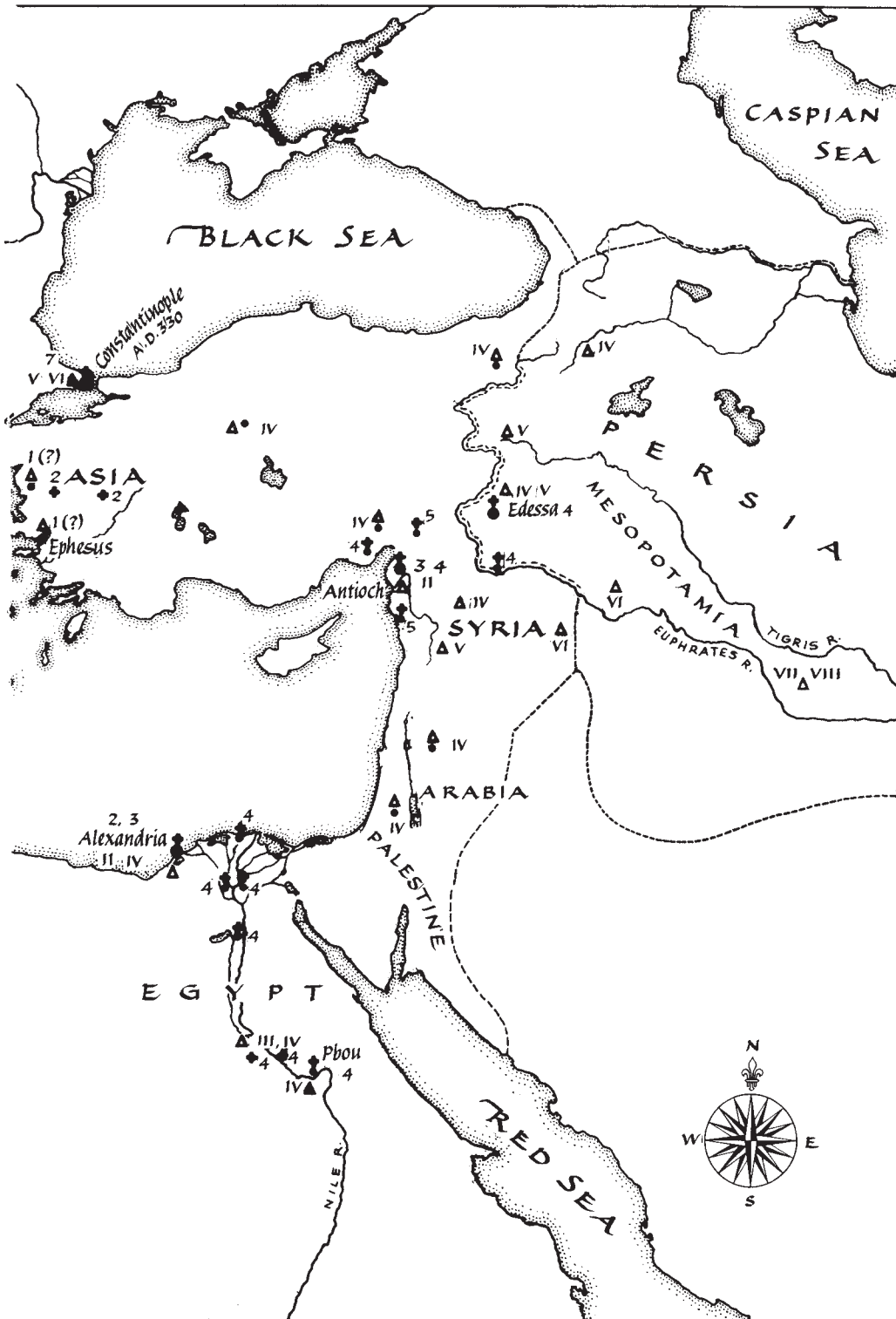
Centuries
 (1-VIII) Gnostics
 (2-7) Valentiniains

▲ Gnostics
 ● Valentiniains ◆

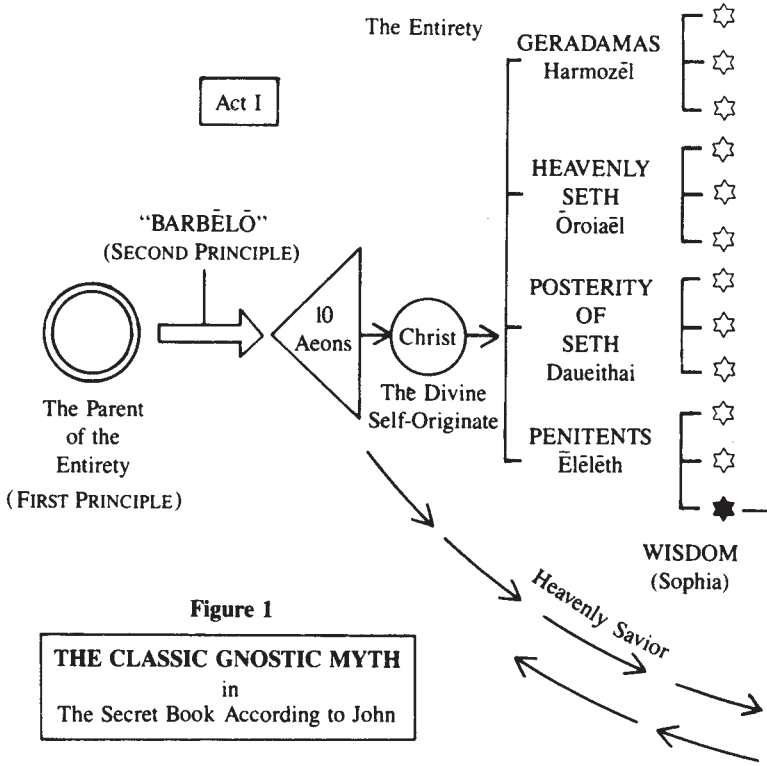


The surviving evidence is incomplete

After van der Meer (1966)



THE REALM OF LIGHT

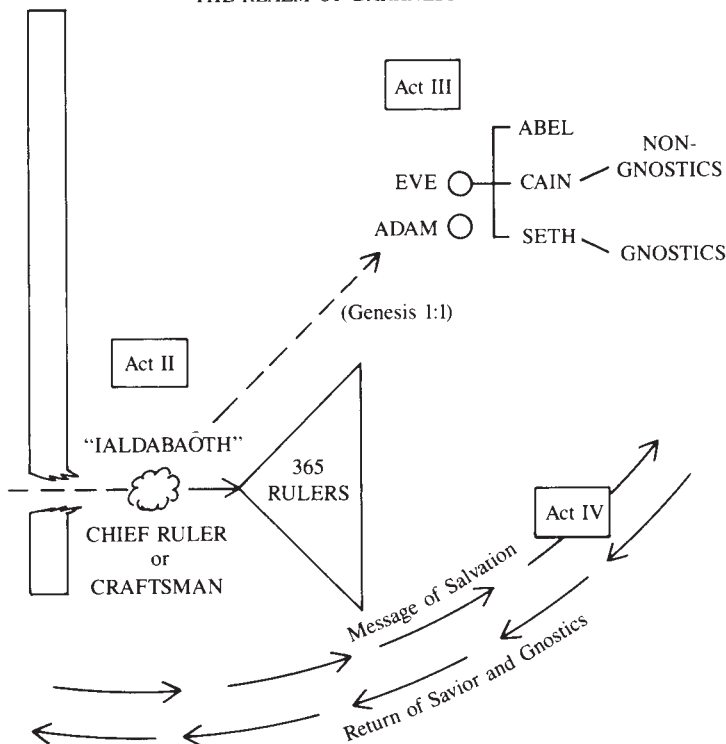


essential types of human being, gnostic and non-gnostic. Along with this goes overt hostility to the non-gnostic population, and the prediction of their ultimate damnation and destruction. Third, the records often use a *special jargon or in-group language*, much of it not found in other branches of ancient Christianity. Fourth, there are references to a *ritual* of baptism. For non-gnostic Christians, baptism marked induction into the religion; the gnostic meaning of baptism may have been the same. Somehow associated are the sacramental “five seals” and their heavenly prototype (EgG); their use is never described.

What is normally excluded by the pseudepigraphic convention of gnostic scripture is information about the organization or daily life of the sect.

It must also be stressed that, despite the distinctive sectarian features mentioned above, gnostics had a great deal in common with non-gnostic Christians, including some of the same scripture, use of broadly Christian in-group language, certain shared theological traditions, and an ascetic life style (though here EpG presents evidence to the contrary). Both the gnostic sect and other branches of early Christianity created new scriptures and attributed them to respected religious figures of the past.

THE REALM OF DARKNESS



THE GNOSTIC MYTH

Gnostic myth is the literary creation of theological poets—an elaborate theological symbolic poem, and not the spontaneous product of a tribe or culture. “Philosophical myth” of this kind was generally fashionable in the second century A.D., following a revival of interest in Plato’s mythic tale of creation, the *Timaeus*, in the previous two centuries.

The mythic drama unfolds in four acts (see Fig. 1):

- Act I. The expansion of a solitary first principle (god) into a full non-physical (spiritual) universe
- Act II. Creation of the material universe, including stars, planets, earth, and hell
- Act III. Creation of Adam, Eve, and their children
- Act IV. Subsequent history of the human race

Running throughout this drama (sometimes just below the surface) is a subplot of theft, loss, and ultimate recovery of a part of the divine. The subplot also expresses itself in the four acts, as follows:

- Act I. Expansion of divine power (“the parent of the entirety”) to fill the spiritual universe
- Act II. Theft and loss of some of that power into the hands of a nonspiritual being (“Ialdabaōth”)
- Act III. Deception of the thief, leading to transfer of the power to a part of humanity (the “gnostics”)
- Act IV. Gradual recovery by the divine of the missing power as gnostic souls are summoned by a savior and return to god

From the divine perspective, therefore, the evolution of this subplot entails (i) fullness or “entirety,” (ii) lack (of the stolen power), and (iii) eventual fulfillment of the lack.

No single complete telling of the gnostic myth seems to have survived, though one may be reflected in *The Secret Book According to John* (BJn) and *The Egyptian Gospel*, and by St. Irenaeus’s account of Satorninos (IrSat). But the surviving forms of the myth all show great variation in detail and structure.

ACT I: THE EMANATION OF THE SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE

At the beginning of the myth is the perfect, ultimate, and omnipotent divine source, or “first principle,” of all further existence; it is ineffable and beyond description. The characterization of this divine source in gnostic myth corresponds to philosophical talk about god found in Platonism of the second century A.D. (and before).²

For unfathomable reasons, according to the myth, this perfect omnipotent divine source emits a hypostasis, or second being, and through successive phases

2. One need only compare the discourse about the “parent of the entirety” in BJn 2:26–4:24f with an excerpt from a second-century textbook of Platonist philosophy by a certain Albinus, also known as Alcinous: “Since the ultimate intellect [that is, the divine source] is supremely beautiful, it must necessarily have a supremely beautiful object of intellection. But there is nothing more beautiful than the ultimate intellect itself. Therefore it will eternally think about itself and its own thoughts, and this activity constitutes its ideal form.

“Now, the first god is everlasting, ineffable, self-perfect, i.e. without need, eterno-perfect, i.e. ever perfect, complete, i.e. in every way perfect: deity, essentiality, truth, proportion, goodness. I do not speak as though distinguishing these things (as aspects of it), but rather as of one being conceived of in all kinds of ways. And it is “good,” because it acts beneficently toward all things to the full extent, acting as cause of all goodness; “beautiful,” because by its very nature it is perfect and proportional; “truth,” because it is the source of all truth, just as the sun is the source of all light; “parent,” in being the cause of all things and because it orients the celestial intellect and the soul of the universe in an orderly relationship to itself and to its own intellections. . . .

“It is ineffable and comprehensible by intellect alone, as stated, since it is neither a genus nor a species nor a variety. Indeed, it does not have any attributes: it is neither evil (it is impious to say so), nor good (for this would be by participation in something, namely, goodness), nor indifferent (for this does not accord with our thought of it); neither something with a quality . . . nor something without any quality . . . neither a part of something, nor a whole having various parts . . . it neither moves nor is moved. . . . Just as the sun stands in relation to seeing and to the things seen—not itself being vision, but rather providing the seeing for the former and the being-seen for the latter—just so, the ultimate intellect stands in relation to intellection within the soul and to the things thought about. . . .”

of emission produces a carefully structured series of other beings. These emanations are called in Greek *aiones* (“aeons”), meaning “realms,” “eternities,” “ages,” or “eternal realms”; the aeons are at once places, extents of time, and abstractions (with names such as “forethought,” “incorruptibility,” “eternal life,” etc.). The last of the aeons is “wisdom” (Sophia).

In such a story of creation the classic problem is why, from a perfect original source (a “first principle”), there should ever need to emanate a second, less perfect being (a “second principle”) and thence a plenitude of forms. No gnostic text attempts a solution of this problem, although *The Secret Book According to John* provides three symbolic models showing how (though not why) such an evolution came about; these, too, are typical of second-century Platonism.

First, it is claimed, the first principle is a solitary *intellect*, whose only function is to think and whose only possible object of thought is itself, since it alone exists. But its act of thinking is objectified, and this thinking is the second principle.

Again, the first principle is a solitary *eye*, floating in a luminous reflective medium. Its only function is to look, and all it has to see is itself. The reflection that it sees, however, is the second principle.

Finally, the first principle is a *spring of water* that flows perpetually. Its only function is to overflow, and that overflow is the second principle.

The second principle is called by the non-Greek name Barbēlō or occasionally (EpG 26.10.10) Barbērō. In antiquity, obscure mythic names like Barbēlō were sometimes invented ad hoc by theological writers rather than being produced by natural language; in some cases, therefore, ancient theological readers were expected to guess their meaning. Such a process is of course difficult to trace without precise identification of the linguistic milieu in which the text was first published. But if that milieu was Egyptian, the name “Barbērō” or “Barbēlō” might have called to mind the native words for “emission, projectile” and “great,”³ yielding a pseudo-word meaning “the great emission”—an apt description of the Barbēlō’s relation to the first principle.

Barbēlō is a stock character who occurs in various versions of the gnostic myth. There are other stock characters as well: especially important among these are *the anointed* (“Christ”), a metaphysical being that in some versions descends to unite with Jesus of Nazareth; and *the four luminaries* Harmozēl, Ōroiaēl, Dauethai, and Ēlēlēth. Since they are aeons, the luminaries are both eternal realms and actors. As realms, they are the dwelling places of four archetypes: *Geradamas* (or *Adamas*), the heavenly Adam; *Seth*, heavenly prototype of Adam’s son; the heavenly *posterity of Seth*, prototypes of the gnostic church on earth; and a *fourth group*, whose identity varies from tale to tale. Some scholars also hold that the gnostic myth divides human history into four great epochs, corresponding to the four luminaries and their resident archetypes. According to one formulation of this theory, the first three epochs are antediluvian (the first, the second, and the third to ninth generations of humankind), while the

3. Cf. Coptic *berbir*, “projectile, lance” (a grammatically feminine noun, surviving only in the northern, or Bohairic, dialect), presumably from Egyptian *brbr* or *b3b3*; and *-ō*, “great.” The name might also have recalled Coptic *berber*, “boiling over, overflow” (a masculine noun).

fourth (the epoch of Ēlēlēth) begins with the time of Noah (cf. RR 92:3f) and extends to the end of the material universe. A parallel conception of history has been proposed in the Zoroastrian religion of Persia.

ACT II: THE CREATION OF THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE

After the emission of the spiritual universe has been completed, in order for creation to continue beyond the limit of spiritual existence the activity of a “craftsman”⁴ or “maker” of the world is introduced; his name is Ialdabaōth. This part of the myth is clearly modeled on Plato’s myth of creation, found in the *Timaeus*. Ialdabaōth the craftsman makes a universe out of matter, copying patterns provided by the spiritual universe. It is an elaborate structure of material aeons (realms), that is, planets, stars, and heavenly spheres, populated by the craftsman’s offspring, which are called “rulers,” “authorities,” “powers,” “demons,” “angels,” etc.

Plato’s *Timaeus* had already exerted an influence on Hellenistic Jewish philosophy when Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (ca. 30 B.C.–ca. A.D. 45) and his colleagues tried to show that the *Timaeus* said substantially the same thing as the opening chapters of Genesis; this can be seen in Philo’s treatise *On the Creation of the World*. Such accomplishments may have paved the way for gnostic Christian theologians, since early Christianity took many of its cues from Hellenistic Judaism. The concept of an intermediate “craftsman” can also be seen, at some remove from Plato, in the Christian theology of the Logos, or Word: “The Word . . . was in the beginning with god; all things were made through it” (Jn 1:1–3).

In Plato’s *Timaeus*, each of the cosmic craftsman’s creations is a copy of some perfect pattern that exists in the spiritual realm. All the copies are as good as they possibly can be, given the resistance of the working material, for the craftsman works to the very best of his ability. But in contrast, Ialdabaōth, the gnostic craftsman of the world—though not exactly a principle of pure evil—is morally ambivalent, for though he loves the good he is fatally flawed by ignorance and self-centeredness. Thus, for example, he recognizes the goodness of the patterns in the spiritual realm and feels a natural attraction toward them; but this attraction is also experienced as an ignorant, selfish, erotic lust to possess the divine, even to rape it (cf. RR 89:18f). Ialdabaōth and his fellow heavenly “rulers” are possessive and arrogant and try to dominate all human affairs; their desire for domination leads them to create human sexual lust and the bond of destiny (control by the stars), by which they intend to enslave humanity.

Why should Ialdabaōth, the creator of our world, be so fatally imperfect? The cause of his imperfection in the myth was a point of continuing speculation

4. “Craftsman,” “demiurge” (Greek *dēmiourgos*), is Plato’s metaphorical term for the maker of the universe in his mythic account of the world’s creation entitled *Timaeus*. Educated readers of gnostic scripture in the second and third centuries A.D. would surely have compared Ialdabaōth with the craftsman of the *Timaeus*.

and difficulty, and the gnostics explained it in various ways. In most accounts this imperfection is paralleled by a previous lustful act or emotion on the part of the creator's mother, wisdom, the lowest aeon in the spiritual universe. At the very least, then, Ialdabaōth's lustful selfishness is a family trait, inherited from his mother.

The gnostics' craftsman or cosmic creator is thus distinct from god the ultimate first principle, just as Plato's craftsman is an intermediate being between the highest principle and our world. Such a distinction had already been made both by Philo Judaeus and in the Gospel of John, where "god the father" (the first principle), the god of Israel, is distinguished from his offspring the "only begotten son," or Logos, or Word, on the one hand, and from ourselves on the other. But, unlike the author of the Gospel of John, the gnostics did not identify the god of Israel with the first principle. Rather, the god of Israel was equated either with Ialdabaōth the imperfect craftsman, or with Ialdabaōth's first-born offspring, Sabaōth.

ACT III: THE CREATION OF ADAM, EVE, AND THEIR CHILDREN

The rest of the myth concerns the efforts of wisdom, aided by higher aeons of the spiritual universe, to regain the stolen power. Although Ialdabaōth is lured into surrendering it, in the process Adam and then a human race are created; and the stolen power becomes dispersed in successive generations, whom Ialdabaōth's offspring enslave by creating destiny and a malevolent spirit of deception. The plot of this act of the drama closely follows Genesis 1–4, but with the extensive reinterpretations necessary to make the acts of the creator into actions of an imperfect craftsman. From Seth springs a race of people in whom the dispersed power resides to this day: these are the gnostics, and to the extent that the myth concerns these people it is a myth of their origins.

ACT IV: THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE

In gnostic eyes the final act of the drama is still in progress. A heavenly savior has been sent to "awaken" gnostic humanity, to give them acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with themselves and god, to free their souls from destiny and from bondage to the material body, and to teach them how to escape the influence of the malevolent rulers. To counteract the evil spirit of these rulers, a good spirit has been bestowed upon the gnostics. According as each soul responds and gains acquaintance, it either escapes and returns to god or becomes reincarnate in another body; a special "eternal punishment" is reserved for apostates from the sect.

Some versions of this final act of the myth are restricted to general theological issues and speak of the final advent of a savior without historical details. Others

dwell on a futuristic description of the final destruction of the evil rulers and of death, thus emphasizing the result of the savior's advent. Still other versions refer to events in biblical history that non-gnostic Christianity saw as parts of the background of the incarnation (Noah and the flood, genealogies of humankind, the prophets of Israel, John the Baptist) and go on to speak of Jesus of Nazareth, his crucifixion, his resurrection, and his post-resurrection teachings, or his ascension. Jesus' special role in these versions results from his being the incarnation of a preexistent Christ, a preexistent Word, a preexistent Seth, or Barbēlō.

GNOSTIC IN-GROUP LANGUAGE (RELIGIOUS JARGON)

Any modern reader, no matter how well informed, will be struck by the obscurity of many names and phrases that occur in the gnostic myth. For the most part, this obscurity is not a mark of our distance from classical antiquity but rather a function of the esoteric character of gnostic life in a closed, and sometimes persecuted, religious sect that was defiantly sure of its superiority to the rest of humanity.

In their mythic tales *the gnostics* do not refer to themselves, their ancestors, or their spiritual prototypes as "gnostics." Instead they are "the offspring (seed, posterity, race) of Seth" or "the offspring of the light"; "the perfect race," "the undominated race," or "the immovable race"; or, even more obscurely, "Those People."

Their true home, *the spiritual universe*, is "the light," "the fullness," their "root." It is populated by "aeons," also known as "eternals," "great eternals," "great eternal aeons," "incorruptible beings," or "immortals" (all of which are equivalent terms). The entire system of the aeons that are lower than the second principle is "the entirety," or, more obscurely, "all these," i.e. "all these spiritual beings." This system is a graded hierarchy of beings, each step of which is a "shadow" or image of the one above it.

Entities in the spiritual universe are identified by the epithets "eternal," "great," "living," "luminous," "male," "masculine," or, more obscurely, by the words "That" (plural "Those") and "other." The epithet "other" ("foreign," "alien") is based on Gn 4:25 (in Greek) describing the birth of Seth, "God has raised up to me some *other* seed," while the mystifying "That" had already been used by esoteric circles (Pythagoreans) in Greek philosophy.

There is no fixed terminology for describing *non-gnostic humanity*, but the *demonic heavenly enemies* of the gnostics are called by traditional names—"rulers," "powers," "authorities," "brigands"—most of which, incidentally, are also known from the letters in the New Testament written by Paul or attributed to Paul. The *material universe* is "the darkness," just as the spiritual universe is "the light." In the language of one gnostic text (RR 94:8), the two domains are divided from one another by a "veil."

Gnostic description of the components of the human being is simple and depends on common Platonizing clichés. The body is a "bond," "bondage," "fet-

ter,” or “prison” of the soul. The true person is the soul, and the body is merely a “garment” that we must “put on” and “wear”; compared to the vitality of the soul, the body is a “corpse.” The realm of matter, to which the body belongs and to which it will return, is “shadow,” a “cave,” a realm of “sleep.” It is “female” and “femininity”—for, according to a philosophical cliché, shape-giving form is called in Greek “male,” while passive constituent matter is “female.” What distinguishes the saved human being from the non-saved is the presence and activity of the good spirit (“holy spirit,” “spirit of life”) and the saved person’s renunciation of deceptions held out by the rulers’ “counterfeit spirit.” The mark of this renunciation is a life of asceticism and contemplation. The capacity for *gnōsis* and salvation within a gnostic is a function of the inherited “power” or “glory” transmitted by the gnostic “race”—nothing less than a fragment of the “power” that the craftsman Ialdabaōth stole from his mother, wisdom, at the moment of his birth. It is not by accident that “power” and “glory” are also descriptions of Barbēlō, the second principle, for they are epithets that characterize the entire spiritual universe so far as it can be known or described.

NAMES OF CHARACTERS IN THE Gnostic MYTH

Apart from this web of sectarian language, gnostic scripture is shot through with the obscure names of stock mythic characters—Barbēlō, Geradamas or Adamas, “luminaries,” Ialdabaōth, etc. In the introduction to each individual work, such of these names as occur are catalogued; they are also commented on in the annotations.

The spelling of these mythic names in ancient manuscripts shows considerable variation—not only from work to work, but even from place to place within one work. This variation has been retained in the English translation. However, it has no obvious significance.

Thus: “Adamas,” “Adama,” “Geradamas”; “Dauethai,” “Dauethe”; “Elōaios,” “Elōaio”; “Ialdabaōth,” “Ialtabaōth,” “Aldabaōth”; “Iōēl,” “louēl”; “Norea,” “Norria”; “Oroiaēl,” “Ōroiaēl,” and so on. Instances of such variation will be obvious to the reader who knows to expect them.

GNOSTIC BAPTISM

Like other Christians, the gnostics laid great stress on the importance of baptism and made strong use of baptismal rhetoric when speaking of salvation. To judge from the texts, gnostic baptism marked a decisive step in the spiritual life of the gnostic, involving renunciation, instruction, learning, and initiation into a new “kinship” and a new state of life. Reception of gnostic baptism was closely associated with reception of *gnōsis* and was believed to enable the gnostic to overcome death.

Various stages of a gnostic baptismal ceremony are enumerated in FTh: the candidate strips off “darkness,” puts on a robe of light, is washed in the waters

of life, receives a throne of glory and is glorified with glory of “the kinship,” and finally is raised to “the luminous place of . . . kinship.” The baptized is also said in EgG to put on the name of Jesus, and according to BJn *gnōsis* is received when the savior seals the candidate with “the light of the water of the five seals.” These five seals are mentioned in many passages of gnostic scripture as having a very intimate connection with *gnōsis*, but what they consist of is never clearly explained. EgG concludes with a lengthy, ecstatic baptismal invocation presumably spoken by a recipient of gnostic baptism.

Yet despite the insistence on baptism in gnostic scripture, the references to it are phrased in exaggerated poetic language, always giving the impression that the ceremony takes place not on earth, but only in the spiritual realm. For example, various aeons known from gnostic myth take a leading role in the ceremony; the spiritual baptismal water is even mythically personified, as are “the five seals.” It may seriously be asked, then, whether such references to baptism are not mere metaphor, a mystical description of salvation by acquaintance (such an equation is explicitly made at the end of RAd). Was there also a physical gnostic rite of baptism, and if so was it a once-for-all initiation into the new kinship of the gnostic church or a repeatable act of mystical enlightenment? What was its relation, if any, to that baptism already received by members of the non-gnostic church who then converted to gnostic Christianity? No answer to these questions is given by the scriptures themselves, apart from silence. But St. Epiphanius, a hostile—and not fully reliable—fourth-century observer (EpA), reports that the Archontics, a subdivision of the gnostics, “curse and reject [non-gnostic] baptism, even though there are some among them who have already been baptized [as orthodox Christians]” because baptism is “alien and has been established in the name of Sabaōth,” that is, the god of Israel, who according to the Archontics is the son of Satan. Furthermore, according to St. Epiphanius, the Archontics believe that when the soul is saved it “gets *gnōsis* and flees baptism of the [non-gnostic] church.”

THE CHRONOLOGY OF Gnostic SCRIPTURE

In the absence of any historical information about the authors of the various works of gnostic scripture and of any mention of historical facts in the texts themselves, nothing very precise can be said about the date of their composition.

The latest possible dates are as follows. Versions of *The Secret Book According to John* and *The Gospel of Judas* seem to be already known and summarized by St. Irenaeus (IrG and IrUnid), writing about A.D. 180. *Zōstrianos* and *The Foreigner* are mentioned by Porphyry (Porph) as being among the works brought to Plotinus’s attention about A.D. 250. It is worth noting that four other works show a striking similarity to these two in philosophical and mythic content: EgG, RAd, 3Tb, and FTh. The remaining works cannot in any case be later than the date of the Coptic manuscripts in which they are copied, roughly A.D. 350, and time must also be subtracted to allow for their prior translation from the original Greek into Coptic.

The *earliest possible dates* of any of the gnostic works, at least in their present form, are limited only by two factors. First, none of them (except possibly GJd, RAd, and Th) can be earlier than the first serious efforts of Christian theologians to come to grips with Platonic philosophical myth, assuming that the gnostic myth emerged from Christianity. Second, none of them (except GJd, RAd, and Th, which are not philosophical in character) seems to presuppose philosophical speculation more advanced than Plotinus or less advanced than Philo Judaeus, so they probably fall not too far outside the chronological framework of those two Platonists' careers, ca. 10 B.C. to A.D. 270. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the chronological sequence of these texts must correspond to their degree of philosophical elaboration in a spectrum from Philo to Plotinus.

In fact, it is reasonable to guess that the dates of composition of the gnostic works in Part One extend over a long period of time. Some of them probably date from before the evolution of Valentinianism (A.D. ca. 140), described in Parts Two and Three of *The Gnostic Scriptures*, and others from after that time. Later gnostic works might even be influenced by Valentinian ideas.

GNOSTIC SCRIPTURE WITHOUT DISTINCTIVE CHRISTIAN FEATURES

Distinctively Christian features appear both in classic gnostic scripture and in the ancient summaries about the gnostics, making it undeniable that the gnostics were a sect or movement of Christianity; and in the discussion above they have been considered only in this aspect.

In a fair number of gnostic works, however, distinctive Christian features are completely absent (see Table 3). Their absence has caused many scholars to raise the question whether the gnostics might have first, or also, existed as a non-Christian movement or sect.

TABLE 3 Distinctive Christian and Platonist Features in the Gnostic Scriptures

	<i>Distinctly Christian</i>	<i>Distinctly Platonist</i>		<i>Distinctly Christian</i>	<i>Distinctly Platonist</i>
BJn	X	X	3Tb		X
GJd	X		IrSat	X	X
RAd	X(?)		IrG	X	X
RR	X	X	IrUnid	X	
Th			Porph	X	(X)
FTh	X	X	EpS	X	
EgG	X	X	EpA	X	
Zs		X	EpG	X	
Fr		X			

How significant is the absence of Christian features in these works? In answering this question, it is important to remember that a sect or religion is a social group, and that its members are people, not texts or ideas. In this primary sense, it is not a written work that is "Christian" or "gnostic," but rather the people who

produce and use it. Ancient Christians certainly made use of writings that contained no explicit reference to Jesus Christ or to other distinctive marks of their own religion; such writings even formed a central part of Christian scripture—for example, the book of Genesis and other Old Testament books. Throughout their history, Christians have not thought it strange to create and use literature that lacked such features. The question is whether early Christians would have written such literary works with the intention of adding them to Christian scripture. If the answer is yes for certain gnostic works, these would be very unusual cases in the history of ancient Christian literature. Yet the possibility seems hard to exclude, especially since one item on the gnostic agenda was the deliberate balancing of Genesis by a rival body of myth (cf. BJN 13:18f, 22:23f, etc.). Scholarship has therefore been hesitant to regard these works as conclusive evidence of an extra-Christian, or even pre-Christian, branch of the gnostic movement.

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THE SECRET BOOK ACCORDING TO JOHN

IN THE LONG VERSION

(BJn)

CONTENTS

The Secret Book According to John (“Apocryphon of John”) contains one of the most classic narrations of the gnostic myth.¹ After starting out with a philosophical description of god as the source of all being (2:26f), the gnostic author proceeds to describe the structure of the divine world in its glorious complexity (4:26–9:24f) telling, as it were, “what happened *before* Genesis 1:1.” After this weighty prelude, the events of the Genesis story are retold from a gnostic perspective (starting at BJn 12:33f). The story finally ends with the gnostic savior’s exhortation of the human race to “awaken” and be saved (30:11f).

Any reader who came upon BJn unprepared would surely have been puzzled by many of its obscurities. The web of highly structured emanations, for instance, that enfold the godhead (see Fig. 1 and “Mythic Characters” below) forms a thick and almost inscrutable barrier between the human world and god, shutting off god from humanity by alienating human beings from the knowledge of the divine. The creator of the material world, though clearly identified with the figure called “god” in Gn 1:1, turns out to be not true god but Satan (here called “Ialdabaōth” and “Saklas,” 10:19f, 11:15f). Furthermore, the creation of Adam is made out to be more complicated than Genesis says, for, following Alexandrian Jewish teaching, the gnostic author tells of a twofold creation of Adam—first an “animate” Adam made only of soul, though having all the anatomical parts (15:1f–20:27f); and second, a material shell to encase him (20:28f).

The detailed retelling of Genesis stops with the birth of Seth (cf. Gn 4:25); after this, the subsequent history of the human race is discussed only in general terms, within the context of a theological discourse on the activity of the holy spirit. Nothing is said about the history of Israel, nor about Jesus as an incarnation of the preexistent Christ (except in the last sentence of the work and by implication in the opening). Nevertheless, Christ (“the anointed”) is an important character of the myth, making BJn an example of a Christian work that discusses the preexistent Christ but not the incarnation.

1. For a more detailed discussion of the gnostic myth, see the “Historical Introduction” to Part One and cf. Fig. 1.

The narration of the gnostic myth in BJn is encapsulated within a frame story which seems to imply that the content of the work is a post-resurrection teaching of Jesus. This would agree with the gnostic belief that after his resurrection Jesus remained on earth for eighteen months and taught “the plain truth” (IrUnid 1.30.14). Yet in terms of the gnostic myth the identity of the revealer is not Jesus but Barbēlō, the second principle, perhaps here manifested as the afterthought of the light.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of BJn are unknown. The date of its composition is probably sometime before A.D. circa 180, the date of St. Irenaeus’s summary of the work (cf. IrG, but the resemblance is not perfect, suggesting that Irenaeus knew a different version of the text); and in any case before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MSS. The work is attributed to John the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus’ twelve original disciples (Mt 4:21, Mk 1:19, Lk 5:10), recording words spoken by the savior; it is thus an example of pseudepigraphy. The language of composition was Greek.

BJn has a complex mixture of genres in which various traditional materials are subordinated to others:

- I. Romance (apocryphal acts of apostles)
 - A. Angelic revelation and revelation dialogue
 1. Treatise
 2. Cosmogony and uranography
 3. “True history” of humankind
 4. Wisdom monologue

The narrative frame story is a typical episode from the literature called “apocryphal acts of the apostles,” a Christianized version of the Greek *romance* or novel. Within the narrative of the romance, an *angelic revelation monologue* occurs, but after some pages it develops into an *angelic revelation dialogue*. In this genre a human interlocutor woodenly intervenes to provide excuses for the continuation of the angel’s revelation; the genre has been traced back to the Greek school catechism (the so-called *erotapokriseis*), in which dry facts are presented in question-and-answer form.

The revelatory monologue comprises two kinds of material: a typical philosophical *treatise on theology*, and a *cosmogony* accompanied by “*uranographic details*” (details describing the structure of the universe). The revelation dialogue comprises a revisionistic “*true history*”—that is, an alternative, “corrected” version—of the events of Gn 1:2f. The dialogue eventually lapses back into monologue and ends by assuming the form of poetry (parallel strophes). The concluding poem is a *wisdom monologue* (for this genre, see the introduction to Th) and closely resembles FTh.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Immortals

The PARENT OF THE ENTIRETY. The perfect invisible virgin spirit.
An ANDROGYNOUS QUINTET OF AEONS, constituents of the parent:

1. The PERFECT FORETHOUGHT OF THE ENTIRETY. The Barbēlō, a product of the parent's thinking, the image of the parent. Also known as:

mother-father;
first human being;
holy spirit;
thrice-male;
the three powers;
the triple androgynous name;
eternal aeon.

2. PRIOR ACQUAINTANCE

3. INCORRUPTIBILITY

4. ETERNAL LIFE

5. TRUTH

The DIVINE SELF-ORIGINATE. The anointed (Christ), a luminous spark, the only-begotten, maker of the entirety, true god over the entirety.

Its coactors: INTELLECT, WILL, WORD (or verbal expression)

FOUR LUMINARIES that stand before the divine self-originate, and twelve aeons that are with them:

HARMOZĒL

LOVELINESS, TRUTH, FORM

ŌROIAĒL

AFTERTHOUGHT, PERCEPTION, MEMORY

DAUEITHAI

INTELLIGENCE, LOVE, IDEAL FORM

ĒLĒLĒTH

PERFECTION, PEACE, and

WISDOM (Sophia) belonging to afterthought. Mother of Ialdabaōth, mother of the living, a holy spirit, sibling of the posterity of Seth. Also called life (Zōē), and referred to as "an afterthought."

FOUR BEINGS that dwell with the four luminaries:

The GERADAMAS, also called ADAMAS. The perfect human being.
With Harmozēl.

SETH, his son. The “child of the human being” (son of man). With Ōroiaēl.

POSTERITY OF SETH. Souls of the holy persons, the immovable race or perfect race. With Dauethai.

SOULS who were not acquainted with the fullness and repented tardily. With Ēlēlēth.

II. The Rulers

IALDABAŌTH OR IALTABAŌTH OR ALDABAŌTH. The first and chief ruler, first begetter of the other rulers, an offspring of wisdom. Called SAKLAS AND SAMAĒL.

Ialdabaōth's AUTHORITIES, KINGS, RULERS, POWERS, ANGELS, SERAPHIM, DEMONS, ETC., amounting to 365 in number and having various names

DESTINY, child of wisdom and Ialdabaōth

III. Humankind

ADAM. The first material human being, created (as an animate body) in the image of the Geradamas, then fitted with a material body.

EVE. The first female human being, created in the image of the luminous afterthought.

ABEL. A just son of Ialdabaōth and Eve.

CAIN. An unjust son of Ialdabaōth and Eve.

SETH. A son of Adam and Eve/afterthought, created as a likeness of the heavenly Seth.

POSTERITY OF SETH on earth. The immovable or perfect race, including Noah, John the brother of James (a son of Zebedee), and John's fellow disciples.

OTHERS, including Arimanios, a Pharise

IV. Spirits Active in Humankind

The SPIRIT OF LIFE. The mother's (wisdom's) spirit.

The COUNTERFEIT SPIRIT. A creature of the rulers, originating in matter.

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known mainly in Coptic translation, attested by four manuscripts: MSS NHC II (pp. 1–32), NHC III (pp. 1–40), NHC IV (pp. 1–49), which were copied just before A.D. 350 and are now in the Cairo Coptic Museum; and MS BG (Berolinensis gnosticus), that is, p. Berol. 8502 (pp. 19–77), which was copied ca. fifth century A.D. and is now in the papyrus collection of the Berlin Museum. In addition, a summary of what appears to be the first part of the work, by St. Irenaeus, survives; it is translated elsewhere in this volume (see IrG).

The manuscripts and summary attest the circulation of no less than four distinct editions of the Greek text in antiquity. Such a series of editions must have resulted from continual study and revision of BJn by gnostic teachers: it is a measure of the importance and timeliness of the work for ancient gnostic Christianity. These four ancient editions, usually called “versions,” comprise the following.

1. The *long version*, which is represented by two virtually identical Coptic manuscripts, MSS NHC II and NHC IV, is the text translated here. When one of its two manuscripts is defective, its original reading can often be restored from the other. The most obvious difference between the long version and the short versions is that the former contains a lengthy excerpt from a certain *Book of Zoroaster* (cf. 15:29–19:8f).

2. A *short version*, which is represented by Coptic MS NHC III, differs from the others in certain details of phraseology and systematic theology; as a Coptic translation it differs in style and vocabulary from all the other Coptic versions.

3. Another *short version*, which is represented by Coptic MS p. Berol. 8502, also differs in certain details of phraseology and systematic theology; as a Coptic translation it differs in style and vocabulary from all the other Coptic versions.

4. The *summary* of BJn in St. Irenaeus (IrG) is too brief and compressed to classify as long or short, but in any case it shows certain minor differences that distinguish it from each of the three other versions.

The long version has been chosen for translation here because of its apparent coherence; however, scholars have not determined which version is the original.

In passages where the three texts of the Coptic versions run in parallel, they differ considerably in vocabulary and style. As in the case of EgG, careful comparison of such parallels has made it possible to gain a systematic understanding of the different ways in which the three ancient Coptic translators did their work; thus, in many places where both manuscripts of the long version are defective or erroneous, the original reading of the long version can be conjecturally restored by comparison and stylistic adjustment of a reading found in the other manuscripts. Such restorations, which are supported by the parallel versions, are *printed in italics*. Comparison of the versions has also clarified the meaning of certain Coptic expressions in the long version and has thus been an aid in translation. In a few instances all pertinent manuscripts are defective in a given passage, but the original text can nevertheless be conjectured with certainty: these totally conjectural restorations are enclosed within square brackets [].

For a critical edition based on all the manuscripts, see Waldstein and Wisse, *Apocryphon of John* (see “Select Bibliography”). The translation below is based on my own unpublished synopsis of the manuscripts, constructed from collation of photographic facsimiles and from Till’s critical edition of the Berlin manuscript (see “Select Bibliography”).

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The Secret Book^a According to John^b

Contents

- 1 **1** The teaching [of the] savior and [the revelation] of the mysteries, [which] are hidden in silence [and which] it (the savior) taught to John [its] disciple.

I. FRAME STORY (INTRODUCTION)

Dialogue of John and a Pharisee

- 5 *Once^c upon a time when John the brother of James, one of the*
8 *sons of Zebedee, was going up to the temple^d • a Pharisee named* Zs 3:15
Arimanios encountered him and said to him, Where is your
teacher, the man that you used to follow?
11 •And he (*John*) said to him, He has returned to the place from Jn 16:28
which he came.
12, 13 •The Pharisee said to him, •That Nazarene^e has greatly misled
16 you, filled your ears with lies, closed [your hearts]. •and turned Jn 7:12
you away [from] the traditions of your [ancestors].

Title 1 a. Greek *apokryphon*, lit. “concealed (thing).”

b. In the manuscripts, the title is found after the text (at 32:7f).

c. For the meaning of *italics*, see the introduction to Bjn, “Text.”

d. The Jewish temple of god in Jerusalem. Ancient Christian tradition (cf. Acts 2:46f) held

that the earliest Christians in Jerusalem continued to take part in the Jewish religious cult of the temple.

e. “Nazarene”: Gk. *nasōraios*, “person from Nazareth.” Traditionally the term was also held to mean “one who is observant” and sometimes referred to members of a Jewish-Christian sect of that name or to Christians in general.

II. JOHN'S NARRATION

John's distress

17 When I^f heard these words, I turned away from the temple
 20 towards the barren mountain,^g •and I was very distressed, saying,
 21, 22 •How indeed was the savior chosen? •And why was he sent into Jn 3:17
 23 the world by his parent who sent him? •And who is his parent who
 24 [sent him]? •And what is that realm like, to which we shall go?
 26 •For what [. . .] he told us that this realm [. . .] has been stamped
 in the mold of that incorruptible realm, and did not tell us what
 that other one is like.

Appearance of the savior

30 At the moment that I was thinking these thoughts, lo, the heav-
 31 ens opened, •and all creation shone with light that [. . .] below Jn 1:9
 33, 1 heaven. •And the [. . .] world moved. 2 •For my part, I was afraid,
 3 [. . .] saw within the light a child standing before me. •When I EgG 55:11
 4 saw [. . .] like an elderly person. •And it changed (?) [its] manner
 5 of appearance to be like a young person. •[. . .] in my presence.
 6, 7 •And within the light there was a multiform image (?). •And the
 [manners of appearance] were appearing through one another.
 8 •[And] the [manner of appearance] had three forms. EgG 50:23+
 9 •[It]^a said to me, John, John, why do you have doubts, and why
 11, 12 [are you] afraid? •Are you alien to this kind of thing? •This is to
 12 say, do not be timid. • It is I who am with [you (plur.)] always.
 13 •It is I who am [the father]; it is I who am the mother; it is I who 99+
 15 am the son.^b • It is I who am the undefiled and the unpolluted.
 16 •[Now I have come] to teach you (sing.) what exists, and what Plato Ti. 50d
 18 [has come to be], and what must come to be, •so that you might
 19 [know about] the invisible realm [and the] visible realm; •and to
 20 [teach you] about the perfect [human being]. •Now, then, lift up
 22 your [face] to hear and [learn about] what I shall say to you to-
 23 day, •so that you too might convey it [to those who are] like [you]
 in spirit, •and who are [from] the immovable race of the perfect GJd 35:2
 human being [. . .], so that [they] might understand [. . .]

f. From here until 31:31f the narrator is John. But starting at 2:9f, John's narration quotes a long speech of the savior.

g. Or "toward the desert." The Judean Desert begins at the back of the Mount of Olives, which on the other side overlooks the site of the temple.

2 a. As is explicitly stated in 30:11f, the speaker of the teaching is forethought, or the Barbēlō. Forethought is genderless because it is simultaneously male and female (cf. 5:6f).

b. "[father] . . . mother . . . son": one of the basic structures of the Barbēlō aeon (cf. FTh, EgG, IrG). A similar triadic structure, but without this terminology, is present in Zs, Fr, 3Tb.

III. THE SAVIOR'S TEACHING

The parent of the entirety

- 26, 26 *It said to me: •The unit (monad), since it is a unitary principle* EgG 50:23
 28 *of rule, has nothing that presides over it. •[. . .] god and parent* Fr 61:32
 30 *of the entirety [. . .] presides over [. . .] incorruptibility,^c •exist-* IrSat 1:24.1
 32 *ing [in] uncontaminated light, toward which no vision can gaze.* IrG 1:29.1
 32 *•This [is] the invisible spirit.* EpA 40.5.2; 3
 33 *•It is not fitting^d to think of it as divine or as something of* Fr 62:27
 35, 36 *the sort, •for it is superior to deity; •nothing presides over it, for*
 1 *nothing 3 has mastery over it; •[it does] not [exist (?)] in any state*
 4 *of inferiority, [. . .] exists in it alone.^a [. . .] because it lacks *noth-**
 6 *ing. •For it is utter fullness, without having become defective in*
 7 *anything so that it might be completed by [it]: •rather, it is always*
 9 *utterly perfect in [. . .]. •It is unlimited because nothing [exists]*
 10 *prior to it so as to bestow limit upon it; •unfathomable, because*
 12 *nothing exists prior to it so as to fathom (?) it; •immeasurable,*
 13, 14 *because nothing else has measured it; •invisible, because nothing*
 15 *else has seen it; •eternal, since it [exists] unto eternity; •ineffable,*
 17 *since nothing has been able to reach it so as to speak of it; •un-*
 18, 20 *nameable, since there is nothing that exists prior to it so as to give*
 22 *a name to it. •It is immeasurable light, which is uncontaminated,*
 22 *holy, and pure; •it is ineffable and perfect in incorruptibility: •not*
 22 *in perfection, nor in blessedness nor in divinity; •rather as being*
 22 *far superior to these.^b*
 22, 24 *•It is not corporeal, it is not incorporeal, •it is not large, it* Fr 63:5
 24, 26 *is not small, •it is not quantifiable, nor is it a creature. •Indeed,*
 26 *no one can think of it. •It is not something among the existents;* 3Tb 121:30
 28 *rather it is something far superior to these: •(yet) it is not as though*
 30 *it were “superior”; rather, its proper characteristic is not to share*
 31 *in eternal realms (aeons), or in spans of time. •For whatever*
 33, 34 *shares in an eternal realm has been prepared beforehand.^c •And*
 36 *it [has not been] divided by time [. . .] any other, for it does not*
 36 *receive anything. •For [. . .]^d •For [. . .] it, so that it might receive*
 1 *light. •For it is majesty;^a it is an immeasurable [. . .].^b*

c. MS BG instead has “the [. . .] god, parent of the entirety, the holy [Spirit (?)], the invisible, [which] presides over the entirety, which [exists in] its incorruptibility.”

d. The description of god that follows resembles some accounts in second-century Platonist philosophy: see “Historical introduction” to Part One.

3 a. MS BG instead has “For, it is eternal.”

b. MSS BG and NHC III next have “It is neither

infinite, nor has it been limited; rather, it is something superior to these.”

c. MS NHC III instead has “prepared by others.”

d. MS BG instead has “And it is not in need, (for) nothing at all exists prior to it.”

4 a. Or “magnitude.”

b. Instead of these two sentences, MSS BG and NHC III have simply “(It is) the immeasurable majesty.”

- 3,3 •[It is] eternity, [as] bestowing^c eternity,^d •It is life, as bestow-
 4,5 ing *life*. •It is blessed, as bestowing blessedness. •It is acquaint-
 6 tance, as bestowing acquaintance. •[It is] good, as bestowing
 7,7 goodness.^e •[It is] *mercy*, [as bestowing] mercy and ransom. •It
 8 is grace,^f *as bestowing* grace. •(It is all these things) [not] as pos-
 ssuming (attributes); rather, as bestowing (them).
- 9 •[It is] immeasurable, incorruptible *light*,^g [in so far as I can
 10 speak] with you (sing.) about it. •Its [eternal realm] is incorrupt-
 ible, at peace and dwelling in *silence, at repose, utterly* (?) preced-
 13 ing. •[It] is the head of *all* the aeons, *since* it is this which in its
 goodness bestows strength upon them.
- 15,16 •Indeed, we [are] not *acquainted* with [. . .]; •we do not (?)
 know [. . .] except [for] *what* has been shown forth out of it,^h that
 19 is, [the] parent: for it is the parent that *spoke to us*. •For it is this
 21 that gazes at its own self in its light *around it*, •that is, the well-
 22 spring of living water;ⁱ •gives unto *all* the aeons; •and in every
 way [thinks of (?)] its image, beholding it in the wellspring of
 24 the [spirit]^j and •exercising will^k in its [watery] *light*, [that is,] the
 wellspring of the *pure, luminous* water around it.

Gjd 35:19
 3Tb 125:26

Zs 128:27?
 Fr 67:24

Fr 64:30

FTh 46:16+
 EgG 62:9
 Zs 17:11
 TrTr 54:39

Production of forethought

- 26 And *its thinking produced* something, and the thinking was
 disclosed, *standing* [plainly] in its presence in *the brilliance of*
 29 its light. •This is the first *power, which exists* prior to all (oth-
 ers), *and which was shown forth* (?) out of its thinking, that is,
 32 *the perfect forethought of the entirety*. •The light of this (thought)

FTh 35:1+
 EgG 51:22
 IrG 1.29,1
 EpG 25.2.2
 v.29
 10:20

EgG 50:5

c. Because it “bestows eternity,” it might itself be termed “eternity.” The savior qualifies these epithets at 4:8f.

d. MS BG next has “It is light, which bestows light.”

e. MS BG next has “and doing goodness—not as though possessing (something); rather, as bestowing.”

f. Or “loveliness”: Greek *kharis*.

g. MSS BG and NHC III next have “What shall I say to you concerning it? The incomprehensible is the image of the light, in terms of what I can think about. Indeed, who can ever think about it?”

h. “Indeed . . . of it” (4.15f): MSS BG and NHC III instead have “For none of us has become acquainted with the properties of the immeasurable except for what has been shown forth by it.”

i. MS BG next has “the light full of sanctification. The wellspring of the spirit streamed down from the living water of the light.”

j. Three metaphors in this passage (4:19–36f) gloss over the difficult traditional problem of why a second principle (here called forethought, Bar-

bēlō) would come to be “produced” from a perfect first principle (the parent). (1) The parent is a detached eye whose function is simply to look. It is surrounded by reflective “luminous water” so that it must “gaze at its own self”; its own “image” that it sees becomes objectified as a second principle, “the image of the perfect invisible virgin spirit.” (2) The parent is an abstract intellect whose function is simply to think. It initially has no other object of thought than its own self; the act of “thinking” or thought becomes objectified as a second principle, “the perfect forethought.” (3) The parent is a “spring of living (running) water” whose function is simply to overflow endlessly. The overflow becomes objectified as a second principle, the Barbēlō (“great overflow”: see “Historical Introduction” in Part One). Note that the first metaphor implies that in the beginning there might have been something together with the parent (“its light”). Metaphors like these are used in a similar context by Platonist philosophers roughly contemporary with the author of BJn.

k. Or “desire.”

- 34 [...] light, the power of the [...], •that is, *the* image of the per- 14:18
 36 fect invisible virgin spirit.^l •*This is the* power, the glory of *the* FTh 38:11
 Barbēlō,^m the (most) perfect glory 5 among the aeons, the glory v.36
 of the manifestation, which glorifies the virgin spirit and praises Th 13:2
 3,4 it, •for because of the latter it was shown forth.^a •It is the first RAD 64:6
 thinking of the spirit's image.^b EgG 52:2
 5,6 •It (the Barbēlō) became a womb for the entirety,^c •for it was IrG 1.29.1
 prior to all (others), (being) the mother-father, the first human EpG 26.10.4+
 being, the holy spirit, the thrice-male,^d the three powers; the FTh 38:14+
 thrice-androgynous name; and (was) the (most) eternal aeon
 among the invisible.

Its request for more eternal realms: prior acquaintance

- 10 And the first emanation, that is, *the* Barbēlō, made a request EgG 51:22
 of the invisible virgin spirit, that it be given prior acquaintance IrG 1.29.1
 14, 14 (*prognōsis*). •And the spirit gazed out.^e •And *when* it had gazed
 15 out, prior acquaintance became disclosed. •And prior acquaint-
 18 tance stood at rest^f along with forethought, which derived from
 19 the thinking of the invisible virgin spirit; •and it glorified the
 spirit *and the* Barbēlō, the spirit's perfect power, •for prior ac-
 quaintance had come to exist *because of the Barbēlō*.

Incorruptibility

- 20 And *furthermore*, the Barbēlō made a request that it be given RR 86:32
 21, 22 *incorruptibility*. •And the spirit gazed out. •While *it was gazing* EgG 51:22
 23 out, *incorruptibility became disclosed*. •And [they]^g stood at rest IrG 1.29.1
 24 along with thinking^h and *prior acquaintance*; •and they glorified
 the invisibleⁱ and the Barbēlō because of which they had come
 to exist.

Eternal life

- 26 And the Barbēlō made a request that it be given eternal *life*. EgG 51:22
 27, 28 •And the invisible spirit gazed out. •And while it was gazing out, IrG 1.29.1
 30, 30 eternal life became disclosed. •And *they stood at rest*, •and they
 glorified the invisible spirit and the Barbēlō because of which
 they had come to exist.

l. "the perfect invisible virgin spirit": the parent.

m. For the meaning of this name, see "Historical Introduction" in Part One and note 4j.

5 a. MS BG next has "and thinks about it."

b. MS BG instead has "the first thinking, the spirit's image."

c. "entirety": the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō.

d. "thrice-male": cf. EgG, note 51f.

e. "gazed out": here and throughout this passage, the Coptic word can be translated also "consented."

f. To "stand at rest" is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, non-change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

g. I.e. prior acquaintance and incorruptibility.

h. I.e. forethought, the Barbēlō.

i. The "perfect invisible virgin spirit" the parent.

Truth

- 32 And furthermore it made a request that it be given truth. IrG 1.29.2
- 33,34 •And the invisible spirit gazed out. •And truth became disclosed.
- 35, 35 •And they stood at rest, •and they glorified the 6 acceptable (?), invisible spirit and its Barbēlō, because of which they had come to exist.
- 2 •This is the quintet of aeons belonging to the parent, which is 3Tb 120:19 the first human being,^a the image of the invisible spirit, namely:
- 5 •forethought, which is *the* Barbēlō and thinking;
prior acquaintance;
incorruptibility;
eternal life;
truth.^b
- 8 •This is the androgynous quintet of aeons, that is, the group of *ten* aeons,^c which constitutes the parent.^d

Begetting of the self-originate

- 10 And it^e gazed at the Barbēlō, (who was) in the uncontaminated light^f around the invisible spirit and (in) its radiation. IrG 1.29.2
- 12, 13 •And the Barbēlō conceived by it, •and it begot a luminous spark consisting of light in an image that was blessed, though *not* equal
- 15 to its parent's magnitude. •This was the only-begotten offspring
- 16 of the mother-father^g which appeared, •and the mother-father's only begetting; (it was) the only-begotten of the parent, the uncontaminated light.

Its anointment

- 18 And the invisible virgin spirit rejoiced at the light that had come to exist and that had been shown forth out of the first Gn 1:4
- 23 power of the spirit's forethought, *who* is the Barbēlō. •And the

6 a. Forethought (cf. 5:6f). The quintet is made up of "forethought" and its four emanations. The four emanations are here considered to be mere aspects of their source, so that also the quintet as a whole can be spoken of as "the image of the invisible, spirit," i.e. as being forethought, the Barbēlō.

b. MSS BG and NHC III omit "truth" from this list, counting "the Barbēlō" and "thought" as the first two members.

c. "forethought, . . . prior acquaintance, incorruptibility, . . . life, truth" are all grammatically feminine words in Greek (*pronoia*, *prognōsis*, *aphtharsia*, *zōē*, *alētheia*), and are here perhaps said to have grammatically masculine consorts, thus adding up to ten. Such an arrangement is hinted at in 7:11f and is explicit in IrG.

d. Lit. "which is the parent" (MS NHC III, "which belongs to the parent"). The parent "is" its emanations even while being distinguishable from them, just as forethought "is" its emanations but is also distinguishable from them (cf. note 6a).

e. The parent, the invisible spirit.

f. MS BG instead has "The Barbēlō, the uncontaminated light, gazed intently at it"; NHC III. "the Barbēlō gazed intently at the uncontaminated light."

g. "the mother-father": forethought (the Barbēlō); cf. 5:6f. Forethought's four emanations in the quintet (6:5f) merely "appeared"; they were not "begotten offspring" of forethought and the parent.

spirit anointed it (the spark) with its own kindness^h until it became perfect, •needing no further *kindness* since it had been anointed with the *kindness* of the invisible spirit. •And it stood at rest in the presence of the spirit, which was pouring upon it. •And the moment that it received from the spirit it glorified the holy spiritⁱ and perfect forethought, because of which it had become disclosed.

FTh 37:31
EgG 55:11
IrG 1.29.1
IrUnid 1.30.1
EpS 39.3.5
Zs 131:14

Its request for coactors

33 And it made a request that it be given a coactor, namely intellect. •And the spirit consented [. . .]. •And while the invisible spirit was consenting, 7 intellect was disclosed. •And it stood at rest along with the anointed (Christ),^a glorifying the spirit and the Barbēlō. •And all these beings came into existence within silence.^b

4 •And thinking^c wished to make something by the Word (or verbal expression)^d of the invisible spirit. •And its will became deed, •and was disclosed along with intellect and the light, and glorified it.^e

9, 10 •And Word (or verbal expression) followed after will. •For by the Word, the anointed (Christ) divine self-originate made the entirety (or all things).

11, 12 •Now, eternal life is with its will. •And intellect is with prior acquaintance.^f

IrG 1.29.1

EgG 51:22

EgG 51:22

FTh 37:34
EgG 51:22

Its establishment as god of the entirety

13 They stood at rest and glorified the invisible spirit and the Barbēlō, for because of the Barbēlō they had come to exist. •And the holy spirit^g perfected the divine self-originate,^h the offspring of itself and the Barbēlō, •so as to make the offspring stand at rest before the great invisible virgin spirit.ⁱ •The divine self-originate, the anointed (Christ), who glorified the spirit with a great voice, was shown forth by forethought. •And the invisible virgin spirit established the self-originate as true god over the entirety, •and

h. “kindness”: Greek *chrēstotēs*. Once “anointed,” the only-begotten will be both *chrēstos*, “kind” and *christos* “the anointed.” The two Greek words were pronounced identically at the time that B_{Jn} was written.

i. “spirit . . . holy spirit . . .”: the parent.

7 a. “anointed” (cf. note 6h) and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

b. In some gnostic systems (e.g. IrV) “silence” is distinguished as an entity that coexisted with the ineffable parent in the beginning.

c. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “and

thinking. The invisible spirit wished to make something.”

d. “Word (or verbal expression)”: the divine Logos.

e. The parent (?).

f. See note 6c.

g. MS NHC III instead has “the great invisible spirit.”

h. “self-originate” (Greek *autogenēs*): the anointed (Christ).

i. MSS NHC II and IV here erroneously insert “of.”

subordinated to it (the self-originate) all authority and the truth
 27 that was in it (the spirit), •so that it might know about the en-
 27 tirety: •which is called by a name that is superior to every name, Ph 2:9
 29 •for that name will be uttered to those who are worthy of it.

Appearance of four luminaries and twelve eternal realms

30 For by the gift of the spirit, out of the light that is the anointed FTh 38:33+
 (Christ) and out of incorruptibility,^j the four luminaries from the EgG 62:11
 divine self-originate gazed out^k so as to stand 8 before it. IrG 1.29.2

1 •And the three: will, thinking, and life.
 2 •And the four powers: IrG 1.29.2

intelligence;
 loveliness;
 perception;
 prudence.^a

Harmozēl

4 Now, loveliness dwells at the eternal realm (aeon) of the lu-
 6 minary Harmozēl, and is the first angel. •And with this eternal
 realm (aeon) are three additional aeons:

7 •loveliness;
 truth;
 form.^b

Ōroiaēl

8 Now, it is the second luminary Oroiaēl that has been estab-
 10 lished in charge of the second eternal realm, •and with it are
 three additional aeons:

11 •afterthought;^c
 perception;
 memory.

Daueithai

12 Now, the third luminary is Daueithai, which has been estab-
 14 lished in charge of the third eternal realm, •and with it are three
 additional aeons:

j. MS NHC II here erroneously inserts “of.”

k. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “appeared.”

8 a. “And the three [. . .] prudence”: the Coptic text of MS NHC II may be slightly garbled here. MSS

BG and NHC III here list “loveliness; intelligence; perception; prudence.” The parallel in IrG has “loveliness; perception; intelligence; prudence.”

b. Greek *morphē*.

c. Greek *epinoia*.

- 15 •intelligence;
love;
ideal form.^d

Ēlēlēth

- 16 Now, the fourth luminary Ēlēlēth was established in charge of
18 the fourth eternal realm, •and with it are three additional aeons:

RR 93:8
FTh 39:13

- 19 •perfection;
peace;
wisdom (Sophia).

3Tb 123:16
EgG 68 9
IrG 1.29,4

- 20 •Those are the four luminaries that stand before the divine
22 self-originate, •and those are the twelve aeons that stand be-
fore the offspring of the great self-originate anointed (Christ),^e
12 through the desire and the gift of the invisible spirit. •The twelve
26 aeons belong to the offspring of the self-originate. •And it was by
the will of the holy spirit that the entirety became strong through
the self-originate.

Appearance of four archetypes

- 28 Then—(deriving) from *prior acquaintance and* perfect intel-
lect through [disclosure] of the desire of the invisible spirit and
the desire of the self-originate—the perfect human being, the
34 first manifestation and true (person), was named •“the Gerad-
35 amas (Ger-Adamas)”^f by the virgin spirit. •And that being was
established upon the first 9 eternal realm (aeon) with the great
self-originate and anointed (Christ), at the first luminary Har-
3,4 mozēl, •and its powers^a dwell with it. •And the invisible gave to
it an invincible intellectual faculty.
5 •And it (the Geradamas) spoke, glorifying and praising the
invisible spirit, and said,

15:9
RR 88:13
EgG 61:5
Zs 6:21+
3Tb 118:25
IrG 1.29,3

- 7 •“Because of you the entirety has come to exist;
8 •And it is unto you that the entirety will return.
9 •And for my part I shall praise and glorify you and the
self-originate along with the *triple* aeon^b— the
father, mother, son, the perfect power.”

2:13
EgG 50:23+

d. Greek *idea*.

e. “offspring of the [...] anointed”: the Geradamas (8:34f).

f. “Geradamas (Ger-Adamas),” known in some works as “Adamas”; the name recalls both “Adam,” the first human being, and Greek *adamas*, “steel, hard, unyielding.” The prefix “Ger-” has been explained as Gk. *hier-* from *hieros*, “holy”; in any case

the name is a neologism in gnostic myth. MS BG instead has “Adam,” NHC III “Adamas.”

9 a. Cf. 8:2f.

b. Forethought, the Barbēlō; cf. 2:15:6f, and note 2b, “the triple aeon” is found in MS NHC III; the other MSS here have lit. “the aeons, the three.”

- 11 •And it established Geradamas's son Seth upon the second eternal realm, before the second luminary Ōroiaēl. 24:34
RAD 65:5
EgG 62:30
Zs 6:21+
- 14 •And in the third *eternal realm*, upon the third luminary 3Tb 118:10
v.14
- 17 Dauethai, the posterity of Seth was established, •and also the souls of the holy persons. EgG III 56:3
Zs 7:6+
3Tb 120.9
- 18 •And in the fourth eternal realm were established the souls of those who were not acquainted with the fullness and did not repent at once, but rather held out for a while and then repented. Zs 27:2
- 22, 23 •They came to exist at the fourth luminary Ēlēlēth. •These were engendered beings,^c •and they glorified the invisible spirit.

Production of wisdom's offspring: Ialtabaōth

- 25 Now, the wisdom belonging to afterthought,^d which is an aeon, thought a thought derived from herself, (from) the thinking of the invisible spirit, and (from) prior acquaintance. RR 94.2
FTh 39:20
EgG III 57:5
Zs 9:16
IrG 1.29.4
EpG 25.2.2
- 28 •She wanted to show forth within herself^e an image, without
- 30, 31 the spirit's [will]; •and her consort did not consent. •And (she
- 31 wished to do so) without his pondering: •for the person of her
- 33 maleness^f did not join in the consent; •for she had not discovered that being which was in harmony with her.^g •Rather, she
- 34 pondered^h without the will of the spirit and without acquaintance withⁱ that being which was in harmony with her.
- 35 •And she brought forth. **10**
- 1 •And because of the invincible power within her,^a her thinking did not remain unrealized. •And out of her was shown forth an imperfect product, that was different from her manner of
- 5, 6 appearance, •for she had made it without her consort. •And compared to the image of its mother it was misshapen, having a different form.

Its concealment by wisdom

- 7 Now, when she saw that her desired artifact was stamped differently—serpentine, with a lion's face^b and with its eyes gleaming like flashes of lightning—she cast it outside of her, outside
- 11 that place, •so that none of the immortals might see it: •for she had made it without acquaintance.
- 12, 13

c. MS NHC III instead has "They will remain at the luminary Ēlēlēth, assembling there."

d. Lit. "of afterthought," perhaps looking forward to the events described in 14:9f. MSS BG and NHC III do not have this phrase, instead having "Now, wisdom our sibling."

e. "within herself"; or "by her own means."

f. "the person of her maleness": MSS BG and NHC III instead have "her consort, the male virgin spirit."

g. MS NHC III instead has "not discovered her consort."

h. MSS BG and NHC III instead have "consented."

i. Or "knowledge of" in the sense of sexual intercourse.

10 a. MS BG instead has "growing strong because of the vulgar (*prounikos*) element within her."

b. "serpentine . . . face": MS BG instead has "with a snake's face and a lion's face."

- 14, 15 •And she surrounded it with^c a luminous cloud. •And she put
16 a throne in the midst of the cloud, •so that no being might see it
except for the holy spirit called “mother of the living.”^d •And she 23:20
called its name Ialtabaōth.^e

Its theft of power from wisdom

- 19, 20 This is the first ruler, •and it took great power^f from its 4:29
mother, retreated from her, and moved out of the place where it RR 86:28
23 had been born. •Taking possession (of another place), it made FTh 39:28
for itself other eternal realms (aeons) inside a luminous, fiery IrG 1.29.4
26 blaze, which still exists.^g •And it became stupefied in^h its mad- EpG 26.1.9
ness, which still is with it. RR 87:4+

Its creation of other rulers

- 27 And it gendered for itself authorities;ⁱ RR 95:1+
EgG III 57:21
28 •the first is named Athōth^j who is called “[. . .]s” by the G⁸d 51:17
races; IrG 1.29.4
30 •the second, Harmas,^k *the eye of fire*; EpG 25.3.5
31 •the third, Kalila-Oimbri^l (or Kalila-Kimbri);
32 •the fourth, Iabēl;^m
33 •the fifth, Adōnaïos, who is called “Sabaōth”;
34 •the sixth, Cain, whom the races of humankind call “the 11:31, 12:20
sun”; 15:19
36 •the seventh, Abel;ⁿ RR 95:13+
36 •the eighth, Abrisene;^o
37 •the ninth, Iōbēl; II
1 •the tenth, Armoupieēl;^a
1 •the eleventh, Melkheir-Adōnein;^b

c. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “she harnessed it in.”

d. Wisdom. MS BG instead has “life (Zōē), mother of all.”

e. The spelling of this name fluctuates among “Ialdabaōth,” “Ialtabaōth,” and “Aldabaōth.” For its meaning, see RR note 95b.

f. Cf. 10:1f. In 13:21f this act is described as theft.

g. MS BG instead has “an eternal realm (aeon), flaming with fire and luminous, where it now is.”

h. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “harnessed to.”

i. MSS BG and NHC III next have “(i.e.) the twelve angels—each of them unto its own eternal realm (aeon), after the prototype of the incorruptible eternal realms. And it made seven angels for each one of them, and three powers per angel [BG next has “all told 360 (*sic*), consisting of angelic

beings and trios of powers”] after the image of the original prototype that was before them. Now, the authorities were shown forth in the first begetter and the first ruler of the darkness, out of lack of acquaintance of the one that begot them; and these arc their names.”

j. MS BG instead has “Iaōth”; NHC III, “Haōth.”

k. MS BG, “Hermas.”

l. MSS BG and NHC III, simply “Galila.”

m. MSS BG and NHC III, “Iōbel.”

n. MSS BG and NHC III count “Sabaōth” as the sixth; count “Cain” (called either “Kainan-Kasin” or “Kainan and Kaē, called Cain”) as seventh; and do not mention “Abel.”

o. MS BG, “Abiressine”; NHC III, “Abiressia.”

II a. MS BG instead has “Harmoupieēl”; NHC III, “Armoupieēl.”

b. MSS BG and NHC III, simply “Adōnin.”

- 2 •the twelfth, Belias, who presides over the depth of Hades.^c
- 4 •And it (the first ruler) established seven kings in charge of the seven heavens, one per firmament of heaven; and five in charge of the depth of the abyss, to reign. •And it shared some of its fire with them, •but it did not bring forth any of the power of the light that it had gotten from its mother. •For, the first ruler is dark and is without acquaintance. •For when light mixed with darkness it made the darkness bright. •But when darkness mixed with light it darkened the light, •so it was neither luminous nor dark, but rather was dim.
- 15 •Now, this dim ruler has three names:
- 16 •the first name is Ialtabaōth;
the second, Saklas;^d
the third, Samael.^e
- 18, 19 •And the ruler is impious, in its madness that is with it. •For it said “It is I who am god, and no other god exists apart from me,”
- 21, 22 •for it did not recognize whence its strength had come. •And the rulers made seven powers for themselves; and the powers made six angels for each of themselves, •so that they amounted to 365 angels.^f
- 26 •And these are the bodies belonging to the names (?):^g
- 26 •first, Athōth,^h with the face of a sheep;ⁱ
- 27 •second, Elōaios, with a Typhonian face (i.e. the face of donkey);
- 28 •third, Astaphaios, with the *face of a hyena*;
- 29 •fourth, Iaō,^j with the *face of a serpent* and having seven heads;
- 31 •fifth, Sabaōth,^k with the face of a dragon (or snake);
- 32 •sixth, Adōnin, with the face of an ape;
- 33 •seventh, Sabbede,^l with a glowing face of fire.

11:26
IrG 1.29.4
IrSat 1.24.1
GJd 52:11
RR 96:3+
vs.7
12:4

GJd 51:16

13:5+

Is 45:21
Is 46:9
Is 45:5

19:2
EpG 26.9.6
vs.26
11:4, 12:15
15:14, 17:8+
RR 95:2
IrUnid 1.30 5
EpA 40.2.3
EpG 26.10.1
10:28 +

c. MSS BG and NHC III next have “Now, they all have other names deriving from desire and anger. In short, they all have pairs of names: one set given them after the superior glory, the other corresponding to the truth that shows forth their nature. And Saklas called them by their names with reference to external appearance and with reference to their powers. Now, over intervals of time they withdraw and grow faint; thereafter they grow strong and increase.”

d. “Saklas” (Aramaic “fool”): a conventional name of Satan in Judaism.

e. “Samael”: Aramaic “blind god.”

f. “And it shared . . . 365 angels” (11:7–25f) is not present in MSS BG and NHC III. See, however, note 10i.

g. Translation uncertain. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “And the names of glory belonging to those in charge of the seven heavens are as follows.”

h. MS BG instead has “Iaōth”; NHC III, “Athō.”

i. MSS BG and NHC III, “of a lion.”

j. MS NHC III, “Iazō.”

k. MSS BG and NHC III, “Adōnaios.”

l. MS BG. “Sabbataios”; NHC III, “Sabbadaios.”

- 34 •This is the septet of the week.^m
- 35 •Now, Ialtabaōth had many 12 outward appearances, and re-
 2 lied upon all of them, •so as to show any one of them according
 3 to wish; •and dwelled in the midst of seraphim.
- 4, 5 •It (the ruler Ialtabaōth) shared its fire with them.^a •The rea- 11:7
 son it dominated them was because of the mother's luminous
 8 power of glory that belonged to it. •For this reason it called it-
 9 self god. •And it did not believe in the source from which it had
 come.
- 10, 12 •And it mixed with the authorities residing with it. •While it
 was thinking and while it was speaking, the seven powers came
 13, 14 to exist; •and it assigned a name to one power after another.^b •It
 began from above:
- 15 •first is kindness,^c with the first (power), Athōth;^d 11:26+
- 17 •second, forethought: with the second, Ēlōaiō;^e
- 18 •third, divinity: with the third, Astaphaios;
- 19 •fourth, lordship: with the fourth, Iaō;
- 20 •fifth, kingship: with the fifth, Sanbaōth;^f
- 22 •sixth, zeal: with the sixth, Adonein;
- 23 •seventh, intelligence: with the seventh, Sabbateōn.^g

- 25 •And each of these has a firmament in its own eternal heaven.^h
- 26 •And they were named after the glory of the heavenly realm, for
 28 the [. . .] power. •And they exercised power through the names
 30 that they had been given by their first begetter; •but the names
 allotted to them according to the glory of the heavenly realm led
 33 to their overthrow and powerlessness: •and so they have pairs
 of names.

Creation of the universe

- 33 And it (the first ruler) put all things in order,ⁱ according to
 the image of the original aeons that had come to exist, so as to
 1 13 make all things in the incorruptible manner: •not that the
 2 ruler itself had seen the incorruptible, •but rather, the power

Gn 1:1
 RR 94:34 +
 FTh 40:4
 Zs 10:1
 IrSat 1.24.1
 EpS 39.1.4

m. MSS BG and NHC III next have "It is these beings that preside over the world."

12 a. MSS BG and NHC III next have "but it did not bestow on them any of the uncontaminated light, i.e. the power, that it had detached from its mother."

b. MS BG next has "and appointed authorities" (NHC III is imperfect here).

c. In MS BG the list is somewhat different: (1) forethought; (2) divinity; (3) kindness; (4) fire

(cf. "zeal"); (5) kingship; (6) [intelligence]; (7) wisdom (Sophia).

d. MS BG instead has "Iaōth."

e. MS BG, "Ēlōaiōs."

f. MS BG, "Sabaōth."

g. MS BG, "Sabbataios."

h. MS BG, "has a firmament and an eternal realm (aeon) in its own heaven."

i. Or "fashioned all things" At this point the story begins to parallel Genesis (Gn 1:1f).

within it, which it had gotten from its mother, and which had begotten within it the image of the ordered world.^a

Ialtabaōth's arrogance

- 5 And seeing the creation surrounding it and the multitude of
 angels around it that had come to exist out of it, it said to them,
 8, 9 •“For my part, I am a jealous god. •And there is no other god
 9 apart from me.” •In uttering this it signified to the angels staying
 12 with it that another god did exist. •For if no other one existed, of
 whom would it be jealous?

11:18
 RR 94:21
 FTh 44:1
 EgG III 58:23
 IrG 1.29.4
 IrUnid 1.30.6
 EpG 25.2.3
 v.8
 Ex 20:5
 Dt 5:9
 v.9
 Is 45:5

The mother's “movement”

- 13, 14 Then the mother began to move. •She knew about the lack
 15 when the radiation of her light diminished. •And she grew
 darker, for her consort had not come into harmony with her.

Gn 1:2

IV. DIALOGUE OF JOHN AND THE SAVIOR

A. Interpretation of Genesis 1–4

The meaning of “move”

- 17 And I said, Sir, what is meant by “move”?
 18 •But it laughed and said. Do not suppose that it means “over
 21 the waters” as Moses said. •No, rather when she saw the imper-
 fection that had come to exist and the theft^b that her offspring
 had committed,^c she repented.
 24 •And in the darkness of unacquaintance, forgetfulness came
 over her. And she began to be ashamed, moving back and forth.
 25 •*And she did not rashly try to return, but rather she went back and*
 26 *forth.* •And the going back and forth is the meaning of “move.”
 27 •Now, the arrogant (ruler) had gotten power from its mother.
 28, 28 •For it was without acquaintance, •since it thought that no other
 30 existed but its mother alone. •And seeing the multitude of angels
 that it had created, accordingly it exalted itself over them.

22:22

Repentance and elevation of wisdom

- 32 But when the mother learned that the garment^d of darkness
 had not come to exist perfectly, she knew accordingly that her

Gn 1:2
 FTh 40:3
 EgG III 59:6
 Zs 10:7
 IrG 1.29.4
 EpG 25.2.4

13 a. “And they were named . . . ordered world” (12:26–13:2f); this passage is not present in MS BG (NHC III is imperfect here).

b. Of wisdom's power (cf. 10:20f).

c. “the imperfection . . . committed”: MS BG

instead has “the imperfection and the coming rebellion of her offspring.”

d. MS BG, “the aborted foetus,” perhaps correctly (NHC III is imperfect here). Ialtabaōth is meant.

- 36 consort had not been in harmony with her, •and she repented
14 with much weeping.
- 1, 2 •And the entreaty of her repentance was heard, •and all the
fullness lifted up praise on her behalf unto the invisible virgin
5 spirit, *and it gazed out.*^a •And while the *holy spirit* was gazing out,
the holy spirit poured over her something of the fullness of all.
- 7, 8 •For her consort did not come to her (in person); •rather, it came
9 to her through the fullness, in order to rectify her lack.^b •And she
was conveyed not to her own eternal realm but to a place higher
11 than her offspring, •so as to dwell in the ninth^c (heaven) until she
rectified her lack.^d

23:20, 25:9
EgG 61:14+
Zs 45:17

Projection of an image of a human being

- 13, 14 And a voice emanated from above the exalted aeons: •“The
human being exists, and the child of the human being.”^e •But
Ialtabaōth the first ruler listened and thought that this voice came
18 from its mother, •and it did not know where it had come from.
- 18 •And the holy mother-father^f and complete, perfect fore-
thought, the image of the invisible, i.e. of the parent of the en-
tirety in whom the entirety had come to exist, the first human
being, showed them^g that it had revealed its image in a repre-
24 sentation like a portrait statue. •And all the eternal realm of the
26 first ruler trembled, •and the foundations of the abyss moved.
- 26 •And through the waters that are over the material realm, the
bottom [shone] because of the [appearance] of its image that had
appeared.
- 30 •And when all the authorities and the first ruler were dumb-
33 founded,^h they saw that the whole lower part shone; •and by the
light, they saw in the water the representation of the image. 15

EgG III 59:4
IrSat 1.24.1

30:19?

Gn 1:2b
Gn 1:3

Gn 1:4a

Creation of the animate Adam

- 1 And it (the first ruler) said to the authorities dwelling with it.
2 •“Come let us make a human being after the image of god^a and
3 after our images, •so that the human being’s image might serve as
5 a light for us.” •And they performed the act of creation by means
of one another’s power, according to the characteristics given to

Gn 1:26
RR 87:23+
Fth 40:24
IrUnid 1.30.6
EpS 39.2.1

14 a. “gazed out”: here and throughout this passage, the Coptic verb can be translated also “consented.”

b. “For her consort . . . her lack”: MSS BG and NHC III instead have “Her consort came down to her to rectify her lacks (plural). It was pleased to rectify her lacks by the agency of forethought.”

c. In the list of twelve aeons given in 8:7f the ninth from the bottom is afterthought.

d. By returning to regain the stolen power

(“lack”) in the person of life (Zoe), a luminous afterthought sent from afterthought proper.

e. “human being . . . child of the human being”; or “man . . . son of man”; i.e. the Geradamas and the great Seth.

f. MS BG instead has “the holy perfect parent.”
g. All the rulers.

h. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “bent down.”

15 a. Forethought, the “first human being.”

- 6 them. •And each of the authorities^b put into that being's soul^c a
 characteristic corresponding to the representation of the image
 9 that they had seen. •And they made a subsistent entity, after the
 11 image of the perfect first human being. •And they said, "Let us 8:28
 call him Adam, so that we might have his^d name as a luminous
 power."
 13 •And the powers began:
- 14 •the first, kindness,^e made an animate element^f of bone. 12:15
 15 •The second, forethought, made an animate element of
 connective tissue.
 16 •The third, divinity, made an animate element of flesh.
 18 •The fourth, lordship, made an animate element of
 marrow.^g
 19 •The fifth, kingship, made an animate element of blood.
 20 •The sixth, zeal, made an animate element of skin.
 22 •The seventh, intelligence, made an animate element of
 hair.^h
- 23,24 •And the multitude of angels stood before him. •And the seven
 substances of the animate subsistenceⁱ were taken by the authori-
 26 ties, •so that the regularizing of limbs and parts and the joining,
 i.e. ordering, of each of the constituents might be brought about.
- 29 •The first,^j Raphaō, began by making the crown of the
 head;
 Abrōn (?) made the skull;
 Mēniggesstrōēth made the brain;
 32 •Asterekhmē, the right eye;
 Thaspomakha, the left eye;
 33 •Ierōnumos, the right ear;
 Bissoum, the left ear;
 35 •Akiōreim, the nose; **16**
 1 •Banēnephroum, the lips;
 Amēn, the front teeth;
 Ibikan, the back teeth;
 2 •Basiliadēmē, the tonsils;

b. MSS BG and NHC III instead have "powers."

c. Or "animate (subsistence)." The original reading of the text is uncertain here.

d. For convenience of identification, the name Adam is hereafter picked up by "he" in the English translation.

e. In MS BG the list is somewhat different: (1) divinity; (2) kindness; (3) fire (cf. "zeal"); (4) forethought; (5) kingship; (6) intelligence; (7) wisdom (Sophia).

f. "animate element": lit. "soul," Greek *psychē*.

g. MS BG next has "and all the system of the body."

h. MS BG next has "and they set all the body in order"; NHC III, "and they set all [the] human being in order."

i. Or "soul."

j. The following passage, 15:29–19:8f ("... *Book of Zoroaster*"), is not found in MSS BG and NHC III.

- Akhkha, the uvula;
- 3 •Adaban, the back of the neck;
Khaaman, the neck bone;
Dearkhō, the throat;
- 5 •Tēbar, the right shoulder;
[. . .], [the] left shoulder;
- 6 •Mniarkhōn, the [right] elbow;
[. . .], the left elbow;
- 7 •Abitriōn, the palm of the right hand;
Euanthēn, the palm of the left hand;
Krus, the back of the right hand;
Bēluai, the back of the left hand;
- 9 •Trēneu, the fingers of the right hand;
Balbēl, the fingers of the left hand;
Krima, the fingernails;
- 12 •Astrōps, the right nipple;
Barrōph, the left nipple;
- 13 •Baoum, the right armpit:
Ararim, the left armpit;
- 14 •Arekh,^a the bodily cavity;
Phthauē, the navel:
Sēnaphim, the abdomen;
- 16 •Arakhethōpi, the right side;
Zabedō, the left side;
- 18 •Barias, the lower back on the right;
Phnouth, the lower back on the left;
- 18 •Abēnlenarkhei, the marrow;
Khnoumeninorin, the skeleton;
- 20 •Gēsole, the stomach;
Agromauma, the heart;
Banō, the lungs;
Sōstrapal, the liver;
Anēsimalar, the spleen;
Thōpithrō, the intestines;
Biblō, the kidneys;
- 24 •Roerōr, the connective tissue;^b
- 24 •Taphreō, the vertebrae;
- 25 •Ipouspobōba, the veins;
Bineborin, the arteries;
Latoimenpsēphei, the pneumatic^c system within all the
limbs;
- 28 •Ēnthollei[.], all the flesh;
Bedouk, the right buttock (?);

16 a. Or "Arekhē."

b. Or "nervous system."

c. Or "respiratory."

- Arabēei, the left <buttock (?)>;
- 29 •< . . .>^d the penis;
 Eilō, the testicles;
 Sōrma, the private parts;
- 30 •Gormakaiokhlabar, the right thigh;
 Nebrith, the left thigh;
 Psērēm, the muscles of the right thigh;
 Asaklas, the muscle of the left thigh;
- 34 •Ormaōth, the right knee;
 Ēmēnun, the left knee;
 Knuks, the right leg; 17
- 1 •Tupēlon, the left leg;
- 2 •Akhiēl, the right ankle;
 Phnēmē, the left ankle;
 Phiouthrom, the right foot;
 Boabel, the toes of the right foot;
 Trakhoun, the left foot;
 Phikna, the toes of the left foot;
 Miamai, the toenails;
- 6 •Labērnium, <the . . .>^a
- 7 •Now, those which are ordained in charge of the preceding are seven in number:
- 8 •Athōth;
 Armas;
 Kalila;
 Iabēl;
 Sabaōth;
 Cain;
 Abel.
- 8 •And those which provide activation in the limbs are, according to parts:
- 10 •first the head, Diolimodraza;
 10 •the back of the neck, Iammeaks;
 11 •the right shoulder, Iakouib;
 the left shoulder, Ouertōn;
 12 •the right hand, Ouididi;
 the left hand, Arbao;

d. The word “<buttock> (?)” and the angel’s name are missing. Through an inadvertence, MSS NHC II and IV omit a few words, having “Arabēei, the left penis.”

17 a. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

- the fingers of the right hand, Lampnō;
 the fingers of the left hand, Lēekaphar;
 15 •the right nipple, Barbar;
 the left nipple, Imaē;
 the chest, Pisandiptēs;
 17 •the right armpit, Koadē;
 the left armpit, Odeōr;
 18 •the right side, Asphiksiks;
 the left side, Sunogkhouta;^b
 19 •the bodily cavity, Arouph:
 the abdomen, Sabalō;
 20 •the right thigh, Kharkharb;
 the left thigh, Khthaōn;
 22 •all the private parts, Bathinōth;^c
 22 •the right knee, Khouks;
 the left knee, Kharkha;
 the right leg, Aroēr;
 the left leg, Tōekhtha;
 the right ankle, Aōl;
 the left ankle, Kharanēr;
 26 •the right foot, Bastan;
 the toes of the right foot, Arkhentekhtha;
 the left foot, Marephnouth:
 the toes of the left foot, Abrana.
- 29 •[And (?)] seven, i.e. 7, were [ordained (?)] in charge of the 17:8
 preceding:

- 30 •Mikhaēl; Gjd 53:17
 Ouriēl;
 Asmenedas;
 Saphasatoēl;
 Aarmouriam;
 Rikhram;
 Amiōrps.

- 32 •And those which are in charge of perception are Arkhendekta;
 33, 34 •and the one that is in charge of reception,^d Deithar bathas; •of
 35 imaging,^e Oummaa; •of [harmony (with imaged information)],
 1 18 Aakhiaram; •of all impulse to action,^a Riaramnakhō.

b. Or "Sounogkhouta."

c. Or "Thabin."

d. Or "perceived information."

e. Or "received information."

18 a. "reception . . . imaging . . . [harmony] . . . impulse to action"; jargon from the ethical division of Stoic philosophy.

- 2 •And the wellspring of the demons that are in all the body is
 5 divided in four: heat, cold, wetness, dryness. •And the mother
 of them all is matter.
- 6 •Ruling over heat (is) Phloksopha;
 cold, Oroorrothos;
 dryness, Erimakhō;
 wetness, Athurō.
- 10 •And Onorthokhrasaei the mother of all these stands in their
 midst, of unlimited extent; and she is mixed with all of them.
- 13 •And truly she is matter, for they are nourished by her.
- 14 •The four leading demons:
- 15 •Ephememphi belongs with pleasure;
 16 •Iōkō, with desire;
 17 •Nenentōphni, with grief;
 18 •Blaomēn, with fear.
- 18, 19 •And the mother of them all (is) Esthēnsis-Oukh-Epi-Ptoē.^b•And
 out of the four demons came passions.
- 20 •From grief:
- envy;
 fanaticism;
 pain;
 distress;
 contention for victory;
 lack of repentance;
 anxiety;
 mourning;
 and so forth.
- 24 •From pleasure come many imperfections and vain boasting,
 and the like.
- 26 •From desire:
- anger;
 wrath;
 [bitterness];
 bitter lust;
 insatiableness;
 and the like.

b. I.e. Greek *aisthēsis oukh epi ptoā*, “perception not in a state of excitement”; more Stoic ethical jar-

gon, a description of the psychic state of the virtuous person.

30 •From fear:

terror;
entreaty;
anguish;
shame.

- 31, 32 •Now, all these are as it were virtues^c and vices. •And the thought of their truth is Anaiō (?), which is the head of the material soul: 19•for it dwells with Esthēsis-Zoukh-Epi-Ptoē.^a
- 2 •Here is the number of the angels: all told, they amount to 11:25
3 365; •and they all labored at him (the human being), until limb by limb the animate and material body^b was completed.
- 6 •Now, others, whom I have not mentioned to you (sing.), pre-
8 side over the rest of the passions; •and if you want to know about them, the matter is written in the *Book of Zoroaster*. Porph 16.3+

His immobility

- 10 And all the angels and demons labored, until they put the an- RR 88:4
13 imate body in order. •And for a long time their product existed IrSat 1.24.1
inactive and immovable.^c IrUnid 1.30.6

Passage of wisdom's power into Adam

- 15 So when the mother wished to recover the power that she had 10:19
surrendered to the first ruler, she entreated the greatly merci- RR 87:4
18 ful mother-father^d of the entirety; •and by divine counsel the FTh 40:25
mother-father sent five luminaries^e in place of^f the angels of the IrSat 1.24.1
21 first ruler. •[And] they counseled it (the ruler), and in conse- IrUnid 1.30.6
quence, the mother's power was extracted from it. EgG III
65:23?
- 22 •Indeed, they said to Ialtabaōth, "Blow some of your spirit
25 into his face and his body will arise." •And Ialtabaōth blew some of its spirit, that is, the power of its mother, upon him. Gn 2:7
RAAd 64:22 +
RR 88:3
FTh 45:28
IrUnid 1.30.6
- 27 •It did not understand, since it existed without acquaintance.
- 28 •And the mother's power left Altabaōth (i.e. Ialtabaōth) and entered the animate body, which they had labored at after the image of the aboriginal existent.

c. Or "valued categories."

19. a. Greek for either "perception not in a state of excitement" or "the seven perceptive faculties not in a state of excitement": cf. note 18b.

b. "and material": with these words the narrator anticipates slightly, since the material body's creation is described at 20:28f. The present passage tells only how the "animate . . . body was completed."

c. MSS BG and NHC III next have "For, the seven authorities could not raise it; neither could the 360 angels that had constructed the chains."

d. Forethought.

e. MS BG instead has "sent the self-originate and its four luminaries."

f. MSS BG and NHC III, "after the manner of?"

Relegation of Adam to the realm of matter

- 32, 34 The body moved, became strong, and shone. •And in that
 1 moment the rest of the powers became envious; **20** •for by the
 2 efforts of all of them he had come to exist, •and they had given
 3 their power to the human being.^a •And his intelligence became 20:19+
 stronger than those which had made him, and stronger than the
 first ruler.
 5 •Now, when they knew that he shone, thought more than they IrUnid 1.30.8
 did, and was naked of imperfection, they took him and cast him
 down into the lower part of all matter.

Sending of a helper (life) to Adam

- 5 But the blessed, beneficent, compassionate mother-father had
 pity on the mother's power, which had been extracted from the
 13 first ruler; •and furthermore (had pity) because they were about
 14 to gain control over the animate and perceptible body. •And
 by its beneficent spirit whose mercy is great it sent unto Adam
 a helper, luminous afterthought,^b which derived from it and
 19 which was called life (Zōē). •And afterthought rendered assis- RR 88:13
Th 14:10 +
FTh 35:12
IrSat 1.24.1
Gn 3:20
Th 16:11
FTh 35:12
v.19
20:3, 20:30
21:14, 22:15
22:28, 28:2
Gn 2:18
RAAd 64:12
RR 88:17
IrUnid 1.30.12
v.21
3Tb 127:20
 20 tance to the whole creature, suffering along with him;^c •leading
 21 him into his fulfillment;^d •teaching him about his descent as the
 23 posterity—•about the way of ascent, by which he had descended.
 24 •And the afterthought of the light hid within Adam so that the
 27 rulers might not understand, •and that rather the afterthought^e
 might be a rectification of the mother's lack.^f

Creation of Adam's material body

- 28 And the human being became visible because of the light's IrUnid 1.30.9
20:19 +
 30 shadow that existed within him, •and his thinking surpassed all
 32 those who had made him. •When they looked up, they beheld
 33 that his thinking was higher. •And along with all the host of rul-
 35 ers and the host of angels, they made a plan. •Taking fire, earth, RR 87:23+
21 and water, they mixed them together with the four fiery winds,
 2 •And they became forged to one another, and a great disturbance
 4 was made. •And they brought him into the shadow of death, in Gn 2:7
 order to perform again the act of modeling, out of earth, water,

20 a. MS NHC III next has “And he bore (within him) the souls of the seven authorities and their powers.”

b. Forethought (the “mother-father”) sends wisdom back down into the material world from her temporary residence in the ninth heaven, the realm of the aeon afterthought (14:11f). Wisdom as an envoy of forethought is called forethought's afterthought, an “afterthought, which derived from it.”

c. Or “to all creation, suffering along with them.”

d. Or “fullness.”

e. “the afterthought”: MSS BG and NHC III instead have “wisdom (Sophia) our sibling that resembles us.”

f. I.e. might bring about the reclamation of the missing power.

- 7 fire, and the spirit that derives from matter— •that is, out of the
 ignorance of darkness, and desire, and their counterfeit spirit.^a Plato Ti. 42
- 9 •That is the cave^b of the remodeling of the body in which the
 brigands clothed^c the human being, the bond^d of forgetfulness,
- 12, 13 •And he became a mortal human being. •It is he who was the first
 to descend, and the first to separate. 22:32+
- 14 •But it was the afterthought of the light within him that was
 raising his thinking. Gn 2:21
 20:19+

His introduction into paradise

- 16 And the rulers brought him and put him in the garden (par-
 18, 19 adise). •And they said to him, “Eat”—namely, at leisure. •For in
 21 fact their food^e is bitter, and their beauty is lawless; •while their
 enjoyment is deception, their trees are impiety, their fruit is in-
 24 curable poison, and their promise is death. •And it was in the
 midst of the garden that they put the tree of their life. Gn 2:15
 RR 88:24

Trees of paradise

- 26 Now, I shall teach you (plur.) what is the mystery of their life,
 the plan they made with one another, the image of their spirit:^f FTh 44:19
- 29, 31 •its root is bitter; its branches are deadly; •its shade is hateful;
 33 deception resides in its leaves; •its blossom is the anointing of
 34 wickedness; its fruit is death; •its seed is desire; and it is in the
 36 dark that it blossoms. •The dwelling place of those who eat **22** of
 2 it is Hades, •and the darkness is their realm of repose.
- 3 •But as for that tree which is called by them the tree of ac-
 quaintance with good and evil, and which is the afterthought of
 the light, they^a remained in its presence^b lest he^c gaze upon his
 9 fulfillment^d and recognize the nakedness of his shame. •But I
 rectified them so that they ate. Gn 2:9
 RR 89:34
 IrG 1.29.3
 IrUnid 1.30.9
 EpG 26.2.6
 23:25

The snake

- 9 And I said to the savior, Sir, was it not the snake that taught
 Adam to eat? Gn 3:4
 RR 89:31

21 a. “counterfeit”: or “mimicking, imitative.” Cf. 29:14f. MS BG instead has “adversarial spirit.”

b. “shadow . . . cave (Greek *spēlaion*)” (21:4–9f): Platonist clichés for the material world, based ultimately on Plato’s *Republic* book 7. “Cave” is also traditionally associated with “brigands” (21:9f).

c. The “brigands” (a cliché for demons) are the rulers; the material body is here likened to the soul’s garment in which it its “clothed,” another cliché.

d. “bond”: a Platonist cliché for the material body.

e. Or “enjoyment”.

f. The counterfeit spirit. Instead of “the image

of the spirit” MSS BG and NHC III have “namely their counterfeit spirit that derives from them so as to turn him back, so that he might not know his fulfillment (or fullness). That tree is of the following sort.”

22 a. The rulers.

b. “remained in its presence”: MSS BG and NHC III instead have “gave the command not to taste of it, i.e. not to hearken to it; for the commandment was directed against him.”

c. Adam.

d. Or “fullness.”

- 11, 12 •The savior laughed and said, •The snake taught them to con- 24:28
 15 sume imperfection consisting of the sowing of desire for cor-
 ruption, so that he (Adam) might become useful to it. •And it
 18 knew that he was disobedient to it^e because of the light of the 20:19+
 afterthought dwelling within him and making him more upright
 20 Adam the power that it had imparted to him. •And it caused a Gn 2:21
 deep sleep to fall upon Adam.

Creation of Eve

- 21 And I said to the savior, What does “deep sleep” mean? RR 89:3
 22 •And it said, It is not as you have heard that Moses wrote; 13:18
 23 •for in his First Book (i.e. Genesis) he said that he made him IrSat 1.24.2
 25 lie down: no, rather (it means) in his perceptions.^f •For also he
 said through the prophet, “I shall make their hearts^g heavy, that
 they might not understand, and might not be able to see.” Is 6:10
 Mk 4:11
 28, 29 •Next the afterthought of the light hid within him. •And the 20:19+
 31 first ruler wanted to extract it from his side. •But the afterthought
 32 of the light is incomprehensible: •although the darkness was Jn 1:5
 pursuing it, it could not comprehend^h it.
 32 •And it (the ruler) extracted a portion of his power from him 21:13
 and performed another act of modeling, in the form of a female, Gn 2:21
 after the image of the afterthought that had been shown forth to RR 89:7+
 36 it. •And into the modeled form of femaleness it brought 23 IrUnid 1.30.7
 the portion it had taken from the power^a of the human being—not EpS 39.2.1
 “his rib,” as Moses said.
 4, 5 •And he saw the woman beside him. •And at that moment
 the luminous afterthought was shown forth, for it had removed
 8 the veil from around his heart; •and he became sober out of the
 9 drunkenness^b of the darkness. •And he recognized his partner Gn 2:23
 in essence, and said, “This now is bone of my bones and flesh RR 89:13
 11 of my flesh. •Therefore man will leave his father and his mother
 and cleave to his wife, and they shall both become one flesh. For
 his consort will be sent to him.”
 20 •Now, wisdom (Sophia) our sibling, who innocently descend- 14:8+
 ed^c in order to rectify her lack, was therefore called life (Zōē)—
 i.e. mother of the living—by the forethought of the absolute 10:16
 Gn 3:20

e. The snake is identified with one of the rulers, as in IrUnid.

f. MSS BG and NHC III instead have “rather, it covered his perceptions with a veil and weighed him down with unconsciousness.”

g. MSS BG and NHC III, “the ears of their hearts.”

h. Or “seize.”

23 a. Wisdom’s “power” is now divided between Adam and Eve; by them it will be transmitted into succeeding generations in the form of soul, cf. 26:26f.

b. Another common cliché for unperceptiveness, especially typical of gnostic texts.

c. As the luminous afterthought.

- 25,25 power of heaven. •And [...] him [...]. •And thanks to it (life) they tasted perfect acquaintance.
- 26 •I myself was shown forth in the manner of an eagle upon the tree of acquaintance—which is the afterthought deriving
- 30 from the uncontaminated, luminous forethought—•so that I
- 31 might teach them and raise them out of the depth of sleep. •For they both dwelled in a corpse,^d and knew that they were naked.
- 33 •The shining afterthought was shown forth to them, raising their thinking.

The expulsion from paradise

- 35 But when Aldabaōth (i.e. Ialtabaōth) knew that they had RR 90:19
37 withdrawn from it, it cursed its earth. •It found the female pre- IrUnid 1.30.8
Gn 3:17
- 1,2 preparing 24 herself for her male—•he was master over her,^a •for he Gn 3:16
v.2
RR 88:10
- 4,4 •And they were afraid to rebuke it (Ialtabaōth). •And he (Adam) showed^b its lack of acquaintance that is within it to its
- 6,7 angels. •And it^c expelled them from the garden, •and clothed Gn 3:24
them in obscure darkness.

Cain and Abel

- 8 And the first ruler saw the female virgin^d standing with Adam, Gn 4:1
and saw that the living, luminous afterthought had been shown RAd 66:25
RR 91:11
- 12 forth within her. •And Aldabaōth became filled with lack of ac- EgG 71:6
IrUnid 1.30.9
- 13 quaintance. •Now, the forethought of the entirety learned of this, EpS 39.2.1
EpA 40.5.3
v.13
- 15 and sent certain beings, who caught life (Zōē) up out of Eve. RAd 64: 28
RR 89:25
- 18 •And the first ruler defiled her,^e and begot on her two sons—
- 19 the first and the second, Elōim and Iauē^f. Elōim has the face of
- 20 a bear; Iauē, the face of a cat. •One is just, the other is unjust:
- 21 Iauē is just, Elōim is unjust. •It established Iauē in charge of fire
- 22 and wind, and established Elōim in charge of water and earth.
- 24 •And it called them by the names Cain and Abel, with trickery in mind.
- 26 •And to the present day sexual intercourse,^g which origi- RAd 67:2
Th 18:28
v.28
22:12
- 28 nated from the first ruler, has remained. •And in the female who belonged to Adam it sowed a seed of desire; and by sexual in-
- 31 tercourse it raised up birth in the image of the bodies. •And it

c. “corpse,” or “fallen thing”: the body.

24 a. “It found . . . over her” (23:37-24:1f): MSS BG and NHC III instead have “And what is more, it gave over the female so that the male might be master over her.”

b. Or possibly “it (Ialdabōdth) displayed.”

c. MS BG instead has “its angels.”

d. Eve.

e. Carnal Eve, from whom wisdom has now escaped.

f. “Eloim . . . Iauē”: in Genesis and other Old Testament books Elohim and Yahweh (Jehovah) are names of the creator of this world, the god of Israel.

g. MS BG, “sexual intercourse of marriage.”

- 32 supplied them some of its counterfeit spirit.^h •And it established the two rulers in charge of realms, so that they ruled over the cave.ⁱ

Seth

- 34 Now, after Adam had known the image of his own prior acquaintance,^j he begot the image 25 of the child of the human being,^a and called him Seth, after the race^b in the eternal realms. Gn 4:25
RR 91:30
EgG 71:10
IrUnid 1.30.9
EpS 39.2.4
EpA 40.7.1
RAAd 65:5
- 2 •Likewise, also the mother sent down her spirit^c in the image of the female being that resembled her, as a counterpart of what 9:11
v.2
EpG 26.1.7+?
- 5 is in the fullness; •for she^d was going to prepare a dwelling place for aeons that were going to descend.

Oblivion of Adam and Eve

- 7 And they were given water of forgetfulness^e by the first ruler, so that they might not know themselves and realize where they had come from. RAAd 65:5
- 9 •And so the posterity temporarily remained, rendering service, so that whenever the spirit^f would descend from the holy RAAd 73:10
RR 92:30
14.8 +
- 14 aeons it might rectify the posterity and heal it of the lack: •so that the entire fullness might become holy and without lack.

B. The Salvation of Souls

The spirit of life

- 16 And I for my part said to the savior, Sir, will all souls then be saved and go into the uncontaminated light?
- 18 •It answered and said to me, The matters that have arisen in
20 your mind are important ones: •indeed, it is difficult to disclose them to any but those who belong to the immovable race,^g upon RAAd 66:1 +
RR 96:22 +
FTh 41:21
EgG 74:30
IrSat 1.24.2
EpS 39.2.4
EpG 26 6.2
- 25 whom the spirit of life will descend and dwell with power.^h •They will attain salvation and become perfect. •And they will become
26 worthy of greatneses. •And there they will become purified of
26 every imperfection and of the anxieties of wickedness: •being

h. MS BG instead has, “In Adam it planted seminal desire, so that it (desire) derives from this essence, which gives birth to an image through their counterfeit <spirit>”; MS NHC III, “And into Adam [it sowed] a seed of desire, so that through this essence their image is born, by means of their counterfeit spirit.”

- i. I.e. the material world (cf. note 21b),
j. Had had intercourse with Eve.

- 25 a. Or “the son of man,”
b. Or “after the manner of birth.”
c. To compensate for the departure of the spiritual element from Adam, Eve, and their first

two offspring (cf. 24:13f), wisdom now sends the “spirit” of life to humankind. It will remain in Seth’s posterity as the element capable of being awakened and saved by true religion.

d. “the female being . . . she”: possibly Seth’s sister and wife, Nōrea, known from other gnostic texts where considerable emphasis is placed upon her role in establishing the posterity of Seth; cf. RR 91:34f; EpS 39.5.2-3; EpG 26.1.1f.

e. Or “deep sleep.”

f. Forethought (the “holy spirit”) as savior.

g. The posterity of Seth.

h. Or “with the power,”

- 30 anxious for nothing except incorruptibility alone; •meditating on it thenceforth without anger, envy, grudging, desire, or insatiableness as regards the entirety; •restrained by nothing but the subsistent entity of the flesh, which they wear, •awaiting the time when they will be visited **26** by those beings who take away. RAd 76:21
- 1 •Such souls are worthy of eternal, incorruptible life and calling:
3 •abiding all things and enduring all things so that they might complete the contest and inherit eternal life. 1Co 13:7
- 7 •I said to it, Sir, can the souls upon whom the power and the spirit of life has descended, but who did not perform these deeds [attain salvation]?
- 10 •It answered and said to me, If the spirit descends upon them, it is quite sure that they will attain salvation; •and they will migrate. •Indeed, the power will descend unto everyone^a—•for without it no one can stand up. •And after they are begotten, if the spirit of life increases—for the power comes (to them)—it strengthens that soul,^b and nothing can mislead it into the works of wickedness. •But those upon whom the counterfeit spirit descends will be beguiled by it and go astray. Plato Ti. 89f
- 22, 23 •But for my part I said, •Sir, so when the souls of these people have come forth from their flesh, where will they go?
- 25, 26 •And it laughed and said to me, •The soul—which means the power—will increase within it (the flesh) more greatly than the counterfeit spirit; •for it (the soul) is strong and will flee from wickedness. •And by visitation of the incorruptible it will attain salvation and be taken into the repose of the aeons. Plato Ti. 42

The counterfeit spirit

- 32 But for my part I said, Sir, then where will the souls of these, others who have not known to whom they belong, reside?
- 35 •And it said to me, In the case of those others, the counterfeit spirit has increased **27** within them while they were going astray.
- 1, 2 •And it weighs down the soul, •and beguiles it into the works of wickedness, •and casts it into forgetfulness^a (or deep sleep). •And after it has come forth it is given into the charge of the authorities, who exist because of the ruler. •And they bind it with bonds and cast it into the prison.^b •And they go around with it^c until it awakens out of forgetfulness and takes acquaintance unto itself. Plato Ti. 42
- 10 •And in this way, when it becomes perfect it attains salvation.

26 a. Wisdom's "power" (19:28f) is transmitted, "descends," to all the posterity of Adam in the form of soul, the animating element.

b. The Coptic text of MS NHC II is slightly corrupt here. MS NHC III instead has "After a person is begotten, the counterfeit spirit of life of [. . .] is introduced. Now, if the strong (i.e. true) spirit of

life [comes], the power or [soul] becomes strong [and is not] misled into wickedness."

27 a. Cf. 22:23f, 25:7f.

b. Cause it to become incarnate in another material body ("prison").

c. In cycles of reincarnation.

- 11, 12 •But for my part I said, Sir, how is it that •the soul becomes thinner and thinner, returning then to the nature of its mother or to the human being?
- 14, 16 •Then it was happy when I asked it this, and said to me, •You
17 are truly blessed, for you have understood! •That soul will be made to follow the guidance of another in which the spirit of life resides, •and by that other it attains salvation, •and so is not cast
19, 20 into flesh again.

EpG 26.10.7+

Apostates

- 21 And I said, Sir, where will the souls go of those who have gained acquaintance and then turned away?
- 24 •Then it said to me, They will be taken to the place where the
26 angels of poverty go—•it is the place where no act of repentance
27 is performed—•and they will be kept until the day when those who have uttered blasphemy against the spirit will be tortured and punished with eternal punishment.

C. The Enslavement of Humankind

Destiny

- 31 But for my part I said, Sir, where did the counterfeit spirit come from?
- 33 •Then it said to me, It is the mother-father who is greatly merciful, the holy spirit who in every way is compassionate and **28** suffers with you (plur.), that is, the afterthought of the luminous
20:19+
2 forethought.^a •And it raised up the posterity of the perfect race, raised their thinking, and raised up the eternal light of the human being.
- 6 •When the first ruler knew that they were greatly superior to it and that they thought more than it did, it then wanted to arrest their pondering; and it did not realize that they were superior to
RR 87:17
11 it in thought and that it could not lay hold of them. •In the company of its authorities, that is, its powers, it made a plan. •And
FTh 43:13
12 in turns they fornicated with wisdom; •and by them, destiny was begotten as bitterness (?); •this is the last and varied bond, which is of diverse sorts, for they (the authorities) differ from one another. •And it is difficult and overpowers that being with whom
13 the deities, angels, demons, and all the races have mingled down
15 to the present day. •For out of that destiny were shown forth all impieties; violent action; blasphemy and the bond of forgetful-

28 a. The text may be corrupt here. Possibly some words have been left out, as follows: “The mother-father that is greatly merciful, the holy spirit that in every way is compassionate and suffers with you

(plur.), < . . . > that is, the afterthought of the luminous forethought.” Instead of “mother-father,” MS BG has simply “mother.”

24 ness; lack of acquaintance; •and all burdensome precepts, bur-
 26 densome sins, and great fears. •And thus they made all creation
 blind so that the deity above them all might not be recognized.
 29 •And because of the bond of forgetfulness, their sins became hid-
 den (to them); for they had been bound with measures, times,
 and ages, since it exerted mastery over all.

The flood and Noah

32 And it (the ruler) repented of all things that had come to exist
 34 because of it. •Again it made a plan: to bring down a flood **29**
 upon the human creation.

1 •But the greatness of the light of forethought taught *Noah*,
 and he preached to all the posterity, that is, the children of hu-
 4 mankind. •And those who were alien to him did not pay heed to
 6,7 him. •They did not—as Moses said—hide in an ark; •rather, it
 8 was in a certain place that they hid. •Not only Noah, but many
 other people from the immovable race, went into a certain place
 12 and hid within a luminous cloud. •And they recognized his ab-
 13 solute power. •And with him was that being which belonged to
 the light, who had illuminated them.

RAAd 69:2
 RR 92:3
 EgG 72:10
 IrUnid 1.30.10
 EpS 39.3.1
 EpG 26.1.7
 v.1
 Gn 6:5f
 IrUnid 1.30.10
 EpG 26.1.7+?
 RAAd 69:19
 RR 92:8

RAAd 70:16

The counterfeit spirit

14 For it (the ruler) had brought darkness down over all the
 16,17 earth. •And in the company of its powers, it made a plan. •It sent
 its angels to the daughters of humankind to take some of them
 unto themselves and so to raise up a posterity as a comfort for
 20,21 themselves. •And at first they did not succeed. •Then after they
 had not succeeded, they assembled again, and all together made
 23 a plan. •They made a counterfeit spirit in the image of the spirit
 26 that had descended, by which they would befoul the souls. •And
 the angels changed in image, after the images of their spouses,^a
 filling them with the spirit of darkness, which they mixed with
 30 them, and with wickedness. •They brought gold, silver, gifts,
 33 copper, iron, metal, and all kinds of raw materials. •And they
 beguiled the people who followed them into great anxieties, **30**
 2 leading them astray in many errors. •Humankind grew old with-
 out having any leisure, and died without discovering any truth
 4 or becoming acquainted with the god of truth. •And thus was the
 whole creation perpetually enslaved, from the foundation of the
 world down to the present time.

7 •And they married women and begot children out of the
 8,9 darkness, •after the image of their spirit. •And their hearts be-
 came closed and hardened with the hardness of the counterfeit
 spirit, down to the present time.

Gn 6:2

Gn 6:4

29 a. Or “doubles.”

V. POEM OF DELIVERANCE

- 11 Then^a I, the perfect forethought of the entirety, transformed
myself into my posterity. RR 97:1
Is 42:1f
- 13 For, I existed in the beginning, traveling in every path of
travel FTh 36:4 +
- 15 For it is I who am the riches of the light;
15 It is I who am the memory of the fullness.
17 And I traveled in the greatness of the darkness,
17 And I continued until I entered the midst of the prison.
19 And the foundations of chaos moved. 14:26?
20 And for my part, I hid from them because of their evil;
21 And they did not recognize me. Jn 1:10
- 21 Again I returned, for a second time. FTh 47:11
EpS 39.3.1
- 23 And I traveled, coming into the beings of the light—
24 I, who am the memory of the forethought.
25 I entered the midst of the darkness and the interior of
Hades, striving for my governance.
27 And the foundations of chaos moved, as though to fall
down upon those who dwelt in chaos and destroy
them.
- 30 And once again I hastened back to my luminous root,^b
31 Lest they be destroyed before their time.
- 32 Yet a third time I traveled— RR 96:28 +
33 I who am the light that exists within the light,
34 I the memory of the forethought—
35 So that I might enter the midst of the darkness and the
interior **31** of Hades:
- 1 I filled my face with the light of the end of their realm, IrSat 1.24.2+
3 And I entered the midst of their prison,
4 Which is the prison of the body. Jn 1:14
4 And I said, “O listener, arise from heavy sleep.” RAAd 66:1
FTh 35:21
6 And that person wept and shed tears, heavy tears;
7 And wiped them away and said, “Who is calling my
name?”
9 “And from where has my hope come, as I dwell in the
bonds of the prison?”
10 And I said, “It is I who am the forethought of the uncon-
taminated light;

30 a. The following passage, 30:11f (“Then . . .”) to 31:27f (“in your ears”) is not present in MSS BG and NHC III, which instead have simply “then in the beginning the blessed mother-father, who is

greatly merciful, takes form in its posterity. I have come to the perfect realm (aeon).”

b. Or “source.”

- 12 “It is I who am the thinking of the virgin spirit,
 13 “And I who am leading you to the place of honor. 4:26+
 14 “Arise! Keep in mind that you are the person who has
 listened;
 15 “Follow your root, which is myself, the compassionate;
 16 “Be on your guard against the angels of poverty and the
 demons of chaos and all those who are entwined
 with you;
 20 “And be wakeful, (now that you have come) out of heavy
 sleep and out of the garment in the interior of
 Hades.”
 22 And I raised and sealed that person, with the light of the FTh 49:27+
 water of five seals,^a EgG 56:25
 24 So that from thenceforth death might not have power
 over that person.
 25 And lo, now I shall enter the perfect eternal realm:
 27 I have completed all things for you (sing.) in your ears.
- 28 •For my part, I^b have told you (sing.) all things, so that you RAd 85:3
 might write them down and transmit them secretly to those Fr 68:16
 31 who are like you in spirit. •For this is the mystery of the immov-
 able race.^c

VI. FRAME STORY (CONCLUSION)

- 32 And the savior transmitted these things to him (John) so that
 34 he might write them down and keep them safe. •“And it said to
 him, “Cursed be anyone who sells these in exchange for a bribe,
 for foodstuffs, for drink, for clothing, or for anything else 32 of
 1 the sort.” •And these things were transmitted to him mystically;
 4 and immediately, it vanished from before him. •And he came to
 his fellow disciples and informed them of what the savior had
 6 told him. •JESUS (IS) THE ANOINTED (CHRIST)!^a AMEN!^b

31 a. The “five seals” are associated with the reception of *gnōsis* in gnostic baptism (for which, see “Historical Introduction” in Part One).

b. The savior, forethought.

c. MS BG here adds: “Now, the mother came before me once again. Moreover, these are the things she did in the world. She caused the posterity to stand at rest. I shall tell you (plur.) about what is going to come to pass.”

32 a. “the anointed”: the divine self-originate (cf. 6:23f). This is the only reference in Bjn to the

incarnate savior as Jesus. Because it does not occur within the central body of the work, some scholars have suspected that it is not part of the original but rather is a pious exclamation added by an ancient Christian gnostic copyist or editor. On the other hand, for gnostic elaborations of the Incarnation, see FTh, EgG, IrUnid, EpS, EpA, EpG; and probably RAd.

b. In the manuscripts the title of this work is written after the text (at 32:7f).

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

(GJd)

CONTENTS

The Gospel of Judas purports to record conversations between Jesus and his disciples and between Jesus and Judas Iscariot: it is what modern scholars call a “dialogue gospel.” These conversations condemn the disciples and the non-gnostic Christians who follow them as ignorant and doomed, and they exposit secret teachings of the gnostics. The dialogues take place during four appearances of Jesus in the days before his last supper with the disciples and his arrest.

In the first three dialogues, Jesus challenges the disciples’ mistaken understanding of his identity, reveals to them the existence of “another great and holy race,” and interprets a vision reported by the disciples as a condemnation of their worship and ethical practices. Jesus alludes to the teachings of the gnostic myth about god and salvation in these conversations, but only in the final dialogue (between Jesus and Judas) does Jesus narrate the myth. The narration includes the existence of the great invisible spirit, the emanation of numerous immortals, the origin of the lower rulers, the creation of humanity, and the end of the present world order. The gospel frames the dialogues with an opening sketch of Jesus’ earthly ministry and his manner of appearing and with a concluding scene of Judas agreeing to hand Jesus over to Jewish leaders as Jesus is in “the guest room” (cf. Mk 14:14; Lk 22:11). Although GJd shows knowledge of all four New Testament gospels, this final episode seems to presuppose the Gospel of John’s account of the last supper, in which Jesus sends Judas out of the room during the meal (Jn 13:30). GJd resembles BJn in presenting the gnostic myth in a revelation from Jesus to a disciple and in placing its narrative within the framework of the Fourth Gospel.

The myth that Jesus reveals is that found also in BJn, but with some significant differences. In both works, the invisible spirit emanates two other divine beings, the Barbēlō (or a “luminous cloud”) and the self-originate, the latter of which has four attendants. Among the other immortals are heavenly prototypes of Adam and of the posterity of his son Seth. A lower hostile power, here called Nebrō as well as Ialdabaōth, presides over the chaos of the material realm, along with Saklas and other rulers, among them a leading group of twelve. Saklas creates humanity and is the ruler that most of humanity mistakenly worships as god. The saved are characterized as a “great and holy race,” modeled after the

divine progeny of Seth, and associated with “the perfect human being” (35:2f). Their ultimate salvation follows the destruction of the hostile rulers and the end of the world as it currently exists.

In contrast to B_{Jn}, however, G_{Jd} mostly eschews philosophical vocabulary and instead draws its imagery from heavenly lore, especially that found in Jewish apocalyptic literature. Both the immortals and the lower rulers are called angels, while the former are referred to also as clouds and the latter are associated with the stars. Although the Barbēlō aeon appears prominently in Judas’s confession of Jesus’ true identity, it appears only briefly in the narrative of the myth as an unnamed cloud (47:14f). More significantly, with one possible exception (44:2f), the aeon wisdom does not appear at all, and her error is not the source of the chief ruler. Instead, one of the immortals, most likely Ēlēlēth, calls Nebrō, Saklas, and their fellow rulers into being, so that they might preside over the lower world. This scenario appears also in E_G, which shares other features with G_{Jd} as well. In general, the myth in G_{Jd} is simpler and less systematic than in other gnostic works.

Like R_{Ad}, G_{Jd} uses the term “race”—in Greek, *genea*—to characterize groups of human beings. The saved are the “great and holy race,” the “mighty and holy race,” and so on, while other human beings are the “corruptible race,” the “races of the pious,” and so on. The Greek term *genea* carried the basic connotation of kinship relation by blood (“family,” “race,” “generation,” “offspring”), but it could refer to groups not so related (“class,” “kind”). Ancient concepts of “race” (*genea*) included not only blood relations but also shared customs, institutions, and religious practices, and thus “race” did not constitute an immutable category. A variety of ancient Christians called themselves a race, even a “new race,” which they invited others to join.

G_{Jd} supplements its narration of the myth with sharp criticism of Jesus’ disciples and (by implication) the Christian churches and clergy that claim them as authorities. The disciples, none of whom other than Judas is named, mistakenly believe that the god they worship (Saklas) is the father of Jesus; Jesus laughs at their prayer over bread, which is reminiscent of the eucharist. In a scene modeled on Peter’s confession of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi (narrated in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke), only Judas correctly identifies Jesus as coming from the aeon of the Barbēlō. When the disciples report a vision of priests offering animal sacrifices and engaging in other sinful acts, Jesus interprets the wicked priests as the disciples and the slaughtered animals as the disciples’ followers.

In contrast to the ignorance and sin of the other disciples, Judas alone knows who Jesus is, and only he receives knowledge of the divine realm and the origin and fate of the cosmos. Nonetheless, Judas himself is not one of the great and holy race; Jesus tells him that he will suffer persecution for his sacrifice of the human being who bears Jesus and that he will groan over his exclusion from full salvation. Judas’s handing over of Jesus sets in motion the events that will lead to the destruction of the hostile powers, and Judas himself will rule over the reorganized lower realm as the “thirteenth demon.”

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of GJd are unknown. The title most likely does not assign authorship of the work to Judas; rather, it is a gospel concerning (“of”) Judas, and no author is mentioned. The date of its composition is sometime before A.D. ca. 180, when St. Irenaeus mentions it by name in connection with the gnostics. He attributes its composition to “others” among the gnostics; these others, he says, identified with biblical figures who were persecuted by the creator god such as Cain and the Sodomites (IrUnid 1.31.1). The language of composition was Greek.

The genre of GJd is the dialogue gospel. In this genre, Jesus appears to one or more of his disciples and engages in extended conversations with them without much, if any, narrated plot. Other early examples include *The Dialogue of the Savior* and *The Secret Book* (“Apocryphon”) of James, both preserved in Nag Hammadi codices, and the *Epistle of the Apostles* (*Epistula Apostolorum*). In these works, Jesus appears and converses with his disciples after his resurrection from the dead and before his final ascension into heaven. In GJd, however, the divine Jesus ascends before the arrest and crucifixion of his human vessel, and Jesus’ appearances and dialogues therefore take place before these events as well. The first three dialogues concern Jesus’ identity and matters of ritual, ethics, and authority. The final dialogue with Judas takes the form of questions and answers (an ancient literary format called *erotapokriseis*) and concerns cosmogony, uranography, anthropogony, and eschatology.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned in the Work

THE GREAT INVISIBLE SPIRIT. A great and invisible aeon. Also called the parent, god, the great one. The one who sent Jesus.

The aeon of BARBĒLŌ. The immortal. A luminous cloud.

The angelic SELF-ORIGINATE. A great angel, the god of light.

FOUR ANGELS that attend the self-originate.

THE TWELVE AEONS of the TWELVE LUMINARIES.

ANGELIC MYRIADS that serve them.

ADAMAS. The first human being.

[SETH.]

The incorruptible RACE OF SETH. The incorruptible powers of Adamas.

72 LUMINARIES OR AEONS and 360 LUMINARIES among the incorruptible race.

72 HEAVENS and 360 FIRMAMENTS.

A numberless ANGELIC ARMY and VIRGIN SPIRITS for glory and service to all the aeons, heavens, and firmaments.

ĒLĒLĒTH (?). An aeon containing the cloud of acquaintance and the angel.

JESUS.

MIKHAĒL.

GABRIĒL.

II. Rulers Mentioned in the Work

NEBRŌ, also called IALDABAŌTH.

SAKLAS. The disciples' god.

TWELVE RULERS OR ANGELS.

TWELVE ANGELS in the heavens, including
[. . .], also called the anointed (Christ) (?)

HARMATHŌTH

GALILA

IŌBĒL

ADŌNAIOS.

THRONES, KINGS, ANGELS.

III. Humankind

ADAM.

EVE, also called Life (Zōē).

The incorruptible RACE OF SETH on earth. The great and holy race, the mighty and holy race, the great undominated race, the great race of Adam, Those People.

The RACE(S) OF THE HUMAN BEINGS. Offspring of this aeon, the races of the pious, the corruptible race, mortal human beings, the race of the earthly Adam, races of the angels.

The TWELVE DISCIPLES, including a replacement for Judas.

JUDAS ISCARIOT. The thirteenth demon.

The human being who bears Jesus.

The JEWS, including HIGH PRIESTS and SCRIBES

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript, Codex Tchacos (pp. 33–58), which was copied in the decades after A.D. 300 and is now in the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Cologny, Switzerland. The damaged and fragmentary character of the manuscript makes much lost text virtually impossible to restore and renders much of the surviving text obscure.

The translation below is based on Jenott's critical edition of the Coptic, with minor alterations: L. Jenott, *The "Gospel of Judas"* (see "Select Bibliography").

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The Gospel of Judas^a

Title

- 1 **33** The secret report of judgment, (the report) in which Jesus spoke with Judas Iscariot eight days prior to the three days before he celebrated Passover. GTh prol.

Prologue: the earthly ministry of Jesus

- 6 When he appeared on earth, he performed signs and great wonders for the salvation of humanity, •while some people also were [walking] in the way of righteousness and others were walking in their transgression. •And the twelve disciples were called,^a •and he began to speak with them about the mysteries that are above the world and the things that will happen until the end. •But many a time he would not reveal himself to his disciples; instead, you would find him in the midst of the . . .^b
- RAad 77:1
Ps 1:6
Mt 21:32
Mt 10:1
Mk 3:13
Lk 6:13
v.15
Mt 13:11
Mk 4:11
Lk 8:10
Mt 24:3
Mk 13:4
Lk 21:7

I. FOUR APPEARANCES OF JESUS

(1) Jesus comes to his disciples and is recognized by Judas alone

- 22 One day he came to his disciples in Judea and found them seated, gathered, and training for godliness. •When he [. . .] his disciples **34** gathered, seated, and giving thanks^a over the bread, [he] laughed. 1Tm 4:7
- 3 •But the disciples said to him, “Teacher, why are you laughing at [our] thanksgiving?^b •What have we done? [This] is what is appropriate.”

Title a. In the MS the title is found after the text (at 58:28f).

33 a. Perhaps to be corrected to “And he called the twelve disciples.”

b. The text contains an unknown word. Possibly, “in the midst of the children.”

34 a. Greek *eucharistein*: the term meant “to give thanks,” but in Christian circles it sometimes referred specifically to celebrating the ritual of the eucharist.

b. Greek lit. “eucharist.”

- 6 •He answered and said to them, “I am not laughing at you—
 9 you do not do this by your own will. •Rather, by this your god
 [will] be blessed.”
- 11 •They said, “Teacher, it is you [. . .] the son of our god.”
- 13 •Jesus said to them, “How are [you] acquainted with me?
 15 •Truly I say to you, no race from the people among you will be
 acquainted with me.”
- 18 •When his disciples heard this, [they] began to get irritated
 22 and angry and to blaspheme against him in their heart. •But
 24 when Jesus saw their foolishness, [he said] to them, •“Why has
 25 agitation brought anger (to you)? •Your god who is within you
 1,2 and [. . .] 35 •have become irritated, along with your souls. •[Let]
 the one who is [stable] among you people bring forward the perfect
 human being and also stand before my face.” Bjn 2:23
- 6,7 •And they all said, “We are mighty!” •But their spirit could
 10 not dare to stand before him—except for Judas Iscariot. •He was
 able to stand before him, but he could not look him in the eyes.
 13 •Instead, he turned his face away.
- 14 •Judas said to him, “I know who you are and where you have Mk 1:24
 17 come from. •You have come from the aeon of the Barbēlō, the Mt 16:15
 19 immortal (aeon). •But as for the one that sent you,^a I am not Mk 8:29
 worthy to proclaim its name.” Lk 9:20
v.19
Bjn 4:9
3Tb 125:26
- 21 •Jesus, because he knew that he was thinking about the rest of
 23 the exalted matters as well, said to him, •“Separate from them,
 and I will tell you the mysteries of the kingdom, not so that you
 1 might go there, but so that you might groan all the more. 36 •For
 someone else will take your place, so that the twelve [. . .] might
 be complete in their god.” Mt 13:11
Lk 8:10
v.1
Ac 1:21
- 5 •And Judas said to him, “What day will you tell me these
 6 things? •And (when) will the great day of light dawn for the [. . .]
 9 race?” •But when he had said this, Jesus left him.

(2) Jesus appears, and the disciples question him about the other realm

- 11 When morning came, he appeared to his disciples, and they
 13,14 said to him, •“Teacher, where did you go? •What do you do after
 you have left us?”
- 15 •Jesus said to them, “I went to another great and holy race.”
- 17 •His disciples said to him, “Lord, what is the great race that
 is more exalted and holier than we but not now in these aeons?”
- 22 •When Jesus heard these things, he laughed and said to them,
 24 •“Why are you thinking in your heart about the mighty and holy
 1 race? 37 •Truly I say to you, no offspring [of] this aeon will see

35 a. “the one that sent you”: i.e. the great invisible spirit.

[. . .], nor will any angelic army of the stars rule over that race,
 8 nor will any mortal human offspring be able to go with it. •For
 [that race] does not come from [. . .] came into being [. . .] the
 11 race of the human beings [. . .] •but it is from the race of [. . .great]
 14 people. [. . .] the powerful authorities [. . .] •nor any power [of the
 aeons] in which you rule.” Mt 19:28

17 •When his disciples heard these things, they were disturbed in
 their spirit, each one, and they were at a loss for words. Mk 14:40

(3) Jesus comes, and the disciples report a dream about corrupt behavior

20 Jesus came to them on another day, and they said to him,
 22 •“Teacher, we saw you in a dream, for we saw great dreams [in
 the] night that passed.”

24 •[But Jesus said,] “Why [. . .] you hid yourselves?”

1 38 •For their part, [they said, “We] saw a large building [in
 which] there were a large altar, [and] twelve men who we say are
 6 priests, and a name. •A multitude were devoting themselves to
 10 that altar [. . .] the priests [. . .] the offerings. •We too were devot-
 ing ourselves.” Ac 2:46

12 •[Jesus said,] “What kind [. . . ?]”

13 •And they said, “[Some] are fasting for two weeks; others are
 sacrificing their own children, others their wives, while they are
 20 blessing and submitting to one another. •Others are sleeping with 1Co 6:9
 men; others are murdering; others are committing a multitude of Rm 1:29
 24 sins and lawless deeds. •And the people who stand [at] the altar
 1 [are] invoking your [name]. 39 •And because they are engaged
 4 in all the labors of their sacrifice, that [altar] is full.” •After they
 had said these things, they fell silent because they were disturbed.

5,7 •Jesus said to them, “Why have you become disturbed? •Truly
 I say to you, all the priests that stand at that altar are invoking
 11 my name. •And even more, I say to you that my name has been
 written upon this building of the races of the stars by the races
 15 of the human beings, •and in my name [they] shamefully have
 planted fruitless trees.”

Jesus explains the dream

18 Jesus said to them, “It is you who receive the sacrifices at the
 21 altar that you saw. •That is the god that you serve, and you are
 25 the twelve men whom you saw. •And the cattle that are brought
 in are the sacrifices that you saw, that is, the multitude that you
 2 are leading astray 40 at that altar. •[. . .^a] is going to stand, and
 in this way he will use my name; and <the>^b races of the pious

40 a. Possibly, “The deacon”; cf. 40:18f.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

7 will devote themselves to him. •After him another person will present the [fornicators], and another will present the killers of children, and another, those who sleep with men, those who fast, and the rest of impurity, lawlessness, and error, and those who
 17 say, ‘We are equal to angels.’ •And they are the stars that bring Lk 20:36
 18 everything to completion. •For they have said to the races of human beings, ‘Lo, god has accepted your sacrifice from the hands
 23 of a priest’—that is, the deacon of error, •or the lord who gives
 25 orders, the one who presides over the entirety. •On the last day they will be put to shame.”

1 41 •Jesus said [to them,] “Stop [sacrifices of animals], which
 4 [. . .] on the altar. •Because they are upon your stars and your angels, having previously come to completion there, consider them
 [. . .] and let them [become] manifest.”

9 •His disciples [said to him, “Cleanse] us from our [sins], which we have committed by the deceit of the angels.”

13 •Jesus said to them, “It is impossible [. . .] them [. . .] nor [can] a fountain extinguish the [fire] of the [entire] inhabited world, [nor] can a spring in a [. . . water] all the races, except the great
 21 one that is destined. •And no single lamp will illumine all the aeons, except the second race,^a nor can a baker feed the entire creation 42 under [. . .].”

1 •And [. . .] to them [. . .] “Teacher, help us, and [. . .].”

5,7 •Jesus said to them, “Stop contending with me. • Each of you
 11 has his own star [. . .] of the stars will [. . .] what is his [. . .] •It is not to the corruptible race that I was sent, but to the mighty and
 14 incorruptible race. •For no enemy has ruled [over] that race, nor
 17 one of the stars. •Truly I say to you (plur.), the pillar of fire will Ex 13:21
 fall suddenly, and that generation will not move [by] the stars.”

Jesus tells Judas about the races of human beings

22 And when Jesus had said these things, he left and [took] Judas
 25 Iscariot with him. •He said to him, “The water on the high mountain is [. . .] 43 [. . .] •that has not come [. . .] spring [. . .] tree of [the
 6 fruit . . .] of this aeon [. . .] after a time [. . .] •Rather, it has come to water god’s garden and the [fruit (?)]^a that will endure, for it will not defile the [. . .] of that race, but [. . .] forever and ever.”

11 •Judas said to him, “[. . .] me, what fruit does this race possess?”

14 •Jesus said, “As for every human race, their souls will die, but as for them, when the time of the kingdom has been completed and the spirit separates from them, their bodies will die, but their souls will live and be taken up.”

41 a. “the second race”: perhaps meaning the latter race, i.e. “the great one that is destined,” rather than the former, i.e. “all the races.”

43 a. Possibly, “race.”

- 23 •Judas said, “And so what will the remaining races of human beings do?”
- 25 •Jesus said, “It is impossible 44 to sow (seed) on a [rock] and
 2 get their fruit. •So too [. . .] the [. . .] race and corruptible wisdom
 8 go up to the aeons on high. •[Truly] I say to you (plur.), [no ruler] or angel [or] power will be able to see those [. . .] that the [great] holy race [will see].”
- 13 •After Jesus said these things, he departed.

Mt 13:5 par.
 GTh 9
 Mt 16:18?

(4) Judas reports a vision to Jesus

- 15 Judas said, “Teacher, just as you have listened to all of them,
 17 listen now to me as well. •For I have seen a great vision.”
- 18 •But when Jesus heard, he laughed and said to him, “Why are
 22 you training yourself, you thirteenth demon?^a •But speak, and I
 will put up with you.”
- 23 •Judas said to him, “I saw myself in the vision, with the twelve
 1 disciples stoning me and 45 pursuing [. . .] •And I came also to
 3 the place where [. . .] after you. •I saw [a building . . .], and my
 5 eyes could not [comprehend] its size. •Great people were sur-
 7 rounding it, and a roof . . . that house.^a •And in the midst of the
 11 building [. . .]. •Teacher, take me in along with Those People.”

RAad 82:10

GTh 13

Jesus explains the vision

- 12 [Jesus] answered and said, “Your star has led you astray, Ju-
 das, because no mortal human offspring is worthy to enter the
 17 building that you saw. •For it is that place that is kept for the holy
 ones, the place where neither the sun nor the moon will rule, nor
 the day, but they will stand at rest always in the aeon with the
 23 holy angels. •Lo, I have told you the mysteries of the kingdom,
 1 46 •and I have taught you about the error of the stars, and [. . .]
 send [. . .] upon the twelve aeons.”

35:23

II. EROTAPOKRISEIS (QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS)

(1) Influence of the rulers; uranography; creation

- 5 Judas said, “Teacher, surely my seed does not dominate the rulers, does it?”^a

44 a. “demon”: Greek *daimōn*. In classical literature, the term refers to spiritual beings that could be hostile, positive, or neutral toward human beings. In early Jewish and Christian works, the term came to have a consistently negative meaning.

45 a. The text in the MS is corrupt.

46 a. Possibly, “Teacher, surely my seed is not subject to the rulers, is it?”

- 7 •Jesus answered and said to him, “Come, and I will [speak
11 with] you [. . .], •but so that you might groan all the more when 35:23
you see the kingdom and its entire race.”
- 14 •When Judas heard these things, he said to him, “What more
have I received because you have separated me from that race?”
- 18 •Jesus answered and said, “You will become the thirteenth, 44:18
20 •and you will come to be cursed by the rest of the races, and you
24 will come to rule over them. •In the last days they <will . . .> you,
and you will not (?) go^b on high 47 to the [holy race].”

The invisible spirit and a luminous cloud

- 1 Jesus said: “[Come,] and I will teach you about the [. . .] that
5 [. . .] human being will see. •For there exists a great and infinite
8 aeon, the extent of which no angelic race has seen. •[In] it is a
10 great invisible spirit, •which no angelic eye has seen nor inner
thought comprehended and which has not been called by any
name.
- 14 •And a luminous cloud appeared there.^a 35:19
1Co 2:9
GTh 17

The self-originate and its four attendants

- 16 “And it (the invisible spirit) said, ‘Let an angel come into be-
18 ing for my attendance.’ •And a great angel, the self-originate, the
21 god of light, came forth from the cloud. •And for its sake four
other angels came into being from another cloud, and they came
into being for the attendance of the angelic self-originate.

Twelve aeons and luminaries

- 26 “And 48 the [self-originate] said, •‘Let [. . .] come into being.’
2 •And it happened [. . .], and it [established] the first luminary to
5 rule over it. •And it said, ‘Let angels come into being to serve [it].’
8 •And innumerable [myriads] came into being.
- 9,11 •“And it said, ‘[Let] a luminous aeon come into being.’ •And
it came into being, and it (the self-originate) established the sec-
ond luminary to rule over it, along with innumerable angelic
myriads serving.
- 15 •“And this is how it (the self-originate) created the rest of the
17 aeons of light,^a •and it caused them to be ruled, and it created
innumerable angelic myriads for their service.

b. The text in the MS is corrupt. Several words have been inadvertently omitted, obscuring the meaning of the words that follow.

48 a. A total of twelve: cf. 49:18f.

47 a. “luminous cloud”: probably the Barbēlō aeon, which Judas named earlier (35:17).

**Adamas, the incorruptible race of Seth,
72 luminaries, and 72 heavens**

21 “And Adamas existed in the first cloud of light,^b which no an-
1 gel has seen among all the things called ‘divine.’ 49 •And [. . .]
that [. . .] the image [. . .] and according to the likeness of [this]
5 angel. •And he (Adamas?) revealed the incorruptible [race] of
9 Seth to the twelve [luminaries . . .] •By the will of the spirit, he re-
12 vealed 72 luminaries among the incorruptible race. •And by the
will of the spirit, the 72 luminaries for their part revealed 360 lu-
16 minaries among the incorruptible race, •so that their number is
18 five for each. •And their source^a is the twelve aeons of the twelve
20 luminaries, •and for each aeon (there are) six heavens, so that
there are 72 heavens for the 72 luminaries.

The 360 firmaments and the corruptible world

25 “And for each 50 [of them (the 72 heavens)] (there are) [five]
2,3 firmaments, •[so that there are] 360 [firmaments.] •[. . .] were
given authority and a [great] angelic army without number for
7 glory and [service], •while [also] virgin [spirits] for glory and
service (were given) to all the aeons and the heavens and their
firmaments.
11,13 •“The multitude of those immortals are called ‘world,’ •that is,
‘corruption,’^a by the parent and the 72 luminaries that are with
18 the self-originate and its 72 aeons, •the place where the first hu-
22 man being appeared with his incorruptible powers.^b •And the
23 aeon that appeared with his race, •in which there are the cloud
of acquaintance and the angel, is called 51 Ēl[ēlēth (?). . .]

Nebrō, Saklas, and other rulers and angels

3 “Afterwards [Ēlēlēth (?)]^a said, ‘Let twelve angels come into
8 being [and rule] over chaos and [Hades].’ •And lo, from the EgG 68:5
cloud appeared an angel whose face poured forth fire and whose
12 likeness was defiled with blood. •He has [the] name, Nebrō,
which has been interpreted as ‘apostate,’^b but others call him ‘Ial-
16 dabaōth.’ •And another angel came forth from the cloud as well:

b. “the first cloud of light”: probably the first luminous cloud (47:14), i.e. the Barbēlō, or perhaps the first of the twelve luminous aeons brought into being by the self-originate (47:26–48:8f).

49 a. Lit. “parent”

compared to the 365 heavens and their angels in the cosmology of Basilides; cf. IrBas 1.24.3.

b. “the first human being” and “his incorruptible powers”: probably Adamas and the incorruptible race of Seth.

50 a. The 360 firmaments and their angels and spirits represent the transition to the material, corruptible world or the border between the incorruptible and corruptible realms. They may be

51 a. The restoration of Ēlēlēth is suggested by the survival of “Ēl-” at 51:1 and the parallel in EgG 68:5f.

b. Nebrō is a variation on Nimrod (Gn 10:8–12), whose Hebrew root means “to rebel.”

- 17 Saklas. •Nebrō created six angels—and (so did) Saklas^c—for at- EgG 68:31
 20 tendance, •and these (twelve angels) produced twelve angels in v.17
 the heavens, and each one received a portion in the heavens. EgG III
57:21f
 23, 26 •“And the twelve rulers spoke with the twelve angels: •‘Let Bjn 10:27
 1 each one of you 52 [. . .]’ •and they [. . .] race [. . . five] angels:
- 4 •The first is [. . .]^a, who is called the anointed.^b Bjn 10:28+
 6 •The [second] is Harmathōth, who [. . .]. EgG III 58:7
 8 •The third is Galila.
 9 •The fourth is Iōbēl.
 10 •The fifth [is] Adōnaios.
- 11 •These are the five that ruled over Hades and first over chaos. Bjn 11:4

Creation of Adam and Eve

- 14 “Next Saklas said to his angels, ‘Let us create a human being Gn 1:26
 18 according to the likeness and according to the image.’ •Then they
 modelled Adam and his wife Eve, but she is called in the cloud
 21 ‘Life’ (Zōē). •For it is in this name (Adam) that all the races seek
 him, and each one of them calls her by their names.
 25, 2 •“But Saklas did not 53 command [. . .] produce, •except [. . .]
 in the races [. . .] which [. . . Adam.]
 5 •“And the [angel] said to him, ‘Your life is going to be mea-
 sured by time, along with your children.’”

(2) The life span of humanity

- 8 And Judas said to Jesus, “What is the maximum that a human
 being will live?”
 10 •Jesus said, “Why are you amazed? For Adam received his Gn 6:3
 13 time measured out, along with his race, •in the place where he RAAd 67:10
 received his kingdom measured out,^a along with his ruler.”

(3) The fate of the spirit

- 16 Judas said to Jesus, “Does the human spirit die?”
 17 •Jesus said, “This is how god commanded Mikhaēl to give the Bjn 17:30
 spirits of the human beings to them while they serve—as a loan.
 22 •But the great one commanded Gabriēl to give the spirits to the EgG 64:17
 25 great undominated race, the spirit along with the soul. •There- Zs 58:20
 2 fore, the rest of the souls shall 54 [. . .] •light [. . .] chaos [. . .] RAAd 75:5,
 5 •spirit within you (pl.), which you have caused to dwell in this 76:24

c. That is, both Nebrō and Saklas create six an-
 gels, for a total of twelve.

53 a. The MS mistakenly reads, “he received his
 dominance in it measured out.”

52 a. Possibly, “Seth” or “Iaōth.”

b. “the anointed”: possibly a mistake for either
 “the lord” or “the ram.”

8 flesh among the races of the angels. •But god caused acquaintance to be brought to Adam and those with him, in order that the kings of chaos and Hades might not rule over them.”

(4) The corruption of humanity

13 And Judas said to Jesus, “What, then, will those races do?”

15 •Jesus said, “Truly I say to you (plur.), it is the stars that bring
18 completion upon all these things. •When Saklas completes the
21 times that have been assigned to him, •their first star^a will come
with the races, and the things that have been said will be brought
24 to completion. •Next, they will fornicate in my name and kill 40:7
1,5 their children, 55 •and [. . .] aeons, •bringing their races and pre-
7 senting them to Saklas. •And next [. . .] will come, bringing the
9 twelve tribes of [Israel] from [. . .], •and all the races will serve
12 Saklas, sinning in my name. •And your (sing.) star will rule over 38:24, 39:7
14 the thirteenth aeon.” •But then Jesus laughed. 46:18

(5) Destruction of the stars

15 [Judas] said, “Teacher, why [are you laughing at me?”]

16 •[Jesus] answered [and said,] “I am laughing not [at you, but]
19 at the error of the stars, •because these six stars go astray with
these five combatants,^a and they all will be destroyed with their
creations.” ClExc 74:2

(6) Fate of the baptized

23 And Judas said to Jesus, “Come then, what will those who
have been baptized in your name do?”

26 •Jesus said, “Truly I say [to you (sg.)], this baptism 56 [. . . in] my
4 name [. . .] •will destroy the entire race of Adam, the earthly man.
6,8 •Tomorrow the one who bears me will be tortured.^a •Truly I [say]
12 to you (pl.), no hand of a mortal human being [. . .] me.^b •Truly [I]
say to you, Judas, as for those who offer sacrifice to Saklas, they
15 all will be [destroyed (?)], •for the [. . .] upon the [. . .] and all [. . .]
18,18 •everything that is [evil]. •But as for you, you will surpass them
all, for you will sacrifice the human being who bears me.

22 •“Already your horn has been raised,

23 •and your anger has been filled,

24 •and your star has passed by,

24 •and your heart has [. . .].

Ps 89:17,
112:9,
148:14
Nb 11:1

54 a. “their first star”: possibly Judas or Judas’s star (cf. 55:12; 57:20).

55 a. “six stars” and “five combatants”: possibly the eleven stars of the other disciples.

56 a. The reference to the suffering of the earthly Jesus as happening “tomorrow” seems to contradict the opening, which places these dialogues “three days before he celebrated Passover” (33:1f).
b. Possibly, “[will sin] against me” or “[will touch] me.”

1,5 57 •“Truly [I say to you,] your final [. . .] •of the aeon have
 5 been [defeated, and] •the kings have become weak, and the races Rv 18:9
 of the angels have groaned, and the evils that [. . .] the ruler is
 10 destroyed. •And next, the [. . .] of the great race of Adam will be
 12 exalted, •for prior to heaven, the earth, and the angels, that race
 exists through the aeons.

Conclusion of the dialogues

16,17 “Lo, you have been told everything. •Look up, and see the
 20 cloud, the light within it, and the stars surrounding it. •And the
 star that leads the way is your star.”
 22 •And Judas looked up and saw the luminous cloud, and he Lk 9:34
 24 entered it.^a •Those standing on the ground heard a voice coming Ac 1:9
 1,5 from the cloud, saying, 58 •[“ . . . the] great race [. . .]” •And Judas Zs 4:20
 no longer saw Jesus. v.24
Mt 17:5
Mk 9:7
Lk 9:35

III. JUDAS HANDS JESUS OVER

6 And at once there was a disturbance among the Jews, more
 9 than [. . .] •Their high priests grumbled because [he] had gone
 12 into the guest room for his prayer. •But some of the scribes were Mk 14:14
 there watching closely, so that they might seize him during the Lk 22:11
 16 prayer. •For they were afraid of the people because they all held v.12
 him to be a prophet. Lk 22:2
 19 •And they approached Judas and said to him, “What are you Mt 21:46
 22 doing here? •You are Jesus’ disciple.” Mk 12:12
 23,24 •For his part, he answered them as they wished. •And Judas Lk 20:19
 took money and handed him over to them.^a Jn 18:17
Mt 26:15

57 a. The text is ambiguous as to whether it is Jesus or Judas who enters the cloud, but the subsequent reference to Judas no longer seeing Jesus (58:5f) suggests that it is Jesus.

58 a. In the MS, the title of this work is written after the text (at 58:28f).

THE REVELATION OF ADAM

(RAd)

CONTENTS

The Revelation of Adam (“Apocalypse of Adam”) tells the gnostic myth from the creation of Eve down to the savior’s final advent and the ultimate damnation of non-gnostic Christianity. The story line seems to be based primarily on the myth rather than Genesis. An important role is played by angels whose names are known from highly developed works such as EgG and Zs; this may indicate that a sophisticated form of the myth is presupposed. Yet in RAd the tale is abbreviated to the point of obscurity; a single biblical term (“god”) is used, for example, to describe both the satanic creator (Sakla, that is, Ialdabaōth) and the ineffable parent. No distinctive elements of non-gnostic Christianity occur in the work, leading some scholars to regard RAd as textbook evidence for the existence of non-Christian, that is, Jewish, gnostic religion; such scholars are obliged to minimize its connection with other, more obviously Christian, versions of the gnostic myth.

The genealogy of humankind is especially important to the author of RAd, though its exact details are obscure (partly owing to the imperfection of the MS). The human race appears to divide into three groups or races: (1) the posterity of Seth, that is, the gnostics who are destined for salvation; (2) the posterity of Noah, including (a) descendants of Sēm (Shem), the people of Israel (?); (b) descendants of Kham (Ham); (c) descendants of Iapheth (Japheth); and (3) apostates from (2)(b) and (c) who join the posterity of Seth and come under their protection. This threefold division seems to contradict Gn 5:1–6:1, which derives Noah from the Sethid line. Possibly the threefold division of humankind in Valentinian gnosticism should be compared.

Especially noteworthy is a fifteen-stanza poem on the incarnation of the savior, near the end of the work, comprising mythic material found nowhere else in gnostic myth.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of RAd are unknown. The date of its composition must be before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. The

mythic content of RAd resembles EgG, 3Tb, FTh, Zs, and Fr. The work is attributed by implication to Seth, recording words spoken by his father Adam; it is thus an example of pseudepigraphy. The language of composition was Greek.

RAd has a complex mixture of genres in which certain traditional materials are subordinated to others:

I. Heavenly message

A. Deathbed literature (autobiography of a hero)

1. Angelic revelation: prediction of the “true history” of humankind

As in EgG and 3Tb, the whole work is presented (85:3f) as a *heavenly message*, in this instance brought by angelic messengers and set on a high mountain, perhaps engraved on tablets. The convention of the heavenly message is a commonplace of ancient Mediterranean revelatory literature. The body of the message in RAd falls into the category of *deathbed* (or farewell) *literature*, in which a patriarch summons his children to hear his last words. Such works, often called “testaments,” are known from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (e.g., *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*); they do not seem to have ever attained a set generic form. In the present example, Adam makes a final autobiographical statement to his son Seth, and in it he recounts an *angelic revelation* that he once received. The revelation comprises historical predictions, which amount to a revisionist “*true history*” of the Sethid line of humanity down to the final incarnation of the savior, partly paralleling the book of Genesis. The monologue eventually assumes the form of poetry (parallel strophes, 77:27f), but concludes with a prose description of the final damnation of the non-gnostic line of humankind.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Great Eternal Aeons Mentioned in the Work

The ETERNAL GOD, or simply “god.” The god of truth.

A REVEALER, in the form of “three persons.” (Forethought?)

The GREAT SETH. The human being who is the seed of the great race.

“That Human being.”

THE GREAT RACE, or incorruptible seed, of the great Seth

The HOLY SPIRIT (not clearly distinguished in the text)

GREAT ETERNAL ANGELS and AEONS, including:

ABRASAKS, SABLŌ, GAMALIĒL

MIKHEUS, MIKHAR, MNĒSINOUS

IESSEUS-MAZAREUS-IESSEDEKEUS

II. Rulers Mentioned in the Work

The RULER OF THE AEONS AND POWERS. The lord god, or simply “god,” creator of Adam and Eve. Called Sakla (Saklas).

POWERS and ANGELS that are with the ruler

III. Humankind Mentioned in the work

ADAM, the first human being

EVE, his wife

A CHILD OF EVE's begotten by the ruler (Cain)

SETH. A child of Adam and Eve.

NOAH and HIS POSTERITY, including his sons:

KHAM (Ham)

IAPHETH (Japheth)

SĒM (Shem)

The POSTERITY OF KHAM AND IAPHETH, constituting twelve kingdoms

400,000 RENEGADES from the posterity of Kham and Iapheth. A thirteenth kingdom.

The SEED OF SETH. "Those People."

A superior HUMAN BEING, in whom the great luminary becomes incarnate

IV. A Spirit Active in Humankind

PRIOR ACQUAINTANCE, eternal acquaintance. The life, or glory, that belongs to acquaintance.

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC V (pp. 64–85), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on MacRae's critical edition of the Coptic, into which a few new restorations by Stephen Emmel have been incorporated: G. W. MacRae, ed., in *Nag Hammadi Codices V2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4* (D. M. Parrott, ed.; Nag Hammadi Studies, vol. 11; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 151–95.

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The testament of Adam

- 2 The revelation^a that Adam taught to his son Seth in the seven
 5 hundredth year,^b saying: •Listen to my utterances, my son Seth!

85:19
 EpG 26.8.1?

I. THE HISTORY OF ADAM

Adam and Eve a mobile androgyne

- 6 After god^c had made me of earth, along with your mother Eve,
 10 I used to go about with her in glory.^d •<. . .>^e that she beheld,
 12 from the eternal^f realm from which we had derived. •And she
 (or it)^g taught me an account of acquaintance with the eternal
 14, 16 god.^h •And we resembled the greatⁱ eternal angels. •For, we were
 superior to the god that had made us, and to the powers that are
 with him,^j which we had not (yet) become acquainted with.

RR 87:23+
 BJn 4:36
 FTh 45:8+
 EgG 62:24
 v.12
 BJn 20:19+

Creation of Eve. Passage of divine acquaintance into an “other” race.

- 20 Next, god the ruler of the aeons and the powers angrily gave
 22 us a command. •Next, we became two aeons,^k and the glory that
 was in our hearts—your mother Eve’s and mine—left us, as did

RR 89:7 +
 64:6
 64:12
 66:21
 BJn 19:25 +

64 a. Greek *apokalypsis*, “apocalypse.”

b. According to the Septuagint Greek version of Gn 5:3–5, Adam was 230 when he begot Seth and died in the seven hundredth year thereafter. The scene of RAD is therefore set at the end of Adam’s life, and Adam’s speech is like a testament.

c. The ruler of the aeons, the creator.

d. “glory”: an extraterrestrial element (see note 64m).

e. Some Coptic words are inadvertently omitted here. For grammatical reasons, “that she beheld” does not relate to “glory.”

f. “eternal”: gnostic jargon, which in RAD indicates membership in the spiritual realm.

g. “she (or it)”: some entity mentioned in the words omitted at 64:10f, possibly a manifestation of wisdom.

h. The other god, the god of truth.

i. “great”: gnostic jargon, which in RAD indicates membership in the spiritual realm.

j. In keeping with the biblical style of RAD, the word “god” is picked up by “he, him,” etc., in this English translation.

k. Prior to this event, Adam and Eve were coupled like Siamese twins or as an androgyne. It was widely held that the first human creation of god was an androgyne until the splitting apart of female and male.

- 28 the prior^l acquaintance that had breathed^m within us. •And it (the glory) fled from us and entered [some other]ⁿ great [aeon and some other] great [race]. •It was (?) not from the present realm (aeon)—from which your mother Eve and I derive—that it (acquaintance) [came]: 65•rather, it passed into the seed belonging to great aeons. •For this reason, I too called you by the name of That Human Being^a who is the seed of the great race—
 32 3 it (acquaintance) [came]: 65•rather, it passed into the seed belonging to great aeons. •For this reason, I too called you by the name of That Human Being^a who is the seed of the great race—
 5 5 longing to great aeons. •For this reason, I too called you by the name of That Human Being^a who is the seed of the great race—
 9,9 •or rather, from him (?)^b •After those days, eternal acquaintance with the god of truth became distant from your mother Eve and
 14 me. •From that time on, we learned about mortal affairs, like human beings.

Bjn 24:13+

66:1 +

Bjn 9:11

Bjn 25:1

Bjn 25:7

RR 91:9

Enslavement of Adam and Eve to the creator

- 16 Next, we became acquainted with the god that made us.
 18, 19 •For we were not alien to his powers. •And we served him in fear
 21, 24 and servility. •And after this, we became dark in our hearts. •And I, for my part, was asleep in the thinking of my heart.

Adam's revelation

- 25 Now, I saw before me three persons,^c whose images I could not recognize, inasmuch as they were not from the powers of the
 32 god that had [made us]. •[. . .] they surpassed [. . .] glory [. . .] . . .
 1 [. . .], saying to me, 66•“Adam! Arise from the sleep of death and hear about eternity and the seed of That Human Being,^a to whom life^b has drawn near and which has emanated from you and from Eve your consort.”

EgG 50:23+

76:24?

Bjn 31:4+

65:3

Bjn 25:20+

Rebuke of Adam by the creator

- 9 Next, when I had heard these utterances from Those Great People who were standing before me then Eve and I sighed in
 14 our hearts. •And the lord god that made us stood before us and
 17 said to us, •“Adam! Why were you (plur.) sighing in your hearts?
 18 •Do you (plur.) then not recognize that it is I who am god, who

RR 90:19

1. Or “first.”

m. According to Bjn 19:22f, when the creator (Ialdabaōth, there called Sakla) “breathed” its spirit into Adam as breath of life to make him alive, the stolen “power” of wisdom passed into Adam. In RAD, “the glory” has a similar function and mobility, as a kind of spiritual element.

n. “other”: or “foreign, alien”; gnostic jargon, which in RAD is associated with the seed of Seth on earth; it is based on Gn 4:25 (Septuagint), “god has raised up to me *some other* seed instead of Abel.”

66 a. I.e. the great Seth. The terms “That” and “Those” are gnostic jargon, which in RAD indi-

cates membership in the spiritual realm. The mystifying “That” (Greek *ekeinos*) was esoteric jargon known especially from Pythagorean circles.

b. The Coptic text is slightly corrupt here; one or more words may have been inadvertently omitted.

c. As in Bjn 2:1f, the vision of the savior (forethought, the Barbēlō) has three aspects of a shifting character. Cf. Bjn, note 2b.

66 a. The coming human manifestation of the great race of heavenly seed of Seth.

b. The “prior acquaintance” of “glory” that had “fled” from Adam and Eve, “entered [some other] great [aeon and some other] great [race]” (64:28f).

- 21 made you (plur.)? •And that it is I who breathed a spirit of life into you (plur.), for you to be a living soul?” 64:22+

Cain. The mortality of Adam.

- 23, 25 Next, darkness came over our eyes. •Next the god that made us made a child (begotten) by himself [on] Eve [your] mother^c . . .
 1 [...] . . . [...] . . . [...] in the [...] the thinking . . . 67•I became
 4 acquainted with a sweet desire for your mother. •Next, the zenith of our eternal acquaintance perished from within us, and weakness pursued us. •For this reason, the days of our life became few.
 10
 12 •For, I knew that I had come under the authority of death. 76:17
 Gjd 53:10

II. PREDICTIONS REVEALED TO ADAM

- 14 So now, my son Seth, I shall disclose unto you what Those Persons whom I had earlier seen before me disclosed unto me. 65:25
 21 •For after I have completed the times of the present generation and [the] years of [...] have come to an end, then [...] servant [...] . . . 69^a

A. Early History of the Seed of Seth

The flood

- 2 Now, in order that god almighty^b might destroy all fleshly beings from out of the earth because of what they seek after, rains of his will [...] upon those (members) of the seed consisting of the people into whom has passed [the] life that belongs to acquaintance^c—(the life) that left your mother Eve and me. •For they were alien to him. •After this, great angels will come in lofty clouds, (angels) that will take Those People into the place in which the spirit [of] life dwells [...] ^d 70 •exist from the heaven
 3
 4 unto the earth (?). •[...] the entire [...] of fleshly creatures will
 6 be left behind in the [...]. •Next, god will rest from his wrath.
 8 •And he will cast his power upon the waters, and [he will] bestow power upon his^a sons and [their wives] (after they come) out of the ark, along with [the] beasts that he has been pleased with and the birds of heaven that he has summoned and released on earth. Bjn 28:32+
 64:32
 Bjn 20:14
 Bjn 29:1+

c. I.e. Cain

69 a. Page 68 of the MS is blank; it has a very irregular surface and could not have been used by the ancient copyist.

b. The ruler of the aeons, the creator.

c. The seed of Seth.

d. About four lines of Coptic text have been destroyed here. Noah and the ark were perhaps introduced in the missing passage.

70 a. “He . . . [he] . . . his” (70:8f): the antecedents of these pronouns are ambiguous; either Noah or god almighty is meant in each instance.

The creator's covenant with Noah

16, 17 And god will say to Noah, •whom the races will call Deuka- BJn 29:12
 19 lion,^b •“See, I have kept watch over you (sing.)^c in the ark, along EpG 26:1.6
 with your wife and your sons and their wives and their beasts
 and the birds [of heaven] that you have called [and released] on
 1 [earth. . .]^d 71 •Therefore I shall give you (sing.) and your off-
 2 spring the land. •With dominance you (sing.) and your offspring
 4 will dominate it. •And out of you (sing.) will come no seed of
 humankind that will not stand in my presence in some other
 glory.”^a

The creator's discovery of the “other” race

8 Next, they^b will become like the cloud of the great light.
 10 •Those who have been cast out from acquaintance with the
 14 great aeons^c and the angels will come. •They will stand in the
 presence of Noah and the aeons.^d
 16, 17 •And god will say to Noah, •“Why have you gone outside of
 18 what I said to you (sing.)? •You have made some other race in
 order to heap scorn upon my power!”
 20 •Next, Noah will say, “I shall testify in the presence of your IrSat 1.24.2
 strength that it was neither by me nor [by my offspring] that the
 race of these people came to exist. [. .]^e

Entry of the “other” race into its land

1, 3 72 •[. .] acquaintance [. .] Those People, •and bring them in
 to their worthy land, and build for them a holy dwelling place.
 5 •And they will be called by That Name^a and will dwell there six
 10 hundred years in acquaintance with incorruptibility. •And an-
 12 gels of the great light will dwell with them. •No hateful matter
 shall be in their hearts, only acquaintance with god.

The testament of Noah

15 Next, Noah will divide up the whole land among his sons
 18 Kham (Ham), Iapheth (Japheth), and Sēm (Shem). •He will say

b. “Deukalion”: a Noah figure in Greek myth. He and his wife Pyrrha built an ark (“coffer”) in which they survived a flood brought wrathfully upon them by Zeus.

c. The MS here erroneously has “him.”

d. About four lines of Coptic text have been destroyed here.

71 a. “other”: or “foreign, alien”; i.e. one associated with the seed of Seth (cf. note 64n). The text may be slightly corrupt here. More logical would be “no seed of humankind that will stand in my presence in some other glory.”

b. Probably, the seed of Seth.

c. Presumably the descendants of Cain, since the glory did not return until the birth of Seth the son of Adam.

d. Perhaps not the “great eternal aeons,” but rather the lower, demonic aeons ruled by Sakla (cf. 64:20f).

e. Altogether about four lines of Coptic text have been destroyed here.

72 a. I.e. “the seed of Seth.”

to them, “My sons, listen to my utterances. Behold, I have divided up the land among you: then serve him^b in fear and servitude all the days of your life. •Do not let your posterity go from before the face [of] god almighty. [. . .] your [. . .] and I [. . .].”^c

Shem’s covenant

31 •[Next Sēm (Shem), the] son of Noah, [will say, “My] posterity [will] be pleasing in your presence and in the presence of
4 your power. 73 •Seal it with your mighty hand by fear and commandment. •For none of the posterity that has come forth from
6 me will turn away from you or from god almighty: •rather, they Bjn 25:9+
10 will serve in humility and fear (because) of their knowledge.”^a

Entry of Hamids and Japhethids into the “other” land

13 Next, others from the posterity of Kham (Ham) and Iapheth (Japheth), namely 400,000 people, shall go and enter some other land and sojourn with Those People^b who came into being out of
20 great eternal acquaintance. •For the shadow of their power will guard those who have sojourned with them from all evil deeds and all foul desires.

25 •Next, the posterity of Kham (Ham) and Iapheth (Japheth)
27 will make twelve kingdoms.^c •And [their other] posterity^d will enter the kingdom of some other people.

Accusation against the “other” people

30 [Next, . . .] will consider [. . .] aeon (or realm) [. . .] mortal
3 [. . . of] the great aeons of incorruptibility. 74 •And they will
4 go to Sakla^a their god; •they will go in to the powers, accusing
7 the great men that dwell in their glory. •They will say to Sakla,
8 •“What is the power of these people who have stood in your
10 presence; •who have been subtracted from the posterity of Kham
(Ham) and Iapheth (Japheth), amounting to 400,<000>^b people;
13 •have been received back into some other realm—the one
14 from which they have come; •and have overturned all the glory
17 of your power and the dominion of your hand? •For, within the realms (aeons) where your rule has been dominant, the posterity of Noah through his son has done all the will of yourself and of

b. The ruler of the aeons, the creator.

c. Altogether about four lines of Coptic text have been destroyed here.

73 a. “knowledge”; the word translated here means propositional or expository knowledge, and not acquaintance (*gnōsis*).

b. The seed of Seth.

c. “kingdoms”: here and throughout the

text, the Coptic word can be translated also “reigns,” “dominions,” or “kingships.”

d. The 400,000 renegades.

74 a. “Sakla” (Aramaic “fool”), elsewhere called Saklas: a conventional name of Satan in Judaism.

b. Through an inadvertence the MS here has “400.” Cf. 73:13f for the correct number.

- 21 all the powers; •while also Those People and the people who
sojourn in their glory have not done what is pleasing to you,
25 •[but rather] have upset your entire throng.”

Fiery attack upon the “other” people

- 26 Next, the god of the aeons will give to them some of (?) those
30 who serve [him^c . . .] except . . . •They will come to that land
where the great people, who neither have become defiled nor
5 will become defiled by any desire, are going to dwell: 75 •for it GJd 53:22
was not by a defiled hand that their souls came into existence,
rather they came from a great commandment of an eternal angel.
9 •Next, fire, brimstone, and asphalt will be cast upon Those EgG 72:13
11.13 People. •And fire and haze shall come over those aeons,^a •the Gn 19:24
15 eyes of the powers of the luminaries^b shall grow dim, •and the IrUnid 1.31.1
aeons shall not have vision in those days. EgG III 56:9

Their rescue

- 17 And great luminous clouds will descend, and from the great
aeons^c still other luminous clouds will descend upon them.
21 •Abrasaks, Sablō, and Gamaliēl will descend and remove Those EgG 64:14+
25 People from the fire and wrath, •and take them above the aeons
and the realms of the powers, and [take] them [. . .] living [. . . ,
and] take them [. . .] the aeons [. . .] dwelling place (?) of the great
3 [. . .] there and the holy angels and the aeons. 76 •The people will
5 come to resemble those angels, •for they are not alien to them:
6 •rather, it is at the incorruptible seed^a that they^b labor.

B. Advent of the Savior

The incarnation

- 8 Once again, for a third time,^c the luminary of acquaintance^d RR 96:28
will pass by in great glory, in order to leave behind some of the
posterity of Noah^e and the children of Kham (Ham) and Iapheth
14, 15 (Japheth)—•to leave behind fruit-bearing trees for itself. •And
it (the luminary) will ransom their souls from the day of death.
17 •For the entire (multitude of) modeled form^f that came into 67:12

c. Or possibly “who [do not] serve [him . . .]”

75 a. Perhaps not the “great eternal aeons,” but rather the lower, demonic aeons ruled by Sakla (cf. 64:20f).

b. The sun and the moon.

c. The spiritual realm.

b. The eternal angels.

c. After the flood and the fire.

d. The great Seth (see note 76h).

e. Offspring of Sēm, Noah’s favored “posterity” (Gn 9:26f).

f. “modeled form”: Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

76 a. The great race of the great Seth, i.e. its earthly manifestation as the seed of Seth.

existence out of mortal earth will dwell under the authority of
 21 death. •But those who think in their hearts upon acquaintance Bjn25:30
 24 with god the eternal will not perish. •For they have not received Bjn 25:20+?
 26 spirit from the same kingdom;^g •rather, it is from an eternal, an- Gjd 53:22
 gelic [...] that they have received it [...] luminary [...] upon
 1 [...] mortal [...] ... [...] Seth.^h 77 •And he will perform signs and Gjd 33:6
 wonders, in order to heap scorn upon the powers and their ruler.
 4 •Next, the god of the powers will become troubled, saying,
 5 •“Which (sort) is the power of this human being who is superior
 to us?”

The persecution

5 Next, he will raise up great wrath against That Human Being.
 9 •And the glory shall go elsewhere^a and dwell in holy buildings
 12 that it has chosen for itself. •And the powers^b will not see it with
 their own eyes, nor will they see the other luminary.^c
 16 •Next, they will chastise the flesh^d of the human being upon
 whom the holy spirit has come.
 18 •Next, all the powers' angels and races will make use of the
 23 name deceitfully, saying, •“Whence did it (the flesh) come into
 23 existence?” •Or else, “Whence came the utterances of falsehood
 that all the powers have failed to make out?”^e

Explanations of the incarnation^f

27 Now, the first kingdom [says of him],
 “He came into existence [from a . . .]
 1 78 A spirit [...] upward,
 And he was nourished in the heavens,
 2 He received its glory and power,
 3 And arrived at the lap of his mother.
 5 And it was thus that he arrived at^a the water.”

EgG 75:4
 Zs 4:25

g. Implying perhaps that they received a spirit from a different kingdom; cf. perhaps the “spirit of life” of Bjn.

h. The final advent of the “luminary” of acquaintance (cf. 76:8f) seems to be the incarnation of the great “Seth” in the form of a “mortal” human being, who is superior to the powers.

77 a. If the preceding passage describes the temporary union of the preexistent great Seth with Jesus of Nazareth, then the present sentence may refer to the departure of the divine person (“glory”), i.e. the luminary or great Seth, from Jesus’ body shortly before his death on the cross; cf. IrUnid 1.30.13.

b. “the powers” of the ruler of the aeons, the creator.

c. Perhaps, the great Seth or glory. For “other,” see note 71a.

d. Perhaps, crucify.

e. Lit. “find.” The two deceitful questions (77:23f) concern, respectively, the origin of the incarnate savior’s flesh and the identity of the divine person incarnate in the flesh.

f. The first twelve stanzas are answers given by the posterity of Kham and Iapheth (73:25f); the thirteenth is by the 400,000 renegades (73:13f); the fourteenth, by the seed of Seth. The poem does not relate an answer by the posterity of Sēm.

78 a. Or “came upon.” Possibly, Jesus’ arrival at the Jordan for baptism by John the Baptist (Mt 3:13f, Mk 1:9f, Lk 3:21f, Jn 1:31f).

6 And the second kingdom says of him,
 7 "He came into existence from a great prophet.
 9 And a bird came, and took the child that had been
 born and brought him into a high mountain.
 12 And he was nourished by that bird of heaven.
 13 An angel came from there and said to [him], 'Arise!
 God has glorified you.'
 16 He received glory and strength.
 17 And it was thus that he arrived at^b the water."

18 The third kingdom says of him,
 19 "He came into existence from a virgin womb.
 21 He was cast out of his city along with his mother;
 22, 23 He was taken to a deserted place; •there he nourished
 himself.
 24 He came and received glory and power.
 25 And it was thus that he arrived at^c the water."

27 [The fourth] kingdom [says of him],
 28 "He came into existence [from a] virgin (?)^d
 1 [. . . search] for her himself, 79 along with Phēr-
 salō and Sauēl and his armies that they had sent.
 3 Solomōn, too, sent his army of demons^a to search for
 the female virgin
 6 And they found not the female for whom they sought,
 but rather the female virgin who had been given
 to them:
 9 It was she whom they brought.
 9 Solomōn took her, and the female virgin became preg-
 nant and bore the child in that place.
 13 She nourished him within a boundary^b of the desert.
 14 When he had been nourished, he received glory and
 power from the seed from which he had been
 engendered.
 18 And it was thus that he arrived at^c the water."

19 And the fifth kingdom says of him,
 21 "He came into existence from a droplet of heaven.
 22 He was sowed^d into the sea.

b. Or "came upon."

c. Or "came upon."

d. "virgin (?)," perhaps Greek *parthenos*: of this Greek word only two letters survive in the MS.

79 a. It was commonly believed by ancient Jews and Christians that King Solomon's proverbial

wisdom (1 K 4:29–34) extended to the control of demons. In this capacity he was invoked by orthodox writers, gnostics, and magicians.

b. Or "palisade."

c. Or "came upon."

d. Or "cast."

23 And the abyss took him unto itself and engendered
 him, and bore him up.
 24 And he received glory and power.
 26 And it was thus that he arrived at^c [the water].”

28 And [the] sixth kingdom [says],
 29 “. . . [. . .]to the lower realm (aeon),
 1 **80** So that he^a might [gather] flowers.
 2 She became pregnant from the desire for^b the flowers,
 and bore him in that place;
 5 And the angels of the flower bed nourished him.
 6 And he received glory and power in that place.
 8 And it was thus that he arrived at^c the water.”

9 And the seventh kingdom says of him,
 11 “He was a droplet and came from heaven onto the
 earth.
 13 Dragons^d took him down into their dens, and he beca-
 me^e a servant.^f
 15 A spirit came over him and lifted him up on high to
 where the droplet had come from;
 18 And he received glory and power in that place.
 19 And it was thus that he arrived at^g the water.”

20 And the eighth kingdom says of him,
 22 “A cloud came over the earth and surrounded a rocky
 outcrop.^h
 24 From it he came into existence.
 25 [The] angels that preside over [the] cloud
 nourished him,
 27 And he [received] glory and power [in that] place.
 29 And it was [thus] that [he] arrived [at]ⁱ [the water].”

1 **81** And [the ninth] kingdom says of him,
 2 “One of the nine Pierian Muses^a went apart from
 the rest.

e. Or “came upon.”

80 a. Or “it.”

b. Or “desire of.”

c. Or “came upon.”

d. Or “snakes.”

e. “He was a droplet and . . . took him . . . he became” (80:11f); or “There was a droplet that . . . took it . . . it became.”

f. Or “child.”

g. Or “came upon.”

h. Or “a rock.”

i. Or “came [upon].”

81 a. “the nine Pierian Muses”: traditional Greek deities of poetry, literature, music, dance, astronomy, and similar pursuits, celebrated as the source and patrons of inspiration and wisdom. Pieria, in Greece, was famous as one of their most ancient sites of veneration.

4 She arrived at (or came upon) a high mountain and
 tarried, sitting there, and so felt desire for herself
 alone, so as to become androgynous.
 8 She realized her desire, became pregnant from her
 desire, and he was born.
 10 The angels that preside over desire nourished him.
 12 And he received glory and power in that place.
 13 And it was thus that he arrived at^b the water.”

14 The tenth kingdom says of him,
 16 “His god became enamored of a cloud of desire, and
 produced him into his hand.
 18 And he ejaculated an additional quantity of the droplet
 upon the cloud.
 20 And he was born and received glory and power in that
 place.
 22 And it was thus that he arrived at^c the water.”

24 And the eleventh kingdom says,
 25 “The father felt desire for his [. . .] daughter, and she
 too became pregnant by her father;
 28 And she cast [. . .] tomb^d outside in the desert,
 1 **82** And the angel nourished him in that place.
 3 And it was thus that he arrived at^a the water.”

4 The twelfth kingdom says of him,
 6 “He came into existence from two luminaries,^b
 7 And they nourished him there.
 8 He received glory and power.
 9 And it was thus that he arrived at^c the water.”

10 And the thirteenth kingdom^d says of him,
 12 “Every one of their ruler’s begettings [is] a verbal
 expression.^e
 14 And this verbal expression received an ordinance in
 that place.
 15 He received glory and power.
 17 And it was thus that he arrived at^f the water.
 18 So that those powers’ desires might be harmonized.”

Gjd 44:18

b. Or “came upon.”
 c. Or “came upon.”
 d. Or “cave.”

b. The sun and the moon.
 c. Or “came upon.”
 d. The 400,000 renegades, 73:13f.
 e. Or “Word.”
 f. Or “came upon.”

82 a. Or “came upon.”

- 19 But the undominated race^g says,
 21 “God^h chose him from all the aeons,
 23 And caused acquaintance with the incorruptible qual-
 ity of truth to reside [in] him.”
 25 He said,
 “The great luminary has emanated [from] an alien air,
 [from a] great aeon.
 28 •And [he has caused (?)] the race of Those People to be
 luminous—
 2 83 Those whom he chose unto himself,
 3 So that they might be luminous over all the realm.”^a

C. The Final Struggle

Protection of the seed of Seth

- 4 Next, the seed, who will have received his name upon the wa-
 ter^b— and from them all (?)—will struggle against the power.
 7 •And an obscure cloud will come upon them.

Acclamation of the seed of Seth

- 8 Next, the peoples will cry out in a loud voice, saying,
 11, 12 •“Blessed are the souls of Those People,^c •for they have become
 14 acquainted with god^d in acquaintance with truth. •They will live
 15 for ever and ever! •For they have not perished by their desires, as
 17 have the angels; •nor have they completed the deeds of the pow-
 19 ers. •Rather, they have stood at rest^e in his presence in acquaint-
 ance with god, like light that has emanated from fire and blood.

Lament of the damned

- 23 “But for our part, we have done everything in the folly of IrSat 1.24.2+
 25 the powers. •We have boasted of the transgression of [all] our
 28 deeds. •We have cried out against [the god] of [truth] because his
 1, 2 [works] . . . is eternal. 84 •These [belong to] our spirits. •Indeed,
 now we know that our souls are going to die with death.”

Accusation of the damned by the guardians of baptism

- 4 Next, a voice came to them—for Mikheus, Mikhar, and FTh 48:18 +
 Mnēsinous, who preside over holy baptism and living water,

g. The seed of Seth.

h. The eternal god.

83 a. Or “over all eternity.”

b. In baptism (?). The text of this sentence is slightly corrupt.

c. The seed of Seth.

d. The eternal “god.”

e. To “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, non-change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

8 were saying, •“Why^a were you (plur.) crying out against the living god with lawless voices, unlawful tongues, and souls full of blood and foul [deeds]? •You are full of deeds that do not belong
14 to truth; •instead, your ways are full of revelry and fun. • Having
16, 17 defiled the water of life,^b you have drawn it unto the will of the powers, into whose clutches you have been given, so as to serve
23 them. •And your thinking does not resemble that of Those People, whom you have persecuted. . . . [. . .] desire [. . .]. 85 •Their
1 fruit does not wither. •Rather, they will be people who are recognized as far as the great aeons.”

Delivery of divine revelation unto the saved

3 For the extant^a utterances of the god of the aeons have not Bjn 31:28
been inscribed in the (form of a) book nor are they in writing:
7 •rather, <it is> angelic beings—about whom none of the races of
9 humankind knows anything—who will deliver them. •For, they EgG 80:16+
will be situated atop a high mountain upon a rocky outcrop^b of truth.
12 •Therefore, they will be called oracles^c of incorruptibility [and] truth (given) unto those who, by wisdom of acquaintance and by teaching of angelic beings, are eternally acquainted with
18 the eternal god: •because he is acquainted with all things.

III. TRANSMISSION AND CONTENTS OF THE TREATISE

19 These are the revelations that Adam disclosed to his son Seth.
21, 22 •And his son taught them to his seed. •This is the secret acquaintance 64:2
24 of Adam that he delivered unto Seth •and which, for those
26 who are acquainted with eternal acquaintance •through the agency of the reason-born beings and the incorruptible luminaries who emanated from the holy seed, is holy baptism,^d •Iesseus- EgG 75:25+
30 Mazareus-Iessedekus, [the living] water.^e

84 a. “Next, a voice . . . were saying, ‘Why . . .’” (84:4f): in this passage the copyist of the Coptic text has miscopied one letter; the English translation presupposes correction of the error. Without correction, the text appears to say: “Next, a voice came to them, saying, ‘O Mikheus, Mikhar, and Mnēsinois: O you who preside over holy baptism and living water! Why . . .’”

b. Possibly, by an improper kind of baptism.

85 a. Or “preserved.”

b. Or “rock.”

c. Or “utterances.”

d. True (“holy”) baptism is “acquaintance” (*gnōsis*).

e. Uncertain remnants of one more line of text survive; apparently it was the title “Revelation of Adam” copied as a subscript, duplicating 64:1f.

THE REALITY OF THE RULERS

(RR)

CONTENTS

The Reality of the Rulers (“Hypostasis of the Archons”) recounts the gnostic myth from the creation of Ialdabaōth down to Noah and the flood and concludes with a prediction of the final advent of the savior, the destruction of demonic powers, and the victory of the gnostics. In the first half of the work the story line intertwines with the wording of Genesis in the Septuagint Greek version, tacitly calling attention to discrepancies between the myth and canonical scripture. Of special importance is an unusual account of the rebellion of Sabaōth against his satanic father Ialdabaōth and his eventual installment as lord of the seventh heaven, that is, as the god of Israel (?). Learned etymologies and puns on Semitic names suggest close contact with a Jewish or Jewish-Christian milieu, despite the anti-Jewish intention of the myth. Apart from the opening paragraph, no elements clearly characteristic of non-gnostic Christianity occur in the work. The author’s theological perspective stresses the activity of divine providence (“the will of the parent”) even in the deeds of the demonic rulers, probably thus altering to some degree the original intent of gnostic myth.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of RR are unknown. The date of its composition must be sometime before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. The language of composition was Greek.

RR has a complex mixture of genres in which various traditional materials are subordinated to others:

- I. Learned treatise
 - A. Cosmogony
 - B. “True history” of humankind
 1. Angelic revelation dialogue
 - a. Cosmogony
 - b. Historical predictions

The whole work is presented as a *learned treatise* in which a teacher addresses a topic ostensibly suggested by the dedicatee of the work. The treatise begins with a fragment of *cosmogony*, which leads naturally into a revisionistic “true history” of the events in Gn 2:7f. Within the narration of the true history occurs an *angelic revelation dialogue* (for this genre, cf. BJn, “Literary background”). In it, the revealing angel repeats and elaborates the author’s fragment of *cosmogonic myth* in much broader scope, concluding with *historical predictions* of the coming of the savior and the end of days. At the end the narration assumes the form of poetry (parallel strophes).

The sequence of these elements within the work is unnatural and, to a degree, repetitive (86:27f = 94:19f) and thus obscure. The more straightforward order would be:

1. Cosmogony (94:2f, cf. 86:27f)
2. “True history” of humankind (87:11f)
3. Historical predictions (96:28f)

The “*true history*” closely mimics the wording of the parallel Genesis passages but with considerable additions, omissions, and substitutions. The result is a text that sounds like a close paraphrase of Genesis but in fact significantly deviates from it in theology and mythic content. Such paraphrases are sometimes called “targums”; they amount to a form of commentary in which the commentator’s remarks have been incorporated into the object of commentary. Typical examples of the form are preserved in Aramaic; they are of either a Jewish or a Jewish-Christian origin and date roughly from the time of gnostic scripture. A classic example is *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, which (though by no means gnostic) contains striking parallels to RR.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned in the Work

The PARENT OF THE ENTIRETY. The invisible virgin spirit.

INCORRUPTIBILITY

The CHILD, who presides over the entirety

FOUR LUMINARIES that stand before the parent of the entirety:

ĒLĒLĒTH and three others

The TRUE HUMAN BEING

The UNDOMINATED RACE

WISDOM (Sophia), also called faith wisdom (Pistis Sophia)

LIFE (Zōē), her daughter

II. Rulers, Also Called Authorities

IALDABAŌTH. The chief ruler. Called SAKLA and SAMAĒL.

Ialdabaōth’s first SEVEN OFFSPRING, including:

SABAŌTH

Ialdabaōth's SECOND OFFSPRING, including:

ENVY

DEATH, etc.

CHERUBIM, ANGELS, etc., including:

The ANGEL OF ANGER

III. Humankind

ADAM. The first human being.

EVE. His wife and counterpart.

Eve's children:

CAIN, begotten by the rulers

ABEL, begotten by Adam

SETH, a son through god

NĪREA or Ōrea

NOAH and his FAMILY

The CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

IV. A Spirit Active in Humankind

The SPIRIT OF LIFE. The female spiritual principle.

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC II (pp. 86–97), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic, with very minor alterations: B. Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons . . ." (see "Select Bibliography"), 67: 351–425. An earlier version of the translation appeared in that publication and is revised here with the kind permission of the publisher.

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The Reality of the Rulers^a

I. THE AUTHOR'S TEACHING

Occasion for the treatise

- 20 **86** On account of the reality^b of the authorities,^c inspired by the
spirit of the parent of truth,^d the great apostle^e—referring to the
23 authorities of the darkness—told us that •“our contest is not
against flesh and [blood]; rather, the authorities of the world
26 and the spiritual hosts of wickedness.” •[I have] sent (you) this^f
because you (sing.) inquire about the reality [of the] authorities.

96:22 + ?
BJn 25:20?
Ep 6:12

Reproof of Ialdabaōth's arrogance

- 27, 28 Their chief is blind;^g •[because of its] power^h and its lack of
30 acquaintance [and its] arrogance it said, with its [power], •“It is
I who am god; there is none [apart from me].”
31, 32 •When it said this, it sinned against [the entiretyⁱ]. •And this
1 utterance got up to incorruptibility; **87** •then there was a voice
3 that came forth from incorruptibility, saying, •“You are mis-
taken, Samaēl”—which is, “god of the blind.”^a

94:23 +
94:21 +
BJn 10:20+
v.30
Is 46:9
v.32
93:29, 94:4
BJn 5:20+
v.1
94:23 +

Passage of the power out of Ialdabaōth

- 4, 4 Its^b thoughts became blind. •And, having expelled its power—
that is, the blasphemy it had spoken—it pursued it down to
7 chaos and the abyss, its mother,^c •at the instigation of^d faith wis-

BJn 19:15+
94:31
BJn 10:20

Title 86 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 97:22f).

b. The Greek word (*hypostasis*) can be translated also “genesis” and “nature.”

c. In this text, the terms “rulers” and “authorities” are equivalent.

d. The parent of the entirety.

e. Paul.

f. I.e. this treatise. The author here addresses a dedicatee.

g. I.e. ignorant.

h. This brief account differs significantly from the narrative in BJn 10:19f, 12:5f, 13: 1f, and 19:15f,

in which the chief ruler steals “power” from wisdom, and is subsequently induced to implant it in humankind.

i. The sum total of spiritual reality deriving, ultimately, from the parent of the entirety.

87 a. “Samaēl”: Aramaic for “blind god.”

b. “It”: the chief ruler.

c. “abyss”: the corresponding Greek word (*abyssos*) is grammatically feminine and thus easily spoken of as a “mother.” The father, as it were, is wisdom.

d. Or “by.”

- 8 dom (Pistis Sophia). •And she appointed each of its offspring ac- 95:1 +
 9 cording to its respective power^e—•after the pattern of the eternal 96:13
 10 realms^f that are above, •for by starting from the invisible domain 94:34 +
 the visible domain was invented.^g

Projection of an image of incorruptibility

- 11 As incorruptibility^h gazed down into the region of the waters, EgG III 59:6
 14 its image was shown forth in the waters; •and the authorities
 15 of the darkness became enamored of it. •But they could not lay
 hold of that image, which had been shown forth to them in the
 17 waters, because of their weakness—•since merely animate be- Bjn 28:6
 18 ings cannot lay hold of those which are spirit-endowed; •for they
 were from below, while it was from above.ⁱ

Creation of Adam out of matter

- 20 This is the reason why ‘incorruptibility gazed down into the 87:11
 22 region (etc.):’ •so that, by the parent’s will, it might join the en- 88:10, 88:34
 23, 24 tirety unto the light.^j •The rulers laid plans and said, •“Come, let 96:11
 us create a human being that will be soil from the earth.” •They EgG III
 26 v.23
 modeled their creature as one wholly of the earth. •Now, the rul- Gn 1:26a
 27 ers^k [. . . body . . .] they have [. . .] female [. . .] is . . . face(s) . . . are . Bjn 15:1
 29 .. bestial. . . •They took [some soil] from the earth and modeled Bjn 20:33
 31 [their human being], •after their body and [after the image] of RA4 64:6
 god^l that had been shown forth [to them] in the waters. IrUnid 1.30.6
 v.27
 94:18
 v.29
 Gn 2.7
 v.31
 Gn 1:26

Animation of Adam. His immobility.

- 33, 33 They said, •“[Come, let] us lay hold of it^m by means of our
 34 modeled form,ⁿ •[so that] it may see its male counterpart [. . .],
 1 **88** •and we may seize it by means of our modeled form”—not
 understanding the power of god, because of their powerlessness. 87:4
 3, 4 •And it^a breathed into his face; •and the human being came to Gn 2:7
 5 be animate and remained upon the ground many days. •But they Bjn 19:25+
 v.4
 Bjn 19:10+

e. “power”: or “faculty,” specific kind of planetary influence.

f. Or “aeons.”

g. The “invisible domain” is the realm of immortals; it is hidden behind a cosmic veil (cf. 94:8f).

h. “Incorruptibility”: one of the aeons deriving from the parent of the entirety. The text here presupposes knowledge of a more complicated exposition of theology, such as found in Bjn 4:26f (cf. especially 6:5f).

i. Incorruptibility is “from above” and so possesses, or is, spirit (“spirit-endowed,” Greek *pneumatikos*); while the rulers are from the visible domain (“below”) and so possess soul but not spirit (“merely animate,” Greek *psykhikos*).

j. “the light”: according to Bjn (2:30f) the parent of the entirety can be described as uncontaminated light.

k. In the following passage the original text is uncertain owing to the imperfection of the MS. The passage described the rulers’ body, which served as a prototype for that of Adam (87:31f).

l. I.e. the image of incorruptibility.

m. The image, which they cannot distinguish from incorruptibility itself.

n. “modeled form”: Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

88 a. “it”: the chief ruler.

- 6 could not make him arise because of their powerlessness.^b •Like 87:4
 storm winds they persisted (in blowing), that they might capture
 9 that image,^c which had appeared to them in the waters. •And they
 did not recognize the identity of its power.

Passage of the spirit into Adam

- 10 Now, all these events came to pass by the will of the parent of 87:22+
 11 the entirety. •Afterward, the spirit saw the animate human being
 13 upon the ground. •And the spirit came forth from the Adaman- BJn 20:14+
 tine Realm;^d •it descended and came to dwell within him, and BJn 8:28+
 14 that human being came to be a living soul. •It called his name v,14
 16 Adam since he was found moving upon the ground.^e Gn 2:7

Sending of a helper to Adam

- 17 A voice^f came forth from incorruptibility for the assistance of BJn 20:19
 19 Adam; •and the rulers gathered together all the animals of the Gn 2:18
 earth and all the birds of the sky and brought them in to Adam v,19
 to see what Adam would call them, that he might give a name to Gn 2:19f
 each of the birds and all the beasts.

His introduction into paradise

- 24, 25 They took Adam [and] put him in the garden (paradise), •that Gn 2:15
 26 he might cultivate [it] and keep watch over it. •And the rulers BJn 21:16
 27 issued a command to him, saying, •“From [every] tree in the
 29 garden shall you (sing.) eat, •yet [from] the tree of acquaintance Gn 3:3
 31 with good and evil do not eat, nor [touch] it; •for the day you
 (plur.) eat [from] it, with death you (plur.) are going to die.”
 32, 33 •They [. . .] this. •They do not understand what [they have
 34, 1 said] to him; •rather, by the parent’s will, 89•they said this in 87:22 +
 2 such a way that he might (in fact) eat, •and that Adam might
 <not>^a regard them as would a person of an exclusively material
 nature.

Creation of Eve. Passage of the spirit into Eve.

- 3, 4 The rulers took counsel with one another and said, •“Come, BJn 22:21+
 5 let us cause a deep sleep to fall upon Adam.” •And he slept.— Gn 2:21

b. Because the chief ruler had already emitted and lost its power by uttering blasphemy (86:28–87:4f), it was unable to impart the power of erect posture to the human being.

c. If the modeled form stands upright it will serve as a decoy by means of which the rulers hope to lure the image out of the waters and “seize it.” All the following episodes presuppose the rulers’ erotic attraction to incorruptibility and all that is spiritual.

d. The “spirit” is the “female spiritual principle” (cf. 89:31f). “Adamantine”: lit. “steel,” but here

used as an esoteric word referring to “Adamas” (or “Geradamas”), the heavenly prototype of Adam; cf. BJn 8:28f, EgG 61:5f.

e. According to a traditional etymology “Adam” means “earth” (Hebrew *’adāmāh*); the etymology was known to speakers of both Greek and Semitic languages.

f. A faculty of speech.

89 a. The word “<not>” is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

- 6 •Now, the deep sleep that they “caused to fall upon him, and he
7 slept” is lack of acquaintance.—•They opened his side like a liv-
9 ing^b woman. •And they built up his side with some flesh in place
10 of her, •and Adam came to be merely animate.^c
- 11 •And the spirit-endowed woman came to him and spoke
13 with him, saying, “Arise, Adam.” •And when he saw her, he said, BJn 22:32+
Th
RAad 64:22
- 14, 15 •“It is you who have given me life; •you will be called ‘mother of
16, 16 the living.’ •For it is she who is my mother. •It is she who is the
midwife,^d and the woman, and she who has given birth.”^e BJn 23:9+
Th
Gn 3:20
Th 13:25
Gn 2:23

The rape of Eve

- 17, 18 Then the authorities came up to their Adam. •And when they
saw his female counterpart speaking with him, they became ag-
21 itated with great agitation; •and they became enamored of her.
- 21, 22 •They said to one another, •“Come, let us sow our seed^f in her,”
23 and they pursued her. •And she laughed at them for their folly Th 16:16
25 and their blindness; •and in their clutches, she^g became a tree,^h
26 •and left before them a shadowⁱ of herself resembling herself; BJn 24:13+
28 and they defiled [it] foully.—•And they defiled the seal of her
29 voice,^j •so that by their modeled form,^k together with [their] own
image, they made themselves liable to condemnation.

Passage of the spirit into a snake

- 31 Then the female spiritual principle came [in] the snake, the Gn 3:1
FTh 42.17?
IrUnid 1.30.7
EpG 26.2.6
v.34
Gn 2:16
BJn 22:3 +
32 instructor;^l •and it taught [them], saying, “What did it [say to]
34 you (plur.)? •Was it, ‘From every tree [in the] garden (paradise)
shall you (sing.) eat; yet from [the tree] of acquaintance with evil
and good do not eat’?”
- 2, 3 **90** •The carnal woman^a said, •“Not only did it say ‘Do not eat,
but even ‘Do not touch it; for the day you (plur.) eat from it, with
death you (plur.) are going to die.’ ” Gn 3:2f
v.3
Gn 2:17

b. “living”: gnostic jargon indicating membership in the immortal realm. It is especially common in EgG.

c. Because the rulers have removed the spiritual element from Adam in the form of a “living woman,” he is no longer spirit-endowed; cf. note 87i.

d. Or “physician.”

e. “you have given me life . . . midwife . . . she who has given birth (or ‘lying-in woman’)”: here begins a series of learned puns in Aramaic on the root of *Ḥawwāh*, the Aramaic equivalent of “Eve” (*ḥayyītāni* . . . *ḥayy’tā* . . . *ḥayy’tā*). *Ḥawwāh* is thus a name of the spiritual element present in the “spirit-endowed woman.” Since they cannot be perceived in Greek, these puns may be evidence of the author’s close contact with Semitic-speaking culture. See also note 89l.

f. Sexually.

g. I.e. the spiritual element within the woman.

h. The tree of life, Gn 2:9.

i. “shadow”: a Platonist cliché for “copy”; i.e. the animate body of Eve, without the spiritual element.

j. The text may be corrupt here.

k. The woman modeled from a part of Adam’s side (89:7f).

l. “tree (of life) . . . snake . . . instructor” (89:25–31f): more learned puns in Aramaic on the root of the name of Eve (*ḥayyayyā* [“life”] . . . *ḥew’yā* . . . **ḥāwē* [hypothetical *Peal* participle, “the one who instructs”]). See note 89e.

90 a. I.e. the animate body of Eve. without the female spiritual principle.

- 6, 6 •And the snake, the instructor, said, •“With death you (plur.) Gn 3:4f
 7 shall not die; •for it was out of envy that it said this to you (plur.).
 8 •Rather, your (plur.) eyes shall open and you (plur.) shall come
 11 to be like gods, recognizing evil and good.” •And the female in-
 12 structing principle^b was taken away from the snake, •and she left
 it behind merely a thing of the earth.
- 13, 14 •And the carnal woman took from the tree and ate; •and she Gn 3:6f
 14 gave to her husband as well as herself; •and these merely animate
 15 beings^c ate. •And their imperfection was shown forth in their
 16 lack of acquaintance; •and they knew that they were naked of
 the spiritual element, and took fig leaves and bound them upon
 their loins.

The expulsion from paradise

- 19, 20 Then the chief ruler came; •and it said, “Adam! Where are Gn 3:9f
 20 you?”—•for it did not understand what had happened. BJn 23:20+
RAd 66:14f
- 21 •And Adam said, “I heard your voice and was afraid because
 I was naked; and I hid.”
- 24 •The ruler said, “Why did you (sing.) hide, unless it is be-
 cause you (sing.) have eaten from the tree from which alone
 I commanded you (sing.) not to eat? And you (sing.) have
 eaten!”
- 27 •Adam said, “The woman that you gave me, [she gave] to
 29 me and I ate.” •And the arrogant [ruler] laid a curse upon the Gn 3:13f
 woman.
- 30, 31 •The woman said, •“It was the snake that led me astray and
 32 I ate.” •[They^d turned] to the snake and laid a curse upon its
 33 shadow,^e [. . .] powerless, •not recognizing [that] it was their own
 34 modeled form. •From that day, the snake came to be under the
 2 curse of the authorities; **91** •until the perfect^a human being was
 to come, that curse lay upon the snake. 96:32
- 3 •They turned to their Adam and took him and expelled him Gn 3:24
 5 from the garden along with his wife; •for they have no blessing,
 since they too are under the curse.
- 7 •Moreover, they threw humankind into great distraction and
 9 into a life of toil, •so that their humankind might be occupied RAd 65:14
 10 by worldly affairs, •and might not have the opportunity of being
 devoted to the holy spirit.

b. Lit. “(female) instructor”; see note 891.

c. I.e. Adam and Eve.

d. The rulers.

e. The animate body of the snake, without the
 spiritual element. Cf. note 891.

91 a. Or “all-powerful,” Greek *teleios*.

Cain and Abel

- 11, 12 Now afterward, she bore Cain, their son;^b •and Cain culti- Gn 4:1f
 13, 14 vated the land. •Thereupon he^c knew his wife; •again becoming Bjn 24:8 +
 15 pregnant, she bore Abel; and Abel was a herdsman of sheep,
 18 •Now Cain brought in from the crops of his field, but Abel
 18 brought in an offering from among his lambs. •God^d gazed
 upon the votive offerings of Abel; but he did not accept the
 20 votive offerings of Cain. •And carnal Cain pursued Abel his Gn 4:8
 brother.
 21 •And god said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?”
 23 •He answered, saying, “Am I, then, my brother’s keeper?”
 24 •God said to Cain, “Listen! The voice of your brother’s
 blood is crying up to me! You have sinned with your mouth.
 27, 27 •It will return to you: •anyone who kills Cain will let loose seven
 29 vengeance, •and you will exist groaning and trembling upon
 the earth.”

Seth and Nōrea

- 30 And Adam [knew]^e his female counterpart Eve, and she be- Gn 4:25
 32 came pregnant, and bore [Seth]^f to Adam. •And she said, “I have Bjn 24:34+
 borne [another] man through god, in place [of Abel].” v.32
 34, 35 •Again Eve became pregnant, and she bore [Nōrea].^g •And Gn 4:1
 she said, “He has begotten on [me a] virgin as an assistance [for]
 2 many generations of humankind.” 92 •She is the virgin whom
 the powers did not defile.

The flood. Nōrea and Noah.

- 3 Then humankind began to multiply and improve. Gn 6:1
 4, 5 •The rulers took counsel with one another and said, •“Come, Bjn 28:32+
 let us cause a flood with our hands and obliterate all flesh, from v.5
 human being to beast.” Gn 6:7
 8 •But when the ruler of the power^a came to know of their de- Gn 6:13f
 10 cision, it said to Noah, •“Make yourself an ark from some wood Bjn 29:1+
 that does not rot and hide in it—you and your children and the

b. I.e. the rulers’ son, begotten on Eve’s “shadow,” or physical body, by their act of raping her in a gang. The posterity of Cain are therefore the offspring of devils.

c. Adam.

d. “god”: possibly Sabaōth, “god of the powers” (95:22f); cf. also 92:2–8f.

e. Sexually.

f. Restoration of the name “[Seth]” can be considered certain because of the biblical parallel (Gn

4:25) and is confirmed by the number of letters probably missing in the MS.

g. Restoration of “(Nōrea)” is confirmed by 92:21f, 32f, and subsequent mentions of the name.

92 a. “ruler of the powers”: Sabaōth. The text here presupposes knowledge of the rebellion of Sabaōth, “god of the powers,” which is narrated only later (95:13–96:3f). See also note 91d.

beasts and the birds of the sky from small to large—and set it upon Mount Sir.”^b

- 14, 16 •Then Ōrea^c came to him wanting to board the ark. •And when he would not let her, she blew upon the ark and caused it to
17 be consumed by fire. •Again he made the ark, for a second time.
18 •The rulers went to meet her intending to lead her astray.
19 •Their supreme chief said to her, “Your mother Eve came to us.”

EpG 26.1.7+

Confrontation of Nōrea and the rulers

- 21, 22 But Nōrea turned to them and said to them, •“It is you who
23 are the rulers of the darkness; you are accursed. •And you did
24 not know^d my mother; •instead it was your female counterpart
25, 26 that you knew. •For I am not your descendant; •rather, it is from
the world above that I am come.”
27 •The arrogant ruler turned, with all its might, [and] its coun-
29 tenance came to be like (a) black [. . .];^e •it [said] to her recklessly,
30 •“You must render service^f to us, [as did] also your mother Eve;
31 •for I have been given [. . .].”
32, 33 •But Nōrea turned, with the might of [. . .]; •and in a loud
voice [she] cried out [to] the holy, the god of the entirety,
1 93 •“Rescue me from the rulers of injustice and save me from
their clutches—immediately!”

89:26
Bjn 25:9+

Appearance of Ēlēlēth

- 2 The <great> angel came down from the heavens and said to
4 her, •“Why are you crying up to God? Why do you act so reck-
lessly toward the holy spirit?”
6 •Nōrea said, “Who are you?”
7, 8 •The rulers of injustice had withdrawn from her •It said, “I
am Elelēth, prudence, the great angel who stands in the presence
11 of the holy spirit. •I have been sent to speak with you and save
12 you from the grasp of the lawless. •And I shall teach you about
your root.”^a

EgG 73:6

93:18
Bjn 8:16 +

b. In ancient Mediterranean lore, Seiris (China?) was an idealized far-away place whose inhabitants had special access to primeval wisdom. Jewish tradition held that in this land Seth’s descendants had recorded information about the heavens, inscribing it upon tablets. See “Historical Introduction” to the Hermetic Corpus.

c. “Ōrea” (Greek *Hōraia*, “beautiful”): a variant form of “Nōrea,” which is used hereafter.

d. “lead her astray . . . came to us . . . did not know” (92:18–23f): sexually.

e. The original text was probably either “like black [lead]” or “like intense [fire].”

f. “render service”: sexually.

93 a. “root”: i.e. origin and source of spiritual sustenance.

II. NŌREA'S NARRATION: THE TEACHING OF ĒLĒLĒTH (DIALOGUE)

- 13, 14 Now, as for that angel, I^b cannot speak of its power: •its image
16 is like fine gold and its raiment is like snow. •No, truly, my mouth
cannot bear to speak of its power and the image of its face!
- 18, 19 •Elelēth, the great angel, spoke to me. •“It is I,” it said, “who 93:7+
20 am intelligence. •I am one of the four luminaries, who stand in
22 the presence of the great invisible spirit. •Do you think these
23 rulers have any power over you (sing.)? •None of them can pre- 97:13
25 vail against the root of truth; •for on its account he has been
26 shown forth in the final ages (?);^c •and these authorities will be
27 dominated. •And these authorities cannot defile you and That
29 Race;^d •for your (plur.) abode is in incorruptibility, where the 86:32+
virgin spirit dwells, which is superior to the authorities of chaos
and to their world.”
- 32 •But I said, “Sir, teach me about the [faculty^e of] these au- 96:15f
34 thorities—•[how]^f did they come into being, and by what kind
35, 1 of genesis, •[and] of what material? 94 •And who created them
and their power?”

Production of wisdom's offspring: Ialdabaōth

- 2 And the great angel Elelēth, intelligence, spoke to me: Bjn 9:25+
4 •“Within limitless eternal realms (aeons) dwells incorruptibility. 86:32+
5 •Wisdom (Sophia), who is called faith (Pistis), wanted to create
7 something, alone without her partner; •and her product was a
celestial thing.
- 8 •“A veil exists between the world above and the realms (ae-
10 ons) that are below;^a •and shadow^b came into being beneath the
12, 13 veil; •and that shadow became matter; •and that shadow was
14 projected apart. •And what she had created became a product in
16 the matter, like an aborted foetus. •And it assumed a plastic form
16 molded out of shadow, •and became an arrogant beast resem-
18 bling a lion.” •It was androgynous, as I have already said, because 87:27 ?
it was from matter that it derived.^c

b. From here on the narrator is Nōrea.

c. The text is slightly corrupt here.

d. “That Race”: i.e. the undominated race. The term “That” is gnostic jargon indicating membership in the immortal realm. It is especially common in RAd.

e. Or “force, strength.”

f. Or “[whence]”

94 a. The existence of such a heavenly curtain was a common Jewish teaching at the time RR was written.

b. Total darkness, because the veil blocks off the realm of light.

c. “it was androgynous . . . derived”: not a part of Nōrea's narrative, but rather a learned remark by the author of RR, referring perhaps to 87:27f.

Ialdabaōth's arrogance

- 19 “Opening its eyes it saw a vast quantity of matter without
21,21 limit; •and^d it became arrogant, saying, •‘It is I who am god, and
there is none other apart from me.’ 86:28, 95:4
Bjn 13:5+
Is 45:21
- 22,23 •“When it said this, it sinned against the entirety. •And a voice
25 came forth from above the realm of absolute power, saying, •‘You
are mistaken, Samaēl’—which is, ‘god of the blind.’ 87:1, 95:5+
FTh 39:32
EgG III 59:1
IrUnid 1.30.6
96:1
- 26 •“And it said, ‘If any other thing exists before me, let it be
28 shown forth to me! •And immediately wisdom (Sophia)
31 stretched out her finger and introduced light into matter; •and
32 she pursued it down to the region of chaos. •And she returned up
33 [to] her light; • once again darkness [. . .] matter. 87:4+

Creation of the universe and of other rulers

- 34 “This ruler, by being androgynous, made itself a vast realm,^e
1 an extent without limit. 95 •And it contemplated creating off-
2 spring for itself, •and created for itself seven offspring, androgy-
nous just like their parent. 87:10
Bjn 12:33+
v.1
87:8
Bjn 10:27+
v.2
Bjn 11:26+
94:18
v.4
94:21+
- 4 •“And it said to its offspring, ‘It is I who am the god of the
entirety.’

Relegation of Ialdabaōth to Tartarus

- 5 “And life (Zōē), the daughter of faith wisdom (Pistis Sophia),
cried out and said to it, ‘You are mistaken, Sakla!’^a—for which
8 the alternate name is Ialtabaōth.^b •She breathed into its face,
9,10 •and her breath became a fiery angel for her; •and that angel
bound Ialdabaōth and cast it down into Tartarus, at the bottom
of the abyss. 94:23+
IrUnid 1.30.7
Bjn 11:15

Repentance and elevation of Sabaōth

- 13 “Now, when its offspring Sabaōth saw the power of that angel,
it repented and condemned its father and its mother matter. Bjn 10:33+
IrSat 1.24.2
IrUnid 1.30.5
IrUnid
1.30.8?
EpA 40:5.1+
EpG 25.2.2+
- 17 •“It loathed her, but it sang songs of praise up to wisdom (So-
19 phia) and her daughter life (Zōē). •And wisdom and life caught
it up and appointed it in charge of the seventh heaven, below
22 the veil between above and below. •And it was called ‘god of the

d. Ēlēlēth begins retelling the narrative already told at 86:28f.

e. Or “aeon.”

95 a. “Sakla” (Aramaic “fool”): a conventional name of Satan in Judaism.

b. “Ialtabaōth” (also “Ialdabaōth,” “Aldabaōth”): a conventional gnostic name for the chief ruler, i.e.

Satan. The name has been explained as a learned neologism based on two Aramaic components: “begetter of” (*yal’ā-*) and “Sabaōth” (*aba’ōt*, a secondary form of *saba’ōt*), thus describing the chief ruler’s position as parent of Sabaōth or of heavenly armies in general. The name has no significance in Greek, but its meaning might have been guessed by an Aramaic speaker.

powers, Sabaōth,^c since it is up above the powers of chaos, for wisdom (Sophia) appointed it.

- 26 •“Now when these events had come to pass, it made itself a
 31 huge four-faced^d chariot of cherubim, and infinitely many angels
 32 to render assistance and also harps and lyres. •And wisdom took
 33 her daughter life and had her sit at its right to teach it about the
 34 things that exist [in] the eighth (heaven); •and the angel [of] EpA 40.2.3
 35 anger she placed at its left. •[Since] that day, [its right] has been EpG 26.10.4+
 1 called life, 96 •and the left has come to represent the injustice of
 3 the realm of absolute power above. •It was before your (sing.)
 time that they came into being (?).^a 94:23

Creation of other rulers

- 3 “Now, when Ialdabaōth saw it in this great splendor and at Bjn 11:4
 6 this height, it envied that being; •and the envy became an an- IrUnid 1.30.5
 7,8 drogynous product; •and this was the source of envy. •And envy
 engendered death; and death engendered its offspring and ap-
 pointed each of them in charge of its heaven; and all the heavens
 of chaos became full of their multitudes.
 11 •“But it was by the will of the parent of the entirety that they 87:22+
 13 all came into being—•after the pattern of all the things above— 87:9
 13 •so that the sum of chaos might be attained.^b
 15 •“There, I have taught you (sing.) about the pattern of the rul- 93:32f
 16, 16 ers; •and the matter in which it was expressed; •and their parent;
 and their world.”

Promise of salvation for Nōrea’s offspring

- 17 But I said, “Sir, am I too from their matter?”
 19 •“You, together with your offspring, belong to the primeval IrSat 1.24.2+
 20 parent;• from above, out of the incorruptible light, their souls
 22 are come. •Thus the authorities cannot approach them because
 25 of the spirit of truth present within them; •and all who have be- 86:20?
 come acquainted with this way exist immortal in the midst of 96:32
 dying humankind. Bjn 25:20
EpG 26.6.2

c. “Sabaōth”: Hebrew “armies” or “powers,” originally the second half of a traditional epithet of Jahweh, “god of the armies (or powers).” By the early Christian period, the single word “sabaōth” had begun to be taken as a name of god, as here. In RR, “Sabaōth” corresponds to the god of Israel; its parent is Satan.

d. Or “four-sided.”

96 a. The text may be slightly corrupt here.

b. Possibly a reference to the Neoplatonic doc-

trine of *plenum formarum*, according to which the production of all grades of possible existents would be a logically necessary consequence from the assumption of an omnipotent and benevolent first principle. Such a chain of graded beings would extend from the most perfect first principle down to the least perfect being at the bottom of Tartarus, thus “attaining the sum” or sum total of possibilities when it reached the limit “of chaos.”

c. The parent of the entirety.

Coming of the true human being

- 27, 28 “Still, that posterity will not be shown forth now. •Instead, after three generations^d it^e will be shown forth, and free them from the bond of the authorities’ error.” Bjn 30:32
RAAd 76.8
FTh 47:13
EgG 74:17 +
- 31 •Then I said, “Sir, how much longer?”
- 32 •He said to me, “Until the moment when the true human being, within a modeled form,^f reveals (?) the existence of [the spirit of] truth, which the parent has sent.” 91:2
96:22 +

Poem of deliverance: the final generation

- 1 97 “[THEN] that being will teach them about every
2 thing: •And will anoint them with the ointment of eternal life, given unto that being from the undominated race.” Bjn 30:11
Zs 63:22
- 5, 6 “THEN they will be freed of blind thought: •And they will trample under foot death, which is of the authorities: •And they will ascend into the limitless light, where this posterity belongs.” 87:4
96:8
- 7
- 10, 11 “THEN the authorities will relinquish their ages: •And their angels will weep over their destruction: •And their demons will lament their death.” FTh 44:14+
EgG 74:4
v.11
FTh 44:10
IrSat 1.24.2+
- 12
- 13 “THEN all the children of the light will be truly acquainted with the truth and their root, and the parent of the entirety and the holy spirit: •They will all say with a single voice, ‘The parent’s truth^a is just, and the child presides over the entirety’: •And from everyone unto the ages of ages, ‘Holy, holy, holy! Amen!’ ”^b 93:23
- 16
- 19

d. Or “ages, epochs.”

e. “it”: the posterity.

f. Perhaps meaning that after three “generations” or ages have passed, a heavenly “true human being” will become incarnate in a body (“modeled form”).

97 a. I.e. judicial accuracy.

b. In the manuscript the title of this work is written after the text (at 97:22f).

THE THUNDER— PERFECT INTELLECT

(Th)

CONTENTS

The Thunder—Perfect Intellect (“Thunder, Perfect Mind”) is a riddlesome monologue spoken by the immanent savior, here represented as a female character and identifiable as “afterthought,” a manifestation of wisdom and Barbēlō in gnostic myth. In gnostic myth the role of afterthought—also known as “life” (Zōē), the female instructing principle, and the holy spirit—is to assist both Adam and all humankind, in order to recollect the power stolen by Ialdabaoth (BJn 20:14f) and now dispersed in the gnostic race. She is immanent in all gnostics who have the holy spirit (BJn 25:20f). Although the monologue consists almost entirely of self-descriptions and exhortations directed to the reader, three short passages refer to the mythic setting of the savior’s words: (1) she has been sent from “the power,” or Barbēlō (cf. BJn 4:26f), and is immanent within humankind (13:2f); (2) she continues in her mission to “cry out” and summon members of the gnostic race (19:28f); (3) souls that respond will gain liberation from the material world and ascend to a place in the metaphysical universe where the speaker herself resides, and will not suffer reincarnation (21:27f). These allusions to the gnostic myth (however ambiguous), the identification of the speaker as “afterthought” (14:10f), and the resemblance of the work to *The Gospel of Eve* read by the gnostic sect (EpG 26.3.1) all suggest that Th should be considered a part of gnostic scripture and understood in the context of such works. Further support for this reading comes from RR 89:14f, where Adam uses similar words to address the female spiritual principle, that is, afterthought, who is resident in Eve: the passage may be an allusion to Th. Nevertheless, some scholars have doubted that Th bears any relation to gnostic myth.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of Th are unknown. The date of its composition must be sometime before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. The language of composition was Greek.

The mixture of genres in Th is simple:

I. Wisdom monologue

A. Self-description (riddles), alternating with

B. Exhortations

The work as a whole is a poem (parallel strophes) in the form of a *wisdom monologue*. In this genre a female divine voice, traditionally the Jewish figure of Dame Wisdom or the Egyptian goddess Isis, speaks directly to the readers about her own virtues and exhorts or summons them to assimilate to her; two types of material, self-description and exhortation, alternate in Th. Examples of the genre occur in the Old Testament (e.g., Pr 8); it also shapes the form of materials found in some passages of the New Testament and elsewhere in early Christian literature. Hellenistic-Roman Egyptian parallels are provided by numerous Greek inscriptions (“aretalogies”) on stone connected with the cult of Isis; in these, the goddess speaks in a version of the genre.

The paradoxical content of the *self-descriptive passages* (“identity riddles”) is almost unique in surviving examples of the wisdom monologue; for ancient readers it must have been one of the most striking features of the work. These paradoxes come from quite another source, for they mimic the logic of the Greek identity riddle—a well-known form in the ancient Mediterranean world. In this type of riddle, a person or personified object describes itself paradoxically; the solution of the riddle is the speaker’s identity. For example, “No one seeing me sees me, but one who does not see beholds me. One who does not speak speaks; one who does not run runs. And I am a liar, yet say all things true.” (Traditional solution: $\text{}\omega\text{r}\omega\text{p}\ \epsilon\text{.}$)

Among ancient riddles there was one from Hellenistic Judaism that may have been the starting point for the wild development of paradox in Th: “A human being begot me, and my parent is supernatural. He calls me life (Zōē), and I bring him death” (Planudean appendix to the *Anthologia Palatina* 7.44). The traditional solution is “Eve”—for she came out (was “begotten”) of Adam (“a human being”) but as the vivifying principle she was ultimately an emanation of god the “parent.” According to the Septuagint Greek version of Gn 3:20, Adam (“he”) called the woman not Eve but “Life” (punning on the Hebrew name “Eve”); and yet—in the orthodox, non-gnostic reading of Genesis—she led him to sin and “death.” This Hellenistic-Jewish Eve riddle is alluded to as early as Philo of Alexandria, circa 30 B.C.–A.D. circa 45 (*Quis rerum* 11, par. 52). It is probably referred to also in Th 16:11f, 19:15f, though here of course with a gnostic reinterpretation made possible by the gnostic author’s identification of life (Zōē) and afterthought (see preceding section, “Contents”) and presupposition of the gnostic myth.

Many of the speaker’s paradoxical assertions about her kinship and ethical relations can be understood by allowing that in the riddle of Th, two distinct actors are being referred to by the name “Eve”: (1) the fleshly spouse of Adam (his “brother” or sibling while they were an original androgyne; his child because she was extracted from him; his wife or mate); (2) afterthought, the celestial Eve (mother of Adam because she is the vivifying principle and made him alive—

compare Gn 3:20, “mother of all the living”; mother of the fleshly Eve for the same reason; a perpetual virgin even though the rulers raped the fleshly Eve). A version of gnostic myth like that told in RR seems to be presupposed.

Th bears striking resemblances to the description and excerpt of the gnostic *Gospel of Eve* given by St. Epiphanius (EpG 26.2.6–26.3.1), in which the paradoxical voice of wisdom is described as “a voice of thunder.”

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC VI (pp. 13–21), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on MacRae’s critical edition of the Coptic: G. W. MacRae, ed., in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Bero-linensis 8502,1 and 4* (D. M. Parrott, ed.; Nag Hammadi Studies, vol. 11; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 231–55.

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1 13 The Thunder—Perfect Intellect

FTh 43:13?
EpG 26.3.1
18:9
FTh 47:7

Exhortations (1)

2 It is from the power that I, even I, have been sent
3 And unto those who think on me that I have come;
4 And I was found in those who seek me.^a

14:10 +
Bjn 4:36+

5 Look upon me, O you (plur.) who think on me.
7 And you listeners, listen to me!
8 You who wait for me, take me unto yourselves,
9 And do not chase me from before your eyes.
11 And do not make your sound hate me: nor your hearing.
12 Do not be unacquainted with me at any place: or even at
 any time.
14 Keep watch! Do not be unacquainted with me!

Identity riddles (1)

15 For, it is I who am the first: and the last.
16 It is I who am the revered: and the despised.
18 It is I who am the harlot: and the holy.
19 It is I who am the wife: and the virgin.
20 It is I who am the mother: and the daughter.
21 I am the members of my mother.
22 It is I who am the barren: and who has many children.
23 It is I who am the one whose marriage is magnificent: and
 who have not married.
25 It is I who am the midwife: and she who does not give
 birth;
26 It is I who am consolation: of my own travail.
27 It is I who am the bride: and the bridegroom.
29 And it is my husband who has begotten me.

16:27, 16:29
18:20

RR 89:16

13 a. This (13:2–4f) is one of three short passages in Th that may narrate parts of a gnostic myth of the descent of the savior; see also 19:28f and 21:27f.

30 It is I who am the mother of my father: and the sister of
my husband.

32 And it is he who is my offspring.

33 It is I who am the servant of him who prepared me:

34 It is I who am the governess of my (own) offspring.

1 14 Yet it is he who [began me] before (due) time, on a
birthday:

3 And it is he who is my offspring in (due) time.

4 And my power comes from him.

18:14
Bjn 22:28

5 I am the staff of his power in his childhood:

6 [And] it is he who is the rod of my old age,

8 And whatever he wishes happens to me.

9 It is I who am incomprehensible silence:

10 And afterthought, whose memory is so great.

13:1
Bjn 20:14 +
v.12
19:20 +

12 It is I who am the voice whose sounds are so numerous:

13 And the discourse whose images^a are so numerous.

14 It is I who am the speaking: of my (own) name.

Exhortations (2)

15 Why, O you who hate me, do you love me,

16 And hate those who love me?

18 Declare me publicly, O you who deny me:

19 And deny me, O you who declare me publicly.

20 Tell lies of me, O you who speak truth of me:

21 And speak the truth about me, O you who have told lies
of me.

23 Become unacquainted with me, O you who recognize me:

24 And may those who have not recognized me become
acquainted with me!

Identity riddles (2)

26 For, it is I who am acquaintance: and lack of
acquaintance.

16:3, 18:10
RAD 64:22

27 It is I who am reticence: and frankness.

29 I am shameless: I am ashamed.

30 I am strong: and I am afraid.

31 It is I who am war: and peace.

18:23

Exhortations (3)

32 Give heed to me—I am the disgraced: and the mighty;

34 Give heed to my poverty: and my wealth.

18:27
18:30

2 15 Do not be arrogant to me as I lie cast upon the ground:

3 [And] you will find me in those [who] are to come.

14 a. Or "kinds."

5 And do not look [upon] me on the dung heap, and then
 go and leave me cast there:
 8 And you will find me in the kingdoms.
 9 And do not look upon me lying cast among the dis-
 graced and in the most wretched places, and
 then mock me:
 13 And do not cast me down cruelly into those who are in need.
 15 But as for me, I am merciful: and I am cruel.
 16 Keep watch! Do not hate my obedience;
 18 And love my continence in my weakness;
 19 Do not overlook me, and do not neglect to fear my
 power!

22 For, why do you scorn my terror: and malign my
 boasting?
 25 It is I who am present in all fears: and boldness.
 27 In trembling, it is I who am what is feeble:
 28 And it is in enjoyment of place that I thrive.
 29 I am foolish: and I am wise.
 31 Why have you hated me in your counsels?
 32 (Is it) because I for my part shall be silent among those
 who keep silent,
 34 And shall be shown forth and speak?
 1 16 Why, then, did you hate me, O Greeks?
 2 Because I am a non-Greek^a among [the] non-Greeks?

Identity riddles (3)

3 For, it is I who am the wisdom [of the] Greeks: and the
 acquaintance of [the] non-Greeks. 14:26 +
Bjn 23:20
 5 It is I who am judgment for Greeks; and for non-Greeks.
 6 [I] am he whose image is manifold in Egypt:
 8 And she who has no image among the non-Greeks.
 9 It is I who have been hated everywhere:
 10 And who have been loved everywhere.
 11 It is I who am called life:^b Bjn 20:14 +
 12 And whom you have called death.
 13 It is I who am called law:
 15 And whom you have called lawlessness.
 16 It is I whom you have chased: RR 89:22
 17 And it is I whom you have restrained.
 18 It is I who am what you have scattered:

16 a. Lit. "a barbarian."

b. I.e. Eve; the name traditionally meant "life."

Cf. the Eve riddle cited under "Literary Back-
 ground" above.

- 19 And what you have collected. EpG 26. 19
 20 It is I before whom you have felt shame:
 21 And with whom you have been shameless.
 22 It is I who do not celebrate festivals:
 23 And it is I whose festivals are numerous.
 24 As for me, I am godless:
 24 And it is I whose god is manifold.^c
 26 It is I on whom you have thought:
 27 And you have despised me. 13:16 +
 27 I am uneducated:
 28 And people learn from me.
- 29 It is I who am the one you have scorned: 13:16+
 30 And about whom you think.
 31 It is I from whom you have hidden:
 32 And to whom you are manifest.
 33 Yet whenever you hide yourselves,
 35 I, too, shall show myself forth:
 1 17 For, [whenever] you [show yourselves forth],
 2 I, too, [shall hide] from you.

Exhortations (4)

- 3 As for those who have [...] from [...] foolishly [...],
 6 Remove me^a [from] their [understanding] out of pain:
 8 And accept me unto yourselves out of understanding
 [and] pain;
 10 And accept me unto yourselves out of disgraceful places
 and oppression,
 13 And catch (me) up from good things:
 14 Though in disgrace out of shame, accept me unto your-
 selves without shame:
 17 And out of shamelessness and shame put my members to
 shame within you.
- 19 And draw near to me, O you who are acquainted with me
 and you who are acquainted with my members,
 22 And establish those that are great within the paltry first
 creatures.
 24 Draw near to childhood,
 26 And do not despise it because it is small and paltry;
 28 Nor cause greatneses, (dispersed) in parts,^b to turn away
 from smallnesses;

c. Or "whose gods are many."

b. Or "in particulars."

17 a. The translation of this passage (17:6–17f) is uncertain; the text may be slightly corrupt here.

30 For it is from greatneses that smallneses are recognized.
 32 Why do you curse me: and honor me?
 35 You have smitten: and you have spared.
 36 Do not separate me from the first, whom you have
 [recognized];
 1 18 [And] cast no one [out, neither] bring any back [. . .]
 4 . . . you [. . .] . . . [. . .] mine [. . .]
 7 I myself am acquainted with the first:
 7 And those after them are acquainted with me.

Identity riddles (4)

9 It is I, however, who am the [perfect] intellect, 13:1
 10 And the repose [. . .].

10 It is I who am the acquaintance of my seeking: 14:26+
 11 And the discovery of those who seek after me,
 12 And the command of those who make requests of me,
 14 And the power of the powers, by my acquaintance— 14:4
 15 Of the angels that have been sent, by my utterance;
 16 And of the gods in their seasons, by my command;
 18 And of the spirits of all men who dwell with me;
 19 And of the women who are in me.

20 It is I who am the honored and praised: 16:16+
 22 And the one scornfully despised.

23 It is I who am peace: 13:31
 24 And because of me war has broken out:
 25 And I am an alien: and a citizen.
 27 I am riches: and she who has no riches. 14:34 +

28 Those who exist because of my sexual intercourse are 8jn 24:26+
 unacquainted with me:

30 And it is those who reside in my wealth^a that are ac- 14:34 +
 quainted with me.

32 Those who are nigh unto me have not recognized me:
 33 And it is those who are far away from me that have
 recognized me.

35 On the day that I am nigh [unto you, you] are far away
 [from me]:
 2 19 [And] on the day that I [am far] away from you, [I am
 nigh unto] you.

4 [It is] I who [am] . . . heart.
 5 [It is] I [who am. . .] nature(s).

18 a. “sexual intercourse [. . .] wealth”: a pun using Greek *ousia* (“being, essence, wealth”) and a related compound, *syn-ousia* (“being together, sexual intercourse”).

- 6 It is I who am [...] of the creation of the spirits [...] demand of the souls.
- 9 It is [I] who am restraint: and unrestraint. 19:20+
- 10 It is I who am joining: and dissolution. RAd 64:22
- 11 It is I who am persistence:
- 12 And it is I who am weakening.
- 12 It is I who am descent:
- 13 And it is to me that people ascend. 21:27
- 14 It is I who am condemnation: and pardon.
- 15 As for me, I am free of sin:
- 16 And the root of sin derives from me.
- 18 It is I who am desire for what is seen:
- 19 And it is in me that continence of the heart resides.
- 20 It is I who am the listening that is acceptable to everyone: 14:12, 19, 9
20:28
- 22 And the speaking that cannot be restrained. v.22
FTh 50:16
- 23 I am mute and cannot speak:
- 24 And great is the multitude of my speaking.

Exhortations (5)

- 25 Hear me softly:
- 26 And learn from me harshly.

Identity riddles (5)

- 28 It is I who cry out:^a 19:33
- 29 And it is upon the face of the earth that I am being cast out.^b
- 31 It is I who prepare the bread and <...>
- 32 <...> my intellect . . .
- 32 It is I who am acquaintance with my name.
- 33 It is I who cry out: 18:28
- 34 And it is I who give ear.
- 1 **20** I am manifest [and...] travel [...] BJn 30:17
- 2 [...] seal of my (?) [...] . . .
- 5 It is I who am [...] the argument of defense [...]
- 7 It is I who am called truth,
- 8 And violence [...]
- 9 You honor me [...]
- 10 And you whisper against [me].

Exhortations (6)

- 11 You who are defeated, pass judgment before sentence is passed against you;

19 a. The ancient copyist originally wrote "It is I who cry out upon the face of the earth" and then struck out the last six words.

b. Cf. note 13a.

13 For it is in you that the judge and the choosing reside.
 14 If you are condemned by it, who will forgive you?
 16 And yet, if you are acquitted by it, who can restrain you?
 18 For your interior is your exterior:
 20 And whoever molded you on the outside has stamped an
 impression of it inside of you;
 22 And what you see outside of you, you see inside of you.
 25 It is manifest, and it is your garment.^a
 26 Hear me, O listeners,
 27 And learn my utterances, you who are acquainted
 with me!

Identity riddles (6)

28 It is I who am the listening that is acceptable in every 19:20 +
 matter;
 30 It is I who am the speaking that cannot be restrained.
 31 It is I who am the voice's name, and the name's voice.
 33 It is I who am the meaning of text, FTh 37:10
 34 And the manifestation of distinction;
 35 And [it is] I [...] light [...]
 5 21 [...] and [...] O listener[s...] you.
 7 It is [...] the great power,
 8 And [...] will not move the name
 1 [...] him [...] who created me.
 11 But as for me, I shall speak its name.

Exhortations (7)

12 Behold, then, its utterances, and behold all the texts that
 have been completed.
 13 Give heed, then, O listeners —
 14 And also you, O angels,
 16 And you who have been sent,
 17 And you spirits who have arisen from the dead.
 18 For, it is I alone who exist,^a
 19 And I have no one to pass judgment upon me.
 20 For—many and sweet are the species to be found in man-
 ifold sins and acts of unrestraint and disgraceful
 passions,
 25 And in temporal pleasures; which people restrain,
 27 Until they become sober and flee up to their place of rest. 19:13
 29 And they will find me there,^b EpG
 26.10.10+
 30 And live, and not die again.^c EpG 26.10.7+

20 a. "garment": a Platonist cliché for the material body.

21 a. Or "it is I who dwell alone."

b. Cf. note 13a.

c. "not die again": i.e. not become reincarnate.

FIRST THOUGHT IN THREE FORMS

(FTh)

CONTENTS

First Thought in Three Forms (“Trimorphic Protennoia” or “Triple Protennoia”) tells, selectively, the entire gnostic myth from the unfolding of the Barbēlō aeon, or second principle, down to the crucifixion of Jesus. Only the following mythic events are mentioned: the subdivision of the Barbēlō aeon; emanation of the preexistent anointed (Christ) or Word (Logos); production of the four luminaries; emanation of wisdom and Ialdabaōth; the creation; the theft of power and its passage into Adam; the incarnation of the Word in Jesus; the heavenly rulers’ lament over the beginning of the last days; the establishment of gnostic baptism; the crucifixion. Much of the work consists of self-description by an immanent savior, as in the concluding poem of BJn; Th should also be compared.

“Three forms” of the invisible spirit’s “first thought” are equated in the work: the Barbēlō aeon as the second principle; life (Zōē); the divine Word (Logos).

Of particular interest is the emphasis laid upon the emanation and incarnation of the preexistent Word (Logos), who is here identified with not only the preexistent anointed (Christ) but also (46:14f, 46:25f) the Barbēlō. Some scholars have considered this myth of the Word to be closely related to the source of the prologue of the Gospel of John.

Also noteworthy are the clear identification of wisdom and afterthought; the ambiguous statement (50:13f) that Jesus was “extracted from” the “accursed wood” by the Word; and a detailed description of the rite of gnostic baptism (for which, see “Historical Introduction” to Part One). The form of gnostic myth presupposed in FTh resembles both BJn and EgG; however, Ialdabaōth’s independence is deemphasized, perhaps to insist upon divine providence as in RR.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of FTh are unknown. The date of its composition must be sometime before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. In philosophical and mythic content the work resembles EgG, RAd, 3Tb, Zs, and Fr. The language of composition was Greek.

The mixture of genres in FTh is slightly complex, combining various traditional materials which alternate with one another in the course of the work:

- I. Wisdom monologue
 - A. Self-description
 - B. Cosmogony and uranography
 - C. “True history” of humankind
 - D. Exhortations
- II. Excerpt from a treatise on baptism (?), 36:27f

The work as a whole is a *wisdom monologue* (for this genre, see Th, “Literary background”); it moves back and forth between poetry (parallel strophes) and prose (running narrative). Four kinds of material appear in the monologue: the female speaker’s *self-description*, characterizing herself and her virtues; a telling of the *cosmogony and uranography* (description of the structure of the universe) of gnostic myth; a “*true history*” of humankind touching upon the creation of Adam and the incarnation; and *exhortations* of the gnostics to respond to the speaker and gain deliverance. FTh is closely paralleled by the concluding poem of BJn; it can also be compared with Th, although unlike the latter it is not characterized by riddlesome paradox.

A fragment of what may be a treatise or sermon on baptism appears to interrupt the monologue at 36:27f, but this passage is so imperfect in the manuscript that its exact character and function are obscure.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Incorruptible Beings Mentioned in the Text

The PARENT. The invisible spirit.

FIRST THOUGHT. The Barbēlō, the parent’s thinking, consisting of:

The FATHER	}	expressions of first thought
The MOTHER		
The SON		

The ANOINTED (Christ). The verbal expression (Word), the perfect child, the only begotten of first thought.

MEIROTHEA (not clearly distinguished in the text). A manifestation of first thought.

FOUR sets of ETERNAL REALMS and LUMINARIES:

ARMĒDŌN-NOUSA[. . .]-[HARMŌZĒL]

PHAINION-AINION-OROIAĒL

MELLEPHANEA-LŌION-DAUEITHAI

MOUSANION-AMETHĒN-ĒLĒLĒTH

WISDOM (Sophia). Life of afterthought, the innocent.

FIVE TRIOS OF INCORRUPTIBLE BEINGS, who enrobe, baptize, etc. the saved:

AMMŌM, ELASSŌ, AMENAI, the enrobers

MIKHEUS, MIKHAR, MNĒSINOUS, the baptizers

BARIĒL, NOUTHAN, SABĒNAI, the enthroners
 ĒRIŌM, ĒLIEN, PHARIĒL, the glorifiers
 KAMALIĒL, [. .]ANĒN, SAMBLŌ, those who catch up

II. Rulers (Authorities, Powers) Mentioned in the Work
 IALTA BAŌTH. The first begetter, the great demon, ruler of Hades and
 chaos. Called Sakla and Samaël.

RULERS, REALMS, POWERS, ANGELS, DEMONS

III. Humankind Mentioned in the Work
 The FIRST HUMAN BEING, created by Ialtabaōth (Adam)
 JESUS
 OFFSPRING OF THE LIGHT

IV. A Spirit Active in Humankind
 The eternal HOLY SPIRIT

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC XIII (pp. 35–50), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on Janssens's critical edition of the Coptic, with very minor alterations: Y. Janssens, *La Prōtennoia Trimorphe* (see "Select Bibliography").

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First Thought in Three Forms^a

I. FIRST THOUGHT'S VERBAL EXPRESSION^b

Poem (1)

First thought as Barbēlō, life (wisdom), and savior

1	35 It is [I] who am first thought, ^c [the] thinking that exists in [. . .].	36:17, 38.7 42:6, 46:7 46:28 Bjn4:26+ v.2
2	It is [I] who am the movement that exists in the [entirety], ^d	
3	In [whom] the entirety stands at rest, ^e	35:13, 35:19 43:18, 46:25
4	[The first]-produced ^f among those that have [come into existence],	
5	[Who] existed before the entirety, [who] am called by three names, ^g and who alone exist [perfect].	37:20+
7	I am invisible within the thinking of the invisible, ^h	Bjn 2:32
9	And disclosed within the immeasurable ineffables.	35:27 TrTr 56:25
10	I am incomprehensible, existing within the incomprehensible and moving within every creature.	
12	It is I who am the life ⁱ of my afterthought;	39:17 Bjn 20:14+ v.13
13	Who exist among all powers and all eternal movements; among invisible lights; and among the rulers, the	35:2+

Title 35 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 50:22).

b. Or “First Thought’s speech.” For the significance of the title, see note 36b. This chapter title is copied only at the end of the chapter, at 42:3.

c. The Barbēlō aeon, which in other texts is called also “forethought,” a slightly different word.

d. The sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō aeon.

e. The term “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, non change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming. The speaker’s paradoxical assertion to be “the movement” in which certain others “stand at rest” mimics for rhetorical ef-

fect the identity riddle, a style highly developed in Th.

f. The “thinking” of the parent, which is its “[first]-produced” power, is the Barbēlō. Cf. Bjn 4:26f.

g. Cf. 37:20f.

h. I.e. the parent.

i. According to Bjn, “life” or “the afterthought of the life” is the spiritual element present in all the offspring of the light (posterity of Seth). It is sent by and is an aspect of wisdom, who dwells in the realm of afterthought; it is an envoy of forethought or the Barbēlō, i.e. first thought; cf. Bjn notes 20b and 25c. “Life” is thus a vivifying principle that is present in all who are capable of salvation.

- angels, the [demons], all souls that dwell in Tartarus, and all material souls; 36:4+
- 19 Who exist among those who have come into existence;
- 19 Who move among all, and who am strong among all; 35:2+
- 21 Who travel^l uprightly; Bjn 30:13
- 21 And who awaken those who are asleep. Bjn 31:4
- 22 It is I who am vision for those who dwell in sleep.
- 24 It is I who am the invisible within the entirety;
- 25 It is I who consider the hidden, being acquainted with the entirety,
- 25 And who exist within it.
- 27 I am the most innumerable of all beings.
- 27 I am immeasurable and ineffable. 35:9, 36:27
36:33, 46:14
- 28 And as for me, when I [. . . , I shall] show forth myself alone.
- 30 [. . . [. . .] the entirety, having existed before [. . .].
- 31 It is I who am the entirety, having [existed (?) before] everyone.
- 32 I am a sound [. . .], 36:9+
- 33 Existing [. . .] within the silence [. . .] . . . and [. . .],
- 1 **36** Which [exists (?) within me [. . .] incomprehensible, immeasurable [. . .] immeasurable silence.

Advent of first thought

- 4 For my part, [I entered the] midst of Hades, 35:13, 35:21
40:29, 43:9
- 5 And [I] radiated [upon the] darkness. 47:11
Bjn 30:13
- 5 It is I who brought forth the [water (?)].
- 6 It is I who am hidden in waters^a [. . .].
- 7 It is I who, within my thinking, radiated the entirety part by part.
- 9 It is I who am laden with sound. 35:32, 38:14
40:8, 42:4
- 9 It is because of me that acquaintance becomes immanent, 42:14, 44:2
45:10, 45:27
- 10 Although I dwell among the ineffables and unrecognizables. 46:19, 46:28
- 12 It is I who am perception and acquaintance:
- 13 Emitting sound by an act of thinking.^b

j. I.e. who visit the perceptible realm as savior; Bjn 30:13f.

36 a. “waters”: a metaphor for the levels of acquaintance that are within the Barbēlō aeon. Cf. Zs 15:1f.

b. “sound. . . act of thinking”: ancient Greek philosophers distinguished internal reasoning (*logos endiathetos*) or the “act of thinking” from the externally expressed reasoning (*logos prophorikos*) that can result from it. The relationship of internal to external reasoning was sometimes presented

by Platonists as a model for understanding how god’s existence—as he really is—might be related to his self-revelation, viz. in the form of a verbal expression or “Word” (*logos*) that he uttered. Such a model, which can be seen e.g. in the prologue to the canonical Gospel of John (1:1-18), underlies all the discussion of “thinking . . . sound . . . voice . . . verbal expression (Word) . . . acquaintance” in FTh. In FTh the model is additionally complicated by the assertion that the source (Barbēlō) of the verbal expression is itself the thinking of another entity (the parent).

- 14 It is I who am the sound that exists,
 15 Bestowing sound upon everyone;
 15 And they recognize that a posterity exists within [me].
 17 It is I who am the parent's thinking; 35:1 +
 17 And from me emanated sound, that is, acquaintance with
 the infinites:
 19 I exist as the thinking of the entirety.
 20 Being joined to unrecognizable and incomprehensible 42:5, 42:8
 thinking,
 22 I personally showed myself forth among all those that had
 recognized me:
 23 For it is I who am joined unto everyone in hidden
 thinking, in exalted sound, and in sound caused by
 invisible thinking.

Prose Discourse

Barbēlō's immanence within the gnostic church^c

- 27 And it^d is immeasurable, existing within the immeasurable;
 28 •it is a mystery; it is [unrestrainable (?)] by [the incomprehensi-
 30 ble (?)]; •it is invisible [. . .] shown forth within the entirety [. . .]
 33 exists within light. •We [. . .] alone [. . .] shown forth [. . .] hidden 35:27+
 1 [. . .], (it is) ineffable and immeasurable. 37•And what is in us and
 is hidden bestows its products upon the water of life.^a 48:20+

Poem (2)

Appearance of the Word as savior^b

- 3 So next, the offspring that is perfect in every way—i.e.,
 the verbal expression (or Word) that came into 46:5, 46:14
 being from the sound^c that had emanated from 46:30, 47:13
 the height, having within it the name and shining 8Jn 7:9+
 bright—was shown forth to the infinite beings.
 8 And all the unrecognizables were recognized;

c. Possibly this section, the MS of which is badly damaged, is actually poetry and is the beginning of poem no. (2).

d. "it": first thought. In this section a teacher speaks to an audience ("us," 37: If), describing the immanence of first thought.

37 a. Baptismal water; cf. 48:20f.

b. The speaker is either the teacher (36:27f) or first thought.

c. "verbal expression . . . sound": cf. note 36b. Following a traditional Greek philosophical analysis of speech, FTh treats "verbal expression" (*logos*), here meaning external rational expression, as a special kind of "voice" (37:20f), which in turn is a special kind of "sound": thus every verbal expression is a sound, but not every sound is a verbal expression. In the following paragraph, the "verbal expression" is personified as a savior.

- 10 And those which are difficult to interpret and hidden it showed forth; Th 20:33
 11 And to those who dwelt in silence and forethought it preached;
 13 And to those who dwelt in darkness it showed itself;
 14 And those who dwelt in the abyss^d it instructed about itself;
 16 And to those who dwelt in the hidden treasures it uttered the ineffable mysteries;
 18 And the inexplicable teachings it taught to all who were offspring of the light.

Narration by Barbēlō (1)

Relation of the Word to Barbēlō^e

- 20 Now, the sound that has derived from my thinking exists as three compartments:^f Father, Mother, Son—a voice exist- 35:5, 46:28
 23 ing perceptibly. •It contains within it a verbal expression (or EgG 50:23+
 Word),^g which possesses all glory, and which possesses three v.23
 27 masculinities^h and three powers and three names: •all three 37:3+
 are thusⁱ □ □ □, quadrangles, secretly in the silence of the inef-
 30 fable: •[the] only-begotten, who [is the anointed (Christ)]^j, 49:7
 31 •[and] whom I myself anointed with glory [. . .] invisible in[. . .]. Bjn 6:23+
 33 •Thus [. . .] I made it alone stand at rest [. . .] eternal [. . .] upon
 [. . .] living [. . .], i.e. [. . .], who first radiated light unto the ex-
 38 alted eternal realms (aeons), within glorious light, in enduring
 3 strength. 38 •And [it] stood at rest within its own light that was
 5 around it: •being the eye of the light that enlightens me in glory. 46:28
 7 •It bestowed eternity of^a the parent of all the eternal realms (ae- EgG 61:8
 ons), who is myself, the thinking of the parent of first thought, i.e. Zs 6:21
 Barbēlō, the [perfect] glory and immeasurable, hidden invisible. Fr 64:30+
v.7
35:1 +
45:8+

Poem (3)

First thought as Meirothea

- 11 It is I who am the image of the invisible spirit, Bjn 4:34
 12 And it was from me that the entirety received image:

d. “darkness. . . the abyss”: i.e. the material world, the realm of Sakla.

e. First thought speaks.

f. “compartments,” or “rooms”: Greek *monē*; the same Greek word is used in the canonical Gospel of John 14:2, “In my father’s house are many rooms.”

g. “sound . . . thinking . . . voice . . . verbal expression”: see note 37c.

h. “three masculinities”: see EgG note 51f.

i. A diagram appears at this place in the MS.

j. “anointed” and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

38 a. “of”: or “upon.”

- 13 (I,) the mother, the light that she left and which is virgin;
 14 She who is called Meirothea,^b the incomprehensible
 womb, the unrestrainable and immeasurable sound.

45:8
 EgG 60:30+
 45:6
 Bjn 5:5
 36:9 +

Narration by Barbēlō (2)

Praise of the anointed Word^c

- 16 Next, the perfect child showed itself unto its eternal realms 38:30
 19 (aeons), which had come into existence for its sake.^d •It
 showed them forth and bestowed glory upon them, and gave
 20 them thrones. •It stood at rest within the glory by which it had
 22 glorified itself. •They praised the perfect child, the anointed
 23 (Christ), the deity, the only-begotten, •and they glorified,
 saying:

- 24 It^e exists! It exists!
 O child of god! O child of god!
 It is this that exists!
 26 O eternal realm (aeon) of the eternal realms,
 You who gaze at the eternal realms that you have
 engendered!
 27 For, you have engendered by your will alone.
 28 Therefore [we] glorify you.
 29 Give! Take!
 You are omega, omega, omega! You are alpha!^f You are
 being!
 29 O eternal realm of the eternal realms! O eternal realm
 that gave itself!

Its establishment of the four eternal realms

- 30 Next, the begotten deity^g bestowed upon them^h [invincible . . .] 38:16
 32, 33 power; •and [it] established [them]. •Now, it established Bjn 7:30+

- [the] first eternal realm (aeon) [in the charge of the]
 35 first, Armēdōn-Nousa[. . .]-[Harmōzēl]; •it
 established

[the] second [in the charge of the second eternal
 realm], Phainion- Ainion-Oroiaēl;

b. "Meirothea": a Greek neologism, possibly meaning "divine part" (*moiros theios*).

c. The speaker is either the teacher (36:27f) or first thought.

d. Or "because of it"

e. I.e. the perfect child.

f. "omega . . . alpha": related to a traditional acclamation. Cf. EgG note 53d.

g. The anointed. Cf. 38:22f.

h. Its eternal realms, 38:16f.

- 1 39 •the third, in the charge of the third eternal realm,^a
 Mellephanea-Lōion-Daeithai;
- 3 •the fourth, in the charge of the fourth,
 Mousanion-Amethēn-Ēlēlēth.
- 5 •So these eternal realms (aeons), which had been engendered
7 by the deity, engendered^b the anointed (Christ). •And they were
8 given glory; and the eternal realms, too, glorified. •They were
9 shown forth as being exalted in their thinking. •And each eter-
11 nual realm rendered myriad glories unto (?) great, unsearchable
luminaries. •And with one another they all praised the perfect
child, the begotten deity.

Emanation of wisdom (afterthought) and Sakla

- 13 Next,^c a verbal expression (or Word) emanated from the great Bjn 8:16+
luminary Ēlēlēth, and it said, “It is I who am the ruler. Who is
17 the one of chaos? And who is the one of Hades?”^d •And at that
moment its light appeared, shining bright because it possessed
19 afterthought.^e •The powers of the powers did not supplicate it. 35:12
20 •And immediately there was shown forth also the great de- Bjn 9:25+
mon that rules over the bottom of Hades and chaos, and which
24 is misshapen and imperfect, •yet has the form of the glory of
26 those beings that were engendered within the darkness, •and so
28 is called Sakla,^f i.e. Samaēl-Ialabaōth. •This is the being that got Bjn 10:20+
power—caught it up from the innocent,^g whom it had first over- 40:7
come, i.e. the afterthought of the light that had descended and
from which it had originally emanated.^h

Forgiveness of wisdom (afterthought)

- 32 So [when] the afterthought of the light knew that it (Sakla) RR 94:23+
[was being] supplicated [. . .], she said,ⁱ “[. . .] you shall be [. . .]”
in confusion[. . .] all [the] house of the glory [. . .] upon her ut-

39 a. “[in charge of the second eternal realm] . . . in charge of the third eternal realm”: the text of the MS may be slightly corrupt there. More consistent would be “[in charge of the second] . . . in charge of the third.”

b. The Coptic text may be corrupt here.

c. The speaker is first thought. Cf. 40:8f.

d. I.e.: “Who is the ruler of chaos? And who is the ruler of Hades?” In this obscure passage, which parallels EgG 68:5f, wisdom (“the innocent”) may be said to emanate from Ēlēlēth and assert her sovereignty—as a result of which, both the afterthought of life and the great demon Sakla appear.

e. The “afterthought of the light” is wisdom, returning to the realm of Sakla in order to rectify the lack created by Sakla’s theft of her power; cf. note 35i.

f. “Sakla” (Aramaic “fool,” elsewhere also “Saklas”): a conventional name for Satan in Judaism.

g. “the innocent”: a stock epithet of wisdom (Sophia), 40:13; cf. Bjn 23:20f. The theft of wisdom’s “power” is narrated more fully in Bjn 10:19f, 12:33f, 13:27f.

h. See Bjn 9:25f.

i. The exact limits of afterthought’s statement are uncertain.

- 2,3 terance. 40 •They lifted up praise to her. •And the exalted band forgave her for him.^a Bjn 13:32+

Creation of the universe

- 4 And the great demon began to order eternal realms (aeons) in Bjn 12:33+
7 the manner of the eternal realms that exist. •And it ordered them only because of its power. 39:38+

Poem: Salvation of the stolen power

- 8 Next, I too secretly showed forth my sound, saying, 36:9+
- 10 “Cease, cease, O you (plur.) who tread upon matter!
11 For behold, I am coming down into the world of mortals
13 For the sake of that part of me^b which has been there
since the day that they overcame the innocent wisdom (Sophia) who descended;
16 (I am coming) so that I might thwart their goal that was ordained by the one that was shown forth^c because of her.”
- 19 And all who dwelt in the house of the unrecognizable light
22 became disturbed. •And the abyss shook.

Creation of Adam

- 22 And the first begetter of the ignorance^d ruled over chaos and
24 Hades. •It put in order a human being, after my manner of appearance.^e Bjn 15:1 +
25 •But it did not know that the human being would turn out to be its condemnation unto destruction, nor did it recognize Bjn 19:15 +
the power that he had within himself.

Poem (4)

Advent and victory of first thought

- 29 But then for my part, I descended and got as far as chaos. 36:4+
30 And I dwelt [with] my own^f who were there, [hidden] within them,^g bestowing power [. . .], (and) [imparting] image unto them. 45:23+
34 And [. . .] down to the present [. . .] those who [. . .], i.e. the offspring of [the] light.

40 a. This highly condensed narration (39:13–40:25f) of the fall and forgiveness of wisdom and the creation of the world and human beings presupposes the reader’s acquaintance with more detailed information, such as that found in Bjn.

b. The stolen “power,” 39:28f.

c. I.e. Sakla.

d. Lit. “lack of acquaintance.”

e. The Barbēlō has the image of an androgynous human being: Bjn 5:6.

f. The offspring of the light.

g. As a spiritual element. Cf. note 35i.

- 1 **41** It is I who am their parent.
 2 And I shall tell you a mystery that is ineffable and indescribable by [any] mouth.
 4 For you (plur.), I loosed all the fetters and broke the bonds^a of the demons of Hades, bonds that were bound to my limbs^b and worked against them.
 7 And I threw down the high walls of the darkness,
 9 And I broke open the solid gates of the merciless (plur.) and split their bolts.
 11 And the evil agency, who strikes you (plur.), who impedes you, the tyrant, the adversary, the ruler, the real enemy—as for all of these, I taught them about my own, the offspring of the light:
 17 So that they^c might become loosened from all these and rescued from all the fetters, and might enter the place where they had been in the beginning.
 20 It is I who am the first to have descended, for the sake of that part of me which remained,
 21 Namely, the spirit that exists within the soul^d and which has come to exist out of the water of life and out of the baptism of the mysteries.
 24 I myself spoke with the rulers and with authorities, for I had descended deep into their language;
 27 And I uttered my mysteries to my own—a hidden mystery—
 28 And the fetters were loosened, as was eternal forgetfulness.
 30 And within them I bore fruit, namely, the thinking that concerns the unchangeable eternal realm (aeon) and my house and [their] parent.
 32 And I have gone [to] my [own] since the beginning, and I have [..]beginning [..] first branch (?), which [..].
 35 All who [were] in me shone bright.
 36 And for the ineffable lights within me I prepared a manner of appearance. **42 •Amen!**^a

45:29
 Bjn 25:20+
 48:20+

41 a. “fetters . . . bonds”: a Platonist cliché for the material body.

b. During an incarnation.

c. The offspring.

d. The soul animates the body and is not identical with the spirit or highest self.

42 a. In the MS the chapter title of the preceding chapter is written here as a subscript.

II. DESTINY^b

Poem (5)

First thought as life (wisdom)

- 4 It is I who am the sound that was shown forth by my thinking. 36:9+
- 5 For it is I who am the conjoined. 36:20+
- 6 I am called the thinking of the invisible. 35:1 +
- 7 I am called the unchangeable voice. 42:14, 44:29
- 8 I am called she-who-is-conjoined. 45:10, 46:7
- 8 I am unique, incorruptible. 47:11
v.8
36:20+
- 9 It is I who am the mother [of (?)] the sound:
- 10 I speak in many ways; I complete the entirety;^c acquaintance exists within me—acquaintance with <the> endless.
- 12 It is I [who] speak in every creature; and I have been recognized by the entirety.
- 14 It is I who impart the voice of the sound into the ears of those who have become acquainted with me, who are children of the light. 42:7+; 36:9+
- 17 And I came, for a second time, in the manner of a woman; and I spoke with them. RR 89:31 ?
- 18 And I shall instruct them about the coming end of the realm.^d
- 20 And I shall instruct them about the beginning of the coming realm,^e which does not experience change, and in which our appearance will change.
- 23 They shall become purified within the aeons, in which I showed myself forth in the thinking of the image of my masculinity.
- 25 I have put myself within those who are worthy in the thinking of my unchangeable eternal realm (aeon).
- 27 For I shall tell you (plur.) a mystery of this realm,
- 28 And I shall instruct you about the agencies that are within it.
- 30 Birth^f is the production of an echo. [For], hour engenders hour, day [engenders (?)] day, months produce^g months, [. . .] following [. . .].

b. This chapter title is copied only at the end of the chapter, at 46:4.

c. By recalling the missing units of wisdom's power to their rightful home and reuniting them with the eternal realms.

d. Or "age."

e. Or "age."

f. The translation of this verse is uncertain.

g. "produce": the MS has lit. "announce."

- 33 In [such] terms, this realm has become complete.
 1 43 And it has been reckoned, and is slight.
 2 For finger has loosened finger,^a
 3 And bond has been bound (?) by bond.

Narration: The Final Struggle

Conflagration of the heavens

- 4 Now, when the great authorities knew that the time for fulfillment had come—as when labor pains are felt by a lying-in woman—and that it was near the door, and that just so, destruction had drawn nigh, all the elements together shook. •And the foundations of Hades and the ceilings of chaos moved. •A great fire broke out in their midst. •And the rocky cliffs and the earth moved as a reed is moved by the wind.
- IrSat 1.24.2+
36:4+

Planetary determinism undone

- 13 And the lots of destiny and those which traverse^b the houses^c were greatly disturbed by a sharp thunderclap. •And the powers' thrones were disturbed and overturned, and their ruler became afraid. •And those which follow destiny^d gave up their numerous circuits along the way. •And they said to the powers, "What is this disturbance and this movement that has come over us from a sound that belongs to the superior voice? •All our house has moved; the whole circuit of our ascent has gone to ruin; the way on which we travel and which leads us up to the first begetter of our birth^e is no longer established!"
- 27, 28 •Next, the powers answered, saying, •"We too are at a loss as to this (disturbance). •For we do not know whom it belongs to.
 29 •But arise, let us go to the first begetter and ask it."
- Bjn 28:12
Th 13:1?
44:14+
IrUnid 1.30.6
35:2?

Accusation of Ialtabaōth by the powers

- 31, 33 The powers all gathered and went to the first begetter. •[They said to] him, •"Where is your boasting of which [you] boasted?
 33 •Did we not [hear you say], •'It is I who am God; [it is I who
 35, 35 am] your (plur.) parent; 44 •it is I who engendered you; •there
 1, 1 is no other apart from me?'^a •Well, now behold—there has been shown forth a sound that belongs to the invisible voice of [the
- Is 45:21
Bjn 13:5+
36:9+

43 a. Or possibly "inch replaces inch."

b. Or "measure."

c. "those which traverse the houses": the planets, which "traverse" the sectors ("houses") of the celestial sphere; according to ancient astrology each planet had its greatest influence within its own "house."

d. The planets.

e. "the first begetter": Sakla.

44 a. This claim is well known from other gnostic texts, where it figures in the narration of Sakla's emanation.

- 4 eternal realm (?) that we do not recognize. •And for our part at
 6 least [we have not] recognized whom we belong to.^b •For, that
 sound which we heard is alien to us, and we do not recognize it,
 8, 8 •we do not know where it comes from. •It has come and instilled
 fear in our midst and limpness in the joints of our legs.

Lament of the powers

- 10, 12 “So, then, let us weep, let us mourn with great mourning! •Fi- RR 97:11
 nally, let us complete our escape before we are forcibly trapped
 14 and taken down into the bowels of Hades. •For the undoing of 43:17
 our bonds^c has already come, spans of time are falling short, days RR 97:10+
 17 have dwindled; •our time has been fulfilled, and weeping over
 our destruction has come upon us, so that we shall be taken to a
 place that we do <not>^d recognize.
 19 •“For our tree from which we sprouted bears fruit of igno- BJn 21:26
 23 rance, and also there is death in its leaves; •darkness dwells in
 24 the shadow of its branches; •and we have harvested it deceitfully
 25 and with desire. •It is by this that ignorant chaos has come to
 27 be our dwelling place. •For behold, it, too—the first begetter of 49:13
 our birth, of whom we boast—it, too. does not know about the
 voice!”

Poem (6)

Call to deliverance by first thought (Meirothea)

- 29 So, then, hear me O children of thinking; hear the voice
 of the mother of your mercy. 42:7f
 31 For you have become worthy of the mystery that has been BJn 10:16
 hidden since eternities, so that you [might . . .].
 33 And the end of this realm (aeon) [and] of this violent life
 [have . . .] beginning (?) of the [. . .] which [. . .].
 2 45 I am androgynous [. . .] a parent^a [. . .] with myself
 alone.
 4 I [. . .] with myself alone (?) [. . .].
 5 The entirety [. . .] through me alone.
 6 It is I who am the [. . .] womb of the entirety, giving birth 38:14
 to the light [. . .] in glory.
 8 It is I who am the aeon that [. . .] the completion of
 the entirety, namely, Meirothea,^b the glory of the
 mother, EgG 60:30+
 46:19
 RAd 64:6+

b. Or perhaps “[we have not] recognized whom it belongs to.”

c. Their influence on human affairs.

d. The word “<not>” is erroneously omitted in the MS.

45 a. Or “father.”

b. Cf. note 38b.

- 10 And I project a voice [of the] sound into the ears of those who recognize me. 42:7+
36:9+
- 12 And I am calling you (plur.) to enter the superior, perfect light:
- 13 When you (plur.) enter it you will be glorified by the glorifiers; the enthroners will give you thrones; you will be given robes by the enrobers, and the baptists will baptize you (plur.); so that along with glories you become the glory in which you existed, luminous, in the beginning. 48:15

Advent of first thought as life (wisdom)

- 21 And I hid myself in everyone,^c and showed [myself] forth in them.
- 22 And all acts of thinking desired me and sought me,
- 23 For it is I who have imparted image unto the entirety: 40:30, 47:12
EgG 62:9
Zs 5:15+
- 24 They were misshapen, and I changed their forms into (temporary) forms until such time as the entirety should be formed.
- 27 It was through me that the sound came to exist. 36:9+
- 28 And it is I who put breath into my own. Bjn 19:25+
- 29 And I injected the eternal holy spirit into them, 41:21+
- 30 And I ascended and proceeded into my light.
- 32 I (?) [. . .] down upon my branch,^d I sat [. . . the . . .] children of the [. . .] light.
- 34 And [. . .] their dwelling place [. . . 46•Amen!]^a

III. THE VERBAL EXPRESSION^b OF THE MANIFESTATION^c

Poem (7)

First two advents of the savior as Word

- 5 It is I who am the [verbal expression (Word)] that exists [. . .], 37:3+, 46:14
- 6 And who exist in ineffable [. . .], existing in incorruptible [. . .],
- 7 And an act of thought [. . .] perceptibly, through [. . .] voice of the mother for a male offspring, 35:1 +
42:7+

c. Cf. note 35i.

d. Or "offshoot."

b. Or "the Word."

c. The chapter title is copied only at the end of the chapter, at 50:21f. It reads: "The Verbal Expression of the Manifestation. (Part) Three."

46 a. In the MS the chapter title of the preceding chapter is written here as a subscript.

- 9 [...] put myself, and since the beginning it^d has existed in
the bones of the entirety.
- 11 And there is light that exists hidden in silence, and which
emanated.
- 13 But the latter (silence) exists alone and silent.
- 14 It is I alone who am the ineffable, incorruptible, immea- 35:27+
surable, inconceivable verbal expression, 37:3+
- 16 And who am hidden light that yields a living crop, that
brings forth living water from the invisible, incor-
ruptible, immeasurable wellspring:
- 19 That is, the inexplicable sound of the mother's glory,^e the
glory of the engendering of the deity, a male virgin
from a hidden intellect; 46:22
BJn 4:21+
v.19
36:9+
45:8+
EgG 54:19
47:7
- 22 That is, silence—hidden from the entirety and inexpli-
cable; immeasurable light; the wellspring of the
entirety; the root of all eternity (aeon): 46:16+
- 25 Which is the platform that supports all motions of the 35:2+
eternal realms (aeons) that belong to the mighty
glory; is the foundation of all platforms; •is the
breath of the powers; •is the eye of the three
compartments,^f and exists as a sound from an act
of thinking; •is a verbal expression (or Word) by
the voice that has been sent to enlighten those who
dwell in the darkness.
- 33 So behold, I [shall] show forth to you (plur.)^g [...],
- 34 For you [are] my fellow [...] all know them(selves?) [...] 38:5+
that exist in un invoked [...]. 37:3+
36:9+
35:1+
v.30
37:3+
- 7 47 And I taught [...] by the [...] by perfect intellect. Th 13:1
47:7
- 10 [I] became a foundation for the entirety, and [...] them.
- 11 For a second time I came, in the [voice (?)] of my sound,
- 12 And I completely imparted image unto those who had
received image. BJn 30:21
42:7+
v.12
45:23+

The third advent

- 13 For a third time I showed myself forth to them within their
bodies,^a existing as a verbal expression (or Word). RR 96:28
37:3+
- 15 And I showed myself forth in the resemblance of their
image.
- 16 And I wore the garment^b of all,

d. "it": or "she"; for grammatical reasons, in the Coptic text this word can refer to either "the voice" or "the mother."

e. Or "the sound of the inexplicable mother's glory," or "the sound of the mother's inexplicable glory."

f. Cf. 37:20f.

g. Or "be shown forth to you as."

47 a. "Bodies": lit. "tents," a traditional metaphor for the fleshly body as the residence of the inner person or self.

b. A Platonist cliché for the material body.

- 17 And I hid myself alone within them.
 18 And [they] did not recognize the source of my power.
 19 For I dwell in all the realms and the powers and in the
 angels and in every movement that occurs in the
 whole of matter. 35:2+
- 22 And I hid myself within them until such time as I might
 show myself forth unto my siblings.^c
 24 And none of them^d recognized me, [even though] it was I
 who was active within them.
 25 Rather, [they] thought that the entirety had been created
 by [them], being unaware that they had not recog-
 nized [their] root^e from which they had sprung.
 28 It is [I] who am the light that illuminates the entirety.
 29 It is I who am the light that rejoices in [its] siblings.
 31 For I have come into the world [of] mortals for the sake
 of the spirit that remained in that which [. . .]
 33 [. . .] came from wisdom (Sophia) [. . .] and [. . .]

Baptism of acquaintance

- 35 And I [. . .] had [. . .] from the water [. . .] strip from that
 person the chaos that [. . .] ultimate [darkness] that
 10 exists[. . .] whole [darkness]; 48 •that is, the think-
 ing [of the . . .]^a and animate (subsistences?).
 11 For my part, I put all these on;
 12 But I stripped them off of that person,^b 49:28
 13 [And I] clothed that person in shining light,
 13 That is, acquaintance with thinking about kinship.
 15 And I delivered that person unto the enrobers^c Ammōm,
 Elassō, and Amēnai, and they dressed that person in
 a robe belonging to the robes of the light. 45:13
- 18 And I delivered that person unto the baptists Mikheus,
 Mikhar, and Mnēsinos, to be baptized;
 20 And they washed that person in the wellspring of the
 water of life. RAd 84:4
 EgG 76:2
 Zs 6:7
 Zs 46:31
 v.20
 37:1, 41:21
- 21 And I delivered that person unto the enthroners Bariēl,
 Nouthan, and Sabēnai,
 22 And they [gave] that person a throne from the throne of
 glory.
 24 And I delivered that person unto the glorifiers Ēriōm,
 Ēlien, and Phariēl,

c. The offspring of the light.

d. I.e. the rulers.

e. Sakla.

b. In a traditional metaphor of garments, expressing renewal by Christian baptism, the former state of being is stripped off the baptismal candidate and a new state is put on.

c. Cf. 45:13f.

48 a. Possibly "[of the corporeal]."

- 25 And they glorified that person with the glory of the kinship.
- 26 And those who catch up, Kamaliēl, [. . .]anēn, and Samblō, the great assistants [of the] holy luminaries, caught up and took that person into the luminous place of that person's kinship. EgG 64:13
- 30 And [. . .] the five seals by^d [the] light of the mother, first thought. 49:27+
- 32 And they [. . .] to that person, and took from [the mystery(?)] of acquaintance, and [. . .] with light.
- 35 So then [. . .] exist in them [. . .].
- 7 **49** They thought [. . .] their anointed (their Christ). 37:31+
- 8 For my part, [. . .] every [. . .], in that which [. . .] luminous [. . .] in them [. . .] the rulers.
- 11 It is I who am their beloved.

The saving Word as Jesus

- 11 For in that place I clothed myself [as though I were] the offspring of the first begetter,^a 50:12
- 13 And I brought it (the first begetter) to the end of its judicial authority, which is the ignorance^b that belongs to chaos. 44:27
- 15 And while among the angels, I showed myself forth in their likeness;
- 17 While among the powers, as though I were one of them;
- 18 And while among the children of humankind, as though I were a child of the human being,^c
- 19 Although I am the parent of everyone.
- 20 I hid myself in all these (spiritual beings)^d until such time as I might show myself forth out of my own members.
- 22 And I taught them about the ineffable ordinances and about the siblings.
- 23 They^e are uninvoked by all realms and powers of rulers—only by the offspring of the light alone.
- 26, 26 They are the ordinances of the parent; •they are the glories superior to all glories; •they are the five seals^f that are perfect through intellect. 48:30, 50:9
Bjn 31:22+

d. Or "from."

49 a. "the first begetter": Sakla.

b. Lit. "lack of acquaintance."

c. Or "a son of man."

d. "all these," namely spiritual beings: gnostic jargon used in this text, probably to mean the sum

total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō aeon; cf. Zs note 2e.

e. The ordinances.

f. The "five seals" are associated with the reception of *gnōsis* in gnostic baptism (for which, see "Historical Introduction," Part One).

- 28 Whoever possesses the five seals of these very names has
taken off robes^g of ignorance^h and put on shining
light. 48:12
- 32 And none that belongs to the powers of the rulers will
appear before that person.
- 34 Within such persons, darkness will perish and [...] ⁱ
will die;
- 36 And the thinking of the [...] creation [...] bestow one
and the same manner, and [...] will perish.
- 38 And [...] and [...] incomprehensible [...] in [...]
6 **50** until such time as I should show myself forth
[...] and until such time as I should gather [...] all
[my (?)...] siblings in my [...].
- 9,10 And I proclaimed the [five] ineffable seals unto them, •so 49:27+
that [I might dwell] in them, and they too might
dwell in me.
- 12,13 For my part, I put on Jesus;^a •I extracted him from the 49:11
14 accursed wood;^b •and I made him stand at rest in
the dwelling places of his parent.
- 15 And the beings^c that watch over their dwelling places did 1Co 2:8
not recognize me
- 16 For I myself am unrestrainable, together with my 49:20+
posterity.
- 18 And I shall bring my posterity in to the holy light, in RR 97:7
incomprehensible silence. Amen!^d

g. “robes”: cf. note 47b. Also possible is “He who possesses the five seals . . . took off.”

h. Lit. “lack of acquaintance.”

i. Possibly “[ignorance].”

50 a. The body or person of Jesus is here likened to the garment in which first thought is clothed during her final advent; a Platonist cliché for the relation of body to soul. This incarnation, or adoption, parallels the final advent of the great Seth, EgG 75:15f.

b. Possibly the cross. The corresponding Greek word *hylē* also means “matter,” and it may have been mistranslated into Coptic.

c. The rulers.

d. In the MS, the text concludes with the chapter title of Chapter III, the general title of the work (at 50:22) and the following expression: “Holy scripture, paternally authored in perfect acquaintance.”

THE HOLY BOOK OF THE GREAT INVISIBLE SPIRIT OR THE EGYPTIAN GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO MS NHC IV

(EgG)

CONTENTS

The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit, also entitled *The Egyptian Gospel* (“The Gospel of the Egyptians”), tells the gnostic myth as though it were the solemn prelude to a baptismal ritual; the work ends with an account of the establishment of gnostic baptism and a baptismal service book, including a list of metaphysical beings that preside over gnostic baptism and a hymn to be said by the baptized. For further discussion of gnostic baptism, see the “Historical Introduction” to Part One. The entire gnostic myth is recounted, but with emphasis on the first and last acts of the mythic drama—that is, the expansion of the invisible spirit or first principle into a full spiritual universe and the establishment of the gnostic church. These two emphases provide a mythic setting for the participation of metaphysical beings in baptism and the establishment of the baptismal ritual. The spiritual universe is described as a glorifying throne room (“Doxomedōn Domedōn”), filled with incessant litanies sung by a hierarchical retinue whose names and laudatory epithets are repeatedly catalogued. The Barbēlō aeon in EgG has a threefold structure, as in FTh, Zs, Fr, and 3Tb. As in BJn, the preexistent savior (here called the great Seth) comes three times to intervene in human history. The third advent is said to be the incarnation or adoption of Jesus by the preexistent great Seth. The account of creation is brief and positive, emphasizing divine providence as in RR and FTh.

The work has no obvious Egyptian character; the reference to Egypt in the title is obscure. EgG is *not* identical to *The Gospel According to the Egyptians*, which is cited by Clement of Alexandria (cf. ClExc 67.2).

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of EgG are unknown. The date of its composition must be sometime before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS.

In mythic content the work resembles RAd, 3Tb, Zs, Fr, and 3Tb. The language of composition was Greek.

The mixture of genres in EgG is slightly complex, combining various traditional materials:

- I. Heavenly message
 - A. Learned treatise:
 1. cosmogony;
 2. "true history"
 - B. Liturgical service book:
 1. uranography;
 2. hymn

As in RAd and 3Tb, the whole work is presented (80:15f) as a *heavenly message*, in this instance composed by "the great Seth" (that is, the spiritual archetype) and left by him in high mountains, perhaps engraved on tablets. The convention of the heavenly message is a commonplace of ancient Mediterranean revelation literature. The message is not spoken by Seth in the first person, but rather is quoted obliquely; the work therefore purports to be not the message itself, but a transcript of the message by someone else. The body of the heavenly message falls into two parts. The first has the form of a *learned treatise* on *cosmogony*, followed by a revisionist "*true history*" of the Sethid line of humanity down to the final incarnation of the savior. The second part is a *liturgical service book* for gnostic baptism, beginning with a *uranographic catalogue* (list of structural elements of the universe) of "great beings that stand at rest" and preside over gnostic baptism and concluding with an ecstatic *hymn* spoken by the newly baptized gnostic.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Incorruptible Beings

The PARENT. The great invisible virgin spirit.

BARBĒLŌ. Forethought, a masculine female virgin.

THREE POWERS and their LIGHTS:

1. THE FATHER, consisting of
 - Thought
 - Verbal expression (Word)
 - Incorruptibility
 - Eternal life
 - Will
 - Intellect
 - Prior acquaintance
 - Androgynous father

2. THE MOTHER

3. THE SON

AEONS, GLORIES, POWERS, THRONES, etc., partly associated with the Doksomedōn realm

IŌĒL. The silence of silent silence, a masculine female virgin.

The ANOINTED (Christ). The thrice-male child,

Telmaēl-Telmakhaēl-Ēli-Ēli-Makhar-Makhar-Seth.

ĒSĒPHĒKH. The child of the child, holder of the glory.

The MOIROTHEA, probably the same as PLĒSITHEA. Mother of the luminaries and the incorruptible beings that are with them.

FOUR LUMINARIES and their CONSORTS, ATTENDANTS, and ATTENDANTS' CONSORTS:

HARMOZĒL

LOVELINESS—GAMALIĒL—MEMORY

OROIAĒL

PERCEPTION—GABRIĒL—LOVE

DAUEITHE

INTELLIGENCE—SAMBLŌ—PEACE

ĒLĒLĒTH

PRUDENCE—ABRASAKS—ETERNAL LIFE

BEINGS that dwell with the luminaries:

The SELF-ORIGINATE WORD (or verbal expression). An offspring of the anointed (Christ). Fused with Adamas.

ADAMAS. The incorruptible first human being. With Harmozēl.

The GREAT SETH, his son. The “child of the human being” (son of man). With Oroiaēl.

SEED OR OFFSPRING OF THE GREAT SETH. The incorruptible immovable race. With Daueithe.

SOULS of the offspring. With ĒlĒlēth.

MATERIAL WISDOM (Sophia)

ANGELIC AGENTS in the birth of the seed of Seth:

HORMOS

EDŌKLA

GUARDIANS of the seed of Seth:

400,000 ETHEREAL ANGELS

AEROSIĒL

SELMELKHEL

OTHER INCORRUPTIBLE BEINGS who preside, receive, guard, etc., including the living water Iesseus-Mazareus-Iessedekus and others.

II. The Rulers

SAKLA. The great angel that rules over Hades and chaos, the devil.

NEBROUĒL. The great demon that is with Sakla.

Sakla's ANGELS, that preside over Hades and chaos

III. Humankind

ADAM

HIS WIFE (Eve)

THREE SONS ("sowings") begotten on Eve:

A SON by the rulers (Cain)

A SON by Adam (Abel)

A SON by the great Seth (Seth)

The RACE OF SETH on earth, including perhaps:

A FEMALE VIRGIN by whom Seth becomes incarnate (Mary)

JESUS of Nazareth. Seth incarnate as a reason-born being.

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by two manuscripts, MSS NHC III (pp. 40–69) and NHC IV (pp. 50–81), which were copied just before A.D. 350 and are now in the Cairo Coptic Museum. Each of the two Coptic manuscripts contains an independent and stylistically distinct translation based on the Greek; thus, wherever the two texts are parallel, they differ in vocabulary and style. Careful comparison of the parallels has made it possible to gain a systematic understanding of the different ways in which the two ancient Coptic translators carried out their task; and thus, in cases where one of the two manuscripts is defective, its original text can often be restored by consideration of the wording of the parallel.

There are also important differences between the two manuscripts that are not a matter of ancient translation technique, but rather indicate that two distinct editions of the Greek text were already in circulation in antiquity when the Coptic translations were being made. At present, there is no certainty among scholars as to which ancient edition contains the more accurate version of the original text, though the editors of the critical edition believe that NHC IV may have been generally superior. For that reason the present translation is based on MS NHC IV; in many places where NHC IV is defective, its readings can be conjecturally restored by comparison and stylistic adjustment of the reading found in the other manuscript. Such restorations, which are supported by the parallel manuscript, are *printed in italics*. Comparison of the other manuscript has also clarified the meaning of certain Coptic expressions in NHC IV and has thus been an aid in translation. In a few instances both manuscripts are defective in a given passage but the original text can nevertheless be conjectured with certainty: these totally conjectural restorations are enclosed within square brackets []. Reference numbers keyed to the translation follow NHC IV, even in italicized passages, except when NHC IV is so defective that its line numbers are uncertain. In such cases a reference to NHC III is given (e.g., III 55).

The translation below is based on Böhlig and Wisse's synoptic critical edition of the Coptic, with some alterations: A. Böhlig and F. Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2 . . .* (see "Select Bibliography"), 52–167. The translation is

based on MS NHC IV; parallel line references of the other manuscript are also provided in the margin.

An English translation of the other ancient edition of the work, which is found in MS NHC III, is given in Böhlig and Wisse's critical edition.

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*The Holy Book of the
Great Invisible Spirit
or
The Egyptian Gospel*^a

I. THE INCORRUPTIBLE REALM

IV (III) **Title. The parent.**

- 1 (40 12) **IV 50** *The Holy Book* of the [...] of the *Great Invisible*
3 (13) [*Spirit*]:^a •the *unnameable* parent [that] emanated from Bjn 2:26+
5 (17) *the heights*; •the light of [the] fullness; the eternal light of
the aeons; the light in silence—in forethought and the par- Bjn 4:29
ent’s silence; the light in word and truth; the incorruptible
12 (41 2) light; the inaccessible light; •the light that has emanated
forever, belonging to the aeons of the ineffable, traceless,^b
18 (5) and unproclaimable parent; the eternity of the aeons; •the
21 (-) self-originate, self-radiation, and alien; •the inexplicable
power of the ineffable parent.
23 (7) •Three powers emanated from it: namely the father, the Bjn 2:8, 9:9+
mother, and the son, which are self-manifest beings, from RAAd 65:25
29 (9) the incorruptible parent’s living^c *silence*. •They emanated FTh 37:20+
from *the ineffable parent’s silence* [...] **51** Doksomedōn- Zs 57:23
IrG 1.29.3
v.29
4 (15) Domedōn,^a the eternal realm of *the aeons*. •[From that 53:3, 55:7
62:4, 65:13
III 56:1
Zs 126:6
source] emanated the light—[that] is, the emanation—of
each of their powers; and in *this way the son* emanated as
the fourth, the mother as the [fifth], the father as the *sixth*.
11 (19) •[...] *it*^b was [not . . .; rather, it is] traceless,^c [and] it left no
mark in all *the powers, glories, and incorruptibilities*.

Title a. The double title is found in the colophon in MS NHC III at the end of the work (III 69:6f). Many scholars translate the subtitle as “The Gospel of the Egyptians” and call the work only by this designation.

The following translation is based on MS NHC IV wherever that MS is extant; for the meaning of *italics*, see the introduction to EgG, “Text.”

IV 50 a. In the colophon of MS NHC III, the main

title of the work is copied as the last phrase, a normal place for titles. It is based upon these opening words.

b. MS NHC III next has “unaging and.”

c. “living”: gnostic jargon used in this text to indicate membership in the incorruptible realm.

51 a. Apparently not an actor but a place.

b. The parent.

c. MS NHC III next has “unfamiliar.”

Emanation of three powers

- 15 (23) From it there had emanated three *powers*,^d which are three octets, which the parent emitted from its bosom in silence *and* by its forethought: the father, the mother, the *son*.

The father

- 22 (42.5) The first octet, for whose sake^e the thrice-male^f child^g 55:11 emanated:

thought;	Bjn 4:26 +
Word (verbal expression);	52:22, 53:17
<i>incorruptibility</i> ;	55:7, 58:23
<i>eternal life</i> ;	60:1, 60:21
will;	61:18, 62:16
intellect;	65:5, Bjn
52 <i>prior</i> acquaintance;	7:9 +
<i>androgynous father</i> .	Bjn 5:20
	Bjn 5:26
	Bjn 7:6
	Bjn 6:34
	Bjn 5:10

The mother

- 2 (11) The second power or octet:

<i>the mother</i> ;	
the [masculine] female virgin, the <i>Barbēlō</i> ;	Bjn 4:36
<Epititiōkh[. . .]ai>;	
<Memeneaimen [. . .]>; ^a	
[. . .]kaba;	
Adōne;	
[. . .], who presides over the heaven [. . .];	
[. . .]akrōbōriaōr [. . .], the inexplicable and <i>ineffable</i>	
power, who [. . .].	

- 11 (17) •Having *emanated*, she (the mother) *self-radiated*, and took delight *in* the parent of the living silence.^b

The son

- 15 (21) And *the third* power or octet, which constitutes the son of silence together with silence (?)^c and acquaintance with
19 (43) *the father* and excellence of [the] mother: •from his bosom

d. This passage is a detailed retelling of 50:23f.

e. Or "because of which."

f. "thrice," i.e. "supremely": gnostic jargon used in this text; "male": gnostic jargon used in this text to indicate membership in the incorruptible realm.

g. Or "servant."

from MS NHC III; they are erroneously omitted in NHC IV.

b. MS NHC III instead has "silent silence."

c. "silence": probably an error of copying; MS NHC III instead has "glory," which may be the original reading of the text. "Glory" and "acquaintance" are closely associated in RAD.

52 a. The words in angle brackets are supplied

- emanated seven powers of the great^d light, [which are] seven
 22 (3) vowels;^e •the Word (or verbal expression) derives from 51:22 +
 them, [and is] their fulfillment.
 24 (4) •They amount to three powers or three octets, which
 the parent emitted from its bosom in silence [and] in its
 forethought.

Completion of the Doksomedōn realm

- 3 (7) **53** In that very same place, the place where Doksomedōn 50:29+
 the eternal realm of the aeons was shown forth along with
 the thrones (?) that are within it and the powers [that] sur-
 round them and glory and incorruption, [the] parent of the
 12 (15) great light [. . .]^a forth in silence [. . . •the great] Doksomedōn
 15 (15) realm, in which the [thrice]-male (?) child reposes. •And
 17 (19) within it was established the throne of its glory; •and upon it 55:11 +
 on the tablet [. . .], its obscure^b name [was inscribed] . . . the
 Word (or verbal expression) . . . the parent . . . light of the en- 51:22+
 23 (22) tirety . . . silence,^c •which emanated in silence, which reposes
 26 (24) in silence, •whose name is in an invisible symbol [. . .] [an]
 ineffable mystery emanated:^d

3 (44 3) **54** •I
 Ē
 O
 U
 E
 A
 Ō

- 13 (9) •And so the three powers lifted up praise unto

d. “great” : gnostic jargon used in this text to indicate membership in the incorruptible realm.
 e. Or “seven voices.”

53 a. Possibly “[came].”
 b. Or “ineffable.”

c. The grammatical connection of the last five phrases is unknown, owing to the imperfection of the manuscripts.

d. What follows is a copy of the “obscure (or ineffable) name” written “on the tablet” attached to the throne of “the [thrice]-male (?) child.” The seven Greek vowels are arranged, in descending order, to spell “Iēou—Epsilon—Alpha—Omega” and each vowel is copied twenty-two times, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. “Iēou”

may be a variant of Ieou, the name of the true god according to certain gnostics (cf. the *Book of Jeu*, edited by C. Schmidt and V. MacDermott; Nag Hammadi Studies, vol. 13; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978). It may ultimately derive from Iaō, a conjuring name of Yahweh commonly used in Jewish-Greek magical spells. “Epsilon” (the letter E) also represents “five” in Greek, and may refer to the quintet structure of the parent’s forethought, or Barbēlō, in classic Gnosticism (cf. BJn 6:2f). “Alpha—Omega” (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) is a traditional acclamation (cf. Rv 1:8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the lord god”). The “tablet” thus contains a pseudo-Semitic representation in Greek of the ineffable name of god.

- 15 (10) •the great, *invisible, uninvoked, unnameable*, the
 virgin spirit of the [parent]; and
 19 (12) •the *masculine*^a female virgin, [the Barbēlō].

**Appearance of Iōēl, the anointed (Christ),
 another being, and Ēsēphēkh**

- 20 (13) The latter^b (the Barbēlō) made a request for [. . .] *a power*.
 21 (14) •And a *living silence* [of] *silence*^c was shown forth in power, 55:15
 Zs 56:13
 [. . .] are glories (?) and *incorruptibilities*, the eternity [. . .]
 1 (17) the aeons, 55 •which presides [over the] *myriad* mysteries,
 the thrice-male beings, the thrice-male peoples, the male
 7 (19) (Christ), and the] male peoples. •The *races*^a filled the great
eternal realm Doksomedōn with *powers* [of] *the Word* (or 50:29
 51:22+
 verbal expression) of the luminous [fullness].
 11 (22) •Next the *thrice-male* child, [the] great *anointed (Christ)*,^b 51:22, 53:12
whom the [great] *invisible spirit* anointed and whose power Bjn 2:1, 6:23+
 15 (25) [is named] *Ainon*, •[lifted] up praise unto *the great invisible*
spirit [and the] *masculine female virgin Iōēl the silence of si-*
 19 (28) *lent* silence,^c •*the greatness* that[. . .] *obscure* [. . .] *ineffable*
 [. . .] *unreplying* [and] *inexplicable*, the first to [appear],
 and *unproclaimable* [. . .] 56 wonderful [. . .] *ineffable* [. . .]
 3 (-) •which possesses all the greatnesses, the (?) greatness of the
 6 (-) *silence of silence*, in that [place], •the thrice-[male] child
 lifted up praise and made a request for [a power] from the
 [great invisible virgin] spirit.
 11 (-) •Next from [that] place was shown forth [. . .] which [. . .]
 which beholds [glories . . . treasures] in [. . .] *invisible* mys-
 teries [. . .] of *silence* [. . .] the *masculine* [female] *virgin* [. . .].
 20 (-) •Next was [shown forth the child of the] child Ēsēphēkh.^a 59:24, 62:1
 23 (-) •And [thus] it was completed: 65:19
 III 15:22
 IV 73:17
 Zs 13:7+
 24 (-) •the [father];
 [the] mother;
 the son;
 25 (-) •the five seals; 58:6, 59:27
 25 (-) •the invincible power, which is the great [anointed 66:25, 74:13
 78:3
 Bjn 31:22+
 (Christ)] of all the *incorruptibilities*.

54 a. According to Bjn 5:6f, the Barbēlō is “the mother-father . . . the thrice-male . . . the thrice-androgynous name.”

b. “The latter”: MS NHC III instead has “they.”

c. “*silence* [of] *silence*”: the “masculine female virgin Iōēl.” Cf. 55:15f.

b. “anointed” and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

c. Or possibly “the silence (which is an offspring) of silent silence.”

56 a. Known elsewhere also as Ēphēsēkh. Cf. Zs 13:7f.

55 a. Or “peoples.”

- 2 (-) [...] 57 •holy [...] the end [...] and [...] are powers, [glo-
 13 (-) ries], and incorruptibilities [...] emanated [...] •it lifted [up
 praise] unto
- 14 (-) •the hidden, obscure [..., the] concealed (aeon)^a [...] in [...] the aeons [...] throne(s) [...] and [...]each
 25 (-) [...] •countless myriads of [...] surrounded them,
 [glories] and incorruptibilities [...] and [...];
- 3 (-) 58 •the father;
 the mother;
 the son;
- 5 (-) •all [the fullness] of which I have already [spoken];
- 6 (-) •[the] five seals [...] of [...]. 56:25+
- 8, 14, 21 (-)(-)(-) •They [...] presiding over [...] •and the aeons [...] •and the
 eternal aeons [in very] truth.

Emanation of another being

- 23 (-) Next [...] ^a [emanated] in [silence] together with [living]
 silence [of] the spirit [and] the parent's Word (or verbal •ex- 51:22+
 27 (-) pression) and light. •[It] had [...] the [five] seals, which the 56,25+
 2 (-) [parent emitted] from its bosom; 59 •it had passed through
 4 (-) all the aeons of which I have already spoken; •and it had
 established glorious thrones [and] countless [myriads] of
 7 (-) angels [that] surrounded [them]— •[powers and incorrupt-
 ible] glories, [singing] and glorifying, all praising [...] with
 [one voice] in a form with a never silent cry, [. . .unto]:
- 13 (-) •the father;
 the [mother];
 [the] son, [...];
- 14 (-) •[all the] fullnesses [of which I have already
 spoken; i.e.
- 16 (-) •[the great] anointed (Christ), which came from
 [silence], [which] is the [incorruptible] child
 Telmaēl-Telmakhaēl-[Ēli-Ēli]-Makhar-Makhar-
 [Seth], [the] power [that] is in very truth living;
- 22 (-) •[the] masculine [female virgin] that is with [it],
 Iouēl;

57 a. “[the] concealed (aeon)”: according to Zs, the highest of the three aeons that constitute the Barbēlō aeon.

58 a. Only part of this word is preserved in the one surviving MS of the present passage; the original text might have been either “[an emanation]” or “[forethought].”

- 24 (-) •Ēsēphēkh, holder [of the glory] and [child] of the child;
- 26 (-) •[the crown of] that being's glory;
- 27 (-) •[. . .] the five [seals: the] fullness [of which I have already spoken]. 56:25+

- 1 (-) **60** •The great living self-originate [Word (or verbal expres- 51:22+
4 (-) sion)], [the] truly [divine], the unengendered nature, •whose IrG 1.29.2
name I shall utter by saying [. . .]aia[. . .]thaōthōsth[. . .].^a EpG 26.10.4
- 7 (-) •which is [the] offspring of the [great] anointed (Christ),^b i.e. the offspring [of] ineffable silence, having [emanated]
- 9 (-) from there, • having come forth from the great [invisible] and incorruptible [spiritas] the [offspring] of silence^c together with [silence], •revealed[. . .] treasure [. . .] its glory
- 13 (-) [. . .] appeared in the visible [. . .]. •And it [established] the
- 19 (-) four [aeons]. •By means of the Word (or verbal expression) 51:22+
21 (-) it established [them].
- 22 (-) •It (the Word) lifted up [praise] unto the great invisible
- 24 (-) virgin spirit, •[the silence (?)] of the [parent], in silence [of
- 27 (-) the] living silence of [silence], •[where] the human being reposes, [. . .] by means of [. . .].

Emanation of the Mirothoē and production of Adamas

- 30 (49 1) Thence there next emanated the *great cloud* of light, a living *power*, the mother of the holy *incorruptible* beings of
- 5 (5) the great powers, *the Mirothoē*.^a **61** •And she engendered *that being* whose name I shall utter by saying, FTTh38:14+
Zs 6:21+
3Tb 119:11 +
v.5
Bjn 8:28 +
- 6 (6) •[Thou art unique!]
Thou art unique!
Thou art unique!
- 8 (7) •*Ea, Ea, Ea!*^b
- 8 (8) •Inasmuch as *the latter—Adamas—is light* that has radi-
11 (9) ated [. . .], this being [is] the eye of the [light]. •Indeed, [this is] the first *human being*, because of *whom* [are] all things, FTTh 38:5+
- 14 (13) *unto whom are all things, and without whom is nothing*: •the inaccessible *parent*^c *beyond thought*, who has become *immanent* and has emanated down from above for the obliteration of *the lack*. 71:1
Bjn 14:8

60 a. An esoteric word, not Greek. The MS is imperfect here.

b. The divine Logos (Word) is not identical with the preexistent Christ but rather its offspring.

c. Cf. note 55c.

61 a. Elsewhere known as Moirothea: a Greek neologism, possibly meaning “divine part.”

b. Or possibly “(Thou art unique!) Thou art unique! Thou art unique! O five, O one! O five, O one! O five, O one!” (i.e. “O five in one”). The letters *E* and *A* represent “five” and “one” in Greek.

c. “parent,” i.e. father of the great Seth.

Fusion of the self-originate Word with Adamas

- 18 (16) •Next, the *great divine self-originate Word* (or *verbal ex- 51:22+*
 22 (21) *pression*) and *Adamas the incorruptible human being be-*
came by fusion a human rational faculty. •And *human beings*
 23 (22) *came into existence because of a rational faculty.*
 24 (23) •*the great invisible, incomprehensible, virgin spirit;*
 26 (25) •*the masculine female virgin, [the Barbēlō];*
 28 (26) •*the thrice-male child;*
 29 (50 I) •*the masculine female virgin Iouēl;*
 1 (2) **62** •[the] child *Ēsēphēkh*, holder of *the glory and*
child of the child;
 3 (3) •*the crown of that being's glory;*
 4 (4) •*the great aeons of Doksomedōn; 50:29+*
 5 (5) •*the thrones that are within them;*
 5 (6) •*the powers that surround them—glories and incor-*
ruptibilities and the whole fullness of which I have
already spoken;
 9 (10) •*the ethereal^a god-receiving realm, where holy peo-*
ple of the light receive image—people of the light FTh 45:23+
of the parent of silence and the [silent] living
wellspring; BIn 4:21+
- 14 (15) •i.e. *the parent and all the fullness of these beings, as I have*
just said.

Adamas's request for four aeons

- 16 (17) *The great divine self-originate Word* (or *verbal expres- 51:22+*
 19 (21) *sion*), in the company of *Adamas the incorruptible human*
being, lifted up praise •and *made a request for power and*
eternal strength and [incorruptibility] (*to be given*) *unto the*
 24 (24) *self-originate in the form of a full complement of four aeons;*
so that by their agency might appear the glory and power of RAD 64:6+
the^b [. . .] parent unto the holy people of the great light that
was to descend unto the gloomy world.

Production of the great Seth

- 30 (51 5) [Next] *Adamas* the [great (?)] *incorruptible human being BIn 9:11 +*
 1 (7) *made a request for a child (to be produced) for it from out of*
 4 (9) *itself—63* •*that for its part, it (the child) might become par-*
ent of the immovable and incorruptible race;^a •that, for the

62 a. Lit. "airy."

b. MS NHC III next has "invisible"; the original reading of the text is uncertain.

63 a. The "child" is the great Seth, and "the immovable . . . race" is the seed of the great Seth.

sake of this race, *silence and speech* might be shown forth;
 6 (12) •and that, at its instigation, the realm that is *dead* might
arise and dissolve.

Production of four luminaries

8 (14) *And so the great* [. . .] *power of the great light emanated*
 11 (16) *from above.* •*The effulgence engendered four luminaries:* B)n 7:30+

Harmozēl;
 Oroiaēl;
 Daueithe;
 Ēlēlēth;

14 (20) together with •*the great incorruptible Seth the son of Adama* [the great] *incorruptible human being.*

17 (22) •And so was completed *the full septet*^b—*which resides*
 in a [mystery] of *hidden mysteries*, and which was glorified

22 (52 2) [. . .] and •became a *group of eleven octets*, thus [being completed by (?)] *four octets.*

Production of the luminaries' consorts

24 (3) *And the parent consented, and the full complement of the*

27 (6) *luminaries joined in the consent.* •*Consorts were shown forth to bring about the completion of the octet of the divine self-originate:*

2 (8) **64** •*loveliness*, for the first luminary *Harmozēl*;

3 (10) •*perception*, for the *second* luminary *Oroiaēl*;

5 (11) •*intelligence*, for the third luminary *Daueithe*;

6 (13) •*prudence*,^a for [the] fourth luminary *Ēlēlēth*.

8 (14) •This is the *first octet* of the *divine self-originate*.

Production of the luminaries' attendants

10 (16) *And the parent consented, and all the full complement*

13 (19) *of the luminaries joined in the consent.* •And attendants
emanated:

76:15
 FTh 48:26

14 (20) •first, great *Gamaliēl*, [belonging to] *the great luminary Harmozēl*;

RAAd 75:21
 Zs 46:31

17 (22) •great *Gabriēl*, [belonging to] the *second great luminary Oroiaēl*;

Zs 58:20
 GJd 53:22

b. I.e. a septet of octets.

64 a. "intelligene . . . prudence," MS NHC III:

NHC IV here has "acquaintance . . . teaching," alternate Coptic translations of the corresponding Greek words (*synesis* . . . *phronēsis*).

- 19 (24) •great Samblō, *belonging to the third great luminary*
Dauethe;
20 (26) •*great* Abrasaks, *belonging to [the] fourth [great]*
luminary Ēlēlēth.

Production of consorts for the luminaries' attendants

- 23 (53 1) And consorts *emanated* by the *parent's consent* to them:
- 26 (4) •*memory*, for the first, *great Gamaliēl*;
27 (5) •*love*, for the second, *great Gabriēl*;
28 (7) •*peace*, for the third, *great Samblō*;
1 (8) **65** •eternal life, for the fourth, *great Abrasaks*.
- 2 (10) •And thus the five *octets* became complete, a sum total of
forty: the inexplicable [power].
5 (12) •*Next* the great *self-originate* Word (or verbal expression) 51:22+
and all the full complement of *the four* luminaries *lifted up*
praise unto:
- 9 (16) •the *great invisible, uninvoked, unnameable virgin*
spirit;
12 (18) •the masculine *female virgin*;^a
13 (19) •the great aeons of *Dokso-medōn*;
14 (20) •the thrones that are *in* them;
15 (21) •the powers that *surround* them^b—glories and *powers*
and authorities;
17 (23) •the *thrice-male child*;
18 (24) •the masculine *female virgin* *Iouēl*;
19 (25) •Ēsēphēkh, *holder* of the glory;^c
20 (54 2) •*the crown* of that being's glory;
21 (3) •*all the fullness* and *all* the glories within the inacces-
sible fullnesses and *the* unnameable *aeons*;
- 25 (6) •*so that* they [for their part] invoked *the parent*^d—
26 (7) •*namely the . . . -th*^e—and the *incorruptible* [immovable]
28 (8) race of the parent; •[and] called [this race] *the* seed of the
great *Seth*.

65 a. The Barbēlō.

b. The MS here erroneously inserts "and."

c. MS NHC III next has "and [child] of the child."

d. Or "father."

e. ". . . -th": an ordinal number. The original reading of the text is uncertain here. MS NHC III has "seventy-fourth," which the ancient copyist has struck out, adding "fourth" above the canceled word; NHC IV is imperfect here.

Enthronement of the four luminaries in the four eternal realms

- 30 (13) Next the fullness began to move, and disturbance seized
 2 (13) the *in corruptibles*. 66 •And then the thrice-male child emanated down from above unto the *unengendered* and self-originate beings,^a and unto those *engendered* in the
 6 (18) (realm of) generation. •That great being who belongs to all the greatnesses of the great anointed (Christ) emanated, and established thrones of glory^b in the four eternal realms
 10 (23) (aeons). •And countless *myriad powers surrounded* them—
 13 (55 1) *glories* and *in corruptibilities*. •And in this way it emanated.
 14 (2) •And the *in corruptible spiritual congregation*^c developed into full strength within the four luminaries of the great, living, self-originate [Word (or verbal expression)], the god of 51:22+
 19 (6) truth, •praising [and] singing, all glorifying with one voice in unanimous form with a never silent cry unto:
- 22 (9) •the father;
 the mother;
 the son;
 23 (10) •their fullness, of which I have [already] spoken [. . .];
 25 (11) •the five seals that preside [over] the *myriads*; 56:25+
 26 (12) •the beings that rule over the *aeons*;
 28 (13) •the governors that convey glory, having [been] ordered to appear^d unto the worthy.
- 1 (16) 67 •Amen!

II. HISTORY OF THE SEED OF THE GREAT SETH

Production of the seed of Seth

- 2 (16) Next the great Seth, son of *Adamas* the *in corruptible* human being *lifted up praise* unto:
- 4 (19) •the great, invisible, uninvoked, unnameable, *virgin spirit*;
 7 (21) •the masculine *female* [virgin];^a

66 a. “self-originate beings”: according to Zs, the lowest of the three aeons that constitute the Barbelō aeon is “the self-originate (aeon),” and it consists of self-originates.

b. MS NHC III next has “countless myriads.”

c. The same word also means “church.”
 d. Or “to make revelations.”

67 a. The Barbelō.

- 8 (-) •the thrice-male [child];
- 9 (21) •[the] masculine [female] virgin *Iouēl*;^b
- (55 22) **III 55** ⁽²²⁾*Ēsēphēkh*,^a holder of the glory;
- (23) ⁽²³⁾the crown of that being's glory, the child of the child;^b
- (56 1) **III 56** ⁽¹⁾the great *Doksomedōn* aeons; 50:29+
- (2) ⁽²⁾the fullness of which I have already spoken.
- (3) ⁽³⁾And he (*Seth*) made a request for his seed. BJn 9:14+
- (4) ⁽⁴⁾Thence there next emanated *Plēsitheā*^a the great power of the great light, mother of the angels, mother of the luminaries,
- (8) mother of glories, ⁽⁸⁾the female virgin that has four breasts,
- (9) ⁽⁹⁾bearing fruit as a wellspring out of Gomorrah and out of Sodom—namely, the fruit of the spring Gomorrah that is
- 26 (12) within her. **IV 67** •She emanated through the agency of^a the great *Seth*.
- 27 (13) •Next the great *Seth* rejoiced at the grace that had been
- 31 (17) bestowed upon him by the incorruptible child. •He took his
- 2 (19) seed from the female virgin that has four breasts **68** •and established it along with her (?)^a within the four aeons, in the third great luminary *Daueithe*.

Appearance of material wisdom

- 5 (22) After five thousand years, the great luminary *Ēlēlēth* GJd 51:4
- 7 (24) said, •“Let something rule over chaos and Hades.”
- 9 (26) •And a cloud [...] “material wisdom” (*Sophia*) appeared. BJn 8:19+
- (57 2) **III 57** ⁽²⁾[...] gazed upon the [...], with her face resembling [...] in her manner [...] blood.

Emanation of Sakla, Nebrouēl, and Sakla's angels

- (5) ⁽⁵⁾And [the great] angel *Gamaliēl* spoke [to (?) great *Gabriēl*], the attendant belonging to [the great luminary] *Oroiaēl*, BJn 9:25+ Zs 9:2?
- (9) [saying, ⁽⁹⁾“Let an] angel emanate [to rule] over chaos [and
- (11) Hades].” ⁽¹¹⁾Next the cloud [...] from the two units^a [...] light
- 31 (16) [...] she established [...] within the cloud [...] **IV 68** •*Sakla*^a GJd 51:12

b. “*Iouēl*”: i.e. *Iōēl*.

III 56 a. *Plēsitheā*: perhaps “nearby goddess.”

III 55 a. The following passage, “*Ēsēphēkh* . . . great *Seth*” (67:9–70:31 = NHC III 55:22–59:10), has been almost entirely destroyed in MS NHC IV, and so is translated from the parallel text in NHC III, taking account of the usual style of NHC IV whenever possible.

b. “the child of the child”: probably this phrase has been copied in the wrong place and belongs after “*Ēsēphēkh*, holder of the glory.”

IV 67 a. Or “out of.”

68 a. “along with her (?)”: the MS here erroneously has “along with him(self).”

III 57 a. Or “two monads.”

IV 68 a. “*Sakla*” (Aramaic “fool”): a conventional name of Satan in Judaism.

- the great [angel] beheld Nebrouēl the great demon that was
 3 (18) with him, **69** •and they [...] became an earthborn spirit [...] BJn 10:27
 – (21) •helping angels. **III 57** ⁽²¹⁾Sakla [said] to Nebrouēl the great [de- GJd 51:17
 mon], “Let the twelve aeons exist within [...] aeon(s) ... worlds
 – (25) [...]” ⁽²⁵⁾Through the will of the self-originate, the great angel
 – (58.1) [Sakla] said, **III 58** ⁽¹⁾“The [...] shall [...] the quantity of seven
 – (3) [...]” ⁽³⁾And it said to the [...] angels], “Go! Let [each] of you
 rule over its own [...];” and each [of them] went.
 – (6) ⁽⁶⁾[These are the] twelve [angels]:^a
 – (7) ⁽⁷⁾[the first] angel, [Athōth...], who is called “[...]” by BJn 10:28+
 the] races of humankind; GJd 52:4
 – (10) ⁽¹⁰⁾second, Harmas, [the eye of fire];
 – (12) ⁽¹²⁾third, [Kalila];
 – (12) ⁽¹²⁾fourth, Iōbēl;
 – (13) ⁽¹³⁾[fifth], Adōnaios, who is called “Sabaōth”;
 1 (15) **IV 70** •sixth, [Cain, whom all (?) the races of] human-
 kind call “the sun”;
 3 (17) •[seventh, Abel];
 4 (18) •eighth, Akiressina;^a
 4 (18) •ninth, Ioubēl;
 5 (19) •tenth, [Harmoupiāēl];
 5 (19) •eleventh, Arkheir-[Adōnein];^b
 – (21) **III 58** ⁽²¹⁾twelfth, [Belias].
 – (21) ⁽²¹⁾These preside over Hades [and chaos].

Reproof of Sakla’s arrogance

- (23) ⁽²³⁾And after the preparation [of the . . .],^a Sakla said to its BJn 13:5+
 – (24) [angels (?)], ⁽²⁴⁾“For my part, I am a [jealous] god; and none Ex 20:5
 has [come to exist] apart from me:” [for it was]^b confident of Dt 49:9
 its origin. Is 46:9
 – (59.1) **III 59** ⁽¹⁾Next a voice came from on high, saying, “The RR 94:23+
 – (4) human being^a and the child of the human being^b exist”—⁽⁴⁾ BJn 14:18
 with reference to the descent of the higher image resembling its
 voice on high, which belonged to the image.

III 58 a. The destroyed words in the passage have been restored by comparison with a similar list in BJn 10:28f.

III 58 a. Possibly “[of the world].”
 b. Or possibly “[for it was not].”

IV 70 a. Probably an error for “Abiressina.” Cf. BJn. b. Melkheir-Adōnein in BJn.

III 59 a. Adamas.
 b. Or “son of man”; i.e. the great Seth.

Projection of an image. Creation of Adam.

- (6) ⁽⁶⁾*It (the image) gazed out. ⁽⁶⁾By the gaze of the image was modeled the first modeled form,^c because of whom repentance came into existence.* RR 87:11
Bjn 13:32+
- (10) ⁽¹⁰⁾*It (the image) received its realization and its power through the will of the parent and the delight that the parent took in the great incorruptible, immovable race of the great mighty people of the great Seth,^d IV 71 •who sowed it (the image) in the earthborn aeons, so that because of it*
1 (16) *the lacks might be completed. •For that (image) which descended from on high into the gloomy world [. . .] came to issue exhortation.^a* 61:14+

Cain, Abel, and Seth

- 6 (21) *And after the sowing by the ruler of this realm and those [that derive from] that ruler—a defiled and corrupt sowing* Bjn 24:8+
IrSat 1.24.2
- 10 (25) *of the demon-begetting god^b—•[and] after the sowing by Adam, a sowing that resembles the sun and the great Seth,^c* Bjn 24:34
- 10 (60 2) *•next the great angel Hormos^d emanated in order to prepare for the great Seth’s sowing^e through the holy spirit in a holy, reason-born vessel,^f by the means of the virgins of the defiled sowing of this realm.* Zs 47:9
75:15

Incarnation of the seed of Seth

- 18 (9) *Next the great Seth came, bringing his seed, and he sowed it in the earth-born aeons, whose number is the infinite number of Sodom.*
- 22 (12) *•[And they (the aeons)] were called a pasture^g of the great*
- 25 (15) *Seth, i.e. Gomorrah. •The great Seth took the plant from [the]*
- 27 (16) *spring of Gomorrah •and planted it in the second location, which also was called Sodom.*
- 30 (19) *•This is the race^h that appeared through the agency of*
- 2 (20) *Edōkla. 72 •For by means of reason, it (Edōkla) engendered truth and right (?),^a i.e. the source of the seed of eternal life*

c. “first modeled form”: i.e. Adam; Jewish and Christian jargon, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

d. The following passage (to IV 78:18f) survives in MS NHC IV, and the translation is based on that MS.

IV 71 a. Or “to summon.”

b. The begetting of Cain (and perhaps Abel) by Sakla and Sakla’s offspring.

c. The begetting of Seth son of Adam.

d. Lit. “refuge.”

e. Or “seed.”

f. The “reason-born vessel” is Jesus, cf. 74:25f and 75:15f. The begetting of Seth the son of Adam establishes a line of descent “by means of the virgins . . . of this realm” leading ultimately to Jesus and his adoption by the great Seth.

g. Or “distribution.”

h. I.e. the race of Seth on earth.

72 a. Gk. *themissa*, perhaps a proper name coined by the author. In Greek *themis* means “established custom, right.”

7 (25) and of all those who are going to endure because of acquaintance with their emanation. •This is the great incorruptible *race that appeared* from out of three (previous) *worlds*.^b 74:17+

The flood and other catastrophes

10 (61 1) And *the flood will come* as a *prototype for the end of the* Bjn 28:32+
 13 (4) *age [and descend] against the world*. •*On account of this race* RAd 75:9
 16 (6) *conflagrations will come upon the earth [. . .]* •*grace will*
 19 (10) *come through the agency of the prophets and the watchmen*
 22 (72) *of the living race*. •*On account of this race plagues and fam-*
 24 (13) *ines will occur*. •*All these things will come to pass on account*
of this great, incorruptible race. •*On account of this race,*
temptations [and] deceptions of false prophets will occur.

Prediction of Sakla's downfall

27 (16) *Next the great Seth saw* that in *the devil's*^c *activity, in its*
crookedness, in its scheme that it was going to bring down
 6 (22) *upon the immovable race, in the persecution waged by its*
powers and its angels, and in its deception, 73 •*it was going*
 7 (23) *to act recklessly against its own self*.
 8 (24) •*Next the great Seth lifted up praise unto:*
 11 (25) •*the great, uninvoked, invisible, unnameable, virgin*
 12 (62 2) *spirit [of the father];*
 •*the masculine female virgin, the Barbēlō;*
 •*the male child^a Telmaēl-Telmakhaēl-Ēli-Ēli-Makhar-*
Makhar-Seth, the power that is in very truth
living;
 16 (5) •*the masculine female virgin Iouēl;*
 17 (6) •*Ēsēphēkh, holder of the glory;*
 18 (7) •*the crown of that being's glory;*
 19 (8) •*the great glorifying aeon;*^b
 20 (9) •*the thrones that are within it;*
 21 (9) •*the great beings that surround them, and glories and*
incorruptibilities and the whole fullness of which I
have already spoken.

Emanation of guardian angels

25 (12) *And he first made a request for guardians of his seed*.
 27 (13) •*Next four hundred ethereal angels emanated from the great*

b. Corresponding to the "three advents" of 74:17. MS NHC III next has "into the (present) world."

c. "the devil": Sakla.

73 a. MS NHC III instead has "the thrice-male child."

b. MS NHC III, "the great Doxomedōn aeon."

- 29 (15) aeons; •with *them* were Aerosiēl and the great Selmelkhel,
 the guardians of the great incorruptible race, its fruit, and
 4 (19) the mighty people of the great Seth 74 •*from the time and*
 age of *truth* and right (?)^a down to the *end of these aeons*^b RR 97:10+
 8 (22) and their rulers, •*whom* the great *judges* have condemned Zs 9:6
 to death.

Seth's incarnations

- 9 (24) Next the *great Seth* was sent by *the four* great luminar-
 11 (26) ies—•*by* the will of the self-originate *and* all their (the lumi-
 13 (63 1) naries') whole fullness, •*through* the gift and delight of the III 59:10
 great, invisible spirit, the five seals, and the whole fullness 56:25+
- 17 (4) •to live through the three advents of which I have 72:7
 19 (6) already spoken, •*the* flood, the conflagration, RR 96:28+
 and the judgment of the rulers, authorities, and v.19
 powers; IrSat 1.24.2
- 22, 23 (8, 9) •to save that (race) which went astray, •by [destruc-
 25 (10) tion] of the world and *baptism* of the body, •and
 by [that] reason-born being^c which the great Seth 75:15+
 prepared mystically through the female virgin;^d
- 29 (13) •to make the *holy people*^e be born again^f Bjn 25:20+
- 30 (14) •by *the holy spirit* and invisible, hidden
 symbols;
- 2 (16) 75 •by destruction of world against world;
 4 (17) •by renunciation of the world and the god of
 the thirteen aeons;^a RAd 77:27+
- 7 (19) •by invitation from the holy, ineffable, and
 9 (20) incorruptible beings •<in>^b the bosom of the
 mighty light that *preexists* in forethought.

His establishment of baptism

- 11 (22) And by forethought he established the holy and the bap-
 14 (25) tism that is higher than the heavens: •(he did this) by the
 15 (64 1) holy, by the incorruptible, •and by the living reason-born
 17 (3) Jesus, whom the great Seth put on (like a garment).^c •And 71:11, 74:25
 77:12, 79:26
 IrUnid 1.30.12
 EpS 39.3.5
 EpG 26.10.4

74 a. Greek *themissa* (cf. note 72a).

b. Or "ages."

c. Jesus (cf. 75:15f).

d. The virgin Mary.

e. The race of Seth on earth.

f. In incorruptible baptism (cf. 77:18f).

75 a. Perhaps corresponding to the thirteen kingdoms of RAd.

b. Through an inadvertence the MS here omits "in."

c. The body or person of Jesus is here likened to the garment in which the great Seth is clothed, or which he adopts, at his final incarnation; a Platonist cliché for the relation of body to soul.

- he nailed down the powers of the thirteen aeons and made
 20 (5) them inactive; •at his instigation they are fetched and they
 are removed.
 21 (6) •And they^d are armed in invincible, incorruptible power
 with an armor consisting of acquaintance with the truth.

III. BAPTISMAL SERVICE

Incorruptible beings that preside over baptism

- 24 (9) And the following have been revealed as great beings that stand at rest: Zs 47:12
- 25 (10) Iesseus-Mazareus-Iessedekes, the living water; RAd 85:30
 27 (12) the great *governors*, the great Jacob, and *Theopemp-*
tos, and Isauēl; Zs 47:5
v.27
Zs 47:15
Zs 47:12
- 1 (-) **76** the being that presides over grace,
 Mēp[. .]ēl (?);
- 2 (14) those that preside over the springs of truth, Mikheus, 76:7?
 Mikhar, and Mnēsinous; FTh 48:18+
- 5 (16) the one that presides over the baptism of the living,
 the purifier Seseggen-Barpharaggēs; Zs 6:11
- 7 (19) those that preside over the gates of the waters of life,
 Miseus^a and Mikhar; 76:2?
- 10 (20) those that preside over ascent, Seldaō and Elainos; Zs 6:13+
- 12 (22) the receivers of the holy race and incorruptible,
 mighty people of the great Seth;
- 15 (24) the attendants of the four luminaries—great 64:14+
 Gamaliēl, great Gabriēl, great Samblō, and
 great Abrasaks;
- 19 (65 1) those beings that preside over the sun's path of com-
 ing out, Olsēs, Hymneus, and Heurymaious; Zs 47:15?
- 22 (3) those that preside over the (sun's) way of going in
 unto the repose of eternal life, Phritanis, Mikh-
 santhēr, and Mikhanōr;
- 26 (6) the *guardians* of chosen^b souls, Akraman and Zs 46:31
 Strempsoukhos;
- 2 (8) **77** the great power Telmakhaēl-Telmakhaēl-Ēli-Ēli-
 Makhar-Makhar-Seth;
- 4 (9) the being that is great, invisible, *virgin*, and unname-
 able, i.e. in spirit and silence;

d. The holy people? Cf. 74:29f.

76 a. Or "Mikheus."

b. Or "slain."

- 7 (12) the great luminary Harmozēl, where there is the
living, self-originate god in truth, with whom is
Adamas the incorruptible human being;
- 12 (16) Oroiaēl, where there is the great Seth and *Jesus* of life, 75:15
who came and crucified what was subject to the
law;
- 16 (19) third, *Daueithe*, where the offspring of the great Seth
repose;
- 18 (20) fourth, Ēlēlēth, where *the souls of the offspring re-*
pose; **III 65**
- (23) ⁽²³⁾*fifth, Iōēl, who presides over the name of the being*
who will be ordained to baptize with the holy, in-
corruptible baptism that is higher than heaven.^a
IV 77

Effect of baptism

- 31 (26)
1 (66 1) *But henceforth 78 • by the agency of the holy and incor-*
3 (2) *ruptible Poimaēl, •(acting) for the sake of those worthy of*
baptisms of renunciation and the ineffable seals thereof, 56:25+
6 (4) *•whichever persons have gained acquaintance of their re-*
ceivers, according as they have been instructed and have
learned, shall not taste death.

Baptismal hymn

- 10 (8) O Iesseus! 75:25+
- 11 (9) [.]ōēouōōua!
- 11 (9) In very truth!
- 12 (10) O Iesseus-Mazareus-Iessedekus!
- 13 (11) O living water!
- 14 (11) O child of the child!
- 14 (12) O name of all glories
- 15 (12) In *very truth!*
- 16 (13) O eternal being!
- 17 (13) IIII ĒĒĒĒ EEEE OOOO YYYY ŌŌŌŌ AAAA!^a
- 18 (14) *In very truth!*
- 19 (15) **III 66** ⁽¹⁵⁾ĒI AAAA ŌŌŌŌ!^a
- (16) ⁽¹⁶⁾*O being, which beholds the aeons*
- (17) ⁽¹⁷⁾*In very truth!*

III 65 a. The baptism that is acquaintance. Cf. RAd 85:22f.

78 a. Cf. 54:3f.

III 66 a. Or possibly “Thou art Alpha, Alpha, Alpha, Alpha, Omega, Omega, Omega, Omega!” Cf. note 53d.

- (17)
$$\begin{array}{c} (17)A \\ E \ E \\ \bar{E} \ \bar{E} \ \bar{E} \\ I \ I \ I \ I \\ Y \ Y \ Y \ Y \ Y \ Y \\ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O}^b \end{array}$$
- (19) ⁽¹⁹⁾*O existent for ever and ever*
- (20) ⁽²⁰⁾*In very truth!*
- 31 (20) **IV 78** $\bar{I}\bar{E}A\ AI\bar{O}$ in the heart!
- 2 (21) **79** *O existent upsilon forever unto eternity!*
- 3 (21) *You are what you are!*
- 3 (21) *You are who you are!*
- 3 (22) *This great name of yours is upon me,^a O self-originate that lacks nothing and is free,*
- 8 (25) *O invisible unto all but [me]!*
- 9 (25) *O invisible unto all!*
- 11 (26) *For what being can comprehend^b you by speech or praise?*
- 12 (27) *Having myself become acquainted with you, I have now mixed with your unchangeableness;*
- 14 (67 2) *And I have girded myself and come to dwell in an armor of loveliness^c and light, and I have become luminous.*
- (4) **III 67** ⁽⁴⁾*For the mother^a was there, because of the fair beauty of the loveliness.^b*
- 17 (6) **IV 79** *For this reason I have stretched out my two hands.*
- 18 (8) *I have been formed within the orbit of the riches of the light,*
- 21 (9) *For it (the light) is within my bosom, bestowing form upon the various engendered beings by unreproachable light.*

b. In the MS this passage is copied as a string of letters rather than a pyramid; the pyramid progresses from Alpha (A) to Omega (̄O) (cf. note 53d and 78:15). Possibly a line of text (“OOOOO”) has been omitted after “III” through an inadvertence, and the original reading is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c} A \\ E \ E \\ \bar{E} \ \bar{E} \ \bar{E} \\ I \ I \ I \ I \\ O \ O \ O \ O \ O \\ Y \ Y \ Y \ Y \ Y \ Y \\ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \ \bar{O} \end{array}$$

IV 79 a. After baptism.

b. Or “contain.”

c. Or “grace.” The remainder of the text has been almost entirely destroyed in MS NHC IV and so is translated from the parallel text in NHC III, taking account of the usual style of NHC IV whenever possible.

III 67 a. The Barbēlō.

b. Or “grace.”

- 24 (12) *I shall truly declare your praise,*
 25 (13) *For I have comprehended you:*
 26 (14) *(It is) yours, O Jesus! Behold, O eternally omega,* 75:15+
 O eternally epsilon,^a O Jesus!
 27 (14) *O eternity! Eternity!*
 – (15) **III 67** ⁽¹⁵⁾*O god of silence! I beg you utterly!*
 2 (16) **IV 80** *You are my realm of repose.*
 3 (17) *O son, Ēs Ēs, the epsilon!^a*
 4 (17) *O being without form that dwells among those without*
 form,
 5 (19) *Raising a human being by whom you will sanctify*
 me into your life according to your ineffaceable
 name.
 9 (22) *For this reason, the fragrance of life is within me:*
 10 (23) *For it has been mixed with water to serve as a proto-*
 type for all the rulers,^b
 12 (25) *So that in your company I might have life in the peace*
 of the saints,
 13 (26) *O eternally existent in very truth!*

IV. CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION

- 15, 16 (68 I) (2) *This is the book that the great Seth composed •and which* 3Tb 118:10
 he placed in high mountains upon which the sun has never RAd 85:9+
 19 (5) *risen—nor can it. •And from the beginning of their days, the* Fr 68:2
 name has never risen upon the hearts of the prophets, the
 24 (9) *apostles, or the heralds—nor could it; •and their ears have*
 26 (10) *not heard it.^c •The great Seth composed this book in writing in*
 2 (12) *130 years and 81 •placed it in the mountain called Kharaksiō,*
 – (14) **III 68** ⁽¹⁴⁾*so that, by emanating at the end of times and ages* III 59:10+
 through the will of the self-originate god and all the fullness,
 – (20) *because of the gift of the unsearchable, inconceivable, pa-*
 rental, will, ⁽²⁰⁾he might appear unto this holy, incorruptible
 – (22) *race of the great savior and unto ⁽²²⁾those^a who sojourn with*
 – (23) *them in love—⁽²³⁾along with the great, invisible, eternal spirit*
 – (25) (26) *and ⁽²⁵⁾its only-begotten offspring, and ⁽²⁶⁾the eternal light and*
 – (69 I) **III 69** ⁽¹⁾*its great incorruptible consort and incorruptible wis-*
 dom (Sophia) and the Barbēlō. and utter fullness in eternity.
 – (5) ⁽⁵⁾*Amen!*

IV 79 a. “epsilon,” or “five.” Cf. note 53d.

c. I.e. neither the “prophets” of Israel nor Christian “apostles” and “heralds” have known the truth.

80 a. Or “the five.” Cf. note 53d.

b. Here MS NHC IV seems instead to have “For it has been blended with [the] baptismal [waters of all] the rulers.”

III 68 a. “appear unto this . . . unto those . . . or “reveal this . . . and those . . . “

Colophon in MS NHC III^a

- (6) ⁽⁶⁾THE EGYPTIAN GOSPEL,^b a book of divine authorship,
 (8) holy and secret. ⁽⁸⁾May loveliness, intelligence, perception,
 and prudence^c be with the copyist, the beloved Eugnōstos
 in the spirit—in the flesh my name is Gongessos^d—and with my
 (14) companion luminaries in incorruption. ⁽¹⁴⁾O Jesus Christ, O
 (15) son of God, O savior! O ikhthys!^e ⁽¹⁵⁾Of divine authorship is the
 (18) Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit! Amen! ⁽¹⁸⁾THE HOLY
 BOOK OF THE GREAT INVISIBLE SPIRIT. Amen!

III 69 a. At the end of MS NHC III the copyist or a predecessor has added the following note.

b. See note IV 50a.

c. Not only virtues, but also consorts of the four luminaries (cf. 64:2f).

d. Latin *Concessus*.

e. “ikhthys” (Greek “fish”): a traditional early Christian acronym in Greek for “Jesus Christ, son of god, savior” (*Iēsous KHRistos THEou Yios Sōtēr*)

ZŌSTRĪANOS

(Excerpts)

(Zs)

CONTENTS

Zōstrianos describes gnostic baptism of acquaintance as a mystical ascent of the soul toward acquaintance or *gnōsis* with the ineffable first principle. The steps in the ladder of this ascent are the “aeons”—eternal hypostases or abstractions—that according to gnostic myth have emanated from the first principle and populate the spiritual universe. The structure of abstractions follows a threefold division of the Barbēlō as in EgG; although most details are lost owing to the imperfection of the manuscript, the structure is clearly one in which higher levels subsume lower ones in a relationship of whole to parts.

The theory of the soul’s progress from higher to higher abstraction toward a mystical leap to *gnōsis* had been laid down by Plato in a much-studied passage of the *Symposium* (210a–212a), and it was a standard element in the teaching of Platonism in the second century A.D. The mystical ascent is not, therefore, the final and decisive ascent of the soul after death, but rather a means of gaining non-discursive knowledge or *gnōsis* (“acquaintance”). Once it has achieved its goal, the soul must descend back through the same levels it passed before, in reverse order. Zs thus narrates the intellectual voyage of the mystic. In accordance with a convention of apocalyptic literature, the voyager is accompanied by a series of revealing angels who explain the various levels of abstraction and incidentally mention other details of the gnostic myth.

Because baptism was the main metaphor of acquaintance in gnostic Christianity, the voyage is mythologized as a progression of “baptisms” in “waters” that “fill” each abstraction. A precedent had already been set in B_{Jn} 4:21f, where the first principle is called a wellspring; RAd 85:22f explicitly equates baptism with *gnōsis* or acquaintance with god. Higher levels of abstraction in Zs are thus mythically quantified as numbers of baptisms, with resultant transformations of the voyaging soul. For further discussion of gnostic baptism, see the “Historical Introduction” to Part One.

Zs is of particular importance in the history of philosophy because Plotinus, the great Neoplatonist philosopher, was acquainted with its contents (cf. Porph 16.3f) and took it into account in his cycle of lectures against the gnostics (*Enneads* 3.8, 5.8, 5.5, and 2.9 [nos. 30–33 chronologically]).

The work concludes with a classic example of gnostic sermon.

The limited scope of *Zs* does not allow for reference to the history of Israel or the foundation of Christianity, and the pseudepigraphic frame story and its main character imply a setting in pre-Christian Persia. Some scholars therefore consider *Zs* to be prime evidence for the existence of a non-Christian variety of the gnostic sect. On the other hand, early Christians as well as non-Christians were fascinated by the idea that ancient religious heroes of the East, including not only Moses but Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, and others, had extraordinary information about divine things. *Zs* might thus be the work of a Christian author writing in a pseudo-Zoroastrian mode. A third-century observer states explicitly that *Zs* was used by Christians (Porph 16.1f). The same source refers to a lengthy refutation of *Zs* written by Amelius, a Neoplatonist disciple of Plotinus; the refutation does not survive.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of *Zs* are unknown. The date of its composition must be sometime before A.D. 268, because the work was known to Plotinus before he wrote against the gnostics. *Zs* is attributed to Zōstrianos, allegedly the grandfather or uncle of Zoroaster (founder of the Persian dualist religion that bears his name); it is thus an example of pseudepigraphy. The language of composition was Greek.

Zs has a complex mixture of genres in which various traditional materials are subordinated to others:

1. Autobiography of a seer
 - A. Heavenly voyage
 1. Angelic revelations
 - a. Uranography, combined with
 - b. Mystical ascent

Like *Fr*, the whole work is presented as the spiritual autobiography of a religious seer. The most important component of his autobiography is the aftermath of an attempt at suicide—a heavenly voyage of his soul, accompanied by revealing angels. Psychic voyage literature of this sort is known from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (e.g., *2 Enoch*); it is sometimes called “apocalyptic.” Such works do not seem to have ever attained a set generic form. In *Zs*, the sites of the voyage are revealed by interpreting angels, who partly describe the structure of the metaphysical universe (“*uranography*”) and partly mark the steps in the *mystical ascent* and descent of the seer’s soul.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Great Eternals

The GREAT INVISIBLE SPIRIT

The BARBĒLŌ

Constituents of the Barbēlō:

1. THE CONCEALED AEON. Reality, divinity.
2. THE FIRST-MANIFEST AEON. Blessedness, acquaintance.
3. THE SELF-ORIGINATE AEON. Life, vitality.

Subconstituent luminaries within the three constituents:

1. Concealed aeons—
(H)ARMĒDŌN
DIPHANE[S]
MALSĒDŌN
[. . .]
2. First-manifest aeons—
SOLMIS
AKREMŌN
AMBROSIOS
[. . .]
3. Self-originate aeons; beings with them—
4th (1st) HARMOZĒL; the GERADAMAS, perfect first human
being
3rd (2nd) ŌROIAĒL; SETH EMMAKHA SETH, his son
2nd (3rd) DAUEITHE; the IMMOVABLE RACE, children of Seth
1st (4th) ĒLĒLĒTH; other self-originate aeons

Lower aeons:

4. The REALLY EXISTENT REPENTANCE
5. The REALLY EXISTENT SOJOURN (or exile)

Antitypical aeons:

- 3-A. The ANTITYPICAL SELF-ORIGINATE AEON
- 4-A. The ANTITYPICAL REPENTANCE
- 5-A. The ANTITYPICAL SOJOURN (or exile)

The THRICE-MALE CHILD

Revealers:

- AUTHROUNIOS
ĒPHĒSĒKH, the child of the child
IŌĒL
SALAMEKS

Great ANGELS, GLORIES, POWERS, etc., that preside, purify, seal, guard, judge, etc., having various names

II. Ruler Mentioned in the Excerpts

The WORLD RULER (Sakla)

III. Humankind Mentioned in the Excerpts

ZŌSTRIANOS and his ancestors

Holy SEED OF SETH within the material realm

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC VIII (pp. 1–132), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic: Layton and Sieber, “NHC VIII,1: *Zostrianos*” (see “Select Bibliography”).

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Zōstrianos

ORACLES OF TRUTH OF ZŌSTRIANOS GOD OF TRUTH ORACLES OF ZOROASTER^a (EXCERPTS)^b

I. INTRODUCTION

Title and authentication

- 1 I [The . . .] of the [. . .] of the oracles^c [. . .] living forever, which I Porph 16.3
 Zōstrianos^d personally [. . .] and Iolaos:^e I [who] came to dwell in 4:10
 the world on behalf of those like me and [those] coming after me,
 7 [the] living elect.^f •As god lives,^g [I] myself [am telling (?)] the
 truth in very truth, [and] acquaintance and eternal light.

II. ZŌSTRIANOS'S SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND ASCENT

Zōstrianos's career as a gnostic teacher

- 10 After I had parted, by means of intellect, from the corporeal
 darkness within me^h together with the animate chaos and desir-
 14 ous femininity within that darknessⁱ—•for I did not concern my-
 15 self with it, •and after I had discovered the infinite (aspect) of my
 16 material •and had reprovved the dead creation within me [and] the

Title I a. In the manuscript, the title is after the text (at 132:6f). The words "Oracles of Truth . . . of Zoroaster" are written in a Coptic alphabetic cipher and would not have been intelligible to the unprepared Coptic reader. "Zoroaster": Zarathustra, founder of the Persian dualist religion of Zoroastrianism. He was the subject of legendary speculation among the Greeks, and widely respected as one of the ancient oriental sages.

b. Many parts of the MS have been destroyed, and consequently only some of the passages are intelligible enough to be translated. Asterisks (* * *) are used where text has had to be omitted.

c. Or "utterances."

d. Zōstrianos: according to the fourth century church father Arnobius, Zoroaster ("the Armenian") was his *nepos* (the Latin word means either grandson or nephew).

e. Iolaos: Zōstrianos's father, 4:10f.

f. The holy seed of Seth.

g. A traditional oath to guarantee the truth of one's words. Cf. Jg 8:19, 1 S 14:39, etc.

h. The intellectual abstraction of the true self from its material context.

i. "corporeal darkness . . . animate chaos . . . that darkness": the state of body together with soul as its vivifying principle, as opposed to intellect.

19 perceptible divine world-ruler,^j •then [I] powerfully proclaimed
 22 the entirety^k unto those who possessed alien parts.^l •Although I
 undertook their affairs for a short time, according as the necessity
 of (my) birth brought me into public light, I was never at all con-
 26 tent. •Rather, I always used to part from them.^m * * *

He ponders spiritual questions^a

24, 25 2 “Concerning reality:^b •How could existents deriving from
 the aeon^c (that consists) of derivatives of an invisible spirit,^d
 which is an undivided self-originate even while being three un-
 engendered images, have a source superior to reality and exist
 32 prior [to] all [these (spiritual beings)],^e •even though being in
 the [world]?”
 33 •“How could those that are against it and all these (spiritual
 beings) [. . .] good [. . .]?”
 3 3 •“Which place belongs to [it]?”
 4 •“What source does it have?”
 5 •“In what way does its derivative belong to it and all [these]
 (spiritual beings)?”
 6 •“How could [it become] simple if it displays differences
 within itself— for it is reality, intelligible form and blessedness,
 and bestows living power through life?^a”
 11 •“In what way has reality, which does not exist, been shown
 forth in power as existing?”
 14 •Now, I <used to> consider how I might understand these
 15 questions, •and I used to offer up daily (a sacrifice) to the god BJn 1:5
 17 of my ancestors, according to the custom of my people. •I would
 18 sing the blessing of all these (spiritual beings).^b •For my fore-
 20 fathers and ancestors who searched found. •And for my part, I
 did not leave off making requests for a realm of repose worthy of
 my spirit without my being bound within the perceptible world.^c

j. The chief ruler, called Sakla or Ialdabaōth in other texts.

k. Was active as a gnostic teacher; “the entirety”: the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō aeon.

l. The holy seed of Seth have an “alien part” or divine spiritual element capable of salvation.

m. See note lb.

2 a. The exact narrative context is lost. Zōstrianos, despite a successful career in which he “powerfully proclaimed” the gnostic message, becomes driven by metaphysical problems, some of which are listed here.

b. An aspect of the concealed aeon, the highest of the three constituents of the Barbēlō aeon.

c. The Barbēlō Aeon.

d. The great invisible spirit.

e. “all these,” namely, spiritual beings: gnostic jargon used in this text, probably identical with “the entirety.” Cf. note lk.

3 a. “reality . . . blessedness . . . life”: aspects of the first, second, and third constituents of the Barbēlō aeon, i.e. the concealed aeon, the first-manifest aeon, and the self-originate aeon.

b. Zōstrianos’s activity as a gnostic teacher is compatible with the practice of traditional Persian religion, in the course of which he invokes blessing upon “all these” (cf. note 2e).

c. Zōstrianos longs for escape from the “petty” influence of the body and finally decides upon a passive kind of physical suicide.

23 •And next, because I was very anguished and depressed at the
 25 pettiness around me, •I dared to commit a rash act and surren-
 der myself to the wild beasts of the wilderness, unto a horrible
 destruction.

Revelation of the angel of acquaintance

28 The angel of acquaintance of the eternal [light] stood be-
 31 fore me and said to me, •“O Zōstrianos, why are you raving in
 32 [this] way, •without understanding the great eternal that are
 8 above[. . .]?” * * * 4 •“Moreover, do [you] suppose that you are
 10 the parent of [your people]? •Or that Iolaios is your father? [. . .]” 1:1
 13, 14 * * * •“Come and pass through [these^a (lower realms)]: •and then Fr 59:9
 you will return again to them in order to proclaim a living race?^b
 16, 17 •to save those who are worthy, •and to bestow power upon the
 18 chosen (plur.). •For, the struggle of [eternity] is great, and the
 time [in] this place is short.

Zōstrianos abandons his material body and ascends

20 Now, after it (the angel) said these words [to me], in its com-
 pany with eagerness and great gladness I went on board a large Gjd 57:22
 luminous cloud, leaving my modeled form^c on earth guarded by 130:6
 25 glories. •And [we] escaped from the whole world and the thirteen Fr 58:26
 realms^d residing in it, [along with their] hosts of angels, without v.25
 29 our being seen. •And their ruler was troubled by [our] journey. RAd 77:27+
 31 •For, the [luminous] cloud [. . .], being far superior [to any]
 2 worldly thing. 5 •It had ineffable beauty; glowed; was powerful;
 6 led the way for holy spirits; •and existed as a life-giving spirit
 7 [and] an intellectual utterance— •[not] like things that reside in
 the world [. . .] of mutable material [and] aggressive utterance.

He is baptized

10 And next, I recognized that the power residing within me pre-
 14 sided over the darkness, [for] it possessed total light. •There I
 15 [was] baptized; and •I received the image of the glories that are 46:25
 in that place, becoming like one of them. FTh 45:23+

4 a. “these,” viz. lower realms: the perceptible world and lower aeons as a structure. The angel invites Zōstrianos on a voyage through the aeons which, incidentally, enables him temporarily to escape from his body.

b. The immovable race or metaphysical counterpart of the holy seed of Seth, which Zōstrianos will encounter in his voyage; “living”: gnostic

jargon used in this text to indicate membership in the eternal realm.

c. Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

d. Or “thirteen aeons”: discussed in RAd and EgG.

- 17, 18 •I passed through the ethereal [realm],^a •And I went past the
 19 antitypical aeons,^b •having sunk [there] seven times [in] living
 22 [water]—once per aeon—•without stopping until [I had seen
 (?)] absolutely (?) all the waters.
- 24, 25 •[And] I came up to [the really] existent sojourn;^c •and [I
 was baptized and [. . .] world.
- 26, 28 •I came up to the [really] existent repentance; •[and] there [I
 was] baptized [four] times.

8:7
 v,18
 11 :2
 129:28

He is baptized four times into the self-originate aeon

- 29, 2 I went past the sixth [realm (?)]^d [. . .]. 6 •And I came [up] to the
 3 [. . .(plur.)]. •There I stood at rest, for I had seen really existent
 light of truth deriving from [a] self-originate root of it, [together
 7 with] great angels and glories [. . .] than measure. •And I [was]
 baptized into the [name of] the divine self-originate (aeon),^a by
 Mikhar and [Mikheus], the powers that preside (?) [over] living
 11 waters. •And I became pure by the agency of [the] great Bar-
 12, 13 pharaggēs. •And they were [shown forth] unto me, •and I was
 13 inscribed in glory. •I [was] sealed by those which preside over
 the aforementioned powers [Mikhar], Mikheus, Seldaō, Elenos,
 17, 19 and Zōgenethlos. •And I [became] a [. . .]-seeing angel. •And I
 stood at rest upon the first, i.e. fourth, aeon^b along with the souls.
- 21 •I blessed

FTh 48:18+

EgG 76:5

126:17
 EgG 76:10

the divine self-originate (aeon);
 the [first] parent, the Geradamas, [an eye of] the
 self-originate (aeon), the perfect [first human being];
 Seth Emmakha [Seth], the child of Adamas, the [parent
 of]the [immovable race]; the [four luminaries . . .];
 [. . .];
 Mirothea, the mother [. . .]
 Prophania, [the . . .] of the lights;
 De[. . .].

Bjn 8:28+
 30:4
 FTh 38:5+
 30:9
 Bjn 9:11 +

29:16, 30:14
 EgG 60:30+

5 a. In the system of Zs, between the “thirteen realms” or heavens of the perceptible world and the tripartite Barbēlō aeon, there are six zones: (1) the ethereal realm; (2) antitypical sojourn; (3) antitypical repentance; (4) the antitypical self-originate aeon; (5) really existent sojourn; (6) really existent repentance. The next thereafter is the self-originate aeon, which is the lowest constituent of the Barbēlō aeon.

b. Or “antitypes of the aeons.”

c. Or “exile.”

d. For the six zones before the Barbēlō aeon, see note 5a.

6 a. The self-originate aeon is the lowest constituent of the Barbēlō aeon.

b. The self-originate aeon has four sub constituents (29:1f); they are numbered both one to four in ascending order and four to one in descending order, since in his voyage (here recounted after the fact) Zōstrianos both ascended and descended through the aeons. Thus the “first” when he ascended was eventually the “fourth” in his descent.

- 1 7 • And I [was baptized for] a second time into the name of the
 divine self-originate (aeon) by the same aforementioned powers,
 4,6 •and became an angel of masculine gender.^a •And I stood at rest
 upon the second, i.e. third, aeon along with the children of Seth. 28:10?
30:12
Bjn 9:14+
- 9 •I blessed each of the aforementioned powers.
- 9 •And I [was] baptized for a third time into the name of the
 divine self-originate (aeon) by each of the aforementioned pow-
 13,14 ers, •and became a holy angel. •I stood at rest upon the third, i.e.
 second, [aeon].
- 15 •I [blessed] each of the aforementioned.
- 16 •And I was baptized [for a] fourth time by [each of] the afore-
 18,19 mentioned powers, •and became a perfect [angel]. •And [I stood
 at rest upon] the fourth, [i.e. first], aeon.
- 21 •And I [blessed each of the aforementioned.] * * *

III. REVELATIONS OF AUTHROUNIOS

Appearance of Authrounios

- 7 8 Authrounios, the great holder of superiority, said to me, 47:18
- 9 •“Are you seeking to understand those things through which you
 10 have passed? •Or why the ethereal realm has this worldly pat-
 12,14 tern? •Or how many antitypical aeons^a there are? •Or why they
 15 are unperturbed? •Or [why (?)] the sojourn^b and the repentance
 and the creation of the [. . .] and the world^c . . . [. . .]?” * * *

Creation of the universe

- 1 9 Authrounios, the [great] holder of [superiority], said [to
 2 me], •“The ethereal realm came into existence by an utterance; EgG III 57:5?
- 4 •but it incorruptibly shows forth engendered things along with
 those that are corrupt.
- 6 •“As for the descent of the great judges, it was so that they^a EgG 74:8
 might not taste (the realm of) perception and be enclosed
 9,10 within the creation. •This is why they descended; •and this is
 the reason that they examined the works of the world and con-
 13 demned its ruler unto destruction, •as being a representation^b of
 14 the world, [. . .] •and a source of the corrupt, dark material that
 engenders [. . .].

7 a. “masculine gender”: belonging to the eternal realm; compare the gnostic jargon “male” in other gnostic texts (EgG, note 51f).

b. Or “exile”; cf. note 5a.

c. The rest of the passage is damaged.

8 a. Or “antitypes of the aeons.”

9 a. The holy seed of Seth (?).

b. Or “symbol.”

- 16 •“Now, when wisdom (Sophia) gazed [at these], she emitted the darkness^c [. . .]” * * * Bjn 9:25
EgG III 57:2?
- 28 •“[. . .] utterance without [its receiving(?)] power [. . .] aeon(s) of [creation], to see any of the eternal. **10** •It (the world ruler) saw a reflection, [and] with reference to the reflection that it [saw] therein, [it]made the world. •And with a reflection of a reflection it worked at (crafting) the world. •And (then) even the reflection of^a visible reality was taken from it. Bjn 12:33+

Repentance and elevation of wisdom

- 7 “Now, it was a realm of repose that was given unto wisdom (Sophia) in return for her repentance:^b •and in consequence, since there was nothing in her domain by way of uncontaminated, first image—nothing within it (the realm of repose) either preexistent or that had already come into existence through it—the (world ruler) exercised its imagination and worked at (crafting) what remained. •For always the image belonging to wisdom (Sophia) is corrupt and deceptive. Bjn 13:32+
- 15
- 17 •“Now, the ruler^c [. . .]” * * *

The antitypical aeons

- 2,4 **11** “Now, the antitypical aeons^a exist as follows. •They themselves have not attained one and the same ideal form of power. 5:18
- 6,7 •What they possess are eternal glories. •And they reside in the judgment places of the several powers. •But if the souls are illuminated by the light residing in these^b and by the pattern that often comes impassively to dwell within them, •then it does not suppose that what it beholds is^c [. . .]” * * *

Ascent of the fallen aeons from antitype unto model

- 3 **12** “They^a are given training by the antitypes, which receive a pattern of their souls while they are still residing in the world.
- 7 •After each aeon’s road of emanation, it comes into existence,
- 9,10 •and each one crosses over: •from the antitype of sojourn to the really [existent] sojourn;^b •from the antitype of repentance to the really existent repentance; •[and from the] antitype of the self-[originate to the] really existent [self-originate]; and so forth
- 13
- 15
- 19 [. . .]. •Now, the souls of^c [. . .]” * * *

c. The rest of the passage is damaged.

10 a. “of”: or “corresponding to.”

b. “repentance”: because of having produced the world-ruler; cf. Bjn 13:21f.

c. The rest of the passage is damaged.

11 a. Or “antitypes of the aeons.”

b. I.e. the antitypical aeons.

c. “it does not . . . what it beholds . . .”: the Coptic text may be slightly corrupt here. More logical might be “they (i.e. the souls) do not . . . what they behold . . .” The rest of the passage is damaged.

12 a. The exact context is lost.

b. “sojourn . . . sojourn”: or “exile . . . exile.”

c. The rest of the passage is damaged.

Zōstrianos (and Authrounios?) offer a blessing^a

1 13 * * * [blessed]

[the] deity above the [great] aeons;^b
 the [unengendered] concealed (aeon);^c
 the [great], masculine first-manifest (aeon);^d
 the perfect [child]^e who is superior to deity;
 its eye, the Geradamas.^f

IV. REVELATIONS OF ĒPHĒSĒKH**Appearance of Ēphēsēkh**

7,8 And I called upon the child of the child Ēphēsēkh.^g •It ^{45:1, 45:9}
 (Ēphēsēkh) stood before me and said, “O angel of god,^h O son ^{EgG 56:20+}
 12 of the father, [. . .]ⁱ perfect human being! •[Why] are you calling
 to me and seeking to understand things that you (already) know
 14 about, as though you [did not understand] them?” •[And] for my
 part, [I] said, “I am seeking to understand the mixture^j [. . .]” * * *

Barbēlō. the source of the three major aeons

1 14 * * * saying,^a “Zōstrianos, listen (to me) concerning [. . .].
 2,4 •For the first [. . .] sources are three (in number): •they were
 shown forth from one and the same source of [. . .], the Barbēlō
 6 aeon, •(although) not as sources and powers, nor as from one
 9 source and one power; •they showed forth every source and be-
 11 stowed power upon every power; •and they were shown forth in
 that which is [far] superior to these latter, namely

13 •reality;
 blessedness;
 life.”^b

* * *

13 a. The narrative context is lost, but cf. 44:23f, 51:23f.

b. The great invisible spirit.

c. The first or highest constituent of the Barbēlō aeon.

d. The second constituent of the Barbēlō aeon.

e. Or “[servant]”; i.e. the self-originate aeon.

f. I.e. Adamas.

g. Elsewhere known also as Ēsēphēkh; cf. EgG 56:20f.

h. Cf. 7:4f.

i. Possibly “[O you who are the.]”

j. The rest of the passage is damaged.

14 a. Ēphēsēkh replies. The exact narrative context is lost.

b. Corresponding to the concealed aeon, the first-manifest aeon, and the self-originate aeon.

Waters of the three major aeons^a

- 1, 2 15 * * * “and water^b belonging to each of them [. . .]. •Therefore they are [. . .] waters; they are the perfect ones.
- 4 •“The water of life, belonging to vitality, is that in which you have now been washed within the self-originate (aeon).
- 7 •“[And] the [water] of blessedness, [belonging to] acquaintance, is that in which you are going to [be washed] within the first-manifest (aeon).
- 10 •“And [it is] the water of reality [that] belongs to divinity, i.e., [to] the concealed (aeon).
- 13, 14 •“And the water of life [exists in respect of] power;^c •that of
15 [blessedness], in respect of essence; •and that of [divinity], in
1 respect of reality.” * * * 17 •“And the power, the essence, and the
4 reality of being^a exist insofar as the water exists. •And the name
in which the washing is conducted is an utterance belonging to^b
the water.
- 5 •“Now, the first perfect water belonging to the [threefold
power of] the self-originate (aeon) [is] life of the perfect souls:
9 •for it is an utterance of the perfect deity while coming into being
11 [. . .]. •For, the invisible spirit is a wellspring of all [these (spir- B/n 4:21 +
13 itual beings)]; •therefore the others derive from acquaintance,
being images of it (the spirit).” * * *
- 5 18 •“And the great perfect, invisible, masculine, intellectual
8 first-manifest (aeon) possesses its own water, •as you (sing.) [are
9 going to see] when you come to its place; •so does the unengen-
dered concealed (aeon).
- 11 •“Each partial (aeon) coexists with a [first] intelligible form,
13 in order that they might become complete accordingly. •For
there are four perfect self-originate aeons.”^a * * *

Structure of the self-originate aeon

- 6 19 “Now, the divine self-originate (aeon) is the first ruler of
9 its aeons and of the angels, as though they were parts of it. •For
11 considered individually, the four belong to it. •The fifth aeon
12, 13 consists of them all together; •and the fifth exists as^a one. •The
15 four [make up] the fifth in respect of its parts. •But considered
individually, these [four] are perfect, having^b [. . .]” * * *

15 a. Ēphēsēkh continues. The exact narrative context is lost.

b. The “waters” described here are not a material substance, but rather the eternal medium in which the candidate is “washed” or baptized into acquaintance; cf. RAd 85:22f.

c. Or “potentiality.”

17 a. “being”: the Coptic word can also be translated “becoming.”

b. “belonging to”: or “of.”

18 a. Listed at 29:1f.

19 a. Or “in.”

b. The rest of the passage is damaged.

Derivation of each major aeon from the preceding

4 20 “Now, the self-originate concealed aeon^a exists as a prior source—god and foreparent—of the self-originate (aeon), in that it is a cause of the first-manifest (aeon): parent of its own parts; 12 a divine, foreunderstood parent. •And they (its parts) did not 13 understand it: •for it is a power deriving from its own self, and 15 a parent deriving from its own self. •In this sense, it is without [parent].”^b * * *

Classification of souls

19 26 “Now, do not wonder about the difference among souls.^a 20 •For, when it is supposed that they display differences,^b [.]” * * *
 2 27 “Now, those that are wholly [uncontaminated] display four 4 [kinds (?)]. •But those that are [within the] realm of time are 5 ninefold. •Each of them has its own kind and custom, and <their> 6 images are different from one another, distinct, and stable.
 9 •“And other souls, which are immortal, coexist along with 43:1 all the aforementioned souls, because of wisdom (Sophia), who gazed down.
 13 •“Indeed, there are three kinds of [immortal] soul.
 14, 16 •“First are those who have become rooted in sojourn,^a •and 43:13 do not have the power^b of being engendered—for it rests only 19 [with] those who follow works of others. •And since this is a unitary type,^c . . . [.] B/n 27:17
 21 •“Second are those who have stood at rest [upon] repentance^d 43:19 [.] sin [.] acquaintance [.] new [.] difference [.] •they B/n 9:18? 27 have sinned along with others and have repented along with others [.] from their own selves. 28 •For [.] kind(s) that exist(s) [.] and those who have committed all kinds of sin and have 6 repented. •Either they are parts, or they have willed (?) of their 8 own accord. •Thus also their aeons are sixfold as regards the places that accrue to each of them.
 10 •“Third is the type of those souls^a that belong to the self-originate 7:6?, 44:5 14 and possess an utterance of the ineffable truth, •(an utterance) that exists in acquaintance and power out of them and eternal 17 [life (?)]. •[And] they display four varieties, according as there are

20 a. The “concealed aeon” is the source of the “first-manifest,” which in turn is the source of the “self-originate.” The concealed aeon is thus the “prior source” of the self-originate.
 b. Several pages had to be omitted here.

26 a. The context and detailed argument of this section cannot be reconstructed because the passage is damaged. Apparently, an elaborate hierar-

chy of souls graded by degrees of perfection was here related to their possible abodes.

b. The rest of the passage is damaged.

27 a. Or “exile.”

b. Or “possibility.”

c. The rest of the passage is damaged.

d. The lower aeon called “repentance.”

28 a. The holy seed of Seth.

- 19 •the kinds of angels; those [who] love truth; those who hope; those who believe.” * * *

The four luminaries of the self-originate aeon

- 1 29 “Likewise, too, four luminaries exist [there].
 2 •“(H)armoꝯēl [presides] over the first aeon, and is a wish^a of
 the god [. . .] of truth and the unification of the soul. 127:15
Bjn 7:30+
 6 •“Ōroiaēl presides over the second, and is a power perceptive
 of truth.
 8 •“Dauei the presides over the third, and is a vision of
 acquaintance.”
 10 •Ēlēlēth presides over the fourth, and is an impulse to action
 and a preparing for truth.
 13 •“Now, the four exist as utterances of truth and acquaintance.
 15 •But [they] exist without belonging to the first-manifest (aeon);
 16,17 •rather, [they] belong to the mother, •for she is an act of thought 6:21
 19 by the [perfect] intellect of light, •so that immortal souls might
 take acquaintance unto themselves.” * * *

Inhabitants of the luminaries

- 4 30 “Since Adamas the perfect human being is an eye of the 6:21
 6 self-originate (aeon), it is acquaintance therewith, •compre-
 hending (?) that the divine self-originate (aeon) is an utterance
 of [the] perfect intellect of truth.
 9 •“And Seth the son of Adamas comes to each of the souls, for 6:21
 he is acquaintance that suffices for them.
 12 •“And for this reason [the] living seed derived from him. 7:6
 14 •“And Mirothea^a is [. . .] divine self-originate (aeon) [. . .] from 6:21
 16 it and[. . .], •being an act of thought by the perfect intellect.”^b * * *

Different kinds of persons^a and their fates^b

- 20 42 “And the soul, [intellect, and] body of the persons [that
 belong to] mortal things [are] all [dead].” * * *
 1 43 •“And the second (kind of) person is the immortal soul 27:9
 that dwells within mortal things, looking after its own interests.
 4 •[For] this (kind) then undertakes a search for affairs that are
 7 profitable in every single case (?). •[And it] perceives bodily
 8,10 pain. •It is [. . .], and it [. . .] •Although (?) possessing [an] eter-
 nal divine (element), it coexists with [demons].

29 a. Or “promise.”

30 a. A Greek neologism, possibly meaning “divine part” (*moiros theios*).

b. A lengthy passage had to be omitted here.

42 a. This may refer to components of the human being or to stages in human development.

b. The context and detailed argument of this section cannot be reconstructed because the passage is damaged.

- 13 •“Next is [the] (kind of) person that resides in the sojourn.^a 27:14
 14 •Now, if this (kind) experiences within itself a discovery of truth,
 16 •it is far from the deeds of others who live [evilly] and [stumble].
 19 •“As for the (kind of) person that repents, if [this (kind)] 27:21
 abandons [mortal] things and desires the things that [exist], the
 immortal intellect and the immortal soul [. . .] first [. . .] for them,
 25 •while for its^b sake this (kind of person) undertakes a search—
 27 [not] for action but for deeds. •For, as a result, it^c [. . .].
 1 44 •“And the (kind of) person that gets saved is the one who
 seeks to understand, and so to discover, the self and the intellect.
 5 •Oh how much power that person has!
 5 •“[And] the (kind of) person that has been saved is the one 28:10
 8 who has not understood these [. . .] as they exist, •but rather is
 personally also within [the] rational faculty^a as it exists [. . .].
 11 •That person has gotten [. . .] everywhere [it] exists simple and
 13 one. •For the one who then has the power to advance through
 16 all [these] (spiritual beings) has been saved. •That person be-
 17 comes [. . .] all these (spiritual beings). •(And)that person can 45:12
 voluntarily part from all these (spiritual beings), and withdraw Fr 59:1
 21 inward. •For such a person becomes god^b and has withdrawn
 into god.”

Zōstrianos offers a blessing

- 23 When I had listened to this I lifted up praise unto
 24 •the living and unengendered [god] who resides in truth;^c
 26 •the unengendered [concealed] (aeon);
 27 •the perfect, masculine, invisible, first-manifest intellect;^d
 29 •the invisible thrice-male child; and
 31 •[the divine self-originate (aeon)].

The soul's swerve and eventual return

- 1 45 And I said to Ēphēsēkh the child of the child, who was 13:7+
 2 with me, •“Can your wisdom instruct me about the dispersion
 5 of the human being that is (being) saved? •Which are the be-
 6 ings that are mixed with such a person? •Which are [the ones
 8 that] divide that person? •(Tell me), so that the living elect might
 understand.”
 9 •And next, Ēphēsēkh the child of the child openly said to 44:17
 12 [me . . .], •“If that person many times [withdraws] inward and 46:13
 Fr 59:1

43 a. Or “exile.”

b. Or “its own.”

c. The rest of the passage is damaged.

44 a. Or “Word.”

b. Or “divine.”

c. The great invisible spirit.

d. I.e., the first-manifest aeon.

dwells near acquaintance with others, the intellect and the un-
 17 engendered first principle will [not (?)]^a understand. •There-
 18 after, that person has a lack: •for that person, too, turns; has Bjn 14:8+
 20 nothing; parts from it (the intellect); •stands [. . .]; and exists
 23 in an alien [impulse] to action instead of existing as One. •Con-
 25 sequently, that person [resembles] many forms; •once having
 inclined, comes into being by seeking things that do not exist;
 27, 29 •and once having fallen into these notionally—•being unable to
 understand them otherwise without receiving enlightenment—
 1, 2 **46** •becomes a part of the natural order. •And thus does that
 person come down into the realm of generation^a because of
 4 it; •becomes speechless at the pains and [infinity]of material;
 6 •and, although possessing immortal eternal power, is bound in
 9, 10 the body's advance; •[made] to be alive; •and bound each [time]^b
 13 in strong fetters^c that cut by all kinds of evil spirits: •until once
 again that person acts,^d and so begins once more to dwell within. 45:12+

Helpers of the fallen souls

15 “For this reason, beings are ordained to be in charge of their
 17 salvation. •And these several powers dwell here (in the visible
 18 world), •whereas at each of the aeons within the self-originate
 (aeon) glories stand at rest, so that beside them a person who is
 22 [here] (in the world) might be saved. •And the glories are perfect
 24 concepts, appearing unto the powers. •They are incorruptible,^e
 25 for [they are] patterns of salvation, •in which each (saved per-
 26, 27 son) is stamped: •such a person shall escape safely into them. 5:15
 •And it is by being stamped that the person receives power from
 the same one of them and has that glory for a helper.
 30 •“In this way, such a person passes through the world and
 [the] aeons [. . .].
 31 •“And there are guardians of the immortal soul:

2 **47** •Gamaliel and Strempsoukous; EgG 64:14
 Akramas and Lōēl; EgG 76:26
 Mnēsinous. 126:9?
EgG 76:26
FTh 48:18

5 •“[The following is the] immortal spirit: Iesseus-Mazareus- EgG 75:25+
 7 Iessedekus. •“[. . .]atitou is [the . . .] of the child; [. . .]ōr, the
 8, 9 child of the child. •And [. . .]. •And it is (H)ormos [that . . .] EgG 71:11

45 a. The original reading of the text is uncertain here. Despite the definiteness of “will,” the passage seems to describe a possible course of events.

46 a. I.e. becomes reincarnate.
 b. In each reincarnation.

c. “fetters”: a Platonist cliché for the material body.

d. Responds to the gnostic appeal.

e. “incorruptible”: the syllable “in-” has been destroyed in the MS and is here conjecturally restored.

- 11 over the living seed; •while Kam[ali]ēl (?) is the cause (or bestower) of spirits. EgG 76:15
- 12 •“And the following stand at rest before [them]: EgG 75:24
- Seisauēl; EgG 75:27
Audaēl;
Abrasaks.
- 14 •“The myriads:
- Phaleris;
Phalsēs;
Eurios.
- 15 •“The guardians of glory:
- Stētheus; 126:12?
Theopemptos; EgG 75:27
Eurymeneus;
Olsēn. EgG 76:19?
- 18 •“And the helpers in every kind of affair are:
- Ba[. . .]mos;
[.]sōn;
Eir[.]n;
Lalameus;
Eidomeneus;
Authrounios. 8:7
- 22 •“The judges are:
- Symphthar;
Eukrebōs;
Keilar
- 24 •“The being who takes away: Samblō.
- 24 •“The angels that guide the billowing (?) clouds:
- Saphphō;
Thurō.”

Intelligible forms within the self-originate aeon

- 27 After saying these things, it (Ēphēsēkh) instructed me about all these (spiritual beings) that reside in the self-originate aeon.
- 30,1 •And they were all luminous, eternal, **48** •and completely perfect

2 particulars. •And at each of the aeons I saw living^a earth, living 113:1
 7 water, luminous [air], and nonconsuming fire—all [these] being
 9 simple [and immutable]; •simple and [eternal living animals],
 12 with many kinds of [body (?)]; •many kinds of incorruptible
 trees, and also plants of the same sort as (?) all the aforemen-
 16,17 tioned; incorruptible fruit; •living human beings; •and every
 18 (other kind of) intelligible form; •together with immortal souls;
 19,20 •every form and intelligible form of intellect; •deities of truth;
 21,23 •angels residing in great glory; •body that is indissoluble; unen-
 26 gendered offspring; and immovable perception. •Moreover, in
 that place was that which^b experiences passions although being
 29 impassive: •for it^c was a power belonging to a power. [. . .]^d * * *

Zōstrianos and Ēphēsēkh offer a blessing^a

23 51 * * * as we said,
 24 “You are One, you are [One], you are One!
 25 O child of [. . .] * * *
 16 52 “O thrice male! Aa[. . .]ōōōōō^a [. . .]
 18 “You are spirit from spirit!
 19 “You are light from light!
 20 “You are [silence] from silence!
 21 “ [You are] thought from thought!
 23 “O child of [god], O divine seven^b [. . .]” * * *

Zōstrianos baptized for a fifth time into the self-originate aeon

14 53 And for a fifth [time I was] baptized into the name of the
 self-originate (aeon) by the aforementioned groups of pow-
 18,20 ers, •and became divine.^a •[I stood at rest] upon the fifth aeon,
 21,22 •being a compound^b of all [these] (spiritual beings). •I beheld
 all that belong to [the] self-originate(aeon) and which are really
 25,12 existent. •[And] I [was] washed five times [. . .]^c * * * 56 •[I] re-
 13 ceived an image from [all] these (spiritual beings). •[And] the
 15 aeons [of the] self-originate (aeon) opened (?). •Great [light]ra-
 18 diated [upon (?)] . . .] from the aeons of the [thrice]-male, •and
 they were [glorifying] them. * * *

48 a. “living”: gnostic jargon in this text to indicate membership in the eternal realm. The self-originate aeon contains the Platonic ideal forms both of the four basic elements (“earth . . . water . . . [air] . . . fire”) and of the particular kinds of entity such as species of plants and animals.
 b. Or “he who.”
 c. Or “he.”
 d. Several pages had to be omitted here.

51 a. The exact narrative context is lost.

52 a. Cf. EgG, note 78b.
 b. The rest of the passage is damaged.

53 a. Or “a god.”
 b. Or “inhabitation.”
 c. The rest of the passage is destroyed. Several pages had to be omitted here.

V. REVELATIONS OF IŌĒL

Appearance of IŌĒl

13 57 [And] into my presence came IŌĒl, the masculine female EgG 54:21+
 15 virgin that belongs to [the] glories. •And [I] took counsel con-
 17 cerning the wreaths.^a •It [said] to me, “Why [has] your spirit
 taken counsel [concerning] the wreaths^b and the seals that are
 21 upon them? •[These (?)] are the wreaths^c that impart power
 23 [unto] every [spirit] and every soul; •while [the] seals that exist
 [upon] them are the threefold peoples^d and [belong to (?)] the
 invisible spirit [. . .]” * * *

13 58 •“And the seals [. . .] people(s)^a belong to the self-originate
 16 (aeon), the first-manifest (aeon), and the concealed (aeon). •And
 the [invisible]spirit [is] an animate and intellectual power—an un-
 20 derstander and a foreunderstander: •and therefore he^b is with Ga-
 22 briĒl the cause of spirits—so that when it (GabriĒl) bestows holy EgG 64:17
GJd 53:22
 spirit it might seal him with^c the wreath^d and wreath him.”^e * * *

Zōstrianos baptized by IŌĒl

23 60 And after it (IŌĒl) had said these things, it baptized
 [me . . .] * * *

8 61 •I received power [. . .] . . . [. . .] received form [. . .], and I
 received [. . .] exist(s) over [. . .] receive(d) an uncontaminated
 14, 15 spirit. •[I] came to be really existent. •And next, it brought me
 into the great aeon where the perfect, thrice-[male] is located.
 19 •And I beheld [the] invisible child within invisible light.
 22 •Next, [it] baptized me again in^a [. . .] * * *

8 63 •[After] louĒl,^a who belongs to all [the glories], [had said]
 these things to me, it left [me] and departed to stand at rest be-
 fore the first-manifest (aeon).

VI. REVELATIONS OF SALAMEKS AND OTHERS

Appearance of Salameks and others (the first-manifest aeon)

13 Next, I [stood at rest], presiding over my spirit [and] men- 126:1
 17 tally praying much to the great luminaries: •I was calling upon

57 a. Or “crowns.”
 b. Or “crowns.”
 c. Or “crowns.”
 d. Or “species.”

c. Or “in.”
 d. Or “crown.”
 e. Several pages had to be omitted here.

58 a. Or “species.”
 b. “he”: perhaps a type of person, mentioned in
 the damaged passage just before 58:13f.

61 a. The rest of the passage is destroyed.

63 a. I.e. IŌĒl.

- 20 Salameks, Se[. . .]en, and the female wholly-perfect [. . .]ē. •And
 22 I beheld [glories] that were mightier than powers. •And they RR 97:2
 22 smeared oil on me, •and I became able^b [. . .] * * *
- 7 **64** •[. . .]Salameks and [. . .], who had disclosed everything [to
 me], saying, “O Zōstrianos, [listen] (to us) concerning the things
 that you are seeking to understand.
- 13 •“It was a [. . .] and single entity [that] existed prior to [all]
 these (spiritual beings), really existing [in (?) the] immeasur-
 14 able and indivisible spirit [. . .] * * * **65** •[. . .] infinite; more than
 16, 18 unsearchable; •bestowing [. . .] mightier than any body; •more
 19 uncontaminated than [any] bodiless entity; •entering every
 21 thought and every body; •more powerful than all these (spiritual
 beings), all [species], and [all] intelligible forms, as being the
 entirety that relates to them [. . .]”^a * * *

Intelligible forms within the concealed aeon^a

- 1 **113** “angels; demons; intellects; souls; living animals; trees; 48:2, 119:3
 4, 5 bodies; •and what exist prior to these: •(namely), what belong
 to the simple elements of the simple first principles, which ex-
 9 ist (both) confusedly (?) [. . .] and unmixed—•air, water, earth;
 11, 13 •number, connection, motion, [. . .], order; •breath, et cetera.
- 14 •“Now, there are powers of a [fourth] type that reside [in] the
 21 fourth aeon, (namely) those [that] reside in the^b [. . .] * * * •[an-
 gels belonging to the] angels; souls [belonging to the] souls; liv-
 ing^c animals [belonging to the] living animals; trees [belonging
 to the trees]^d * * *
- 1 **115** •“And they do not exercise compulsion upon one another;
 3 •rather, it is in them^a that they are alive, coexisting with and con-
 7 senting to one another as deriving from one single source. •And
 they exist conjointly, for they all reside within one single aeon
 11 of the concealed (aeon); [. . .] in power and distinct. •For in the
 case of each of the aeons they exist standing at rest according to
 (?) what has reached them.
- 13, 14 •“[Now], the concealed (aeon) is one single aeon; •[it] com-
 prises four varieties of aeon.”^b * * *

b. The rest of the passage is destroyed.

65 a. A very lengthy part of the work had to be omitted here because of damage to the MS.

113 a. The narrative context is lost. The concealed aeon, which is the highest constituent of the Barbēlō aeon, contains the Platonic ideal forms of kinds of entity such as plants and animals, the basic ele-

ments (“air, water, earth”), and abstractions such as “number,” “connection,” etc.

b. The rest of the passage is damaged.

c. Cf. note 48a.

d. The rest of the passage is damaged. One page had to be omitted here.

115 a. Or “in one another.”

b. One page had to be omitted here.

1 117 •All living animals are there, both existing particularly and
 4 all conjointly collective. •Acquaintance of acquaintance is there,
 7 and attainment of non comprehension. •Chaos is there, and [a
 9 perfect place] belonging to all (spiritual beings). •And they are
 10 new.^a •Moreover, true light is there, and darkness that has been
 illuminated.^b * * *

The four luminaries of the concealed aeon

3 119 “Now, the luminaries belonging to it (the concealed aeon) 113:1
 have names:

4 •the first [is] (H)armēdōn; the female entity with it is
 [. . .];

6 •second, Diphane[. . .]; the female entity with it,
 Dēiph[. . .];

8 •third, Malsēdōn; the female entity with it, [. . .];

10 •fourth, [. . .]s; the female entity with it, Olmis.

12 •[And] the concealed (aeon) exists [. . .] along with its ideal form.
 13 •And [it is] obscure to [all] these (spiritual beings), so that they
 all might receive power from it.”^a * * *

11, 12 125 •“Now, the concealed (aeon) is really existent; and with
 it is located Iouēl,^a the masculine female virgin glory that belongs
 to all the glories, (the glory) through whom all the wholly per-
 fects have been beheld.” * * *

The four luminaries of the first-manifest aeon

1 126 “Now, the first aeon that exists within it, and derives from 63:13
 it, is the first luminary Solmis, together with that which shows
 6 forth god; •being infinite, after the pattern that exists in the con-
 cealed aeon and Doksomeōn. EgG 50:29+

9 •“The second aeon, Akremōn the ineffable, occupies the sec- 46:31?
 ond luminary Zakhthos and Iakthos.

12 •“And the third aeon is Ambrosius the virgin, occupying the 47:15?
 third luminary Sētheus and Antiphantēs.

17 •“While the fourth aeon is that which praises [. . .] occupying 6:13+
 [the] fourth luminary [Seldaō] and Elenos.” * * *

1 127 “Phoē, zoē, zēoē, zē[. . .], zōsi, zōsi, zaō, zēooo, zēsen,
 zēsen!

117 a. Or “strange.”

b. One page had to be omitted here.

119 a. Several pages had to be omitted here.

125 a. I.e. Iōēl.

- 3 The particulars live,^a and the quartet that is eightfold!
 5 Ē O O O O Ē A Ē Ō !
 5 It is you (sing.) who are prior to them.
 6 And it is you who are in all these (spiritual beings)!

- 7 •“And these are in the perfect, masculine, (H)armēdōn, first-manifest (aeon), (being) the activity of all these (spiritual beings), collectively, that exist.

The four luminaries of the self-originate aeon

- 11 “Inasmuch as all the perfect particulars were existent, the activity of all the particulars became shown forth again, namely,
 15 the divine self-originate (aeon). •Now, the latter stands at rest ^{29:1 +} within an aeon, displaying within itself four varieties of aeon, consisting of the self-originate:

- 19 •the first aeon that exists within it, belonging to the first luminary [(H)armoꝛē]: Orneus-Euthrounios, which is called [. . .];
 25 •[the] second [aeon, belonging to the second luminary Ōroiaēl]: [. . .] udas[. . .]us-Ap[. . .]-Arros[. . .];
 1 128 •the third, belonging to the third luminary Daueithe: Laraneus-Epiphanius-Eideus ;
 4 •the fourth, belonging to the fourth luminary Ēlēlēth: Kodērē-Epiphanius-Allogeni.

The fate of those who have fallen into material existence

- 7 “But as for all the rest who dwelt in the material realm, they all
 10 remained.^a •And since they have come into being and have been put in order^b because of acquaintance with greatness, because of recklessness, and because of power, and since they have become uncomprehending of god, they shall perish.
 14 •“There, O Zōstrianos! You have heard all these things, of which the gods are uncomprehending and which unto angels seem infinite.”

Zōstrianos ponders the ineffable first principle

- 19 But for my part, I acted recklessly and said, “I am still seeking ^{RR 93:4} to understand about the triply powerful, perfect, invisible spirit.^c ^{EgG 73:6}

127 a. The esoteric words in 127:1f are permutations of the Greek stem meaning “to live,” of a type that could be found in Greek magical spells at the time Zs was composed.

128 a. The Coptic text may be corrupt here. More logical would be “shall not remain.”

b. Or “adorned.”

c. Having ascended through all three constituent aeons of the Barbēlō, Zōstrianos now asks about the ineffable great invisible spirit. The text is badly damaged.

- 22 •How does it exist . . . [. . .] cause(?) of all these (spiritual beings)?
[. . .] really existent [. . .]? Which is [. . .]? Or [. . .]?”
- 27,1 •[. . .] greatly.^d 129 •They left [me and] departed. Bjn 4:15+?

VII. ZŌSTRIANOS' DESCENT RECORD OF HIS EXPERIENCE

He descends

- 2 And Apophantēs came before me, accompanied by Aphro
4 Pais-Parthenōphōtos.^a •And it brought me into the great, mas- 63:8
6 culine, perfect, first-manifest intellect. •And there I saw all these
8 (spiritual beings) as they exist, in one. •And I became unified
9 with all of them, •and I blessed
- 10 •the concealed aeon;
the virgin Barbēlō;
the invisible spirit.
- 12 •And I became wholly perfect; received power; was inscribed in
glory; was sealed; and there was wreathed with a perfect wreath.
- 16, 18 •I came forth unto the perfect particulars. •And they all were
greeting me, and listening (to me) about the greatnesses of ac-
20 quaintance. •And they were rejoicing, and receiving power.
- 22 •And I then descended to the aeons comprising the self- 5:29
24 originates. •I received a [true], uncontaminated image worthy
of perception.
- 26 •I descended to the antitypical aeons.^b 5:18
- 28,1 •From there [I] descended to the ethereal [realm], **130** •and 5:17
I inscribed three tablets (of wood)^a and left them^b as a (source v,1
of) acquaintance for those who would come after me, the living 3Tb 118:10
elect (plur.).

He reoccupies his material body

- 4, 6 And I descended to the perceptible world, •and I put on my 4:20
7, 8 ignorant material image.^c •Although it was ignorant, •I bestowed

d. Zōstrianos is unable to obtain a discursive answer.

b. Or “antitypes of the aeons.”

129 a. “Aphro, child of virgin light.” Zōstrianos now descends through the first-manifest aeon to the self-originate aeon and then through the six zones between the self-originate and the perceptible world; cf. note 5a.

130 a. The Greek word means specifically a writing board of wood.

b. The tablets are left not on earth but in “the ethereal [realm].”

c. Lit. “statue, idol.”

10 power upon it, and went about preaching truth unto all. •Neither
 12 the hosts of angels of the world nor the rulers saw me. •Indeed,
 I escaped many condemnations that brought me near to death.

His sermon^d

14, 16 I awakened^e a multitude that were lost, saying, •“O living peo-
 17 ple! O holy seed of Seth! Understand! •Do not let yourselves [ap-
 18 pear (?)] inattentive to me. •Elevate^f your divine element as be-
 19, 21 ing god. •Bestow power upon the innocent, [elect] soul. •Behold
 22 the transitoriness that is found here. •Seek immutable unengen-
 24 deredness. •[The] parent of all these (spiritual beings) is calling
 26 you (plur.). •When you are being censured and mistreated, that
 2 (parent) will not abandon you. **131** •Do not bathe yourselves in
 3 death, •nor surrender yourselves unto ones who are inferior to
 5 you as though they were superior. •Flee the madness and fetter^a
 7 of femininity, •and choose for yourselves the salvation of mas-
 8 culinity.^b •It is not to experience passion that you have come (to
 10 this place), but to break your fetters. •Break yourselves free, and
 12 the one who bound you^c will be broken to bits! •Save yourselves
 14 so that that(soul) might be saved! •The kind parent has sent the Bjn 6:23+
 16 savior unto you and bestowed power upon you. •Why are you
 17, 18 standing there? •Convert! For you are being sought! •You are
 19, 20 being called! Listen! •For, the time is short! •Do not let your-
 21 selves be deceived! •Great is the eternity^d of the aeon of the living
 23 (plur.), •and (great is) the chastisement of those who are un-
 24 convinced. •Many fetters and chastisers are surrounding you.
 1 **132** •Flee in the short time that remains, before destruction over
 3, 3, 4 takes you! •Behold the light!! •Flee the darkness!! •Do not let
 yourselves be enslaved unto destruction!!”^a

d. A typical gnostic sermon. For another sam-
 ple of this style of rhetoric, cf. CH7.

e. Or “raised up.”

f. Or “awaken.”

c. The world ruler.

d. Or “aeon.”

132 a. In the manuscript, the titles of this work are
 written after the text (at 132:6f).

131 a. The body; cf. note 46c.

b. “femininity . . . masculinity”: i.e. “materiality
 . . . membership in the eternal realm”; cf. note 7a.

THE FOREIGNER

(Excerpts)

(Fr)

CONTENTS

The concluding half of *The Foreigner* (“Allogenes”), which is translated here, describes the interior mystical journey of a soul to acquaintance or *gnōsis* with the ineffable first principle, thus constituting a close parallel to *Zs* (cf. the introduction to *Zs*). The stages of this journey are the main aeons (abstractions) that according to gnostic myth have emanated from the first principle and structure the spiritual universe. Their description in *Fr* is brief and very selective; it follows a threefold division using terminology also found in *Zs*, but at least one important structural detail is at variance with that work:

	<i>Fr</i>	<i>Zs</i>
The concealed aeon	= reality	= reality
The first-manifest aeon	= vitality	= blessedness
The self-originate aeon	= blessedness	= vitality

Unlike *Zs*, the mystical ascent described in *Fr* is almost entirely abstract, without metaphorical “baptisms” or interpreting angels. Furthermore, the ascent is explicitly said to be “inward” to the interior of the self, so that the apocalyptic convention of an “upward” voyage through “heavens” is entirely suppressed. No reference is made to a return voyage downward. The voyager is not explicitly identified with any known religious hero or put in a historical setting, but simply called “the Foreigner” (Greek *allogenēs*, “an other type,” “an alien type”; the Greek word is retained in the ancient Coptic version of the text); according to EpA 40.7.2, gnostics understood this epithet to belong to Seth, presumably with reference to Gn 4:25. The Foreigner’s experience comes not after a career of religious service as in *Zs*, but as the summation of a hundred years of “deliberation,” that is, study and contemplation. After attaining his vision (*gnōsis*) of the “unrecognizable” first principle, he seeks rational knowledge about the nature of the unrecognizable, but these hopes are dashed when holy powers from the Barbēlō aeon lecture him on the ineffability of the first principle. Their lecture closely parallels the beginning of the gnostic myth in BJn, and actually quotes from the latter. Thus, in *Fr*, a mythic structure whose original context was cosmology (in BJn) has been abstractly transformed into a psychology of the individual gnostic—macrocosm into microcosm, myth into philosophical mysticism.

Like Zs, *The Foreigner* is of particular importance in the history of philosophy because Plotinus, the great Neoplatonist philosopher, was acquainted with its contents (cf. Porph 16.3f) and took it into account in his cycle of lectures against the gnostics (*Enneads* 3.8, 5.8, 5.5, and 2.9 [nos. 30–33 chronologically]).

Of special interest is the language used to describe the technique of mystical contemplation (59:9f).

The abstract and theoretical character of the excerpt does not allow for reference to the history of Israel or the foundation of Christianity, nor indeed to dramatic actions of any part of the gnostic myth.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author and place of composition of Fr are unknown. The date of its composition must be sometime before A.D. 268 because the work was known to Plotinus before he wrote against the gnostics. Fr is attributed to an unnamed person simply called “the Foreigner” (*allogenēs*); however, gnostics are known to have applied this epithet to Seth (cf. above, “Contents”), so if the equation operates here Fr is an example of pseudepigraphy. The language of composition was Greek.

Fr has a complex mixture of genres in which various traditional materials are subordinated to others:

1. Autobiography of a seer
 - A. Mystical “ascent” (cf. heavenly voyage)
 1. Angelic revelation
 - a. Learned treatise

Like Zs, the work as a whole is a spiritual autobiography of a religious seer. The literary genre of the excerpt is a variant of the “apocalyptic” heavenly voyage of the soul (for this genre, see the introduction to Zs), spiritualized and stripped of its usual celestial reference so as to coincide with a description of the *mystical ascent* of the soul.

The seer voyages alone, without the usual interpreting angels. But before his voyage begins, he receives angelic directions; and after it has come to an end, he seeks angelic advice on its rational interpretation. In consequence, the seer receives a monologic *angelic revelation*, in the form of a typical philosophical *treatise* on the nature of god, comparable to the treatise embedded in BJn.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Great Eternals Mentioned in the Excerpt

The TRIPLY POWERFUL INVISIBLE SPIRIT. The unrecognizable.

The BARBĒLŌ. A masculine female virgin, first source of blessedness and divinity.

1. THE CONCEALED (AEON). Reality.
2. THE FIRST-MANIFEST INTELLECT. Harmēdōn. Vitality.
3. THE SELF-ORIGINATE (AEON). Blessedness.

The THRICE-MALE CHILD. The savior.

LUMINARIES of the Barbēlō.

Their HOLY POWERS

II. Humankind Mentioned in the Excerpt

The FOREIGNER (Seth?)

MESSOS, a disciple or spiritual “child” of the Foreigner

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC XI (pp. 45–69), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The meaning of one word occurring several times in the Coptic manuscript is at present unknown. It has been represented by a series of points (. . .) in the English translation.

The translation below is based on an advance copy of J. D. Turner’s critical edition of the Coptic (kindly supplied by him), with minor alterations: Turner and Wire, with Wintermute, “NHC XI,3: *Allogenes*” (see “Select Bibliography”).

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See also items listed under Zs, “Select Bibliography.”

The Foreigner^a

(EXCERPTS)

I. PREPARATION FOR THE MYSTICAL VISION

The Foreigner's lifetime of deliberation

27 57 But for my part, I did not despair at the words that I had
29, 30 heard.^b •Through them I prepared myself, •and I deliberated for Porph 16:3
a hundred years.^c
* * *

The way of withdrawal: summary^d

7 58 [And when . . .] the hundred years had [nearly passed (?)]
the blessedness^a of eternal hope, filled with kindness, [came over
12 (?)] me. •I beheld

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| 12 | •the good, divine self-originate (aeon); ^b | Zs 20:4 |
| 13 | •the savior, i.e. the thrice-male perfect child; | Zs 29:1+ |
| 15 | •the latter's goodness; | v.13 |
| 16 | •the perfect, Harmēdōn, the first-manifest intellect; ^c | Zs 13:1 |
| 18 | •the blessedness of the concealed (aeon); ^d | Zs 127:7 |
| | | Zs 63:13+ |
| | | v.18 |
| | | Zs 113:1+ |

Title 57 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 69:20).

b. The first part of the work, about a dozen pages, is badly damaged and had to be omitted here. In it “the Foreigner” (*allogenes*) evidently writes to a disciple, Messos, reporting certain revelations made by the eternal being Iouēl “that belongs to all the glories” (i.e. Iōēl; cf. Zs 57:13f, EgG 55:15f). These revelations may have described the structure of the Barbēlō aeon, as in Zs. In the second part of the work, translated here, the Foreigner tells of putting this information to use as the basis for mystical contemplation, and of receiving a further revelation from “the glories.” The exact narrative context of the excerpt is lost.

c. Lit. “the hundred years” (referring to an earlier mention of the hundred-year period).

d. The following section (58:7–38f) summarizes the contents of the more detailed passage that follows hereafter.

58 a. “blessedness” is bestowed by Barbēlō. See below.

b. The lowest of the three constituents of the Barbēlō aeon. This and the other constituents had already been discussed in the earlier pages of the work.

c. I.e. the first-manifest aeon (cf. Zs 127:7), which is the second constituent of the Barbēlō aeon.

d. The highest constituent of the Barbēlō aeon.

- 19 •the first source of blessedness, the Barbēlō aeon, filled with divinity; Zs 14:4
- 23 •the first source of beginning lessness, the triply powerful invisible spirit, the entirety better than perfect. Bjn 2:26
EgG 50:23 +
Zs 128:19
Zs 4:20
- 26 •After being caught up by the eternal light out of the garment^c that I was wearing, and taken to a holy place, no resemblance of which could be shown forth in the world, then by great blessed-
- 37 ness I beheld all the things that I had heard about. •And I blessed
- 38 all of them, •and [stood at rest]^f within my acquaintance.

The Foreigner's vision of holy powers

- 1 59 [I turned] inward^a toward acquaintance [with] the entire- Zs 45:12+
- 4 ties, the Barbēlō. aeon, •and I beheld holy powers from the lumi-
- 7 naries of the masculine female virgin Barbēlō, •[which said . . .]
I would attempt [. . .] reside in the world.

The method of withdrawal

- 9 “O Foreigner, behold how your blessedness^b resides in si- Zs 4:13
lence—(a blessedness) through which you understand your- 3Tb 120:11
- 11 self as you really are. •And in seeking to understand yourself,
- 12 withdraw to vitality,^c which you will see moving. •And if you
- 16 are unable to stand at rest, do not be afraid. •Rather, if you want
- 18 to stand at rest, withdraw to reality,^d •and you will find it stand-
- 20 ing at rest and still, after the resemblance of what is really still
- 24 •and restrains all these (spiritual beings)^e in quietness and lack
of activity.^f
- 26 •“And if you receive a manifestation thereof through a first
- 30 manifestation of the unrecognizable^g—•of which you must be
- 32 uncomprehending, if you should happen to understand it— •and
- 35 if you are afraid there, draw back because of the activities. •And if
- 37 in that place you become perfect, be still; •and understand also

e. “garment”: a Platonist cliché for the body.

f. To “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, non-change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

59 a. The Barbēlō aeon is “within” the self and can be discovered in the course of self-acquaintance.

b. “your blessedness” (cf. 58:7f): “blessedness” is an aspect of the self-originate aeon, the lowest of the Barbēlō constituents, which the Foreigner discovers “within.”

c. An aspect of the first-manifest aeon, the second of the Barbēlō constituents.

d. An aspect of the concealed aeon, the highest Barbēlō constituent.

e. “all these,” namely, spiritual beings: gnostic jargon used in this text, probably to mean the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō aeon; cf. Zs note 2e.

f. The highest form of self-acquaintance (to “understand yourself as you really are”) is a state of total stillness and inactivity; it is acquaintance with god, i.e. the Barbēlō.

g. “the unrecognizable”: i.e. the invisible spirit.

that its manner of existing in [all these] (spiritual beings) is after the pattern that resides within you.^h

2 **60** •“And do not be further dispersed, [so that] you might be
5 able to stand at rest. •And do not desire to [be active], lest you
utterly perish [because of] the inactive element within [you] that
8 belongs to the unrecognizable. •Do not (attempt to) comprehend
9, 10 it: •for this is impossible. •Rather if, through a luminous thought,
you should happen to understand it, be uncomprehending of it.”

The Foreigner's withdrawal

12 Now, I was listening to them say these things, and within me 59:9
16 was stillness of silence. •I listened to blessedness,^a through which
19 I understood myself as I really am. •And I withdrew to vitality,
20 which I sought to understand; •and I accompanied it into itself,
22, 24 •and stood at rest—not firmly, but in stillness. •And I beheld an
indivisible, eternal, intellectual movement—belonging to all the
28 powers; formless; and unlimited by bestowal of limit. •And when
I wished to stand firmly at rest I withdrew to reality, which I
found to be standing at rest and still, after an image and a resem-
35 blance of that (image) which I was wearing. •Through a manifesta-
tion of the undivided and the still, I became full of manifesta-
38 tion. •(And) through a first manifestation of the unrecognizable,
I [understood] it (the unrecognizable), at the same time [that] I
3 was uncomprehending of it. **61** •And from the latter I received
power, having gotten eternal strength from [it].^a
5 •I recognized that [which] existed within me and the triply
powered and the manifestation of the uncontained [that] be-
longed to it.

II. VISION OF THE UNRECOGNIZABLE

8 [And] I beheld the first^b which is unrecognizable to all, the
deity better than perfect, through a first manifestation thereof,
along with the triply powered^c that exists in all.

h. The Barbēlō and its constituents encountered within the self correspond to the structure of spiritual reality at large (“all these”; cf. note 59e): microcosm corresponds to macrocosm.

60 a. The events narrated here (60:16–38f) correspond to the instructions given in 59:9f.

61 a. “[it]”: the first manifestation.

b. The invisible spirit.

c. I.e. the Barbēlō.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE UNRECOGNIZABLE

The Foreigner's attempt to understand the vision

- 14 I was seeking to understand^d the ineffable and unrecognizable
 15 god, of which people are certainly uncomprehending even if they
 16 understand it, •the intermediation of the threefold power that is
 17 located in stillness and quietness and which is unrecognizable.
 18 •Now, once I was strong in these, the powers of the luminaries
 19 said to me, •“It is enough that through the search for the incom-
 20 prehensibles you might disperse the inactive element that resides
 21 in you. •Yet, listen (to us) about this subject, insofar as may be
 22 possible with a first manifestation and a manifestation.^e”

Can the unrecognizable be described?

- 32 “Now, its possession of any given nonessential property re- Bjn 2:26+
 33 sides in its mode of existing, either in existing and being about
 34 to be, or in being active, or in understanding and being alive—
 35 •although, in an incomprehensible way, it does not possess intel-
 36 lect, life, reality, or unreality.
 1 **62** •And it has any given nonessential property along with its
 2 essential existent property without its being left behind^a in any
 3 way, at the time that it causes something undertaken, or purifies,
 4 [or] receives, or bestows; likewise without its being [. . .] in any
 5 way, [whether] through its will alone or in bestowing or in re-
 6 ceiving from another. •Nor has it any will, neither (one deriving)
 7 from itself nor (one bestowed) through another. •It is not toward
 8 its own self that it proceeds; •yet neither does it, in itself, bestow
 9 anything out of itself, lest it become . . . in some other way. •Ac-
 10 cordingly, it does not need intellect or life, or indeed anything at
 11 all: •for, in (its) lacking <nothing> and being unrecognizable, i.e.
 12 in nonexistent reality, it is superior to the entireties, inasmuch
 13 as it possesses silence and stillness, lest it be . . . by those that
 14 are not . . .
 15 •“It is neither divinity nor blessedness nor perfection. •Rather, Bjn 2:33
 16 (each of these) is an unrecognizable nonessential property of it,
 17 and not its essential property. •Rather, it is some other, superior
 18 to blessedness, divinity, and perfection.

d. By progressive mystical introspection, the Foreigner has “beheld” the ineffable, i.e. gained acquaintance (*gnōsis*) of it (61:8f). Yet to “understand” the vision of this object is a different task, the task of philosophy; hence the heavy philosophical style of the revelation that follows.

e. The following description of god may be

compared with Bjn 2:33f. In some ways it is typical of second-century Platonist philosophy. The precise details of translation are somewhat conjectural throughout this section.

62 a. “left behind”: or “distinct.”

- 36 •“Indeed, it is not perfect: rather, it is some other, superior
 1 thing. **63** •It is not infinite, nor [is] limit bestowed upon it by
 5 [some] other: rather, it is some other, superior thing. •It is not Bjn 3:22
 6 corporeal; it is not incorporeal. •It is not large; [it is not] small.
- 8,9 •It is not quantifiable; it is not a [creature]; •nor is it something
 11 that exists, i.e. which one could understand; •but rather it is
 [something] else, which is superior,^a i.e. which one could not un-
 14 derstand. •It is a first manifestation and acquaintance therewith,
 17 although it is understood only by itself, •inasmuch as it is not
 anything among the existents, but something superior, among
 the superiors.
- 20 •“Yet, like its essential property and any given nonessential
 21 property of it, •it neither shares in eternity nor shares in spans
 24,25 of time. •It neither receives anything from another, •nor is it . . .
- 26,28 •It neither is . . . anything, nor is it un- . . . •Rather, it is attainment
 (?) of itself alone, at the same time as being unrecognizable,
 31 •(and) at the same time as being superior, in (its) unknowabil-
 33 ity, to those which are good; •possessing a blessedness, a per-
 35 fection, a quietness—•<not> blessedness <itself> or perfection
 37 itself with a stillness, •but rather (each of these as) a nonessential
 property of it as it exists, which one could not understand, and
 which is still.
- 2 **64** •“Yet these are nonessential properties that are unrecog-
 4 nizable to all. •And in beauty it is far superior to all those which
 6 are good. •Thus it is utterly unrecognizable to all and by all,
 9 •although it is in all—and not just in unrecognizable acquaint-
 12 tance that exists according as it (the ineffable) really is. •And it
 is reconciled through^a the nonrecognition that looks toward it.
- 14,16 •How is it unrecognizable? •Or does any behold it as it utterly
 18 exists? •If one should say that it exists as something, such as
 acquaintance, one has acted impiously toward it, and has been
 23 sentenced to not being acquainted with god: •not sentenced by
 that (ineffable), which neither cares about anything nor pos-
 29 sesses any will, but rather self-sentenced •because of not having
 30 discovered the really existent first principle. •Such a person has
 gone blind, outside the still eye of activated manifestation, which
 derives from the triply powered belonging to the first thought of
 the invisible spirit, which thus exists [. . .]^b * * *
- 17 **65** •“beauty, . . . of stillness, quietness, stillness, and great
 21 unsearchability. •In having been shown forth, it has no need
 of spans of time, not even of eternity—but rather, of itself
 25,26 alone, •since it is unsearchably unsearchable, •and does not

Bjn 4:19
 FTh 38:5?

63 a. A more obvious translation of the Coptic phrase would be “but rather it is a superior nonessential property.”

64 a. Or “reconciled to.”

b The next half page of the MS has been destroyed.

activate (anything), not even itself, and so it exists in stillness.
 28,30 •And it is not reality, and so it does not lack. •In terms of being
 31 in a place, it is a body; •but in terms of being in a dwelling
 32,34 ing, it is incorporeal; •possesses nonexistent reality; •belongs
 35,36 to^a all, as itself; and •has no will. •Rather, it is a great superiority
 37 of greatness, •and superior to its stillness, so that [. . .]”^b * * *
 19,20 **66** •“Nor does anyone who shares in it receive power. •Nothing
 activates it, in accord with (its) still sameness.
 23,23 •“Indeed, it is unrecognizable. •For, it is a place without spirit^a
 25 of infinity, •at the same time as being infinite, powerless, and
 27,28 nonexistent. •It does not bestow existence: •rather, it receives
 all these (spiritual beings) unto itself in stillness, standing at rest
 32 out of that which always stands at rest, •since eternal life has been
 35 shown forth: (viz.) the invisible and triply powerful spirit, •the
 One, which is in all these beings that are existent, and which
 surrounds them all, though being more exalted than all.”^b * * *
 18 **67** •“It [has] stood at rest prior (?) [to] these (?), bestowing
 19 power upon all these (spiritual beings); •and has filled all these.

Limits upon further speculation

20 “Truly, you have listened firmly (to us) concerning all these
 22 things. •Do not seek to understand^a anything more. Rather, go.
 24 •We are not acquainted with whether the unrecognizable possesses
 28 angels or gods; •nor whether the still has anything within
 32 it but stillness, i.e. its own self; and so it is not . . . •Nor is it
 fitting to become dispersed many more times by seeking (to
 understand).”^b * * *

IV. CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION

16 **68** [It]^a said [to] me, “Write down [whatever] I tell you and
 remind you about, for the sake of whoever after you may be
 20 worthy.”^b •And you shall deposit this book upon a mountain,
 22 •and call upon the guardian. Come, O Phrikto^c, guardian of
 death.”

65 a. Or “exists for.”

b. The next half page of the MS has been destroyed.

66 a. Or “breath.”

b. The next half page of the MS has been destroyed.

67 a. Cf. note 61d.

b. The next half page of the MS has been destroyed.

68 a. The exact narrative context is lost. The Foreigner now converses with one interlocutor rather than several.

b. The holy seed of Seth.

c. The Greek word means “dreadful, awesome.”

23, 25 •Now, after saying these things it parted from me. •And for
 26, 27 my part, I was filled with joy •And I wrote this book •It was
 ordained, O Messos my child,^d that I should disclose to you the Porph 16:3
 31 things that have been proclaimed unto me within myself. •I first
 received them in great silence and stood at rest as I really was,
 34 preparing myself. •These are the things that were disclosed to
 me, O [Messos] my child [..]”^e * * * *

d. “my child”: the style in which a spiritual teacher addresses a disciple. The same word also means “my son.” For “Messos,” see note 57b.

e. The final half page of the text has been destroyed except for a few words of the last sentence,

in which the Foreigner perhaps encourages Messos to disseminate the contents of the treatise, followed by the title (at 69:20): “[..] publish (?) [them, O] Messos [my]child, [..] seal [..] all the [..]. The Foreigner (69:14–20).”

THE THREE TABLETS OF SETH

(3Tb)

CONTENTS

In gnostic myth, hymnody (parallel strophes) is the usual mode by which one divine being addresses another (e.g., BJn 9:7f) or the savior speaks to the gnostic soul (BJn 30:13f). In *The Three Tablets of Seth* (“Three Steles of Seth”) two important characters of the myth—the metaphysical archetypes of Seth (“Emmakha Seth”) and his father Adam (“Geradamas,” that is, Adamas) express their hymnic adoration of a more abstract being within the structure of the spiritual universe. As in modern Christian hymnals, no explicit setting or mythic actions are described; the reader’s acquaintance with the gnostic myth is simply presupposed.

According to the mythic structure of the spiritual universe (as described, for example, in Zs) the two speakers are situated within the lowest constituent of the Barbēlō aeon. Hymns 4, 5, and 6 express their desire for acquaintance with the Barbēlō, that is, the higher abstraction under which they are subsumed. Hymns 5, 6, and 7 express thanksgiving for the receipt of acquaintance; the pauses between Hymns 4 and 5, 5 and 6, and 6 and 7 are thus moments of mystical contemplation and unification with the Barbēlō. There is no clear reference in the work to attainment of *gnōsis* of the ineffable, unrecognizable first principle, as described in Fr.

Hymns 6 and 7 are phrased as though uttered by more than two speakers (e.g., 124:33f, “we *all* bless you”). The phraseology of these two hymns is particularly suited to recitation by a congregation, and may indicate that 3Tb as a whole is a hymnal of the gnostic church. The gnostics’ belief that Emmakha Seth was the archetype of Seth, the founder of the gnostic race, provides adequate justification for them to have joined in his hymns of praise and petition.

The frame story, which recounts the discovery and transcription of the tablets by a certain Dositheus, concludes with reference to an ascent and descent of the soul, analogous to the mysticism of Zs and Fr, and can be read as a liturgical direction for use of the hymns. It speaks of ascent from “the first” to “the second” to “the third” (that is, the three major constituents of the Barbēlō aeon), then “silence” (mystical contemplation), and finally descent in reverse order.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The place of composition of 3Tb is unknown. Its date of composition must be sometime before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. In philosophical and mythic content the work resembles EgG, RAd, FTh, Zs, and Fr. The transcript of the tablets is attributed to a certain Dositheus, possibly meaning the ancient sect leader of that name (cf. note 118b). But it is impossible to know whether 3Tb is actually by him, by another writer of that name, or an example of pseudepigraphy. Beyond the assertion that Dositheus transcribed the three tablets, their authorship is attributed (118:10f) to the great Seth, that is, the spiritual archetype Emmakha Seth; the work is thus in any case pseudepigraphic. The language of composition was Greek.

The mixture of genres in 3Tb is slightly complex, combining three traditional materials:

1. Heavenly message
 - A. Hymnal
 - B. Directions for use

As in RAd and EgG, the whole work is presented (118:10f) as a *heavenly message*, in this instance left by Seth (the metaphysical archetype) in the form of three stone tablets, and subsequently discovered by Dositheus. The convention of the heavenly message is a commonplace of ancient Mediterranean revelation literature; in the message of 3Tb, Seth speaks in the first person. The Roman Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.2.3) records the popular belief that Seth, son of Adam, had left esoteric information for his posterity in the form of tablets on a high mountain; 3Tb may be a literary elaboration of that tradition. The body of the heavenly message is a *hymnal*, consisting of seven hymns distributed in three "tablets" (the sevenfold division is hypothetical; there is no sign of division between hymns in the MS). The hymns are followed by what appear to be *directions for use* or at least a reference to use of the hymnal in congregational mystical communion.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Eternals Mentioned in the Work

The INVISIBLE PARENT. The One.

The BARBĒLŌ aeon

Constituents of the BarbĒlō aeon:

1. THE CONCEALED AEON
2. THE FIRST-MANIFEST AEON
3. THE SELF-ORIGINATE AEON

GERADAMAS

EMMAKHA SETH, his son

The LIVING AND IMMOVABLE RACE

The WORD (or verbal expression)
 Various POWERS, etc.

II. Humankind Mentioned in the Work

The SEED OF SETH, the elect, including DOSITHEUS

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC VII (pp. 118–27), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on an advance copy of J. E. Goehring and J. M. Robinson's critical edition of the Coptic, kindly supplied by them: Goehring and Robinson, "The Three Steles of Seth" (see "Select Bibliography").

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See also items listed under Zs, "Select Bibliography."

The Three Tablets of Seth^a

I. CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION

Introduction: Dositheus's Vision of the Tablets

- 10 **118** Report of Dositheus,^b (consisting) of the three tablets^c of EpG 26.8.1?
Zs 130:1
Bjn 9:11 +
EgG80:15
13 Seth,^d father of the living^e and immovable race.^f •He^g remem-
16 bered what he saw,^h gained acquaintance of, and read; •and he
delivered it, just as it was written there, unto the elect.ⁱ

His report

- 19 Many times I^j joined in glorifying along with the powers.^k
21 •And I was deemed worthy by the immeasurable greatnesses.
24 •And they^l are as follows.

Title 118 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 127:27).

b. “Dositheus”: the name Dositheus and a sect of “Dositheans” were mentioned in a list of sectarian leaders cited in the second century A.D. by the anti-gnostic writer Hegesippus; other ancient and medieval sources occasionally refer to an ancient leader or sect of this name, but never with much detail or precise indication of date.

c. “tablet,” Greek *stêlē*: a monumental stone slab set upright in a permanent base and bearing an incised inscription. Such tablets were commonly erected in ancient cities as records of important public documents.

d. The eternal Seth, in this text called “Emmakha Seth.”

e. “living”: gnostic jargon used in this text to indicate membership in the eternal realm.

f. The eternal posterity of the eternal Seth.

g. Dositheus.

h. Presumably the tablets had been set up in the eternal realm, since their author is the spiritual Seth (cf. note 118e); this implies that Dositheus “saw” them either in a vision or in the course of a heavenly voyage like the one described in Zs.

i. The seed of Seth, son of Adam, on earth.

j. Dositheus.

k. Dositheus’s act of “joining in” the heavenly liturgy sets a precedent for use of the tablets by human worshipers. Cf. also note 124c.

l. The tablets.

II. THE TEXT OF THE TABLETS

The First Tablet of Seth^m

Hymn 1: Emmakha Seth's praise of the Geradamas

- 25 Iⁿ praise you, O father, O Geradamas^o— BJn 8:28+
 26 I, your own son Emmakha Seth, whom you have in gen- Zs 6:21+
 erately produced for the praise of our god.
 30 For, I am your own son,
 31 And it is you who are my intellect, my father.
 1 **119** Now, I for my part have sown and begotten:
 3 While you, for your part, have beheld the greatneses,
 and have stood at rest^a ceaselessly.
 4 I praise you, [O] father: bless me, O father.
 6 It is because of you that I exist: it is because of god that
 you exist.
 7 Because of you I exist under (the authority of) that being.
 9 You are light, beholding light: you have shown forth light.
 11 You are a Mirotheas: it is you who are my Mirotheos.^b 120:15
EgG 60:30
 13 I praise you as a deity, I praise your divinity:
 15 Great is the good self-originate (aeon),^c which has stood
 at rest.
 17 O deity that stood at rest in the beginning,
 18 You came with good, and you were shown forth: and you
 showed forth a good.
 20 I shall utter your name: for you are a prime name.
 22 You are unengendered: for your part, you have been
 shown forth so that you might show forth those
 which are eternal.
 25 It is you who are the one that is existent: therefore you
 have shown forth those which are really existent.
 27 It is you who are spoken of by voice: but by intellect you
 are glorified.
 30 It is you who are powerful everywhere.
 31 Because of you and your seed [the] perceptible universe is
 acquainted with you: you are merciful.

m. The chapter title of the first tablet is copied only at the end of the chapter, at 121:16f.

n. The eternal Seth.

o. "Geradamas" or "Ger-Adamas," i.e. Adamas (cf. BJn note 8f): father of the eternal Seth. According to Zs he and his son are located in the Barbēlō aeon, within the self-originate aeon, at the luminaries Harmozēl and Ōroiaēl, respectively.

119 a. To "stand at rest" is philosophical jargon

for the state of permanence, non-change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

b. "Mirotheas . . . Mirotheos": a Greek neologism, possibly meaning "divine part" (*moiros theios*). The spelling of the MS has been reproduced in the English translation.

c. The lowest of the three subconstituents of the Barbēlō aeon, in which the eternal Seth and the Geradamas are located. Cf. note 118o.

- 1 **120** And you derive from a foreign thing:^a and it presides
over a foreign thing. 120:11
- 3 But now, you derive from a foreign thing: and it presides
over a foreign thing.
- 5 You derive from a foreign thing: for you are [dissimilar].^b
- 6 And you are merciful: for you are eternal.
- 8 It is over a people that you preside: for you have caused
all these (spiritual beings)^c to increase.
- 9 And (you did this) for the sake of my seed: for it is you
who recognize that it resides in (the realms of)
generation.^d Bjn 9:14+
- 11 And they derive from foreigners: for they are dissimilar. Fr 59:9
- 13 And it is over foreigners that they preside: for they reside
in life.
- 15 You are a Mirotheos:^e I praise its power, which has been
given unto me. 119:11 +

Hymn 2: Praise of the Barbēlō^f

- 17 O you who have caused the really existent masculinities
to be thrice-male!^g
- 19 O you who have been divided into the quintet!^h Bjn 6:2
- 20 O you who have been given to us in triple powerfulness! 121:32+
- 22 O you who have been ingenerately produced!
- 23 O you who have emanated from the superior (realm), and
for the sake of the inferior (realm) have gone forth
into the middle!ⁱ
- 26 You are a parent (produced) by a parent:^j an utterance
from a command.
- 29 We praise you, O thrice-male: for you have unified the
entirety^k from out of all.

120 a. Or “an alien thing” (the same word is translated “foreigner” in Fr): the invisible parent. In the following verses, all the eternal world of emanations is a “foreign thing”; likewise, the seed of Seth on earth are “foreigners” who “derive from foreigners,” i.e. from the living and immovable race that is their prototype.

b. “[dissimilar]”: the word is partially preserved in the MS. Cf. 120:11f.

c. “all these,” namely, spiritual beings: gnostic jargon used in this text, probably meaning the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō aeon; cf. Zs note 2e.

d. “my seed . . . in (the realms of) generation”: the seed of Seth on earth.

e. Cf. note 119b.

f. The eternal Seth and the Geradamas speak, jointly praising the Barbēlō aeon, from which

they ultimately derive and within which they are located. Hymns 2-4 speak of the Barbēlō’s emanations and immanence within the perceptible realm.

g. “masculinities . . . thrice-male”: cf. EgG note 51f, Bjn 5:6f.

h. Although mostly speaking of the Barbēlō aeon as a tripartite structure, the author of 3Tb here accepts the quintet structure elaborated in Bjn, demonstrating that the two structures were not necessarily held to be mutually exclusive.

i. Or “into public view.”

j. The Barbēlō is “parent” of its constituents, even while being a product of the invisible parent or One.

k. “entirety”: the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbēlō aeon.

- 31 For, you have bestowed power upon us.
 32 You have come into existence from the One^l by the One.
 33 You have traveled:^m you have entered the One.
 34 [You] have saved, you have saved, you have saved us.
 35 O you who are crowned, O you who crown: we praise you
 eternally.
- 2 **121** We praise you—we who, in our capacity as those who
 are perfect and particular, have become wholly
 saved,
- 4 We who are perfect because of you,
 5 We who [became] perfect along with you.
 6 O you who are perfect!
 6 O you who perfect!
 7 O you who are perfect through all these (spiritual beings)!
 8 O you who are everywhere similar!
 8 O thrice-male !
 9 You have stood at rest: you stood at rest in the beginning.
 10 You have become divided everywhere:^a you have re-
 mained One.
- 11 And you have saved whomever you desired: and you
 desire that all worthy people become saved.
 14 You are perfect! You are perfect! You are perfect!^b

The Second Tablet of Seth

Hymn 3: Praise of the Barbēlō^c

- 20 Great is the masculine, virgin, first aeon Barbēlō, the Bjn 4:36
 invisible parent's first glory!^d
- 23 O you (sing.) who are called perfect, you yourself have
 beheld in the beginning that what is first really exist-
 ent is nonexistent.^e
- 27 And from it and through it you came into existence eter-
 nally in the beginning.
- 30 O you who are nonexistent^f from an undivided, thrice Bjn 3:26
 [powerful] One, 120:20, 122:10
123:23
EgG 50:23+
- 32 You are a threefold power!^g
- 33 You are [a] mighty unit from [an]uncontaminated unit! Bjn 2:26

1. Cf. 120:26f.

m. I.e. become immanent; cf. Bjn 30:13f.

121 a. I.e. become immanent.

b. In the MS the chapter title of the first tablet is written here as a subscript.

c. The eternal Seth and the Geradamas speak.

d. The Barbēlō is the first emanation of the invisible parent. Cf. Bjn 4:26f.

e. "nonexistent": or "without essence." Cf. Bjn 3:26.

f. Or "O you who are without essence." The Barbēlō aeon is here addressed by an epithet of its parent.

g. Or (continuing the verse) "belonging to a threefold power."

- 1 122 You are a superior unit!^a
 1 O first shadow^b of the holy parent, light from light,
 4 [We] praise you.
 5 O you who produce perfect beings and who are a cause of
 aeons,
 6 You yourself have [beheld] those which are eternal, for
 they derive from a shadow.
 8 And you have been a cause of multiplicity:^c And you have
 found and remained One, while yet being a cause of
 multiplicity^d in order to become divided.
 10 You are a threefold replication: truly you are thrice
 replicated. 121:32+
 12 You are One belonging to the One: and you derive from
 its shadow.
 14 You are a concealed (aeon):^e you are a world of
 acquaintance;
 16 For, you understand that those which belong to^f the One
 derive from a shadow.
 17 And these^g are yours in (your) heart.
 18 For the sake^h of these, byⁱ essentiality you have bestowed
 power upon those which are eternal.
 20 By vitality^j you have bestowed power upon divinity.^k
 22 By goodness you have bestowed power upon
 understanding.
 23 By blessedness^l you have bestowed power upon the shad-
 ows that flow from the One.
 26 By understanding you have bestowed power upon one;
 27 By creation you have bestowed power upon another;
 28 You have bestowed power upon the same and the differ-
 ent,^m the similar and the dissimilar.
 31 In (the realms of) becoming and (of) intelligible form
 you have bestowed power, by that which is existent
 untoⁿ others . . . and [. . .].

122 a. "unit . . . unit . . . unit": or "monad . . . monad . . . monad."

b. "shadow": i.e. image.

c. Or "you have bestowed number."

d. Or "bestowing number."

e. The "concealed (aeon)" is the highest of the three constituents of the Barbēlō aeon, according to Zs.

f. Or "those of."

g. I.e. "those which belong to the One."

h. Or "because."

i. "by": here and in the following verses, the word can also be translated "in."

j. "vitality": an aspect of the self-originate aeon according to Zs, but of the first-manifest according to Fr.

k. "divinity": an aspect of the concealed aeon according to Zs and Fr.

l. "blessedness": an aspect of the first-manifest aeon according to Zs, but of the self-originate according to Fr.

m. "same . . . different": or "equal . . . unequal."

n. Possibly a new verse began with this word.

- 34 Upon these—which means, That^o Concealed (Aeon) in
the heart^p—[you have bestowed] power.
2 123 And you [have] emanated unto these and [out of]
these.
3 You get divided^a among them;
4 And you become a great, masculine, first-manifest
intellect.^b

Hymn 4: Petition to Barbēlō the parent

- 6 O god the parent! O divine child!^c O producer of
multiplicity!
8 In respect of division of all those which are really existent
you (sing.) have shown forth a verbal expression
(or Word) unto all.
11 And you possess all these (spiritual beings) ingenerately
and eternally, without (participation in) perishing.
14 Because^d of you (sing.) salvation^e has come unto us.
15 From you comes salvation!
16 You are wisdom (Sophia)!^f Bjn 8:19
17 You are acquaintance!
17 It is you who are truth!
18 Because^g of you is life:^h from you comes life.
20 Because of you is intellect: from you comes intellect.
21 You are intellect: you are a world of truth.ⁱ
23 You are a threefold power: you are a threefold replication; 121:32+
24 Truly, you are thrice replicated, O aeon of aeons!
26 It is you alone who without contamination behold those
which are first eternal and those which are unen-
gendered: but also the first divisions, according as
you have been divided.
30 Unify us according as you have been unified.
31 Tell us [of] the things that you behold.
33 Bestow power upon us, so that we might become saved up
into eternal life.

o. As in RAD, the term “That” is gnostic jargon indicating membership in the spiritual realm.

p. Cf. note 122e. As in Fr, constituents of the Barbēlō aeon, such as “That Concealed Aeon,” are both the macrocosmic structure of god and the microcosmic structure of the individual self (“the heart”).

123 a. Or “shared.”

b. I.e. either the first-manifest or the self-originate aeon. Cf. note 122l.

c. “parent . . . child”: cf. note 120j.

d. Or “For the sake of”

e. Or “preservation.”

f. “wisdom” is here considered a manifestation of the Barbēlō or perfect forethought of the light, as in Bjn (cf. Bjn note 20b).

g. Or “for the sake.”

h. “life”: the spiritual element immanent in the seed of Seth (Bjn note 25c).

i. Or “you are a world; you are truth.”

- 2 124 For, as for us, we are a shadow of you.
 3 [And] according as you are a shadow of that which is first
 preexistent, hear us first.
 6 We are eternal: hear us—we who are perfect and
 particular.
 8 It is you who are the aeon of aeons, O you who are collec-
 tively wholly perfect.

Hymn 5: Thanksgiving to the Barbēlō

- 10 You have heard! You have heard!
 11 You have saved! You have saved!
 12 We give thanks! We praise always! We will glorify you!^a

The Third Tablet <of Seth>^b

Hymn 6: Collective thanksgiving and petition to Barbēlō the parent

- 17 We^c rejoice! We rejoice! We rejoice!
 18 We have beheld! We have beheld! We have beheld that
 which is first really existent^d as it really exists—as it
 exists!
 20 O you who are first eternal, O you who are unengendered,
 22 From you^e (sing.) come those which are eternal and the
 aeons, those which are collectively wholly perfect
 and those which are perfect and particular.
 25 We praise you, O you who are non-existent,^f O reality
 prior to realities, O first essence prior to essences, O
 parent of divinity and vitality, O maker of intellect,
 O bestower of good, O bestower of blessedness!^g
 33 We all praise you, O you who understand with blessing
 [. . .], you because of whom all [. . .],

124 a. In the MS the chapter title of the second tablet is written here as a subscript.

b. In the MS the chapter title of the third tablet is written here (124:27). The words “of Seth” are absent, probably through an inadvertence, in the first of the two places.

c. Hymns 6 and 7 are uttered by a group of speakers: cf. 124:33f, “we *all* praise you”; 125:13f, “acquaintance with you . . . is the salvation of us *all*”; 126:29f, “we have praised you: . . . *All of us* do so.” Thus the grammatical form of these two hymns is immediately appropriate for use by a congregation. Cf. note 118k.

d. Some of the language in this hymn could also refer to the invisible parent of the Barbēlō aeon (cf. 121:23f), yet the hymn is clearly addressed to the Barbēlō and not its parent (125:7f, “[you] are acquainted with the One: for, we cannot speak of That One, which everywhere belongs to you”).

e. “you” is addressed to one being throughout the hymn; it is grammatically singular.

f. Or “who are without essence.”

g. “divinity . . . vitality . . . blessedness”: aspects of the three Barbēlō constituents. Cf. notes 122j, k, and l.

- 3 125 O you who understand yourself through yourself
alone!
- 4 Indeed, there is nothing that is active prior to you.
- 6 You are spirit, alone and living.
- 7 And [you] are acquainted with the One:^a for, we cannot
speak of That One, which everywhere belongs
to you;
- 9 For, your light is shining upon us.
- 11 Command us to behold you, so that we might be saved.
- 13 It is acquaintance with you that is the salvation of us all.
- 14 Command! If you command, then we have been saved!

Hymn 7: Collective thanksgiving to the Barbēlō

- 16 Truly we have been saved!
- 17 We have beheld you by means of intellect.
- 18 It is you who are all these (spiritual beings).
- 18 Indeed, you save all these (spiritual beings)—you, who
moreover shall not be saved, nor have been saved,
by them;
- 21 For, as for you, you have commanded unto us.
- 23 You are the One, you are the One^b—according as a person
might speak of you, you are the One;
- 25 You are a single, living spirit.
- 26 How shall we say your name? It is not ours to say!
- 28 For, it is you who are the reality of all these (spiritual
beings).
- 30 It is you who are the life of all these (spiritual beings).
- 31 It is you who are the intellect of all these (spiritual
beings).
- 32 [It is] you in whom all [these] (spiritual beings) rejoice.
- 1 126 For your part, you have commanded all these (spir-
itual beings) to [...] in your [...] them, the [...]
before it.
- 5 [O] blessed concealed (aeon) Sēnaōn, [...] from its own
self!
O [...]neus!
O . . . ephneus!
O Optaōn!
O great power, Elemaōn!
O Emouniar!

Bjn 4:9
Gjd 35:19

125 a. The invisible parent.

b. The Barbēlō aeon is here addressed by an epithet of the invisible parent.

- O Nibareus!
 O Kandēphoros!
 O Aphrēdōn!
 O Dēiphaneus!
- 11 It is you who are Armēdōn <for> these:^a O you who pro-
 duce powers, O Thalanatheus, O Antitheus! Zs 119:6?
- 14 It is you who reside within your own self. Zs 119:4?
- 15 It is you who are before^b your own self: and after you,
 none have come providing activation. Zs 127:7?
- 17 With what shall we praise you? We cannot!
- 19 But as inferior beings we give thanks to you;
- 20 For, you, who are superior, have commanded us to glorify
 you as we are able.
- 24 We praise you, perpetually glorifying you: for we have
 been saved.
- 26 So that we might be saved unto eternal salvation, we will
 glorify you.
- 29 We have blessed you: for we are able.
- 30 We have been saved: for you have wished (it) always.
- 32 All of us do so;^c all of us do so.
- 33 [...] through [...],
- 4 127 Who has [...], us together with those who [...].

III. DOSITHEUS'S DIRECTIONS FOR USE OF THE HYMNS

The mystical ascent

- 6 Whoever remembers these^a and always glorifies shall be
 perfect among those who are perfect and impassive beyond all
 11 things; •for, particularly and collectively they all praise these:
 14 and afterward they shall be silent. •And just as it has been or- Zs, Fr
 15 dained for them, they will ascend.^b •After silence,^c they will de-
 scend from the third: they will bless the second; and afterward,
 20 the first. •The way of ascent is the way of descent.^d Bjn 20:21

126 a. The MS has "It is you who are Armēdōn for me."

b. "before": in either a temporal or a spatial sense.

c. I.e. "All of us praise you."

127 a. These tablets.

b. A mystical ascent such as described in Zs.

c. The moment of highest contemplation, cf. Fr. 59:18f and note 59f.

d. A dictum of Heraclitus (Frag. 60, Diels).

- 21 •Understand, then, O you who live, that you have succeeded, and have taught yourselves about the infinites: marvel at the truth that is within them, and the manifestation.^e

IV. DOSITHEUS'S CONCLUDING BENEDICTION

- 28 This text^f belongs to the kinship.^g It is the son^h who wrote it.
30, 31 •Bless me, O parent: I praise you, O parent. •In peace. Amen! 119:4

e. In the manuscript, the title of this work is written here (at 127:27).

f. Or "this manuscript," in which case the concluding words are a note by the copyist or a predecessor, and not part of the original text.

g. The gnostic church.

h. Or "an offspring."

SATORNINOS

ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON,
AGAINST HERESIES 1.24.1–2

(IrSat)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Not enough is known about the teaching of Saturninos to be sure it is a product of the gnostic sect. If it is, he is one of the earliest teachers whose name can be associated with the gnostics. This summary of his teaching by St. Irenaeus of Lyon, written in Greek about A.D. 180, may be based either on a treatise by Saturninos himself, or else a pseudepigraphic work (like the others collected here) that Saturninos was known to have written or used. It parallels the full extent of gnostic myth from the description of the first principle (“a single parent, unrecognizable by all”) down to the final destruction of the heavenly rulers (“angels”), among whom is the god of the Jews. Although it is extremely compressed and brief, the summary refers to almost all parts of the gnostic myth, as well as related topics such as components of the human being, genealogies of humankind, the history of Israel, principles of biblical interpretation, Christology, and ethics. No single gnostic work is more comprehensive than this; it is thus possible that the document here summarized parallels an original statement of gnostic myth that underlies other gnostic scriptures.

A little earlier in the same chapter, St. Irenaeus reports that Saturninos was from the city of Antioch in Syria (see Map 1). Nothing else is known about the circumstances or exact date of his career.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

The PARENT

The ANOINTED (Christ)

The SUPERIOR POWER

II. Rulers Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

SEVEN ANGELS who created the world, among them being the god of the Jews (Sabaōth?)

Other ANGELS, ARCHANGELS, AUTHORITIES, POWERS
SATAN
DEMONS

III. Humankind Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

The FIRST HUMAN BEING (Adam)

An EVIL HUMAN RACE

A GOOD HUMAN RACE, having the spark of life within it

TEXT

St. Irenaeus wrote in Greek; part of the original Greek text of this passage survives in a quotation in the third-century *Refutation of all Heresies* 7.28. But the complete passage is known only in an ancient Latin version of Irenaeus's work, attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. The translation below is based on the critical edition of Rousseau and Doutreleau, with alterations: A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies: Livre I* [Book 1] (Sources chrétiennes, no. 264; Paris: Le Cerf, 1979), vol. 2, 320–4.

The parent

1.24.1 Saturninos refers to a single parent, unrecognizable by all,^a who made angels, archangels, powers, and authorities.^b BJn 2:26+

Creation of the universe

And the world and all things in it were engendered by some seven of these angels. BJn 12:33+
BJn 11:4

Projection of an image. Creation of Adam.

Moreover, the (first) human being^c—he says—was a creation of angels, in response to the appearance of a luminous image coming down from the realm of absolute power. Because they could not lay hold of that (image), since it immediately retreated back upward, they exhorted one another saying, “Let us create a human being after the image and after the likeness.” BJn 14:18+

His immobility. Passage of a spark of life into Adam.

When this had happened—he says—and when the modeled form proved to be unable to stand erect because of the angels’ impotence, and rather writhed on the ground like a worm, the superior power^d had pity upon him because he had come into being after her^e likeness; and that (power) sent a spark of life,^f which aroused the human being, raised him up, and made him be alive. BJn 19:10+
BJn 19:15
BJn 20:14+
EpS 39.2.4

1.24.1 a. Or “unknown to all.” Possibly corresponding to the invisible virgin spirit of BJn.

b. “who made . . . authorities.” In the system of BJn and similar works, all beings derive ultimately from the unrecognizable parent, but do so by a very complex genealogy that is interrupted by the error of wisdom: cf. BJn 4:26–12:33f. Possibly

Irenaeus skips or compresses this in his account of Saturninos.

c. Adam.

d. Possibly corresponding to forethought, the Barbēlō aeon, in BJn.

e. “her”: i.e. “the superior power’s.”

f. Possibly corresponding in BJn to the luminous afterthought called “life.”

The spark alone is destined for salvation

Thus after the end (of one's life)—he says—this spark of life returns to the elements like it;^g and the other parts^h dissolve into those out of which they came into being.

The incarnate savior's body was apparent and not material

1.24.2 And he postulates that the savior was unengendered, incorporeal, and formless, and was shown forth as a human being only in appearance.^a EpA 40.8.2

Judaism worships an angel

And—he says—the god of the Jews is one of the angels. And because the parent wished to destroy all the rulers, the anointed (Christ)^b came for the destruction of the god of the Jews and for the salvation^c of those who might be persuaded by him: and these are the ones who have the spark of life within them.^d RR 95:13
Bjn 31:1
RAAd 83:23
RR 97:10
FTTh 43:4
EgG 74:19
EpS 39.2.5

Two human races

Indeed, there are—he says—two human races which were modeled by the angels, one wicked and the other good.^e And inasmuch as the demons were assisting wicked people, the savior came for the destruction of bad human beings and demons and for the salvation^f of good ones. Bjn 25:20+
RAAd 71:20
RR 96:19
EgG 71:6
EpS 39.2.6

Ethics

And he says that marriage and the engendering of offspring are from Satan.^g And most of his followers abstain from (the flesh of) living things,^h and they deceive many people by this feigned abstinence. Bjn 24:26+

Principle of biblical interpretation

And certain of the propheciesⁱ (he says) were spoken by the angels who created the world, others by Satan. The latter—he postulates—was itself also an angel, which opposed the ones that created the world and opposed above all the god of the Jews.^j Bjn 22:22+
IrUnid 1.30.11
EpG 26.6.1
RR 95:13+

g. I.e. to the immortal realm.

h. I.e. components of the human being, such as material body and its animating force.

1.24.2 a. The doctrine (called “docetism”) that the real Jesus did not exist as human flesh, but only appeared to do so.

b. “anointed” and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

c. Or “preservation.”

d. Possibly corresponding to the posterity of Seth in Bjn.

e. Possibly corresponding to the posterity of Cain and the posterity of Seth.

f. Or “preservation.”

g. Like RR, Satorninos does not equate Satan (called Sakla, Ialdabaöth) and the “god of the Jews” (Sabaöth). Cf. below.

h. Abstinence from meat, alcohol, and sexual activity was a common form of asceticism (called “enkratism”) practiced by religions and philosophies of the ancient Mediterranean world.

i. Of Jewish scripture (the Old Testament).

j. Possibly as in RR, where Ialdabaöth, called Sakla (i.e. Satan), opposes the other rulers, who are led by Sabaöth (the god of Israel).

THE Gnostics

ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON,
AGAINST HERESIES 1.29

(IrG)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Unlike his summary of the teaching of Saturninos, St. Irenaeus's account of the gnostics (sometimes called "Barbelognostics"), written in Greek about A.D. 180, is detailed and clearly tells the very myth that underlies BJn. Its importance is not in providing information about the contents of the myth, but in connecting the myth with gnostic Christianity as such. The coherence of the cycle of classic gnostic works is only a matter of their systematic interrelationship, for the scripture itself provides no obvious grounds for connection with any precise historical group. It is St. Irenaeus's remark in the opening paragraph of this excerpt that constitutes the primary evidence for such a connection.

The material that St. Irenaeus has chosen to excerpt covers only the first act of the mythic drama (expansion of the first principle into a full spiritual universe), followed by the production of the imperfect craftsman of the material world. It is impossible to know how much more was covered in the document from which he extracted this summary; in any case it is not likely to have simply ended with the production of the world craftsman, as here. (Compare also the introduction to IrUnid.)

Despite its overall agreement with BJn, a number of peculiar details indicate that the excerpt is based on either a different work or an edition of BJn that differs from the ones that survive: the fact that the main emanations (aeons) of the first principle are explicitly arranged in pairs; the distinction of the anointed (Christ) from the self-originate (as in EgG but not BJn); and wisdom's epithet Prounikos, "the vulgar."

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

The PARENT. The virgin spirit.

[The next ten aeons can be listed either as in BJn or in the form of five duets. Both arrangements are given below.]

A QUINTET OF AEONS:

1. The BARBĒLŌTH. A thought, the parent's thinking.
2. PRIOR ACQUAINTANCE
3. INCORRUPTIBILITY
4. ETERNAL LIFE
5. TRUTH

The ANOINTED (Christ). Begetter of the entirety.

Its coactors: INTELLECT, WILL, WORD (or verbal expression)

The SELF-ORIGINATE

[Irenaeus speaks of another arrangement of these aeons, in five duets:

<i>Word (verbal expression)</i>	=	<i>Thinking (the Barbēlōth)</i>
<i>Intellect</i>	=	<i>Prior acquaintance</i>
<i>The anointed (Christ)</i>	=	<i>Incorruptibility</i>
<i>Will</i>	=	<i>Eternal life</i>
<i>The self-originate</i>	=	<i>Truth]</i>

FOUR LUMINARIES that stand around the self-originate, and their FOUR ATTENDANTS:

HARMOGENĒS
 LOVELINESS
 RAGUĒL
 PERCEPTION
 DAUID
 INTELLIGENCE
 ĒLĒLĒTH
 PRUDENCE

ADAMAS. The perfect true human being. With Harmogenēs.

PERFECT ACQUAINTANCE, his consort. Joined to Adamas.

The FATHER	}	<i>The place of these within the system is not clear.</i>
The MOTHER		
The SON		

VULGAR WISDOM (Sophia Prounikos). The mother, a holy spirit, an emanation from the angels that stand beside the self-originate.

II. Rulers Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

The FIRST RULER. Maker of the world.

The first ruler's AUTHORITIES, ANGELS, etc.

Another set of EVIL OFFSPRING, including:

EVIL
 JEALOUSY

ENVY
DISCORD
DESIRE

TEXT

St. Irenaeus wrote in Greek, but the present passage is known only in an ancient Latin version of his work, attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. A summary in Greek of Irenaeus's original Greek text is given by the fifth-century Christian historian Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Compendium*, 13); it sheds light upon the Greek vocabulary of the original. The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Latin text by Rousseau and Doutreleau with alterations, in comparison with the Greek summary by Theodoret; I have also utilized the classic English translation of Irenaeus by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (in their *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1): A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies: Livre I [Book 1]* (Sources chrétiennes, no. 264; Paris: Le Cerf, 1979), vol. 1, 328–30 (Greek summary); vol. 2, 358–64 (Latin).

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Genealogy and multiplicity of the gnostics

1.29.1 Now in addition, from the aforementioned Simonians^a a multitude of gnostics^b have sprung up, and have become shown forth like mushrooms growing out of the ground. We shall now describe the principal opinions that they hold.

TEACHINGS OF THE SECT

The parent and the Barbēlōth

Some of them, then, assume the existence of a certain unaging^c aeon,^d which they call Barbēlōth,^e existing within a virgin spirit.^f In that place, they say, there exists a certain unnameable parent.^g And it willed to show itself forth to this Barbēlōth.

BJn 4:36
BJn 3:15
BJn 2:26+

Production of other aeons

Then this thought^h emanated and stood at restⁱ in its presence, and made a request of it, to have prior acquaintance. And when prior acquaintance, too, had emanated and these,^j moreover, had made a request, incorruptibility emanated, and then eternal life.

BJn 4:26+
BJn 5:10
BJn 5:20+
BJn 5:26+

1.29.1 a. In an earlier part of the work from which this excerpt comes, Irenaeus had described a sect supposedly founded by Simon Magus (Ac 8:9f). From this sect, he claims, other sects such as the gnostics derive their inspiration.

b. “gnostics,” meant as the proper name of a sect. Several versions of the text are attested here, and the original reading is uncertain; possibly it was “Barbēlō gnostics” or “gnostics of Barbēlō.”

c. “unaging”: or “indestructible.”

d. “aeon”: or “eternity.”

e. “Barbēlōth,” Greek fragment; in the Latin version, this word does not have the final *-th*.

f. Or “a certain unaging aeon existing within a virgin spirit that they call Barbēlōth.”

g. The “unnameable parent” is the “virgin spirit”; see BJn 2:28f, 3:15f, 4:34f.

h. “this thought”: the Barbēlōth, BJn 4:26f.

i. To “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, non-change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

j. “these”: or “it.”

Begetting of the anointed (Christ)

Barbēlōth rejoiced in these. And gazing at the magnitude, it (Barbēlōth) took pleasure in the act of conception,^k and in respect of this (magnitude) begot light similar to it (the parent). They declare that this was the beginning both of enlightenment^l and of the begetting of the entirety; and that the parent, beholding this light, anointed it with its own kindness^m until it became perfect. BJn 6:10
BJn 6:23+
Ps 45:7

Its request for coactors

Moreover, they maintain that this was the anointed (Christ),ⁿ who BJn 6:33 again, according to them, made a request that it be given a coactor,^o namely intellect. And intellect emanated. Moreover, besides these, the parent sent forth the Word (or verbal discourse).

Then the following joined as consorts:

thinking and the Word (or verbal discourse);
incorruptibility and the anointed (Christ);
eternal life and will;
intellect and prior acquaintance.

These, then, glorified the great light^p and Barbēlōth.

Emanation of the self-originate and truth

1.29.2 They also state that the self-originate^a afterward emanated from thinking and the Word (verbal discourse), in the image of the great light. And they state that it was greatly honored and that the entirety was subordinated to it. Along with this (self-originate) there emanated truth. And the self-originate and truth joined as consorts. EgG 60:1
BJn 5:32

Emanation of four luminaries and their attendants

And from the light that is the anointed (Christ) and from incorruptibility, the four luminaries emanated—they say—to stand around the self-originate. BJn 7:30+

And again, from will and eternal life, four emanations were produced so that they might serve the four luminaries. And these they name BJn 8:2

k. The Greek fragment next (or instead) has “it became pregnant.”

l. Or “light.”

m. The Greek fragment instead has “It was anointed with the spirit’s perfection.”

n. “anointed” and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

o. Or “assistance.”

p. “the great light”: in BJn (6:13f) the “anointed” is called a “luminous spark consisting of light.”

1.29.2 a. Classic gnostic texts do not agree on the systematic function of the “anointed” and the “self-originate.” For example, the two are identical in the system of BJn, but distinct in EgG.

loveliness;
 perception;^b
 intelligence;
 prudence.

And furthermore, loveliness is subjoined to the first great luminary, which they consider to be the savior, and which they call Harmogenēs; perception, again, is subjoined to the second luminary, which they also call Raguēl; intelligence, to the third, which they call Daudid; prudence, to the fourth, which they name Ēlēlēth. BJn 8:4

Emanation of Adamas and perfect acquaintance

1.29.3. So when all these had been established in this way, the self-originate additionally emits^a a perfect, true human being, whom they also call Adamas,^b inasmuch as neither has he himself ever been dominated, nor have those from whom he derived: he, too, was set apart with the first luminary (H)armogenēs.^c Moreover, perfect acquaintance was emitted by the self-originate along with that human being, and was joined to him as a consort; hence he gained acquaintance of that being which is over the entirety. An invincible faculty was also given to him by the virgin spirit. And the entirety reposed in him, to lift up praise to the great aeon.^d BJn 8:28+

The father, mother, and son. The tree of acquaintance.

Hence, too—they say—the mother, the father, and the son were shown forth.^e And from the human being and acquaintance there sprouted a tree, which they also call acquaintance.^f EgG 50:23+
BJn 22:3+

Emanation of vulgar wisdom

1.29.4 Next, they say, a holy spirit,^a whom they also call wisdom (Sophia) and the vulgar element,^b emanated from the first angel, who stands by the side of the self-originate. BJn 10:20+
IrUnid
1.30.3+
EpG 25.3.2

Her offspring: the first ruler

It,^c then, perceived that although all the others had consorts it had no consort; and it searched for a being with which it might become BJn 9:25+

b. The MSS here erroneously have “volition,” Greek *thelēsis*; the original text, “perception,” Greek *aisthēsis* (or *esthēsis*), is confirmed by BJn 8:2f.

1.29.3 a. The present tense is used for rhetorical effect.

b. In Greek, *adamas* means “steel,” an unyielding or hard substance.

c. The MSS here erroneously have “he was also set apart from (H)armogenēs along with the first light.”

d. Or “eternity.”

e. Or “were brought forth.”

f. The tree of acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with good and evil, Gn 2:17.

1.29.4 a. Or “the holy spirit.”

b. Or possibly “lewd,” Greek *prounikos*. The word basically means “mover, porter,” one who corporally transports burdens for a fee.

c. The holy spirit who is wisdom.

united. And since it did not find one, it passed through^d and extended itself; and it gazed down into the lower region, thinking it would find a consort there; and not finding one, it leaped forth in a state of loathing,^e because it had taken this impulsive action without the good will of the parent. Then next, influenced by simplicity and kindness, it engendered a product in which resided lack of acquaintance, and also arrogance. This, its product—they say—was the first ruler, the maker of this creation.^f

Its theft of power from wisdom. The universe. Other rulers.

Moreover they relate that it stole great power from its mother,^g and that it retreated from her into the lower region, and made a firmament of heaven, in which—they say—it also dwells. And since it was in (a state of) lack of acquaintance, it made those which are in its charge—authorities, angels, and firmaments, and all earthly things. Next—they say—it united with arrogance, and bore evil, jealousy, envy, discord,^h and desire.

BJn 10:19+

RR 87:4+

BJn 10:27+

BJn 11:4

RR 96:3

Wisdom's flight into the eighth heaven

When these had been born, the mother, wisdom (Sophia), was deeply grieved and fled. She departed into a higher place—and it was the eighth (heaven), counting from below.

BJn 13:32+

The first ruler's arrogance

And since she had thus departed, itⁱ imagined that it alone existed. And on this account it said, "For my part, I am a jealous god, and there is none apart from me."

BJn 13:5+

Ex 20:5

Dt 49:9

Is 46:9

And such are the lies that these (gnostics) tell.

d. The MS here erroneously has "it confirmed."

e. Or "weariness."

f. "this creation": i.e. the material world.

g. The holy spirit who is wisdom.

h. Or "fury."

i. The first ruler.

“OTHER” GNOSTIC TEACHINGS

ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON
AGAINST HERESIES 1.30–31

(IrUnid)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

St. Irenaeus's chapter on the gnostics (IrG) is immediately continued by the one translated here, which summarizes the teaching of certain unidentified “others.” It has been suggested that the two chapters really belong together (even if they are not perfectly continuous) and that the “others” are other gnostics; in any case the document being summarized here seems to present a version of the gnostic myth. The summary was written in Greek about A.D. 180. For the most part, the contents of the two chapters are complementary: IrG gives a detailed description of the expansion of the first principle into a full spiritual universe and stops with the creation of the craftsman of the world; IrUnid speaks especially of the production of the craftsman and of the subsequent events of the mythic drama, all of which are touched upon in some detail. Taken together, then, the two chapters present a full summary of the gnostic myth from the production of the Barbēlō (the second principle) down to the end of time, with the ingathering of gnostic souls into their spiritual home and the recovery of the dispersed power.

The first three paragraphs of the present excerpt are a brief and almost incoherent summary of the first act of the mythic drama. They seem to be strangely different from other tellings of the myth, including the one found in IrG. The second act of the gnostic myth, as found in this version, begins with a unique account of the origin of matter (“creation of the heavenly universe”)—a topic hardly touched upon in other versions of the myth. In the third act, Adam and Eve are said to have been created twice, once as animate creatures and again as material bodies to encase the animate entities; their expulsion from paradise is allegorized as the beginning of life in material bodies. A comparable version of a double creation (but with reference only to Adam) is found in BJn, following Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of the two creation narratives in Gn 1:26–2:7. Particular emphasis is laid on the final act of the drama (the subsequent history of humankind) as it bears on the history of Israel and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The Incarnation is explained as the descent of a preexistent Christ into

Jesus of Nazareth; Christ is explicitly said to have left Jesus just before his death on the cross. Also discussed are the nature of Jesus’ resurrection body and his establishment of gnostic doctrine during a period of post-resurrection teaching.

The chapter ends with a brief account of yet another group of “others.” Although the reported claims of these other gnostics about Cain appear quite different from the rest of the summary, Irenaeus attributes to them the composition of GJd, which presents a version of the gnostic myth similar to that in other gnostic works and testimonies.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

The PARENT OF THE ENTIRETY. The first human being.

The parent’s THOUGHT. Its offspring, the second human being.

The HOLY SPIRIT. The first female.

The ANOINTED (Christ)

VULGAR WISDOM (Sophia Prounikos)

II. Rulers Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

(a) The HIGHER SEPTET:

IALDABAŌTH. Wisdom’s offspring, ruler of heaven.

Ialdabaŏth’s SIX OFFSPRING

Angels, archangels, powers, authorities, dominions

(b) OTHER OFFSPRING of Ialdabaŏth’s, including:

FORGETFULNESS

EVIL

JEALOUSY

ENVY

DEATH

(c) The LOWER SEPTET:

The “NUN,” a snake. The chief worldly demon. Called Michael and Samaël.

The “nun”’s SIX DEMONIC OFFSPRING

III. Humankind Mentioned by St. Irenaeus

ADAM. The first material human being. Created (as a non-material body) in the image of the parent of the entirety and of the rulers, then fitted with a material body.

EVE, his wife

CAIN

ABEL

SETH

NŌREA, Seth’s sister

NOAH

ABRAHAM and his DESCENDANTS

ELIZABETH

JOHN THE BAPTIST, her son by Ialdabaōth

The VIRGIN MARY

JESUS, her son by Ialdabaōth

Jesus' DISCIPLES

People who have HOLY SOULS

TEXT

St. Irenaeus wrote in Greek, but the present passage is known only in an ancient Latin version of his work, attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. A summary in Greek of Irenaeus's original Greek text is given by the fifth-century Christian historian Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Compendium*, 14–15); it sheds light upon the Greek vocabulary of the original. The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Latin text by Rousseau and Doutreleau with alterations, in comparison with the Greek summary by Theodoret; I have also utilized the classic English translation of Irenaeus by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (in their *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1): A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies: Livre I [Book 1]* (Sources chrétiennes, no. 264; Paris: Le Cerf, 1979), vol. 1, 330–34 (Greek summary of Irenaeus 1.30.1–14); vol. 2, 364–86 (Latin). Theodoret's summary (*Compendium*, 15) of Irenaeus 1.30.15–1.31.1 can be found in J. P. Migne, genl. ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 83 (Theodoretus Cyrensis Episcopus, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 4), col. 368.

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The parent, its thought, and the holy spirit

1.30.1 Furthermore,^a others^b relate a monstrous thing, that in the power of the deep there exists a certain blessed, incorruptible, infinite first light, which is the parent of the entirety and is called the first human being. Moreover—they say—its thought^c emanated from it and was the offspring of the being that had emitted it; and this was the offspring of the human being,^d the second human being.^e And below these is the holy spirit.^f And below the superior spirit were distinct elements:

water;
darkness;
abyss;
chaos.

It was above these—they say—that the spirit moved. And they call this (spirit) the first female. Gn 1:2

Begetting of the anointed (Christ)

Next, they say, the first human being together with its offspring became enamored of the beauty of the spirit—that is, of the female; and it shed light upon her and begot on her an incorruptible light, a

1.30.1 a. The present account comes immediately after IrG in Irenaeus's catalogue of heresies.

b. Instead of "others" the Greek fragment preserved by Theodoret has "the Sethians, whom some call Ophians or Ophites," but these words are often regarded as an interpretive remark by Theodoret.

c. In BJn (4:26f) the thinking or thought of the ineffable parent is the Barbēlō or forethought.

d. Or "the son of man."

e. In BJn (5:6f) the Barbēlō. is called "the *first* human being."

f. In BJn the "holy spirit" who is the "mother of the living" is wisdom or her manifestation as life. It seems unlikely that Irenaeus's account or his source here has compressed the description of a theology like that of BJn, since the terms "first human being," "second human being," and "first female" are not applied according to the system of BJn.

third masculine being, whom they call the anointed (Christ)^g—the offspring of the first and second human beings and of the holy spirit, the first female being. BJn 6:23+

Production of the vulgar element, wisdom

1.30.2 Now, the parent and the offspring both had sexual intercourse with the female, whom they also call mother of the living; and then she could neither endure nor contain the excess of the lights, but was—they say—filled to saturation and overflowed on the left side: thus, too, their only-begotten the anointed (Christ), who was as it were on the right side and ever tending to what was higher, was immediately drawn up into the incorruptible realm^a along with its mother. Moreover, this constitutes the true, holy congregation,^b which has become the calling,^c assembling, and union of EpA 40.5.2?

the parent of the entirety or first human being;
the offspring or second human being;
the anointed (Christ), their offspring;
the aforementioned female.

1.30.3 Now, they teach that the power that gushed forth from the female contained a secretion of light, and fell downward from its parents; yet it was by its own will that it contained the secretion of light. And this they call “left,” “vulgar element,”^a and “wisdom” (Sophia), as well as “androgynae.” 1.30.7, 1.30.9
1.30.11
Irg 1.29.4+

Creation of the heavenly universe

It absolutely sank into the waters, while they were (still) motionless; moreover, it set them in motion, recklessly proceeding all the way to the lowest depths,^b and it assumed from them a body. For—they say—all things rushed toward the secretion of light that it contained; clung to it; and enveloped it. Had it not contained this (secretion), it probably would have been totally absorbed and submerged by matter. Bound, therefore, by a body composed of matter, and greatly weighed down by it, this (power) recovered its senses, and attempted to escape from the waters and ascend to its mother. But it could not do so, on account of the weight of the enveloping body. But greatly suffering, it contrived to conceal that light, which was from above, for fear that the light too might be injured by the inferior elements, just as it had been. And when it had gotten power from the secretion consisting of RR 87:4?

g. “anointed” and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

1.30.2 a. Or “aeon.”

b. The word can be translated also “church.”

c. Or “naming.”

1.30.3 a. Or possibly “lewd element,” Greek *prounikos*. The word basically means “mover, porter,” one who corporally transports burdens for a fee.

b. Lit. “to the abysses.”

the light that it possessed, it rebounded and surfaced; and once it was above, it spread out as a covering, and out of its body it constructed this visible heaven. And it stayed beneath the heaven that it had made, for it still had the characteristics of an aqueous body. When it had conceived a desire for the higher light and had received power, it put off this body in every respect, and was freed from it. Moreover, they call this body, which—they say—that (power) took off (like a garment), “female from a female.”^c

Wisdom’s offspring and the emission of its offspring

1.30.4 Now, they also say that her offspring, too, had some sort of breath of incorruptibility, which had been left it by its mother, by means of which it worked. And becoming powerful, this (offspring), too—so they say—emitted a motherless offspring out of the waters; for they deny that it knew a mother. And by imitation of its parent, its offspring emitted another offspring. This third one, too, engendered a fourth; the fourth also generated an offspring; from the fifth—they say—a sixth offspring was engendered; and the sixth, too, engendered a seventh. Thus, according to them, the septet was completed, with the mother occupying the eighth position. And just as these beings have a hierarchy of generation, so too they have one of rank and of power.

1.30.5 Moreover, they have assigned names within their false system,^a such as the following:

the first descendant of the mother is called Ialdabaōth;
 the descendant therefrom, Iaō;
 thence, Sabaōth;
 fourth, Adōnaios;
 fifth, Elōaios;
 sixth, Ōraios;
 seventh and last of all, Astaphaios.

1.30.11
 Bjn 11:26

Furthermore, they suppose that these heavens, excellences, powers, angels, and creators sit invisibly in heaven according to the hierarchy of their generation and dominate heavenly and earthly things.

Creation of other rulers. The “nun.”

Ialdabaōth, the first of them, despised its mother, inasmuch as it produced children and grandchildren without anyone’s permission—angels, archangels, powers, authorities, and dominions. After these had been produced, its children turned against it to strive and quarrel

RR 95:13

c. Some scholars hold that the text is corrupt here and conjecture that the original reading was “Moreover, they say this body was her child (or son), and they call her ‘female from female.’”

1.30.5 a. “they . . . their false system”: Irenaeus speaks from his own point of view.

with it over the rulership. Accordingly, Ialdabaōth became sad and filled with despair; and, observing the dregs of matter that lay below, fixed its desire^b thereupon. Hence, they say, an offspring was born. This offspring is the letter *nun* (נ),^c which is twisted in the form of a snake. From it derive spirit, soul, and all worldly things; from it were generated all forgetfulness, evil jealousy, envy, and death. Moreover, they say, while this serpent-like, twisted *nun* of theirs was with its parent in heaven and in the garden (paradise), it subverted its parent even more by its crookedness.

EpG 26.10.8

RR 96:3+

Reproof of Ialdabaōth's arrogance

1.30.6 So Ialdabaōth rejoiced, priding itself in all those that were below it, and said, "It is I who am the parent and god;^a and there is none Is above me."

BJn 13:5+

Is 45:21?

Is 46:9?

Now, when its mother heard it speak thus, she cried out against it, "Do not lie, Ialdabaōth: for above you (sing.) are the parent of the entirety or first human being; and the human being who is the offspring of the human being."

RR 94:23+

Creation of a non-material Adam. His immobility.

Now, all were disturbed by the new voice, and by the unexpected announcement, and they asked where the sound was coming from. In order—they say—to distract them and attract them to himself, Ialdabaōth said, "Come, let us make a human being after our image." Now, when the six powers had heard this, their mother caused them to think of the human being—so that by this means she might empty them of their original power. They gathered together, and they modeled a human being that was immense in breadth and length. But since it could only writhe upon the ground, they carried it to their parent.

FTh 43:17

BJn 15:1+

BJn 19:10

Passage of wisdom's power into Adam

But wisdom (Sophia) was causing this so that she might empty it (Ialdabaōth) of the secretion of light, so that it might not be able to rise up against those that were above it by having power. And when it breathed a spirit of life into the human being—they say—it was inadvertently emptied of power. And thus the human being became a possessor of intellect,^b and thinking; and these—they say—are the elements that can be saved.

BJn 19:15+

And this (human being) at once rendered thanks to the first human being, forsaking its creators.

b. Or "thought."

c. The Hebrew letter נ (*nun*) is here compared to a snake because of its form. Some scholars have also detected here a play on an inflection of the Greek word *nous*, "intellect," presumably referring

to the effective aspect of the power that Ialdabaōth got from the mother.

1.30.6 a. Or "god and parent."

b. Greek *nous*: see note 1.30.5c.

Creation of a non-material Eve

1.30.7 Ialdabaōth was jealous, and decided to consider a way of emptying the human being, by (the creation of) a woman. And as a result of its own thinking, it brought a woman out.^a The aforementioned vulgar (wisdom) seized her and secretly emptied her of the power. Bjn 22:32
1.30.3+

Begetting of angelic offspring upon Eve

But the others came and were amazed at her beauty; and they called her Eve. And they became enamored of her, and begot children on her, and these they also call angels.

The snake

But their mother (wisdom) cunningly led Eve and Adam astray by the agency of the snake, so that they transgressed the commandment of Ialdabaōth. And Eve was easily persuaded, as if she were listening to an offspring of god. And she persuaded Adam to eat from the tree from which god had said not to eat. Moreover—they say—when they ate they became acquainted with that power which is superior to all, and they revolted from those who had made them. 1.30.8, 1.30.9
1.30.15
RR 89:31+

Second reproof of Ialdabaōth

Now, when the vulgar (wisdom) saw that the latter (lower powers) had been defeated by their own modeled form,^b she rejoiced greatly. And once again she cried out that, since an incorruptible parent had already existed, it (Ialdabaōth) had lied when it called itself the parent; and that since a human being and a first female had already existed, it had sinned in making counterfeit copies of these beings.^c RR 95:5

The expulsion from paradise into the realm of matter

1.30.8 But Ialdabaōth paid no attention to these words, because of the forgetfulness that surrounded it. And it expelled Adam and Eve from the garden (paradise), because they had transgressed its commandment. For it wished to beget (yet other) offspring on Eve, but it did not succeed because its mother opposed it in all things. And she secretly emptied Adam and Eve of the secretion of light, so that the spirit that derived from the realm of absolute power might not receive a share in the laying of a curse or in a state of disgrace. Thus—they teach—after they had been emptied of the divine essence a curse was laid upon them by it, and they were cast down from heaven into this world. Bjn 19:32
Bjn 23:35
RR 91:5

1.30.7 a. I.e. brought her out of Adam's side.

b. 'modeled form': Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

c. Or (quite differently) "saw that she had sinned when she committed adultery."

Production of seven worldly demons

But the snake too, which had worked against its parent, was cast down by it into this lower world. And it brought together under its authority the angels that are here, and engendered six offspring, with itself serving as the seventh in imitation of that septet which surrounds its parent. And—they say—these are the seven worldly demons, which always oppose and resist the race of human beings, because it was on account of these that their parent was cast down.

1.30.7+
RR 90:32
RR 95:13?

1.30.11
RR 95:2?

Production of material bodies for Adam and Eve

1.30.9 Now, previously Adam and Eve had had the nimble, shining, and as it were spiritual bodies that had been modeled at their creation; but when they came hither, these changed into darker, denser, and more sluggish ones.^a

Bjn 20:28

Adaptation to material life

Their souls also were inattentive and listless, inasmuch as they had received from their maker a merely worldly inbreathing; until the vulgar (wisdom) had pity on them and restored to them the good fragrance of the secretion of light. By means of this they came to a recollection of themselves, and recognized that they were naked, and that their bodies were made of matter. And they recognized that they carried death about with them. And they existed patiently, recognizing that bodies would envelop them only for a time.

Bjn 22:3

Cain and Abel

Led by wisdom (Sophia), they also discovered food; and when they were satisfied they had sexual intercourse, and engendered Cain, whom the contemptible snake and its offspring immediately laid hold of and destroyed by filling him with worldly forgetfulness. They led him into foolishness and arrogance, so that in killing his brother Abel he was the first (human being) to display jealousy and death.

Bjn 24:8+

1.30.7

Seth and Nōrea

After these (two)—they say—by the forethought of the vulgar (wisdom), Seth was engendered, and then Nōrea. From them—they say—the remaining multitude of humankind descended.

Bjn 24:34+
1.30.3+
EpG 26.1.7

Humankind led astray

They were introduced by the lower septet to all kinds of evil: apostasy from the upper, holy septet; idolatry; and a general contempt for everything—even though the mother always secretly opposed them and preserved^b her own, that is, the secretion of light. Moreover, they

1.30.9 a. I.e. their bodies became or acquired material substance.

b. Or “saved.”

say that the holy septet is the seven heavenly bodies called planets; and— they say—the contemptible snake^c has two names, Michael and Samaël.^d Bjn 17:30?

The flood

1.30.10 Now, Ialdabaōth was angry at humankind because they did not worship or honor it as parent and god; and it sent a flood upon them so that it might destroy all people at once. And here too wisdom (Sophia) opposed it; and Noah and those with him were saved in the ark for the sake of the secretion of that light which derived from her. And because of it the world was again filled with human beings. Bjn 28:32+
Bjn 29:1+

Abraham

From among these Ialdabaōth chose a certain Abraham, and made a covenant with him, to the effect that if his posterity would continue serving it, it would give them the land as their inheritance.

Moses. The prophets.

Next, through Moses it brought Abraham’s descendants out of Egypt, and gave unto them the law, and made them the Jews. From among these (Jews) each of the seven deities,^a which they also call the holy septet, chose its own herald to glorify it and to proclaim that it was god; so that when the rest (of the Jews) would hear these glorifications they too would serve the beings who had been proclaimed to be gods by these prophets. **1.30.11** And they arrange the prophets as follows. 1.30.8
1.30.5

To Ialdabaōth belong:

Moses;
Joshua the son of Nun;
Amos;
Habakkuk.

To Iaō belong:

Samuel;
Nathan;
Jonah;
Micah.

To Sabaōth belong:

Elijah;

c. Or “the snake that had been cast down.”
d. Samaël: Aramaic, “blind god.”

translation given above represents an attempt to recover the original reading. In any case each of the seven demonic deities in the following list possibly corresponds to a planet and day of the week or “septet”; cf. Gn 1:3–2:4.

1.30.10 a. The MSS have “it (Ialdabaōth) chose seven days . . . each of which also has its own herald”: this text is probably corrupt; the English

<Hosea>;^a
 Joel;
 Zechariah.
 To Adōnai belong:
 Isaiah;
 Ezekiel;
 Jeremiah;
 Daniel.
 To Elōi belong:
 Obadiah;^b
 Haggai.
 To Ōraios belong:
 Malachi;^c
 Nahum.
 To Astaphaios belong:
 Esdras;
 Zephaniah.

Principle of biblical interpretation

Thus each of these (prophets) glorifies his own particular parent and god. And—they say—wisdom (Sophia) herself also spoke many words through these (prophets) concerning the first human being, the incorruptible realm,^d and the anointed (Christ) who is above, thus foretelling and reminding humankind of the incorruptible light, the first human being, and the descent of the anointed (Christ). And the rulers were terrified and amazed at the newness of those things which were proclaimed by the prophets. IrSat 1.24.2+

Begetting of John the Baptist and Jesus by Ialdabaōth

Through Ialdabaōth, but without its knowing what it did, the vulgar (wisdom) caused the emission of two human beings: one from Elizabeth, a barren woman; and the other from Mary, a virgin. **1.30.12** And since she herself (the vulgar wisdom) had no repose either in heaven or on earth, she felt grief, and called upon her mother to assist her. And her mother, the first female, took pity upon her daughter, and made a request of the first human being, that the anointed (Christ) should be sent to her as an assistance. And it emanated and descended to its sister and to the secretion of light. And when the lower wisdom (Sophia) recognized that her sibling was descending to <her>, she announced its advent through the agency of John, prepared a baptism of repentance, and made Jesus suitable in advance, so that when the anointed (Christ) should descend it might find a pure vessel,^a and that 1.30.3+
Bjn 20:19+

1.30.11 a. Erroneously omitted in the MSS.

b. The MSS erroneously have “Tobias.”

c. The MSS erroneously have “Michaiah.”

d. Or “aeon.”

1.30.12 a. “vessel”: i.e. “body,” a traditional cliché.

thanks to the agency of her son Ialdabaōth the existence of the female might (ultimately) be proclaimed by the anointed (Christ).

Union of the anointed (Christ) and wisdom

Now, it descended (they say) through the seven heavens, having assumed the likeness of their offspring, and it gradually emptied them of any power; for—they say—the whole secretion of light rushed to it. And when the anointed (Christ) was descending into this world, it first put on its sister wisdom (Sophia), and both rejoiced, reposing in one another: this they declare to be bridegroom and bride. 1.30.1

Christ descends into Jesus

Moreover Jesus, by being begotten of a virgin through the agency of god, was wiser, purer, and more righteous than all other human beings. The anointed (Christ) in combination with wisdom (Sophia) descended into him, and thus was made Jesus Christ. **1.30.13** Accordingly many of his disciples—they say—did not recognize that the anointed (Christ) had descended into him; but when the anointed (Christ) did descend into Jesus, he began to perform miracles, heal, proclaim the unrecognizable^a parent, and openly confess himself to be the child of the first human being.^b

Crucifixion of Jesus

The rulers and the parent of Jesus were angry at this, and worked to have him killed. And while he was being led away (to death)—they say—the anointed (Christ) himself, along with wisdom (Sophia), departed for the incorruptible realm^c but Jesus was crucified.

Jesus' resurrection body

The anointed (Christ) was not unmindful of its own, but sent down into him a certain power, which raised him up in a (kind of) body that they call animate and spiritual, for he let the worldly parts return to the world. Now, when his disciples saw him after he had arisen, they were not acquainted with him—nor with the one by whose agency Jesus had arisen from the dead. And—they say—among his disciples there arose the great error of imagining that he had arisen in a worldly body, for they did not know that “flesh and blood do not lay hold of^d the kingdom of god.” **1.30.14** Moreover, they claim to confirm that the anointed (Christ) descended and reascended by the fact that according to Jesus' disciples Jesus did not do any great deed either before his baptism or after his resurrection from the dead; these (disciples) did not know that Jesus was united with the anointed (Christ) nor that the EpA 40.8.2?
1Co 15:50

1.30.13 a. Or “unknown.”
b. Or “the son of first man.”

c. Or “aeon.”
d. Or “do not comprehend.”

incorruptible realm^a was united with the septet. And they spoke of his animate body as if it were a worldly one.

His post-resurrection teachings and ascension

Now, after his resurrection he remained (on earth) for eighteen months. And because perception had descended into him (from above), he taught the plain truth. He taught these things to a small number of his disciples, who, he knew, were able to receive such great mysteries.

His ingathering of souls will bring the end

And so he was taken up into heaven, where the anointed (Christ)^b sits at the right hand of its parent Ialdabaōth, so that he (Jesus) might receive unto himself the souls of those who have become acquainted with him, once they have left behind their worldly flesh—thus enriching himself without his parent's^c knowing or even seeing him; so that to the extent that Jesus enriches himself with holy souls his parent is diminished and suffers loss, being emptied of the power that it^d has in the form of souls: for in consequence it does not have any more holy souls to send back into the world, except for those which derive from its essence, that is, those which come from its inbreathing. Moreover, the end will take place when the entire secretion of the spirit of light is gathered together and caught up into the realm^e of incorruptibility.

EpG 26.9.3

EpG 26.10.7+

APPENDIXES

The snake

1.30.15^a * * * Some assert that it was wisdom (Sophia) herself who became the snake; accordingly she remained hostile to the creator of Adam, and introduced acquaintance into humankind. For this reason the snake was said to be more prudent than all (others). 1.30.7+

But also, because of the arrangement of our intestines, through which food is passed, and the fact that the intestines possess the shape that they do, these persons point to the life-producing essence hidden within us in the form of a snake.^b

1.30.14 a. Or “aeon.”

b. Some scholars hold that the original text here had “Jesus” rather than “the anointed (Christ).”

c. “his parent”: i.e. Ialdabaōth.

d. I.e. the parent.

e. Or “aeon.”

1.30.15 a. An irrelevant comment by Irenaeus is here omitted.

b. See note 1.30.5c. The original reading of the text here is debated by scholars, but the general meaning is held to be clear.

Origin of Cain

1.31.1 And others^a say that Cain was from^b the superior realm of absolute power, and confess that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons are of the same people^c (or nation) as themselves: for this reason they have been hated by their maker, although none of them has suffered harm. For wisdom (Sophia) snatched up out of them whatever in them belonged to her. RAd 75:9
EgG III 56:9

The “Gospel of Judas”

And furthermore—they say—Judas^d the betrayer was thoroughly acquainted with these things^e and he alone^f was acquainted with the truth as no others were, and (so) accomplished the mystery of the betrayal. By him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thrown into dissolution.

And they bring forth a fabricated work to this effect, which they GJd entitle *The Gospel of Judas*.

1.31.1 a. The Greek fragment preserved by Theodoret next has “who are called Caini.”

b. The Greek fragment preserved by Theodoret instead has “was ransomed from.”

c. The saved

d. The name can also be translated “Jude.”

e. Perhaps referring to the union of the anointed (Christ) and Jesus as related in 1.30.12–13.

f. The Greek fragment preserved by Theodoret next has “of all the apostles.”

THE GNOSTICS

ACCORDING TO PORPHYRY,
LIFE OF PLOTINUS, CHAPTER 16

(Porph)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

In this brief selection Porphyry of Tyre (A.D. 232/3–ca. 305), an educated pagan of the third century, attests to the fact that classic gnostic scriptures were available in the city of Rome about A.D. 250. In the process he mentions the names of several authors of gnostic scripture and confirms that Zs and Fr were scriptures of the gnostic sect, that those who used them were Christians, and that they were written in Greek.

Porphyry was interested in gnostic scripture because he was a professional Platonist philosopher. The Platonic component of gnostic myth had always been obvious for all to see. But when non-Christian Platonism—especially the system of its greatest representative, Plotinus—and the mythic ideas of the gnostics grew closer to one another, the resemblance became too close for comfort, and Platonists felt obliged to refute the gnostics and dissociate themselves from gnostic philosophy. Porphyry, as one of Plotinus's closest disciples, played a major role in this task. After his teacher's death he edited his works (which included four treatises against the gnostics), publishing them shortly after A.D. 300. He also composed a fascinating biography of Plotinus, which is excerpted here; it was written A.D. 301–5.

Plotinus (A.D. 205–69/70), the greatest philosopher of late antiquity, had taken up philosophical study in Egypt, then traveled, and at the age of 40 settled in Rome, where he gave philosophical seminars. Porphyry became his disciple there in A.D. 262/3. Both Plotinus and Porphyry wrote in Greek.

Porphyry was an unoriginal philosopher, but a learned scholar and a critical student of religions. By conviction he was anti-Christian, and in his famous treatise *Against Christians* he turned historical criticism against the church, arguing (for example) on the basis of anachronisms that the Old Testament book of Daniel must be a relatively modern work and so an example of pseudepigraphy. He used precisely the same technique in refuting one of the gnostic works, as he states in the present excerpt.

TEXT

The translation below is based on the critical edition of Henry and Schwyzer, whose line numbers are also followed: P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, eds., Plotinus, *Opera*, vol. 1 (Museum Lessianum, ser. philosophica 33; Paris: Descléde Brouwer; Brussels: Universelle, 1951), 21–22.

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1 16 In his time^a there were among the Christians many others,^b mem-
 3 bers of a sect,^c who were followers of Adelphios and Aquilinus^d and had
 started out from classical philosophy. • They possessed many works by
 Alexander of Libya, Philokōmos, Dēmostratos, and Lydos;^e and they
 brought out revelations of Zoroaster,^f of Zōstrianos,^g of Nikotheos,^h of
 7 the Foreigner,ⁱ of Messos,^j and of other such figures. • They deceived
 many people, and themselves as well, in supposing that Plato had not
 drawn near to the depth of intelligible essence.

BJn 19:8f ?
 Zs
 Fr
 EpS 39.5.1
 EpA 40.2.2+

9 •Accordingly, Plotinus constructed many refutations (of their
 ideas) in his seminar meetings; in addition, he wrote the work to
 which I have assigned the title^k “Against the Gnostics.”^l

12 •He left it to us^m to contend with the rest. Ameliusⁿ proceeded
 14 with a forty-chapter refutation^o of the *Book of Zōstrianos*. •I, Por- 16.3
 phry, constructed numerous refutations^p of the *Book of Zoroaster*:
 I demonstrated that the book is spurious and modern, fabricated by
 the organizers of the sect^q in order to give the impression that the
 opinions that they themselves wished to represent were those of the
 ancient Zoroaster.

a. In the time of Plotinus.

b. Or simply “there were many other Christians.” But “others” may refer to an epithet that the gnostics applied to themselves; see RAD note 64n.

c. “members of a sect”: Greek *hairetikoi*. Porphyry goes on to identify them as gnostics.

d. Adelphios and Aquilinus are otherwise unidentifiable.

e. Some scholars conjecture that the original text is “Dēmostratos the Lydian.” None of the gnostic writers listed here can be specifically identified or linked with one of the surviving works of gnostic literature.

f. Cf. perhaps BJn 19:8f. Zoroaster is mentioned also in the title of Zs.

g. Identical with Zs.

h. The work apparently does not survive.

i. Identical with Fr.

j. The work apparently does not survive. Messos is mentioned in Fr.

k. As Plotinus’s editor, Porphyry assigned titles to the lectures that comprise the *Enneads*, Plotinus’s collected works.

l. *Enneads* 2.9 (no. 33 in the chronological list). It is in fact one of a four-part series directed against gnostic philosophy, comprising *Enneads* 3.8, 5.8, 5.5, and 2.9 (nos. 30-33 in the chronological list).

m. Plotinus’s pupils.

n. Amelius or Amerius Gentilianus, pupil of Plotinus A. D. 246-70.

o. The work apparently does not survive.

p. The work apparently does not survive.

q. The gnostic sect.

THE SETHIANS

ACCORDING TO ST. EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS,
AGAINST HERESIES, CHAPTER 39

(EpS)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Seth was of special importance to the gnostic sect as being the parent of their racial line, which was the transmitter of the divine power of wisdom. In this very important sense, gnostic myth is a myth about Seth. Not without reason, then, have modern scholars referred to the gnostic sect as “Sethian gnostics”; in fact, such terminology had already developed by the fourth century, as the present excerpt shows. The excerpted passage was written in Greek about A.D. 375.

The material that St. Epiphanius of Salamis has chosen to summarize adds nothing in particular to one’s knowledge of gnostic myth. Apart from a passing reference to the creation of the world by “angels,” the summary begins with the third act of the mythic drama, that is, the creation of Adam and Eve and the birth of their children, with emphasis on Seth and his special relationship to the metaphysical universe. The fourth act—the subsequent history of humankind—stresses the difference between the descendants of Seth and the rest of humankind. St. Epiphanius’s summary ends with the flood, except for the information that the preexistent Christ that descended into Jesus of Nazareth (as in IrUnid) was actually Seth; this identification is known also from EgG. Compare also the introduction to EpA.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

The ANOINTED (Christ)

The MOTHER OR FEMALE (Wisdom?)

II. Rulers Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

ANGELS who created the world and the first human beings

III. Humankind Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

The TWO FIRST HUMAN BEINGS (Adam and Eve)

CAIN and ABEL, their offspring

SETH

HŌRAIA, his wife

POSTERITY OF CAIN }
 POSTERITY OF ABEL } merged

POSTERITY OF SETH, and in particular:

KHAM (Ham), a descendant of Cain and Abel

NOAH

JESUS, a descendant of Seth

TEXT

St. Epiphanius's original Greek text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts, whose accuracy is a matter of debate among scholars. The translation below is based on Holl's critical edition, but with alterations: K. Holl, ed., *Epiphanius*, vol. 2 (Griechische christliche Schriftsteller, vol. 31; Leipzig: Henrichs, 1922), 71–74.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Epiphanius's acquaintance with the Sethian sect

39.1.1. * * * Another school of thought^a is the Sethians, so-called. It is not found everywhere; neither is the school of the Caini, mentioned above.^b And perhaps most of them have already been eradicated from the world—for what is not from god will not stand at rest,^c but rather will flourish for a while but will not endure so as to last forever.

39.1.2 But I think I probably^a encountered this school of thought, too, in the country of the Egyptians.^b Indeed, I do not exactly remember which country^c I encountered them in. And some details we became acquainted with by first-hand observation of this (school), while others we learned from written accounts of it.

The sectarians claim to have sprung from Seth

39.1.3 Now, these Sethians proudly derive their ancestry from Seth the son of Adam and honor him and attribute to him whatever belongs to excellence, and proofs of excellence and righteousness and the like. They even do not stop short of calling him the anointed (Christ)^a and insist that he was Jesus. 39.3.5

39.1.1 a. Greek *haeresis*, the usual term for a philosophical school or religious sect. An unspecified degree of social cohesion is implied by the term.

b. In the preceding chapter of the work from which this passage is extracted.

c. To “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, non change, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming. It was a favorite term of gnostic writers; it is here turned against them by Epiphanius.

39.1.2 a. Or “perhaps.”

b. Or possibly “in the Egyptian countryside,” i.e. the part outside Alexandria.

c. Or “region.”

39.1.3 a. “anointed” and “Christ” are the same word in Greek.

II. TEACHINGS OF THE SECT

Creation of the universe by angels

39.1.4 And they teach the doctrine that the universe has come into existence because of angels and not because of the power on high. BJn 12:33+

Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel.

39.2.1 Now, they agree with the preceding school,^a the Caini, on the following point: that in the beginning two human beings^b immediately came into being; Cain and Abel were from those two; forming a faction on account of them, the angels went to one another;^c thus Abel was caused to be slain by Cain. **39.2.2** For (they say) the faction was formed^a by the angels as they struggled on account of the descendants of the human beings <. . .>^b these two, the one who begot Cain and the one who begot Abel.^c BJn 15:1+
BJn 22:32
BJn 24:8+

Intervention of the mother. Seth.

39.2.3 But the higher power prevailed, whom they call “mother”^a and “female”—for^b they suppose that there are mothers above, and females and males, and almost speak of kinships and patriarchal lineages.^c IrUnid
1.30.2?

39.2.4 So—they say—since she had prevailed, the mother who is called the female, once she recognized that Abel had been killed, took thought and caused Seth to be born. And she deposited her power within him, establishing^a in him^b a posterity^c of the power from above and the spark that had been sent from above for the first establishment of the posterity and the alliance.^d **39.2.5** And the latter is an alliance of righteousness and a choosing of a posterity and a people, so that by such an alliance and by this posterity the powers of the angels who had created the world and the two original human beings might be defeated. BJn 24:34+
BJn 25:20+
IrSat 1.24.1+

39.2.6 So it is for this reason that the people of Seth have been set apart and are descended from that origin, as being the elect who are IrSat 1.24.2+

39.2.1 a. In the preceding chapter of the work from which this passage is extracted.

b. Adam and Eve.

c. Perhaps meaning “joined in alliance.” Some scholars conjecture that the original reading of the text was “went to <war with> one another,” understanding that the angels quarreled with one another and not with the “mother” (39.2.3).

39.2.2 a. Or “the quarrel was held.”

b. Possibly one or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

c. “the one . . . Cain . . . the one . . . Abel”: the male parents of Cain and Abel, i.e. according to RR 91:11f the chief ruler (angelic creator of the world) and Adam, respectively.

39.2.3 a. Wisdom, according to other Gnostic texts.

b. Epiphanius here speaks from his own point of view.

c. Or “relatives and fatherhoods.”

39.2.4 a. Or “sowing.”

b. The MSS instead have “in it” (i.e. her power).

c. Throughout EpS this word can also be translated “seed.”

d. Or “(political) union.” The word has many other meanings as well: “existence, genesis, nature, structure,” etc.

differentiated from the other people.—39.2.7 For, they say, as time went on the two peoples belonging to Cain and to Abel coexisted, intermingled, and merged into one owing to great imperfection. Taking note of this fact, the mother of all decided to make the posterity of the human beings pure, as I said, because of the slaying of Abel. And she chose this Seth and showed that he was pure. And in him alone she established the people of her power and purity.

The flood

39.3.1 And again the aforementioned mother and female saw the frequent intercourse and confused impulse on the part of the angels and the human beings, so that the two tended toward mixture; and saw that their confusion was producing certain alliances of (the two) species. Again she traveled, and she brought on a flood and destroyed every faction of any human being of the (?)^a hostile people—naturally, so that the pure people descended from Seth, who alone were righteous, might remain in the world, to bring about an alliance of the people from above and the spark of righteousness. Bjn 28:32+
Bjn 30:21 +

Kham preserves an unrighteous strain within Noah's ark

39.3.2 But in turn the angels secretly introduced Kham (Ham) into the ark, for he belonged to their posterity. For, they say that out of eight persons then saved in that “coffer”^a of Noah seven belonged to the pure people, but one—namely Kham—belonged to the other power, having sneaked on board unbeknownst to the higher mother. EpG 26.1.8
39.3.3 And this plan, which was contrived by the angels, came out as follows. Now—they say—inasmuch as the angels recognized that their entire people was going to be obliterated by the flood, by trickery they secretly added the aforementioned Kham in order to preserve the evil people, which had been made by them. 39.3.4 And as a result of this (people) there arose forgetfulness, error, sinful undisciplined passions, and evil promiscuity among humankind within the world. And thus the world turned back again to its original state of disorderliness and became filled with evils as it had been in the beginning before the flood.

Incarnation of Seth (Christ) within Jesus

39.3.5 But the anointed (Christ) itself came as Jesus, a descendant of Seth by descent and by succession of peoples; it^a was shown forth in the world not through being born but in a mysterious way. This was Seth himself, who both formerly and at that time—as the anointed Bjn 6:23+
Lk 3:23-38
EgG 71:11
EgG 75:15+
39.1.3

39.3.1 a. The text is uncertain here.

39.3.2 a. “coffer,” Greek *larnaks*: not the usual bib-

lical word for Noah's ark, but rather the classical Greek term for Deukalion's ark. Cf. EpG 26.1.8.

39.3.5 a. “it”: the anointed.

(Christ)^b—visited the human race, having been sent from above, from the mother.^c * * *

III. BOOKS READ BY THE SECTARIANS

39.5.1 Now, they have composed certain books, attributing them to great people:

they say there are seven books attributed to Seth;
 other, different^a books they entitle *Foreigners*;
 another they call a *Revelation* attributed to *Abraham*, and full
 of all evil;
 others attributed to Moses;
 and others attributed to other figures.

RAd?
 EgG?
 3Tb?
 Porph 16.3+
 IrUnid
 1.30.10?
 EpG 26.11.12?

IV. ANOTHER TEACHING OF THE SECT

Hōraia, wife of Seth

39.5.2 And degrading their intellects into utter foolishness, they say that a certain woman named Hōraia was the wife of Seth.—Just consider, O beloved friend,^a the folly of these (Sethians) and utterly condemn their drama, their fabulous vanity of thought, their fictitious nonsense.—

EpG 26.1.7+

39.5.3 Indeed, there are other schools of thought that say there is a power whom they name Hōraia. So, these (Sethians) say that power, whom others esteem and call Hōraia, was the wife of Seth. * * *

b. “as the anointed (Christ)”: some scholars delete this phrase as being not a part of the original text; but cf. 39.1.3 (end).

c. In the next paragraph (not translated here) Epiphanius attacks the Sethian myth of origins, objecting that in the beginning there was only one human being (Adam), not two (he probably misconstrues the myth at this point; cf. BJn 15:1f and BJn 20:33f). Similarly he objects that after the

flood (Gn 6:11–8:19) all people descended only from Noah and his wife.

39.5.1 a. Or possibly “another seven”: cf. EpA 40.7.4f.

39.5.2 a. Epiphanius addresses the dedicatee of the work from which this passage is extracted.

THE ARCHONTICS

ACCORDING TO ST. EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS,
AGAINST HERESIES, CHAPTER 40

(EpA)

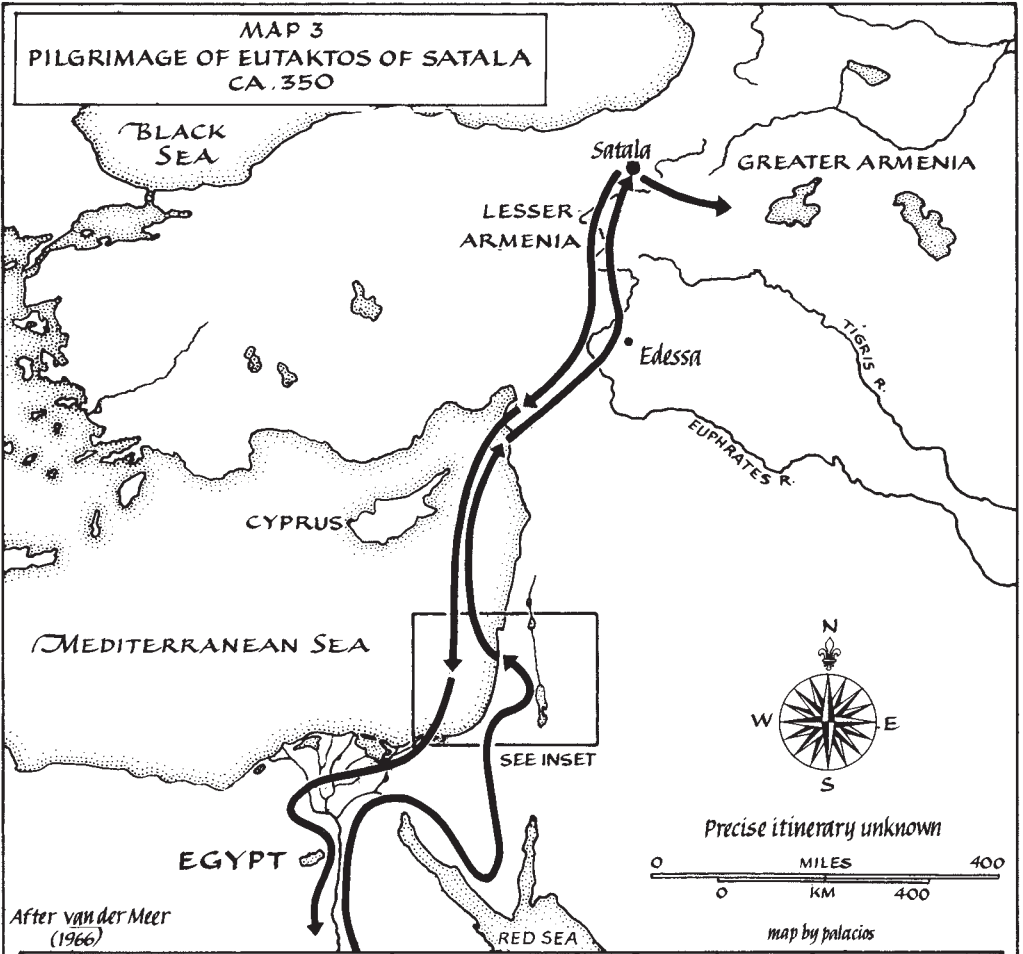
CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

This excerpt affords a rare glimpse into the ecclesiastical history of the gnostic church.

The later fourth century A.D. was an age of Christian pilgrimage to the holy lands of Egypt and Palestine. Pilgrims came not only to visit the holy places but also to converse with holy people—the Christian monks and nuns, whose fame had extended to far-away countries. Among these pilgrims was a certain Eutaktos, whose story is told in this excerpt. Eutaktos traveled from what is now eastern Turkey (“Lesser Armenia”) southward to Egypt and then back north to Palestine, finally returning to his native Armenia (see Map 3). Although in both lands (cf. EpS) he could have encountered gnostic Christians, it was in southern Palestine, where monastic hermits were such a common sight, that Eutaktos met a gnostic Christian monk named Peter and was converted to the gnostic understanding of Christianity. Eutaktos is the first known Armenian pilgrim to the holy land, and after his visit to Peter the Gnostic he became the first gnostic missionary to Armenia. According to St. Epiphanius of Salamis, Eutaktos founded the gnostic branch of the Armenian church, which eventually spread eastward from Lesser Armenia to Greater Armenia. By about 375, when Epiphanius wrote this passage (in Greek), Eutaktos was no longer alive (“the lord quickly obliterated him”).

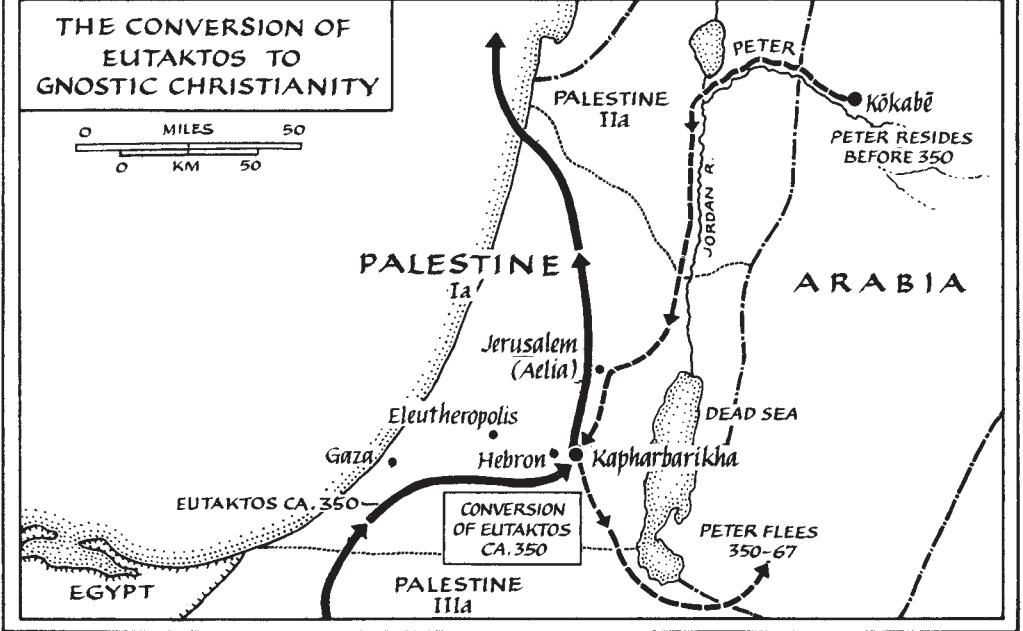
Peter the Gnostic’s career is somewhat more obscure. Earlier in his life, he had already been “denounced” and “refuted” in the diocese of a certain bishop named Aetius, who eventually expelled him from the priesthood. Nothing is known about the identity of Bishop Aetius, nor where the incident took place. But in any case Epiphanius may have gotten some of his information about gnostic beliefs from the “refutation” that convinced Bishop Aetius, especially if it was a written document. From A.D. circa 337 to 367, St. Epiphanius, a notorious heresy hunter in his day, resided in Eleutheropolis, Palestine (cf. 40.1.1). When Peter eventually came to settle in that region, Epiphanius recognized him and had him excluded (“expelled”) from participation in church affairs. It is not clear whether the exclusion occurred before or after Eutaktos made his pilgrimage and became a convert to Peter’s gnostic Christianity.

MAP 3
 PILGRIMAGE OF EUTAKTOS OF SATALA
 CA. 350



After van der Meer
 (1966)

THE CONVERSION OF
 EUTAKTOS TO
 Gnostic CHRISTIANITY



St. Epiphanius treats the teachings summarized here as belonging to a distinct group within gnostic Christianity, one that was peculiar to Palestine and Armenia and went by the strange name of “Archontics,” that is, people characterized by belief in the *arkhontes*, or heavenly rulers. But it is not clear whether Epiphanius’s “Archontics” were really so distinct from other kinds of gnostics. The present chapter, for example, immediately follows his account of the so-called “Sethians” (EpS). It may be no coincidence that the contents of the two chapters are largely complementary, and that taken together they cover much the same parts of the gnostic myth as RR. Parts of St. Epiphanius’s work *Against Heresies* depend on earlier works of a similar nature. It is just possible that, in some prior source that he used, the material here distributed in chapters on the “Sethians” and the “Archontics” belonged to a single document or report.

The account of the “Archontics” follows RR in stating that Sabaōth (the eldest offspring of Ialdabaōth) rules from the seventh heaven and dominates Ialdabaōth (“the devil”); St. Epiphanius’s report that Sabaōth is the parent of the devil may be a misunderstanding of the kind of material found in RR 95:13f.

Two pieces of sectarian information are reported: the “Archontics” reject baptism as practiced in the non-gnostic church on the grounds that it is performed in the name of Sabaōth rather than the highest deity; and they practice abstinence (which, adds Epiphanius, is really a sham).

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Immortals Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

The PARENT

The LUMINOUS MOTHER or superior power (Wisdom?)

II. Rulers Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

SEVEN HEAVENLY RULERS or authorities, one per heaven:

SABAŌTH, the highest

SIX OTHERS

Hosts of ANGELS that assist them

The DEVIL, an offspring of Sabaōth. Ruler of earth.

III. Humankind Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

ADAM

EVE, his wife

CAIN and ABEL, sons of Eve by the devil

SETH, a son of Eve by Adam

SEVEN SONS OF SETH

JESUS

TEXT

St. Epiphanius's original Greek text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts, whose accuracy is a matter of debate among scholars. The translation below is based on Holl's critical edition, but with alterations: K. Holl, ed., *Epiphanius*, vol. 2 (Griechische christliche Schriftsteller, vol. 31; Leipzig: Henrichs, 1922), 80-89.

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I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Presence of the sect within Palestinian monasticism

40.1.1 The school of thought^a called Archontics^b is next.^c Now, it is not commonly found in many places, only in the province of Palestine. Yet they have already somehow carried their poison into Greater Armenia.^d

40.1.2 What is more, at the end of the reign of Constantius,^a this weed had already been sown in Lesser Armenia^b by a certain man from Armenia, named Eutaktos—or rather, *ataktos* (“disordered”),^c in his way of life! He was temporarily residing in Palestine, learned this evil teaching, and then returned home and taught it. **40.1.3** Now in Palestine, as I said, he had received it, like poison from an asp, from a certain old man named Peter—who was unworthy of the name. The latter lived in the territory belonging to Eleutheropolis^a of Jerusalem, three miles beyond Hebron. The village is called Kapharbarikha.^b

40.1.4 This old man had, in the first place, an astonishing disguise, filled with hypocrisy. For outside he was literally wrapped in a lamb’s fleece; but it passed unnoticed that inside he was a ravenous wolf. For, Mt 7:15

40.1.1 a. Greek *haeresis*, the usual term for a philosophical school or religious sect. An unspecified degree of social cohesion is implied by the term.

b. From Greek *arkhōn*, “ruler,” i.e. heavenly ruler of the material world.

c. “next,” viz. in the catalogue of schools from which this chapter is extracted.

d. Roughly, the eastern part of modern Turkey, south and east of the upper Euphrates River, together with the modern Republic of Armenia. The Christianization of Armenia had largely begun in the late third century A.D.

b. In modern Turkey, roughly between the headwaters of the Euphrates River and Trebizond.

c. A pun in Greek on the component *-taktos*, “ordered.” The prefix *eu-* means “well” (*eutaktos*, “well-ordered”), while *a-* means “dis-” (*ataktos*, “disordered”).

40.1.3 a. “of”: or “and.” “Eleutheropolis”: modern Beit Jibrin or Bet Guvrin, southwest of Jerusalem. Epiphanius was born in Eleutheropolis.

b. Possibly identical with the modern village of Bani Na’im, three miles east of Hebron.

40.1.2 a. Constantius II, the third son of Constantine the Great. He reigned A.D. 324–61.

he appeared to be a hermit^a situated in a cave; he led many people, of course, to a life of renunciation and was called, of course, “father” because of his age and his monastic dress; and he distributed his possessions to the poor and gave alms daily.

40.1.5 In his youth he had been found in many schools of thought. But in the time of Aetius the bishop he was denounced and refuted; next he followed the school of the gnostics;^a and he was deprived of the priesthood^b—for he had once been a duly appointed priest. And after his refutation he was expelled from office by Aetius, departed, and lived in Kōkabē in Arabia,^c from which the roots of the Ebionites and the Nazoreans^d sprang; I have already noted this fact about the place in discussing many other schools.

Epiphanius’s opposition to its leader

40.1.6 But later he returned, as though chastened in his old age; and secretly bearing within himself this venom, he was unrecognized by all—until finally he was convicted as such by words that he was whispering in the ears of certain people, and was expelled from the church by us and was refuted by your humble servant.^a **40.1.7** And he sat in the cave, finally, abhorred by all and isolated from the Christian community^a and from most of those who have charge of their own lives.

Spread of the sect to Armenia

40.1.8 The aforementioned Eutaktos—if indeed he can be called *eutaktos* (“well-ordered”)—was passing through on his way from Egypt, and put in to port with the old man. He took up the old man’s evil teaching, treating this poisonous substance as a precious cargo, and transported it back to his native land; for, he originated in Lesser Armenia, as I said—from the district near Satala.^a **40.1.9** So after he had returned to his native land, he polluted many people of Lesser Armenia, defiling some who were rich, a certain man of senatorial rank, and other dignitaries. And through these illustrious persons he destroyed many people there. But the lord quickly obliterated him from life; yet he sowed his weed.

40.1.4 a. I.e. a monastic solitary, an anchorite. Such Christian hermits (desert “fathers”) were very common in Palestine at this time.

40.1.5 a. Presumably Epiphanius refers to the sect described by him in EpG.

b. Or “office of presbyter (elder).”

c. Khokhaba, southeast of the Sea of Galilee in the vicinity of modern Deraa, Jordan. Its exact location is uncertain.

d. Two branches of the Semitic Christian church, which Epiphanius treated as heresies.

40.1.6 a. “us . . . your humble servant (lit. ‘our smallness’):” i.e. Epiphanius.

40.1.7 a. “Christian community”: lit. “brotherhood.”

40.1.8 a. Modern Sadak, Turkey, about 75 miles south of Trebizond (at 39°37’ E, 40°14’ N). Located in Lesser Armenia, it was sufficiently important to send a bishop to the ecumenical Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325.

II. BOOKS READ BY THE SECTARIANS

40.2.1 And these (Archontics) have forged certain apocryphal books for themselves, whose titles are as follows:

one book they entitle *Lesser Harmony*;
another, *Greater Harmony*.

And furthermore, they accumulate other books for themselves, < . . . >^a to introduce in addition whichever ones they happen upon, and so they pretend to confirm their erroneous teaching with many (books). **40.2.2** Thus they also use the work called *The Foreigners*—for there are books entitled thus.^a And they draw arguments from the *Ascension of Isaiah* and also from certain other apocryphal books.

Fr?
Porph 16:3
40.7.5

III. TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE SECT

The heavenly rulers

40.2.3 And < . . . >^a the whole (of their system) from the book entitled *Harmony*. In this (book) they state that there is an eighth heaven^b and a septet of heavens;^c that there are rulers for the various heavens; that the latter are installed in the seven heavens, so that there is one ruler per heaven with each ruler having a band (of angels); and that the luminous mother is in the highest position, in the eighth, just as the other schools of thought assert.

Bjn 11:264+
RR 95:31+

IrUnid
1.30.2 ?

Ethics

40.2.4 And some of them, as it happens, have polluted their bodies by sensuality. Others, of course, feign a put-on abstinence and deceive the simpler folk, priding themselves on a kind of renunciation in the disguise of monastic hermits.

IrG

IrSat 1.24.2

40.2.5 Now, they say that in each heaven, as I mentioned,^a there is a realm and an authority and hosts of angels for assistance, inasmuch as each ruler has engendered and made for itself an assisting retinue.

40.2.1 a. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

40.2.2 a. Possibly a reference to Fr.

40.2.3 a. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

b. Or possibly “an octet of heavens.”
c. Or possibly “a seventh (heaven).”

40.2.5 a. Cf. 40.2.3.

Resurrection

And (they say) there is no resurrection of flesh, but only a resurrection of souls. IrUnid 1.30.14

Rejection of baptism and other sacraments

40.2.6. And they curse and reject baptism, even though there are some among them who have already been baptized. They deny the value of participation in the sacraments^a on the grounds that it is alien and has been established in the name of Sabaōth.

Sabaōth rules the universe

For, like certain other schools of thought, they make out that the latter rules with absolute dominion from the seventh heaven, and prevails over the others. 40.5.1

The soul's escape through the heavens

40.2.7 The soul, they maintain, is the rulers' and authorities' food, and without it they cannot live since it comes from the moisture from above, and provides them with power.

40.2.8 If the soul comes to be in (a state of) acquaintance and flees the baptism of the church and the name of Sabaōth, who gave the law, it ascends to each heaven in turn, gives a speech of defense before each authority, and thus rises up to the superior mother and the parent of the entirety, whence indeed it descended into this world.^{a * * *} EpG 26.10.7+

The devil

40.5.1 These (Archontics) maintain, as I have previously indicated, that the devil is an offspring of Sabaōth^a the seventh authority, and that Sabaōth is god of the Jews; the devil is the evil offspring of the latter, which presides over the earth and opposes its own parent. **40.5.2** And (they say) its parent is not this sort, nor again is it the incomprehensible deity that they call parent, but belongs to the left-hand authority. RR 95:13+
EpG 25.2.2
Bjn 2:26+
IrUnid
1.30.2?

Cain and Abel

40.5.3 These folk recount another tale, according to which, they say, the devil came to Eve and united with her as a man with a woman and begot on her^a Cain and Abel. **40.5.4** One (supposedly) rose up against Bjn 24:8+

40.2.6 a. Lit. "mysteries," a usual term for the eucharist or baptism.

40.2.8 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

40.5.1 a. Exactly contradicting Bjn, RR, and similar gnostic texts, according to which "Sabaōth the

seventh authority" or ruler is the offspring of "the devil" and only through rebellion gains control of the seven heavens.

40.5.3 a. Or possibly "produced out of itself."

the other because they were jealous of one another: they (the Archontics) do not accept the true story,^a that Abel was very pleasing to god, but fictitiously tell another account, which states that inasmuch as both of them had burning desire for a sister of theirs, Cain rose up against Abel and slew him. For, they say, they were physically begotten from the devil's sperm, as I have already stated. **40.5.5** When they wish to deceive people they adduce evidence from the holy books^a—as I have already mentioned in discussing another heresy^b—(noting) that the savior said to the Jews, “You (plur.) are of Satan” and “when he lies he speaks according to his own (nature), for his father, too, was a liar.” **40.5.6** And so, of course, they say that Cain was from the devil^a in as much as he (the savior) said, “He was a murderer from the beginning” and <. . .>^b **40.5.7** to show that the devil was his father, and that the devil's parent was the lying ruler. And bringing down blasphemy upon their own heads, these foolish people say it is Sabaōth, supposing that the word “Sabaōth” is the name of a particular deity.^{a * * *}

Seth's birth, escape, and reincarnation

40.7.1 And in turn, they say, Adam united with Eve his wife and begot BJn 24:34+ Seth, his own physical son. And next, they say, the higher power descended, accompanied by the ministering angels of the good god, and caught up Seth himself, **40.7.2** whom they also call “the foreigner”; Fr carried him somewhere above and cared for him for a while, lest he be slain; and after a long time brought him back down into this world and rendered him spiritual and bodily,^a so that neither <Sabaōth>^b nor the authorities and realms of the world-creating god could prevail over him. **40.7.3** And they say that he no longer served the maker and craftsman (of the world); but he acknowledged the unnameable power and the higher, good god, serving the latter; and that he revealed many things to the discredit of the maker of the world, the rulers, and the authorities.

40.5.4 a. I.e. the biblical account (Gn 4:1f): Epiphanius here speaks from his own point of view.

40.5.5 a. I.e. the canonical scriptures of Epiphanius's church.

b. In his attack on the so-called sect of the Caini, 38.4.2.

40.5.6 a. Or possibly “that Cain was the devil.”

b. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

40.5.7 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

40.7.2 a. “bodily”: some scholars have supposed that this word contradicts 40.8.2 below and so cannot be in the original of the text, conjecturing that the original reading must have been “invisible” or “seemingly bodily.” But it must be noted that “bodily” is not the same as “material,” and so there may be no contradiction at all.

b. “<Sabaōth>” or possibly “<the craftsman (of the world)>”: in any case one or more words are inadvertently omitted here in the MSS.

IV. PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC BOOKS READ BY THE SECTARIANS

40.7.4 Hence they have also portrayed certain books, some written in the name of Seth and others written in the name of Seth and his seven sons, as having been given by him. 40.7.5 For they say that he bore seven <sons>^a, called “foreigners”—as we noted in the case of other schools of thought, viz. gnostics and Sethians. 40.7.6 And these (Archontics) say there are also other prophets, a certain Martiades and a Marsianos, who were caught up into the heavens and came back down after three days. 40.7.7 And there are many tales that they fictitiously portray.^{a * * *}

RA d ?
Eg G ?
Fr ?
3Tb ?
s.40.7.5
40.2.2+

V. ANOTHER TEACHING OF THE SECT

Jesus' body was apparent and not material

40.8.2 Moreover, these (Archontics) say that his^a body did not exist but rather was shown forth in appearance.^{b * * *}

IrSat 1.24.2
IrUnid
1.30.13 ?

40.7.5 a. “<sons>”: the word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

40.7.7 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

40.8.2 a. I.e. Jesus Christ's. The reference is clarified by the preceding passage, which is not translated here.

b. The doctrine of docetism: that the real Jesus did not exist as human flesh, but only appeared to do so. The rest of the chapter (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

THE Gnostics

ACCORDING TO ST. EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS,
AGAINST HERESIES, CHAPTERS 25–26

(EpG)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Gnostic myth sets out to show that only the soul is the true self; that the body is a negative element, a “prison” or “fetter” of the soul; and that salvation entails escape from the “bondage” of bodily existence. Yet classic gnostic scriptures almost never go on to draw explicit conclusions about the way that gnostics should in consequence behave. This is understandable, for the literary form of the gnostic scriptures provides almost no occasion for ethical conclusions to be drawn. To some extent, such ethical conclusions may have seemed too obvious to state; for, to many thinkers in the second century A.D., the acceptance of a split between body and soul implied that the best mode of life was continence, so as to minimize the body’s adverse influence upon the soul (“passion”). This is also confirmed by a certain amount of direct literary evidence in the gnostic scriptures. *Zōstrianos* (Zs 131:8f) states explicitly that “it is not to experience passion that you have come (to this place), but to break your fetters” (cf. also BJn 25:30f); St. Epiphanius of Salamis (EpA) mentions the monastic asceticism of the “Archontic” gnostics, though ambiguously; and St. Irenaeus (IrS) reports Satorninos’s teaching that “marriage and the engendering of offspring are from Satan,” adding that most of his followers “abstain from (the flesh of) living things.” The speaker in *Thunder* (Th 15:18f) exhorts the listeners, “Love my continence.”

Against this background, St. Epiphanius’s description (written A.D. ca. 375) of the licentious behavior of the “gnostics, also known as Borborites,” completely diverges from the expected norm and is shockingly anomalous.

Stories about sexually licentious Christian sects were not unheard of in antiquity. Starting as early as St. Irenaeus, anti-gnostic writers occasionally reported on libertine sects, some of whom even called themselves “gnostics,” that is, “people capable of acquaintance” (it should be remembered that in the language of the Old Testament, “to know, to gain acquaintance of” could be a euphemism for sexual intercourse). It is difficult to judge the accuracy and fairness of such polemical reports. Irenaeus (1.25.1–6), for example, states that followers of a certain Carpocrates (in the second century A.D.) believed that they must experience every kind of deed, including what is ordinarily held to be wicked, in order to escape reincarnation in another body after death. Whether or not this statement

is accurate or reasonable, the doctrine of the Carpocratians bears no noticeable resemblance to gnostic myth, and so there are no grounds to conclude that the Carpocratians were gnostics in the classic sense of the word, although they may have borrowed the name “gnostic,” perhaps as a form of self-praise.

The same is not true of St. Epiphanius’s description, translated here, of a licentious “gnostic” sect in Egypt, for in this instance the teachings of the sect bear an unmistakable resemblance to classic gnostic myth, touching selectively on all four acts of the mythic drama. The following mythic elements are mentioned or implied, although their presentation by Epiphanius is disorderly and obscure: emanation of the Barbēlō from the parent of the entirety; the afterthought of light, here confused with both Barbēlō and “vulgar” wisdom (Prounikos); production of Ialdabaoth; theft of wisdom’s power and its passage into human beings; wisdom’s repentance; creation of the world by Ialdabaoth; the existence of 365 heavenly rulers or authorities, of which the seven main ones have traditional gnostic names; Ialdabaoth’s claim to be honored as god; his defeat and replacement by Sabaōth, as in RR (only implied; cf. 25.2.2 and 26.10.3); the chief ruler’s arrogance; the serpentine form of Sabaōth (known also from EpA); Eve and the serpent; activity of the female spiritual principle (the speaker in the gnostic *Gospel of Eve*, 26.3.1); Nōrea (here called “Noria”) and Noah; struggle of two spirits active in humankind; incarnation of the preexistent Christ within Jesus of Nazareth; escape of the soul and ingathering (“collection”) of gnostic souls into their spiritual home.

The sources of St. Epiphanius’s information were literary, for he cites them by title. Apart from the usual gnostic myth, he speaks also of an unusual gnostic claim to be obliged to “collect” the dispersed units of wisdom’s power (“emissions”) in the form of “soul” dispersed in all “living things, whether beasts, fishes, reptiles, human beings, vegetables, trees, or fruit . . . No matter what we eat,” they claim, “whether meat, vegetable, bread, or anything else, we are doing a favor to created things by collecting soul from all things and transporting it with us to the above.” Likewise they claim that when a gnostic soul ascends through the seven heavens it can only get past the rulers if it has “not sown children for the ruler, but . . . eradicated its roots and collected the scattered members . . .” If it has produced a child, the soul is swallowed by Sabaōth, the celestial snake (the Milky Way?), and sent back to earth.

This striking notion of a religious elect who deliberately gather entrapped particles of the divine from foodstuffs and transport them to the metaphysical universe is well known from the Manichaean religion—though the Manichaean diet was vegetarian and the Manichaean elect were extreme ascetics. Since Manichee missionaries were active in Egypt starting in the late third century A.D., St. Epiphanius may have encountered a gnostic church that had been influenced by the pattern of Manichaean theology. Alternatively, he may be using a polemical source that parodies Manichaeism.

In the absence of further information, it is impossible to reconstruct any rationalization of the gnostic diet as described in this excerpt. The reputedly licentious behavior of the sect appears difficult to justify or explain on the basis of the theology just described. St. Epiphanius’s description of the gnostic church

therefore remains a mystery. The historian must weigh the saint's claim of first-hand observation and the grisly detail of his report against his avowed desire to discredit and destroy the sect. In any case, there is no reason to assume that this is a typical description of gnostic Christianity.

St. Epiphanius lists various names under which the sect was known. One of these in particular, "Borborites," continued to be mentioned in later historical documents, especially in Syria and Mesopotamia (see Map 1). In fact, the original form of this name may have been Barbērites, "followers of Barbērō," for Epiphanius reports that Barbērō was an alternate form of Barbēlō (26.10.10), and that the sect was also known as Barbēlites (26.3.7). The form spelled Borborites, "filthies, muddies," may thus be a polemical tag coined by opponents of the sect.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Higher Powers Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

The PARENT OF THE ENTIRETY

The BARBĒLŌ or BARBĒRŌ

The ANOINTED (Christ)

The VULGAR ELEMENT. Wisdom. Confused with Barbēlō.

The MOTHER, perhaps identical with the former

II. Rulers (At Least 365 in Number) Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

IALDABAŌTH

SABAŌTH

Other AUTHORITIES, RULERS, ANGELS, DEMONS, etc.

The RULER OF THIS WORLD, a snake

III. Humankind Mentioned by St. Epiphanius

EVE

NOAH

NŌRIA, his wife

PROPHETS and OTHERS mentioned in the Old Testament

ZECHARIAH

MARY

JESUS

IV. Spirits Active in Humankind

The SPIRIT OF TRUTH. The holy spirit, perhaps identical with wisdom.

The WORLD SPIRIT, belonging to Ialdabaōth

TEXT

St. Epiphanius's original Greek text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts, whose accuracy is a matter of debate among scholars. The translation

below is based on Holl's critical edition, but with alterations: K. Holl, ed., *Epiphanius*, vol. 1 (Griechische christliche Schriftsteller, vol. 25; Leipzig: Henrichs, 1915), 268–98.

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Against the Gnostics Also Known as Borborites^a

Genealogy and diversity of the gnostics

25.2.1 And from this source,^a those who belong to *gnōsis* (acquaintance), falsely so called, also began to spring up in the world—namely, gnostics,^b Phibionites, the so-called followers of Epiphanes, Stratiōtics, Levitics, Borborites, and the rest. For, each of these has provoked its own school of thought^c by its own particular passions, and has invented myriad ways of evil.

I. TEACHINGS OF THE SECT

A. Veneration of Barbēlō

Barbēlō's offspring. Its arrogance.

25.2.2 Now, certain ones of them venerate a certain Barbēlō, who—^{26.10.4+} they say—is above in the eighth heaven.^a And—they say—this female ^{BJn 4:26+}

Title a. This title properly belongs only to chapter 26 of Epiphanius's catalogue of heresies; it appears in the MSS at 26.1.1. But the following extract, which is taken from chapter 25, "Against the Nicolaitans," actually concerns the gnostics and is a transitional prelude to chapter 26. Elsewhere in his catalogue of heresies (the table of contents with book 2 of the catalogue) Epiphanius gives a summary description of each of the schools of thought that he intends to refute. His summary of the gnostic school provides a few supplementary points of information (italicized below) that are not found in the extracts translated here:

"Gnostics: successors to the aforementioned schools of thought; but more than they, raving devotees of filthy conduct; in Egypt, called Stratiōtics and Phibionites, but in the "Upper" (i.e. southern) part (of Egypt), called *Secundians*, elsewhere *Sōkratites*, and by still others called *Zacchaeuses*. Others, still, call them *Coddians*; yet others call them

Borborites. These people take pride in Barbēlō, who is also called Barbērō."

25.2.1 a. The Nicolaitans, a school of thought mentioned in the preceding passage (not translated here). From early Christian times, the condemnation of a group called Nicolaitans had apostolic and scriptural sanction (Rv 2:6f; see Map 1); Epiphanius's assertion that the gnostics and other schools were merely offshoots of the Nicolaitans is one of his refutations of their authenticity.

b. "gnostics," here used in the narrower sense as the designation of a particular school.

c. Greek *hairesis*, the usual term for a philosophical school or religious sect. An unspecified degree of cohesion is implied by the term.

25.2.2 a. In other gnostic texts, it is Barbēlō's manifestation in the form of wisdom who presides in the eighth heaven.

was emitted from the parent. Some say she is the mother of Ialdabaōth; others, of Sabaōth; 25.2.3 and her offspring keeps charge of the seventh heaven in arrogance and absolute dominion; and says to those below, “It is I who am the first and hereafter; there is no other god apart from me.” 25.2.4 But (they say) the Barbēlō heard this utterance and wept.

BJn 9:25+
26.10.11
RR 95:13+
EpA 40.5.1
BJn 13:5+
Is 44:6
s.25.2.4
BJn 13:32+

Recovery of her power

Moreover, she is repeatedly^a shown forth to the rulers in a kind of beauty, and through pleasure and outflowing robs the sperm from them, so that—of course—she might again recover her power that has been sown into various places.^{b * * *}

B. Veneration of the Vulgar Element

Allegorical significance of sexual acts

25.3.2 And others venerate a certain vulgar element;^a and like the above-mentioned people, when they consummate their passions they make mythical reference to this allegory of obscenity, saying, “We are collecting the power of the vulgar from bodies by means of their emissions,^b that is, by semen and menses.”^{c * * *}

IrG 1.29.4+

C. Veneration of Ialdabaōth

25.3.4 And others venerate the aforementioned Ialdabaōth, stating that he is the first offspring of the Barbēlō, as I said. And thus—it says^a—one must render honor to that (first offspring) because it revealed many things.

Books of Ialdabaōth

25.3.5 Hence they make up also certain books under the name of Ialdabaōth, forming also myriad non-Greek names of rulers and authorities, distributed among the heavens and opposing the souls of humankind. And their plotting^a against the human race through error is, in a word, great.^{b * * *}

BJn 10:27+

25.2.4 a. Or “always.”

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

25.3.2 a. Or possibly “lewd element,” Greek *prounikos*. The word basically means “mover, porter,” one who corporally transports burdens for a fee. In gnostic texts it is an epithet of wisdom (Sophia); cf. IrG 1.29.4.

b. “emissions” (the Greek word can also be translated “emanations”): cf. 26.1.9, 26.4.5, 26.4.8, 26.5.3, 26.5.7, 26.8.2, 26.8.4, 26.8.7, 26.9.2, 26.10.9, 26.11.1, 26.11.10, 26.13.5.

c. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

25.3.4 a. “it says;” either Epiphanius refers to a specific written source, or he means this in the sense of “they say.” The phrase recurs throughout the extracts.

25.3.5 a. I.e. the gnostics’ plotting.

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

II. BOOKS COMPOSED BY THE SECTARIANS^a

Genealogy of the sect

26.1.1 In turn, the aforementioned gnostics sprouted up in diverse ways from him.^{b * * *} **26.1.3** And they—who are connected with this Nicolaus and who are begotten from him like scorpions from the failed egg of a snake or < . . . > from asps^a—introduce to us certain names belonging to godless chatter, and they fabricate books.

A. The Book “Nōria”

One book they entitle *Nōria*. And by allegorical interpretation of Greek religion^b they recompose Greek epic mythology and imagery, interweaving falsehood and the truth. **26.1.4** For, this Nōria, they say, was Noah’s wife.^a

Meaning of the name Nōria

And they name her “Nōria” so that with reference to non-Greek words they might recompose epic written among the Greeks in the Greek language^b and so make an impression on those who have been deceived by them. Thus they give an explanation of the name Pyrrha^c by calling her Nōria. **26.1.5** Now, inasmuch as *nura* means “fire” only in the Syriac language^a but not in formal Hebrew—for in the formal language the Hebrews call fire *hēsath*^b—it must have happened that they used this name (Nōria) from lack of acquaintance^c and from inexperience. **26.1.6** For neither Pyrrha of the Greeks—for the Greeks say that Deukalion’s wife was called Pyrrha—nor Nōria fabled by these (gnostics) was Noah’s wife: rather, it was Barthenōs.^a

RAd 70: 17

26.1.1 a. In the MSS the chapter title is written here; see note “a.” with title.

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.1.3 a. One or more words are inadvertently omitted in this phrase. Some scholars conjecture that the original reading was “<cobras> from asps.”

b. Or “Greek superstition.”

26.1.4 a. Nōria (Nōrea, Hōraia, Ōrea) is mentioned also in RR and EpS.

b. “epic . . . Greek language”: the flood myth of Deukalion, a Noah figure in Greek myth. He and his wife Pyrrha built an ark (“coffer”) in which they survived a flood brought wrathfully upon the earth by Zeus.

c. Deukalion’s wife.

26.1.5 a. The gnostics seem to have referred to a learned etymology of the name “Nōria,” relating it to Syriac *nura*, “fire.” Epiphanius here objects that since Noah is a biblical figure the etymology ought to work in “the formal language (i.e. Hebrew)” and not in Syriac.

b. I.e. *ēšat*. This is actually closer to the Palestinian Aramaic word for “fire”; the biblical (“formal”) Hebrew is *ēš*.

c. “lack of *gnōsis*.”

26.1.6 a. Noah’s wife is not called by name in the Old Testament; Epiphanius here refers to non-biblical tradition.

Nōria and Noah

26.1.7 Then these (gnostics) once again stage Philistionian shows^a for us, charging that when she wanted many times to be with Noah in the ark, her request was denied since—it says—the ruler who created the world wanted to destroy her in the flood along with all the others. **26.1.8** And—it says—she laid siege to the “coffer”^a and burned it,^b once, again, and a third time. Hence, indeed, the construction of Noah’s “coffer” went on for many years because it was burnt many times by her. **26.1.9** For—it says—Noah put his trust in the ruler, whereas Nōria revealed the higher powers and the Barbēlō from the powers, who like the other powers was opposed to the ruler.

BJn 25:2?
BJn 29:1f
RR 92:14
IrUnid 1.30.9
EpS 39.5.2
BJn 28:32+
s.26.1.8
EpS 39.3.2

Recovery of the higher mother’s power

And she made clear the necessity of collecting, from out of the power within bodies, the parts plundered from the superior mother by the ruler who made the world^a and by the others in its company—gods, angels, demons—by means of the emissions of males and females. **26.2.1** And I simply find it difficult to describe the utter blindness of these people of darkness. For I would spend a lot of time if at this point I wanted to quibble over the treatise on these matters and give detailed information about the bizarre teachings of their falsely termed “acquaintance.”

26.3.1, 26.5.6
26.9.4, 26.10.9
26.13.2
Th 16:19
BJn 10:20 +
25.3.2+

B. Prophecy of Barkabbas

26.2.2 Certain others, originating from them^{a * * *} introduce a prophet named Barkabbas—he is worthy of his name, **26.2.3** for *kabba* means “illicit sexual activity” in Syriac, “the act of murder” in Hebrew, and means also the fourth part of the measure.^{a * * *} **26.2.4** And from this most wonderful prophet they adduce for us a shameful narrative so that we might be persuaded to have intercourse with corrupt bodies and be deprived of the higher hope: they are not ashamed to retell, verbatim, pornographic stories about sexual activity.^a

26.3.3+

26.1.7 a. “Philistionian”: erroneous, ridiculous, unclear. The epithet refers to a proverbial author of mimes who flourished in the early first century A. D.

26.1.8 a. “coffer,” Greek *larnaks*: not the usual biblical word for Noah’s ark, but rather the classical Greek term for Deukalion’s ark.

b. Hence the gnostics’ interest in the etymology of the name Nōria and her possible identification with Pyrrha, for Greek *pyr* means “fire.”

26.1.9 a. The chief ruler’s theft of “power” from wisdom and the subsequent implantation of that

power in humankind are more explicitly narrated in BJn 10:19f, 12:5f, 13: 1f, and 19:15f.

26.2.2 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.2.3 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.2.4 a. Lit. “about Aphrodite,” a traditional euphemism.

C. “The Gospel of Perfection”

26.2.5 Still others, originating from them, introduce a fabricated work rather like a love charm, to which they have assigned the title *Gospel of Perfection*—in truth, it is not a gospel (good news) but rather sorrow over death, for all the consummation of death resides in this clandestine sowing of the devil.

D. “The Gospel of Eve”

26.2.6 And yet others shamelessly speak of a *Gospel of Eve*.^a Indeed, they clandestinely sow (this weed) in her name, on the grounds that she discovered the food of acquaintance through a revelation spoken to her by the snake.^b And as though in the unstable frame of mind of a drunkard and of one who randomly utters statements that are not compatible, but rather are partly the result of laughter and partly full of weeping—such was the rogues’ utterly evil, clandestine sowing. RR 89:31

26.3.1 And they start out from foolish visions and testimonies in the *Gospel* that they profess.

Indeed, they say the following:

I stood upon a high mountain. And I saw a tall person and another who was short. And I heard as it were a voice of thunder, and I drew near to listen. And it^a spoke to me and said: Th 13:1+

It is I^b who am you (sing.); and it is you who are me. 26.1.9+

And wherever you are, I am there.

And I am sown in all: and you collect me from wherever you wish.

But when you collect me, it is your own self that you collect.^c * * *

III. PRACTICES OF THE SECT

Promiscuous religious services

26.3.3 Those of the school of *gnōsis*^a (acquaintance) who are connected with Nicolaus’s school of thought^b thus introduce such

26.2.6 a. For the literary character of this *Gospel*, see introduction to Th.

b. As, e.g., in RR 89:31f.

c. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.3.1 a. The voice of thunder.

b. The speaker (the superior mother) is consubstantial with the divine elements (her power) now “sown” in various human bodies.

26.3.3 a. Gnostics, as a specific school.

b. Cf. note 25.2.1a.

things, having been deprived of the truth; and they not only turn away the intellects of their followers, but also make their bodies and their souls slaves of illicit sexual activity and promiscuity. Thus they confuse^c their religious services with promiscuous filthy conduct, eating and becoming contaminated by human flesh and impurities.^d * * *

26.2.4, 26.4.1
26.4.4, 26.5.2
26.9.6, 26.10.1
26.11.9, 26.17.7

Various branches of the sect

26.3.5 * * * Indeed, the blasphemous assembly full of enormous recklessness, the anthologizing and narration of its filthy conduct, and the filthy perversity of their beggarly obscenity truly pollute the ears, **26.3.6** so that quite naturally they are called Borborites (“filthies”)^a by some; others call them Coddians—for *kodda* means “side dish” or “bowl” in Syriac—from the fact that people cannot eat with them but rather they dispense their food in private to those who have been polluted and no one can dine with them, not even on bread, because of the defilement.^b **26.3.7** * * * In Egypt the same people are called Stratiōtics and Phibionites, as I mentioned before in turn. Some call them Zacchaeuses, others call them Barbēlites.^a * * *

26.4.3.+

Sign of membership in the sect

26.4.1 * * * They hold their women in common. **26.4.2** And if someone from out of town belonging to their persuasion comes to visit, they have a signal for use by men unto women and by women unto men: the hand is held out, in greeting of course, and a tickling stroke is made in the palm of the hand, so as to indicate secretly that the visitor is of the same religion as they. **26.4.3** Thereupon, having recognized one another they hasten to dine. And they serve lavish meat dishes and wines,^a even if they are in penury. Then, after a drinking party where so to speak they have engorged their veins^b with gormandizing, they turn to their frenzied passion.

26.3.3+

26.3.6, 26.5.5
26.5.8, 26.9.4

Sexual practices in the eucharistic service

26.4.4 And husband withdraws from wife and says, speaking to his own wife,

c. Or “wet.”

d. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.3.6 a. From Greek *borboros*, “filth, mud”: presumably a hostile parody of the name Barbērō, an alternate form of Barbēlō.

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.3.7 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.4.3 a. Abstinence from meat, wine, and sexual activity was typical of early Christian asceticism.

b. Or “organs.”

Arise and have the love feast^a with your (sing.) brother.

And when the wretches have had intercourse with one another^b * * * 26.3.3+
26.4.5 * * * in the passion of illicit sexual activity, then they lift up
 their blasphemy to heaven. The woman and the man take the male
 emission in their own hands and stand gazing toward heaven with 25.3.2+
 the impurity in their hands; and of course they pray—**26.4.6** I refer to
 the so-called Stratiōtics and gnostics—offering what is in their hands 26.8.5+
 aptly to the parent of the entirety. And they say,

We offer unto you (sing.) this gift, the body of Christ (the
 anointed)^a

26.4.7 and then they eat it, partaking of their own filthiness. And
 they say,

This is the body of Christ (the anointed), and this is the Passover
 because of which our bodies feel passion^a and are constrained to
 confess the passion^b of Christ (the anointed).

26.4.8 And likewise with the woman's emission: when it happens that 25.3.2+
 she has her period, her menstrual blood is gathered and they mutually
 take it in their hands and eat it. And they say,

This is the blood of Christ (the anointed).

26.5.1 Thus when they read in apocryphal books,^a

I beheld a tree bearing twelve crops^b per year, and he said to me,
 "This is the tree of life"

they interpret the passage allegorically as referring to the woman's
 monthly emissions.

Childbearing forbidden

26.5.2 Now, although they have intercourse with one another, they 26.3.3+
 forbid childbearing; for among them, this (act of) corruption is not

26.4.4 a. Greek *agape*, a technical term of early Christianity, originally denoting a common meal held in connection with religious services or meetings. The phrase quoted here is thus liturgical in character.

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.4.6 a. "anointed" and "Christ" are the same word in Greek.

26.4.7 a. "passion": or "suffering."

b. "Passover . . . feel passion . . . the passion": a play on words in Greek, *paskha* . . . *paskhein* . . . *pathos* (which is formally related to *paskhein*). The formulaic phrases quoted here are in the style of solemn eucharistic prayers.

26.5.1 a. Very similar to Rv 22:2.

b. Or "fruits."

undertaken for the sake of bearing children, but for pleasure.^a * * *

26.5.3 They consummate their pleasure, and then they take unto themselves the sperm produced by their (act of) impurity—not inseminating it for the bearing of children, but rather eating the product of their filthy conduct. 25.3.2+

Abortion and ritual cannibalism

26.5.4 And if one of them, a man, prematurely ejaculates and the woman becomes pregnant, listen to the even more terrible thing that these folks dare to do. **26.5.5** As soon as it is feasible, they induce the expulsion of the embryo, and take the aborted offspring and grind it up with a mortar and pestle. And they season it with honey, pepper, and other spices, and with aromatics, so as not to nauseate themselves. Doing this, all the participants belonging to this <herd>^a of swine and dogs gather together^b and partake with their fingers of the ground-up baby. **26.5.6** And when in this fashion they have accomplished their act of cannibalism they pray, finally, to god. It^a says, 26.4.3+

We have not been deceived by the ruler of desire, but rather we have collected the transgression of our brother. 26.1.9+

And, of course, they consider this to be the perfect Passover. 26.8.5+

26.5.7 But they dare to perform other, equally dreadful acts. Indeed, when again they are aroused to the point of climax they wet their own hands with the filthiness of their own emission; and entirely naked with their hands still defiled, they pray—as though by this production to find the openness to speak to god. 25.3.2+

Abstinence forbidden

26.5.8 And they—both men and women—care for their bodies night and day, perfuming themselves, bathing, banqueting, and spending their time in bed and drunk. And they curse anyone who is abstinent,^a saying one ought not to be abstinent, for abstinence belongs to the ruler who made this realm; rather, one must eat in order to make one's body strong so it can yield its fruit in its season.^b 26.4.3+
26.8.7+

26.5.2 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

thai) is appropriate to gatherings for celebration of the eucharist.

26.5.5 a. Through an inadvertence this word is omitted in the MSS.

26.5.6 a. Cf. note 25.3.4a.

b. "gather together": the Greek verb (*synages-*

26.5.8 a. Or "who fasts."
b. Cf. 26.8.7.

IV. LITERATURE OF THE SECT

Principle of biblical interpretation

26.6.1 They utilize both the Old and the New Testament, but they reject the one who spoke in the Old Testament. And whenever they find a passage capable of meaning something in opposition to themselves, they say that it has been spoken by the world spirit. **26.6.2** But if any statement—not what the passage actually means, but what their deceived interpretation says—can be adapted so as to be similar to their (sexual) desire, they transform it to conform to their (sexual) desire and say that it has been spoken by the spirit of truth.

IrSat 1.24.2

BJn 26:32?

BJn 25:20+
RR 96:22+

26.6.3 And this—it says—is what the lord said concerning John: “What did you (plur.) go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?” For—it says—John was not perfect, since he was inspired^a by many spirits^b like the reed shaken by every wind.

Mt 11:7

26.6.4 And

when the spirit belonging to the ruler came, it proclaimed Judaism. But when the holy spirit came, it spoke of Christ (the anointed). And this—it says—is the meaning of “whoever is least in the kingdom” (etc.).^a It is about us that he spoke—it says—for the least among us is greater than he.^{b * * *}

Mt 11:11

Books composed by the sectarians

26.8.1 And they have many books. Indeed, they publish certain *Questions of Mary*. Others posit many *Books* in the name of the aforementioned *Ialdabaoth* or in the name of *Seth*. Other books they call *Revelations of Adam*;^a and they have dared to compose other *Gospels* in the names of the disciples, and are not ashamed to say that our savior and lord himself, Jesus Christ, revealed this obscenity.

RAAd ?
EgG ?
Fr ?
3Tb ?
Gjd ?

The “Greater Questions of Mary”

26.8.2 For, in the so-called *Greater Questions of Mary* (indeed, there are also *Lesser* ones fabricated by them) they posit that he gave a

26.6.3 a. Or “blown upon.”

b. The Greek word (*pneumata*) also means “winds.”

26.6.4 a. Mt 11:11: “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than

John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.8.1 a. “Books . . . of . . . Seth . . . Revelations of Adam”: cf. perhaps 3Tb and RAAd.

revelation to her:^a he took her to the mountain,^b prayed, and took from his side a woman; he began to mingle with her; and thus, of course, partaking^c of his own emission, he indicated that 25.3.2+

we must act thus, so that we might live;

26.8.3 and when Mary was disturbed and fell to the ground, he raised her up and said to her, “O person of little faith, why did you doubt?” Mt 14:31

Examples of biblical interpretation

26.8.4 And they say that what is written in the gospel, when it says “If Jn 3:12
I have told you (plur.) earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe in heavenly things?” and “When you see the son of man Jn 6:62
ascending where he was before,” refers to the source from which came the emission^a that is partaken of. **26.8.5** And when it says “Unless you 25.3.2+
(plur.) eat my flesh and drink my blood,” and when the disciples are 26.4.6, 26.5.6
troubled and say “Who can listen to it?” they say that the statement Jn 6:53
was about filthy conduct. **26.8.6** Thus they both were troubled and Jn 6:60
“drew back.”^a For—it says—they were no longer established in full- Jn 6:66
ness. **26.8.7** And when David says that “he shall be as a tree planted 26.5.8
by the brooks of waters, which shall yield its fruit in its season” he is Ps 1:3
speaking—it says—of filthy conduct by the male. The words “at the outpouring of waters” and “which shall yield its fruit” refer—it says—to the emission belonging to pleasure.^a And “its leaf shall not fall off” 25.3.2+
refers—it says—to the fact that we do not let it fall on the ground but Ps 1:3
personally eat it.^b * * * **26.9.2** Indeed—it says—the statement that Ra-
hab set the scarlet in the window^a did not refer—it says—to a scarlet thing; rather, it refers to the parts of the female reproductive organ and the scarlet refers to menstrual blood. 25.3.2+

And the saying “Drink water out of your (sing.) own vessels” refers to the same thing. Pr 5:15

26.8.2 a. Mary.

b. Or possibly “to the desert.”

c. The Greek word is appropriate to eating in a sacramental rite.

26.8.4 a. The Greek word (*aporrhōia*) also means “emanation.”

26.8.6 a. Jn 6:53-66: “Jesus said to them, ‘... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his

blood, you have no life in you.’ ... After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.”

26.8.7 a. Or “pleasurable emission.”

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.9.2 a. The story is told in Jos 2:1f.

V. TEACHINGS OF THE SECT

Resurrection

26.9.3 They say that flesh is dying, and is not arising, and that it belongs to the ruler. IrUnid 1.30.14

Recovery of the higher mother's power

26.9.4 And (they say) the power residing in the menses and the semen is soul, which, they say, 26.4.3+

we collect and eat. And no matter what we eat, whether meat, vegetable, bread, or anything else, we are doing a favor to created things by collecting souls from all things and transporting it with us to the above. 26.1.9+

Thus they partake of all kinds of meat, saying,

It is so that we might have mercy upon our own kind.^a

26.9.5 And they say that one and the same soul is sown in living things, whether beasts, fishes, reptiles, human beings, vegetables, trees, or fruit.

A. Phibionite Teachings and Practices

Divinization through ritual intercourse

26.9.6 And those of them who are called Phibionites offer up their shameful sacrifices of illicit sexuality—which we have already spoken of—in the names of 365 rulers, which they themselves fabricated, of course. They deceive their women, saying, 26.3.3+
Bjn 11:25+

Have intercourse with me, so that I might bring you (sing.) up to the ruler.

26.9.7 And with each act of intercourse they utter a non-Greek name of some one (of the rulers) fabricated by them. And, of course, they pray, saying,

I bring my offering unto you (sing.), O so-and-so, so that you might bring (her) as an offering to so-and-so.

And again, with the next act of sexual intercourse the male posits that he is likewise offering (her) to the next (ruler), so that also

26.9.4 a. Or "our own people."

that one might (bring her as an offering) to the next. **26.9.8** And until he has “ascended”—or rather gone down—through 365 falls consisting of coitus, the man who is doing this invokes some name with each act. And then he begins to “descend” through the same ones, performing the same shameful acts and misleading the deceived women. **26.9.9** Now, when he has progressed through the enormous number of 730 falls—I mean, shameful acts of sexual intercourse and names fabricated by these people—then next this man acts recklessly and says

It is I who am Christ (the anointed), inasmuch as I have descended from above through the names of the 365 rulers.

Names of the heavenly rulers

26.10.1 They speak of many rulers, but the names of what they consider to be the greater ones, they say, are the following:

In the first heaven is the ruler Iaō;	Bjn 11:26+
in the second—it says—is Sakla, the ruler of illicit sexual activity;	26.3.3+
in the third, the ruler Sēth;	
in the fourth—it says—is Daudē	

26.10.2 (for they posit a fourth heaven and a third);

fifth is another heaven, in which they say is Elōaios, also called Adōnaios;
in the sixth, some say there is Ialdabaōth, while others say Ēlilaios;

26.10.3 they posit additionally a seventh heaven, in which they say there is Sabaōth—but others say no, rather Ialdabaōth is in the seventh.

The incorruptible realm

26.10.4 And in the eighth heaven:	25.2.2 RR 95:31+
the so-called Barbēlō;	26.10.10+
the parent of the entirety and lord, the self-engendered itself;	Bjn 4:36+
the anointed (Christ), another self-born being.	EgG 60:1+

Jesus’ body was apparent and not material

And (they say) it was this anointed (Christ) who came down and manifested this acquaintance unto humankind. They also say he was Jesus, **26.10.5** but that he was not born of Mary but man- EgG 75:15+

ifested by Mary; and he did not take on flesh, but only existed in appearance.^a

IrSat 1.24.2

Sabaōth's form

26.10.6 And some say that Sabaōth has the form of an ass;^a others, of a pig—whence, it says, the Jews were commanded not to eat pork. And it (Sabaōth) is the maker of heaven and earth, of the heavens thereafter,^b and of its angels.

26.12.2

The soul's escape or its reincarnation

26.10.7 Thus (they say), departing from here the soul passes through the aforementioned rulers; but it cannot get through unless it is in fullness of acquaintance (*gnōsis*)—or rather, moral dereliction (*katagnōsis*)^a—and if it has become full it escapes the clutches of the rulers and the authorities. **26.10.8** And the ruler who restrains this world has the form of a snake, and it swallows the souls that do not exist in a (state of) acquaintance and returns them to the world through its tail, and thence into swine and other living things, and brings them up again through the same (rulers). **26.10.9** But if, it says, one is in this (state of) acquaintance and gathers one's self out of the world, by the menses and by the emission belonging to pleasure,^a that person is no longer restrained here (in this world), but rather goes beyond the aforementioned rulers, **26.10.10** and comes to Sabaōth and tramples upon his head—as they say with their blasphemous babbling; and thus the person goes beyond, into the higher place, where there is the mother of the living, the Barbērō or Barbēlō, and in this way the soul is preserved.^a

26.13.2
Bjn 27:20
Th 21:30
IrUnid 1.30.14
EpA 40.2.8

IrUnid 1.30.5

26.19+

25.3.2+

26.10.4
Th 21:29

26.10.11 Furthermore, the wretches say that Sabaōth has hair like a woman, and they suppose that the word *sabaōth*^a is the name of a particular ruler.^b * * *

25.2.2+

Homoerotic practices

26.11.1 * * * Indeed, some of them who are males do not consort with females, but corrupt themselves with their own hands and catch their corruption in their hands and so eat it, **26.11.2** utilizing misrepresented (scriptural) evidence—namely, the passage “These hands ministered

25.3.2+

Ac 20:34

26.10.5 a. The doctrine of docetism: that the real Jesus did not exist as human flesh, but only appeared to do so.

26.10.6 a. Cf. 26:12.2f.

b. I.e. higher than our terrestrial heaven.

26.10.7 a. Epiphanius puns on the Greek word *gnōsis*.

26.10.9 a. Or “by pleasurable emission.”

26.10.10 a. Or “saved.”

26.10.11 a. Hebrew “armies,” originally the second half of a traditional epithet of Jahweh, “god of armies.” By the early Christian period, the single word “sabaoth” had begun to be taken as a name of god.

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

not only to me but also to those who were with me” and again, the passage “Working with your (plur.) own hands, so that you might be able to share also with those who do not have.”^a * * * **26.11.8** * * * For the males who become corrupted by their own hands, as also the ones who consort with females, finally become sated of promiscuity with females and burn with passion for one another, males with males.^a * * *

Ep 4:28
26.13.1

Definition of female virginity

26.11.9 But also males who deceive the female sex^a * * * say to the women who are deceived by them that such-and-such a woman is a virgin, when for many years she has been corrupt and is being corrupted every day. For with them the desire for coitus is never satisfied. Rather, a man is admired by them in proportion to the frequency of his obscenity.

26.3.3+

26.11.10 And the females that they call “virgins” are the ones who have never experienced the worldly intercourse of ordinary natural marriage as far as the reception of sperm goes. Rather, even though they are always having intercourse and illicit sexual activity, before the consummation of pleasure they release the wicked male seducer and take his aforementioned filthiness to eat.^a * * *

25.3.2+

26.11.12 And they utter blasphemy against not only Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and all the band of prophets, but also the god who chose them.

EpS 39.5.1?
26.13.4

“The Birth of Mary”

26.12.1 And they dare to put forth many other fabricated writings. Indeed, they say there is a certain book called *The Birth of Mary*, into which they have inserted terrible and destructive passages, which they then proceed to read there.

26.12.2 For—it says^a—the reason why Zechariah was slain in the temple was that he saw—it says—a vision. And when he wished to tell the vision his mouth froze from fear. For—it says—in the hour of the offering of incense he saw, as he was offering incense, a person standing at rest, having—it says—the form of an ass.^b **26.12.3** And when he went

Lk 1:5f

26.11.2 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.11.8 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.11.9 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.11.10 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.12.2 a. In the passage that follows, features of two biblical stories are combined—the murder of

Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest in about 800 B.C. (2 Ch 24:20f, mentioned in Mt 23:35 and Lk 11:51) and the circumstances of the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:5–80). “*The Birth of Mary*” must have properly concerned the second of these two stories.

b. According to an Egyptian anti-Semitic tradition the god worshiped by the Jews had to be an ass because they spoke of him (in Greek) as “Iaō” (cf. Yahu, Yahweh) and the Old Coptic word for “ass” was *eiō* or *iaō*.

outside—it says—and wanted to say, “Woe unto you (plur.)! What are you worshipping?” the thing he had seen inside in the temple froze his mouth, so that he could not speak. And when his mouth opened so that he might speak, then he revealed it to them, and they slew him. And thus—it says—did Zechariah die. **26.12.4** Indeed, the reason why the priest was commanded by the lawgiver himself^a to have bells—it says—was so that whenever he entered to perform priestly duties, the being who was worshiped might hear the noise and hide, lest the imaginary nature of his form be disclosed.^{b * * *}

B. Levitic Practices and Teachings

Homoerotic practices

26.13.1 Those males among them called Levites do not have sexual intercourse with females but have intercourse with one another. They, of course, are the ones who are preferred and honored among them. But they scorn those who practice religious behavior, purity, and virginity, as though they undertook this labor in vain. 26.11.8

Ascent of the soul in “The Gospel According to Philip”

26.13.2 And they produce a fabricated *Gospel* in the name of *Philip*^a the holy apostle, with—it says—the words

The lord revealed unto me what the soul must say when it is ascending into heaven and how it must reply to each of the higher powers: “I have come to be acquainted with my self”—it says; “I have collected myself from everywhere; I have not sown children for the ruler, but have eradicated its roots and collected the scattered members. And I know who you (sing.) are. For it is I”—it says—“who belong to those from the above.” And so—it says—the soul departs. **26.13.3** But if—it says—it is found to have produced a child, it is restrained below until it can get back its own offspring and return to itself. 26.10.7+

26.1.9+

26.13.4 So frivolous and fabulous are their stories that they dare also to utter blasphemy against the holy Elijah and to state that—it says—after he had been taken up he was cast back down into the world. 1K 2:11

26.13.5 For—it says—a female demon came, laid hold of him, and said, “Where are you (sing.) going? For I have had children by you;

26.12.4 a. Moses. See Ex 28:33f (28:29f in the Greek LXX version).

b. I.e. lest it be discovered that he did not look as people had imagined. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.13.2 a. The following citation bears no relation to the Valentinian *Gospel According to Philip* (GPh).

you cannot ascend and leave your children here.” And—it says—he replies, “How could you have had children by me while I remained in purity?” And—it says—she replies, “Oh yes, often while you were dreaming dreams you had nocturnal emissions, and it was I who partook of your sperm and bore you children.”^{a * * *} 25.3.2+

VI. EPIPHANIUS’ ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE Gnostics

26.17.4 Indeed, beloved readers, I happened to come upon this school of thought in person, and was instructed in these matters face to face, by the people who naturally attempt this (school). Women, who had been deceived in such a way, not only offered us this verbal information and revealed such things to us, but also—just like that deadly, wretched Egyptian wife of the captain of the guard^a—reached out their hands to us in our youth and with babbling recklessness attempted to drag us down. **26.17.5** But the one who once assisted the holy Joseph also assisted us, and^{a * * *} **26.17.6 * * *** we were saved. For, though reproached by these deadly women I laughed scornfully when they indicated to one another, making fun of me, of course, “We have not been able to save the young man, but have abandoned him to perish in the clutches of the ruler”—**26.17.7** inasmuch as the one of them who is the most beautiful offers herself so to speak as bait, so that by means of her they promise to save those who are deceived “before they perish.” And the unbeautiful female (gnostic) is reproached by the more beautiful ones with the words, “It is I who am a chosen instrument, who am able to save those who are deceived, but you (sing.) cannot.” **26.17.8** Now, the women who gave instruction in this erotic incantatory tale were very beautiful in the form of their appearance, but in the content of their wretched thought they possessed the full ugliness of the devil. But the merciful god delivered us from their wretchedness. And thus after we had read their books and truly understood their intention we were not led away by them, but rather we avoided them and did not become hooked. **26.17.9** And we devoted ourselves to the problem of the moment, pointing them out to the bishops there and detecting the names of those who were hidden within the church. And so they were expelled from the city, about eighty names, and the city was cleansed of their thorny underbrush full of tares. 26.3.3+ Ac 9:15

26.13.5 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

26.17.4 a. Gn 39:1-7. Joseph was sold into Egypt as a slave, where he was owned by Pharaoh’s Egyptian captain of the guard. After a time, Joseph’s master’s wife noticed Joseph’s good looks and said, “Lie

with me.” Joseph’s refusal led to his imprisonment on false charges, but god eventually assisted him and he was saved.

26.17.5 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by Epiphanius.

Part Two

THE WRITINGS
OF
VALENTINUS

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

VALENTINUS'S EARLY YEARS

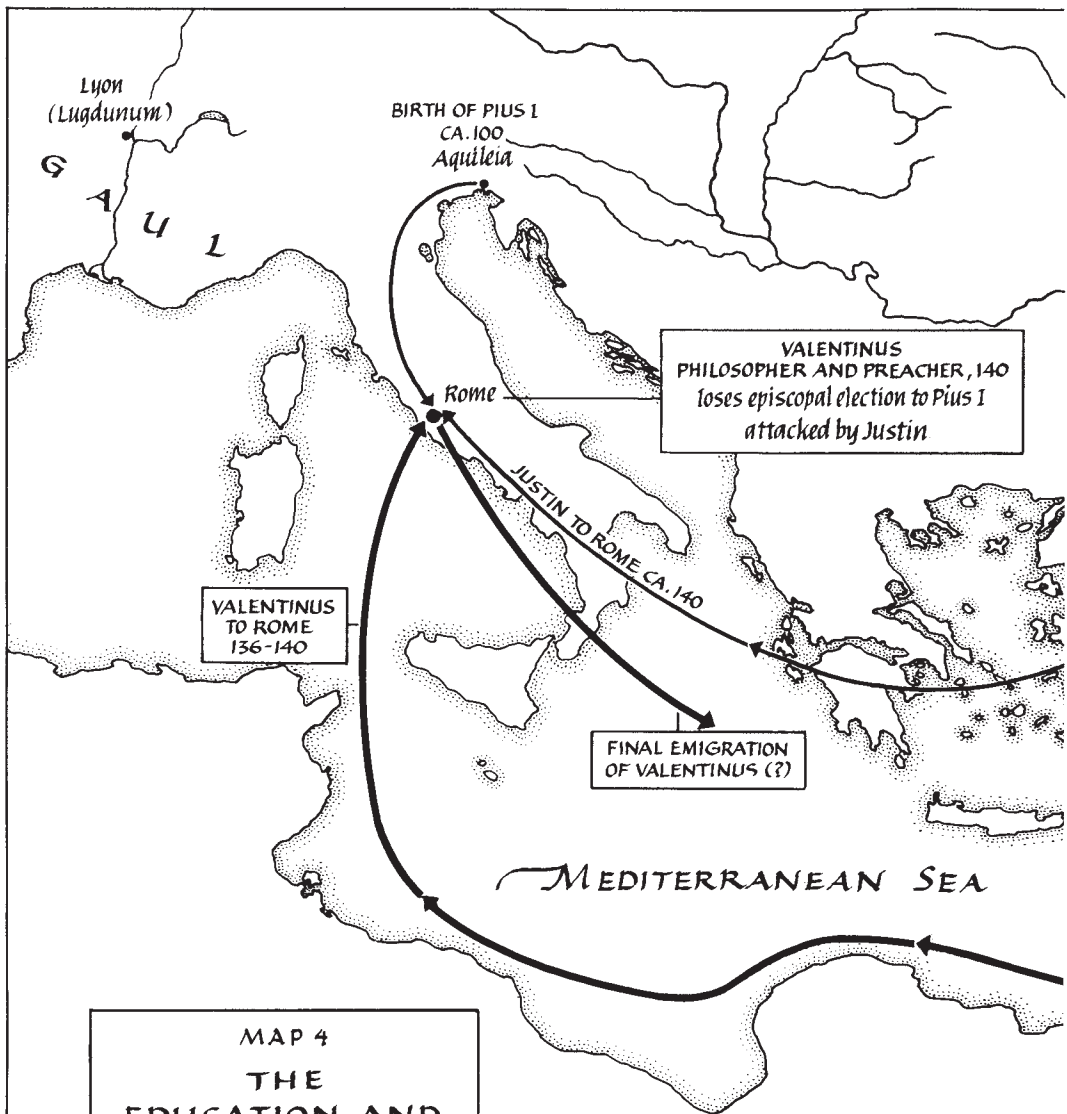
Valentinus (A.D. ca. 100–ca. 175) was born in the Egyptian Delta, at Phrebonis¹ (see Map 4). He enjoyed the good fortune of a Greek education in the nearby metropolis of Alexandria, the world capital of Hellenistic culture. In Alexandria he probably met the Christian philosopher Basilides (see Part Five), who was teaching there, and may have been influenced by him. There, too, he must have made the acquaintance of Greek philosophy. Valentinus's familiarity with Platonism may have come to him through study of Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of the Bible, for in a passage of one of his sermons he seems to show knowledge of a work by the great Alexandrian Jewish allegorist and philosopher Philo Judaeus (ca. 30 B.C.–A.D. ca. 45).² Valentinus's distinguished career as a teacher began in Alexandria, sometime between A.D. 117 and 138. Since most of the Fragments of his works (VFr) were preserved by a second-century Christian intellectual in Alexandria, Valentinus may have written and published in Alexandria while he was teaching there. If so, his considerable expertise in rhetorical composition, which is evident in these Fragments, must have been acquired while he was studying in Alexandria. Valentinus's followers in Alexandria later reported that he had claimed a kind of apostolic sanction for his teaching by maintaining that he had received lessons in Christian religion from a certain Theudas, who—he said—had been a student of St. Paul. If there is any truth in this claim, his contact with Theudas and his reading of St. Paul may have occurred in Alexandria.

In the second century all roads led to Rome. Thus, sometime between A.D. 136 and 140, Valentinus migrated to the great nerve center of the Roman empire, where he assumed a role in ecclesiastical affairs.

St. Irenaeus of Lyon reports in about the year 180 that Valentinus based his theological system in part upon the gnostic myth (IrV, "Relation to gnostic myth"). Where then did Valentinus come into contact with the sect of gnostics—

1. A city of the north central Egyptian Delta, otherwise called Phlabonis. The sixth-century encyclopedist Hierocles places it between Xoïs and Pachnemunis, thus nearly at the latitude of Alexandria but halfway between the two main branches of the Nile. Its exact modern equivalent cannot be discovered.

2. GTr 36:35f may use the allegory of Gn 2:8 found in Philo Judaeus, "Questions and Answers on Genesis" 1.6. For the text, see *Philo: Supplement I, Questions and Answers on Genesis Translated from the Ancient Armenian Version of the Original Greek*, by R. Marcus (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge; Mass: Harvard University Press, 1953).



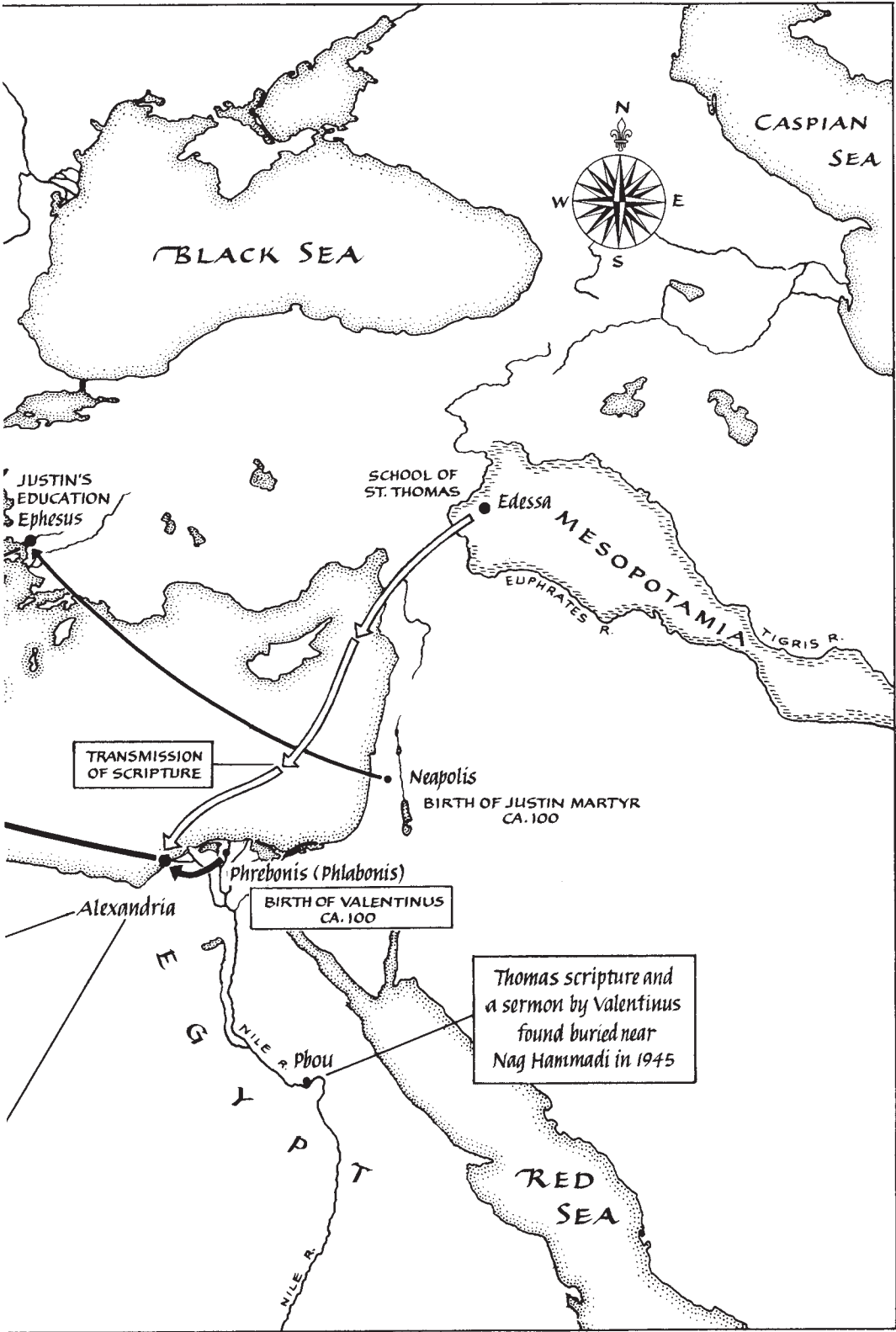
MAP 4
 THE
 EDUCATION AND
 CAREER
 OF VALENTINUS
 CA. 100-175

EDUCATION AND EARLY CAREER
 OF VALENTINUS

*Philo Judaeus studied by Christians
 Platonic and Stoic philosophy taught
 pagan school of Hermes
 many Christian scriptures used
 mystical theology of Thomas known
 Theudas and Glaucias
 Basilides teaches ca. 130-140
 Gnostic sect active*



After van der Meer (1966)



Alexandria or Rome? Since VFrC speaks of a “preexistent,” or spiritual, prototype of Adam, a knowledge of gnostic myth *may* be already presupposed in this Fragment. VFrC is one of the Fragments that were transmitted in Alexandria and preserved by an Alexandrian source, and so it may well go back to the time of Valentinus’s residence in Alexandria. If so, he had already met gnostics while he was in Egypt. Otherwise, he must have met them in the Christian church of Rome when he arrived. Any previous Alexandrian contact with Basilides or other myth-creating philosophers would have prepared him for this meeting.

It is difficult to detect the influence of other precise historical figures or sects upon Valentinus. But from the atmosphere of his style it is hard not to imagine that he also had come into contact with the esoteric Hermetic literature of Greek-speaking Egypt (cf. Poim, CH7). However, much more important—central, in fact—in Valentinus’s Christianity is mysticism, an acceptance of salvation through *gnōsis* (acquaintance) of the savior, the self, and god, whose most brilliant exposition is found in his sermon *The Gospel of Truth*. This doctrine is far from classic gnostic myth and from gnostic mysticism (as represented by Zs, Fr, and 3Tb). It is therefore a major aspect of Valentinus’s revision of gnostic tradition that he chose to make this mystical approach to salvation so important.

The doctrine is dimly present in the Johannine literature of the New Testament; but its clearest expression is probably in the works of the school of St. Thomas that are translated in Part Four, and which are *not* gnostic. Since the Mesopotamian Thomas literature (at least GTh) circulated in Egypt roughly at the time of Valentinus’s formative years—and also was known at Rome (to judge from the third-century witness of St. Hippolytus)—it might be supposed that Valentinus knew *The Gospel According to Thomas*, or perhaps similar works. This Mesopotamian current is the chief intellectual counterforce to gnostic myth in the delicate and unstable system of Valentinus’s religious thought (see Table 1 in the General Introduction).

HIS LATER CAREER

Once at Rome, Valentinus began to play an active role in the affairs of the Roman church as teacher and leader. It is even reported that he expected to be chosen bishop of Rome, on the grounds of his outstanding talent and literary ability (Greek was at this time the language spoken by Christians living in Rome). If this was his hope, it was dashed—and had it not been, the whole future of Roman Christianity might have been unimaginably altered.

Although Valentinus played a public role in the teaching and worship of the Christian community, he and his students also met privately. Apparently they accepted a shared, traditional Roman formulation of correct belief, but by means of allegorical interpretation they discovered also a “deeper” meaning within it, which was partly expressed in the form of Valentinus’s version of the gnostic myth (IrV); cf. “Allegorical interpretation of scripture” in the “Historical Introduction” to Part Three. Valentinus was a successful and productive teacher, for

the next generation of the Valentinian movement was populated by important exegetes and writers, who continued in the trail that Valentinus had blazed.

The Roman Christian community at mid second century was noteworthy for the great variety of its theologians and for their acrimonious debates with one another. Valentinus was the subject of a bitter series of attacks, in which he was lumped together with many different sects and past figures of Christianity. However, it is not clear that this opposition ever caused him to leave Rome, as later church fathers claimed in retrospect. In any case, Valentinus's public Roman career probably ended sometime around A.D. 165, and his death is shrouded in silence.

HIS WRITINGS

Valentinus's genius and Greek eloquence were publicly acknowledged by even his bitterest enemies. It is not surprising, then, to find an astonishing range and variety in his literary remains—so astonishing, in fact, that some critics even doubt they can have been written by one and the same author. But the variation is mainly one of literary genre and content, not style. In particular, the stylistic identity and peculiarity of the Fragments and GTr have recently been demonstrated, tending to confirm the attribution of GTr to Valentinus.

Three sides of Valentinus's literary personality emerge in these remains. First, there is the mythmaker—continuing in the steps of the gnostics, but strikingly innovative so as to take account of a different brand of philosophy, a more profound acceptance of biblical and cross-centered Christianity, and a different structuring of the myth. A doctrinal résumé of Valentinus's myth, by St. Irenaeus, survives (IrV): it is abbreviated and stops short, so no more than a hint of this side of Valentinus emerges. The myth is known in more detail in versions taught by Valentinus's disciples. The version by Ptolemy is included in the present volume (IrPt); from it, a modern reader can get a better idea of what Valentinus's own teaching must have been like, though some details are doubtless due to Ptolemy's own creativity.

Second, there is the Platonizing—or perhaps, better, gnosticizing—biblical theologian of the Fragments (VFrA–H). These eight Fragments, excerpted by ancient witnesses from Valentinus's philosophical epistles, sermons, and treatises, show an intensity, an attention to detail, and a penchant for unexpected turns of thought that set them apart from most other literature of gnostic Christianity and Valentinianism. Despite their brevity and incompleteness, they are among the most striking remains of ancient Christian literature. Without more of the originals, it is hard to assess how far they resembled the other material attributed to Valentinus. VFrA, VFrC, and VFrD relate to a mythic story of cosmic structure and creation like IrV, while VFrF and VFrH resemble more the content of GTr. However, there is very little in the Fragments that unambiguously resembles gnostic or postgnostic myth (except perhaps “the preexistent human being” in VFrC; cf. VFrD, “the form was not reproduced with perfect fidelity”).

Third, there is the mystic poet of *Summer Harvest* (VHr) and *The Gospel of Truth* (GTr). Both these works are personal and visionary. *Summer Harvest* is

nothing less than a stylized evocation of the whole metaphysical and physical world, in seven lines of verse that hover between philosophical cosmology and pure poetry. *The Gospel of Truth* also evokes the entire universe, but in a rhetoric that no longer bears any immediate relation to the linear, chainlike cosmology of gnostic myth or *Summer Harvest*. The world view of GTr is Stoic and pantheistic: that is, a universe in which all is enclosed by god, and ultimately all *is* god. Although it begins with formal rhetoric and continues with exhortation of the listeners, GTr ends in a purely visionary mode in which Valentinus confesses that he is already present in the “place” of repose and salvation.³

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- . “The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996): 327–52.
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Any reconstruction of Valentinus’s life and teachings is inseparable from the study of his disciples and school. See also, therefore, the “Select Bibliography” at the end of the “Historical Introduction” to Part Three.

3. Since each of these three bodies of text—the myth, the Fragments, and GTr—is written from a different perspective, the marginal cross-references among them are of uncertain value.

VALENTINUS'S MYTH

ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON,
AGAINST HERESIES 1.11.1

(IrV)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

This incomplete summary by St. Irenaeus of Lyon, written in Greek about A.D. 180, may be based upon a lost work of Valentinus; but if so, nothing is known about the literary nature or title of that work. The summary may also be based on secondhand information. Irenaeus did not know Valentinus personally, though he did have personal contact (in Gaul, that is, southern France, and perhaps elsewhere) with the first generation of Valentinus's disciples and also examined writings used in the Valentinian church. In addition, he relied on at least one older Christian work written against Valentinus and others.

St. Irenaeus means the reader to compare the present summary with his account of the gnostic sect (cf. IrG and possibly IrUnid), as he explicitly states. Thus he is only concerned to highlight some of the salient differences between Valentinus's system and the gnostic myth.

The summary parallels the gnostic myth, very selectively, from the description of the first principles down to Jesus of Nazareth—and perhaps beyond, since it ends by describing the activity of the holy spirit, presumably within the church.

The following points of Valentinus's gnostic myth appear:

Act I: The emission of the spiritual universe (**b–c, e**)

A primaevael octet and twenty-two subsequent aeons develop

Act II: The creation of the material universe (**c, f–h**)

“The mother” produces matter, Christ, and a thieving “craftsman”

(Act III: The creation of Adam, Eve, and their children—not mentioned here)

Act IV: The subsequent history of the human race (**i–j**)

Emission of the holy spirit; Jesus

From the summary, Valentinus's system appears more overtly Christian than the gnostic myth and also closer to the language of Plato (it speaks of a divine “craftsman,” for example, and not of Ialdabaōth). Furthermore, it is not inspired by the same school of Platonic teaching as gnostic myth, since the system begins with not a monad (BJn 2:26f) but a duality or dyad, that is, a pair of original first principles. The system also takes account of the origin of matter (a “shadow”

engendered by one of the aeons [“powers”] of the spiritual universe). On the problems of reconstructing Valentinus’s original system from other sources, see the introduction to IrPt.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Original Fullness

A. The deep:

The INEFFABLE, unengendered parent = SILENCE

B. Other aeons of the fullness:

The PARENT (of the entirety) = TRUTH

The WORD = LIFE

The HUMAN BEING = The CHURCH

TEN POWERS, from the Word and life

TWELVE POWERS, from the human being and the church, including:

The MOTHER (Wisdom)

II. Beings Produced Outside the Fullness

The ANOINTED (Christ)

The CRAFTSMAN (The almighty)

The LEFT-HAND RULER

JESUS

III.

The HOLY SPIRIT

TEXT

St. Irenaeus’s original Greek text survives in the form of a word-for-word citation in St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against Heresies* 31.32.2–9 (vol. 1, 434–35 in K. Holl’s edition of Epiphanius), whose text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. An ancient Latin version of Irenaeus’s work also survives. The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Greek and Latin texts by Rousseau and Doutreleau, with slight alteration: A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies: Livre I [Book 1]* (Sources chrétiennes, no. 264; Paris: Le Cerf, 1979), vol. 2, 166–71.

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See the “Select Bibliography” at the end of the “Historical Introduction” to Part Two. Also:

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Plato. “Timaeus.” In vol. 7 of *Plato with an English Translation*, by R. G. Bury, 1–253. Loeb Classical Library. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1929.

Relation to gnostic myth (a)

1.11.1 Valentinus adapted the fundamental principles^a of the so-called gnostic school of thought to his own kind of system.^b Here is what he laid down.

The ineffable and silence (b)

There was a duality, of which one member is called the ineffable^c and the other is called silence

GTr 17:4

BJn 4:10
TrTr 55:35
GTr 34:7

Production of the other aeons (c)

Then from this duality a second duality was emitted, of which one member he calls the parent^d and the other he calls truth.

GTr 16:31

This quartet yielded:^e

the Word;^f
life;
the human being;
the church.

GTr 16:33 +

GTr 20:28

VFrC
TrTr 57:33

This is the first octet.

And—he says—from the Word and life ten powers^g were emitted, as I already said.^h And from the human being and the church twelve powersⁱ were emitted

a. Or “first principles”; i.e. metaphysical assumptions, perhaps referring in this case to the gnostic myth.

b. Lit. “to his own character of classroom.”

c. Cf. the ineffable parent of the entirety in gnostic myth (BJn 2:26f).

d. As distinct from the “ineffable parent” (or “the ineffable”).

e. Like a crop. The word here is an agricultural term. The Valentinian school characteristically

spoke of emanations and the process of emanation in agricultural metaphors.

f. Or “verbal expression, rational faculty” (Greek *Logos*).

g. Cf. BJn 6:8f.

h. Cf. IrPt 1.1.2. In the work from which this section comes, St. Irenaeus discusses the Ptolemaean version of the myth before he summarizes the teaching of Valentinus.

i. Cf. BJn 8:22f.

Revolt of the mother (d)

One of these^j revolted^k and became lacking; this one was responsible for the rest of the affair.

Two boundaries (e)

He assumes the existence of two boundaries: one is between the deep and the rest of the fullness,^l bounding the engendered aeons away from the unengendered parent;^m the other bounds their mother apart from the fullness. GTr 35:14
GTr 16:33
TrTr 76:30

Production of the anointed (Christ) and “shadow” (f)

And furthermore, the anointed (Christ) was not emitted from the aeons within the fullness. Rather, he and a shadowⁿ were engendered by the mother, according to her memory of the superior realm, while she was outside (of the fullness). Since he was male he cut off the shadow, (removing it) from himself; and he hastened up into the fullness. CIExc 23.2

Loss of spirit by the mother. The craftsman. (g)

The mother was left behind with the shadow; and having been emptied of the spiritual substance,^o she emitted another child. This was the craftsman,^p whom he also calls the almighty of those that are subject to it. GTr 17:17

The left-hand ruler (h)

Just like the gnostics—falsely so called!—of whom we shall speak further on,^q he holds that along with this (craftsman) was emitted also a ruler on the left.

The emanation of Jesus (i)

And furthermore, sometimes he says that Jesus emanated from that being who had drawn away from this mother of theirs and had merged with the entirety, i.e. the wished-for.^r At other times he says that he emanated from that being which had hastened up into the fullness, i.e. the anointed (Christ); at still other IrPt 1.2.6
TrTr 86:23
GTr 17:4

j. In gnostic myth, wisdom (the last of the twelve aeons accompanying the four luminaries).

k. Or “turned away.”

l. Valentinian jargon for the spiritual universe.

m. The “ineffable” belonging to the first duality.

n. Matter; cf. RR 94:8f.

o. Corresponding to the “power” lost by wisdom at the production of her offspring Ialdabaōth; cf. Bfn 10:20f.

p. Greek *dēmiourgos*; the same word is used by Plato in his myth of creation entitled *Timaeus*.

Valentinus’s craftsman corresponds to Ialdabaōth of gnostic myth.

q. St. Irenaeus’s refutation is arranged in such a way that his description of the gnostics comes after that of Valentinus even though, as he says, they were Valentinus’s predecessors.

r. Greek *thelētos*, “the one who is desired or desirable.” Perhaps an epithet of the anointed (Christ), although St. Irenaeus’s next remark implies that this being is distinct from the anointed.

times, he says that he emanated from the human being and the church.

The holy spirit (j)

And the holy spirit, he says, was emitted by truth, for the scrutiny and yielding of the aeons,^s invisibly entering into them. Through it the aeons yielded the plants of truth.^t

GTr 26:35+

VHr 6
GTr 36:35 +

s. "aeons" (or "eternal realms") usually refer to beings within the spiritual universe (fullness).

t. See note "e."

FRAGMENTS OF LOST WORKS

(VFrA–H)

- A. The Divine Word Present in the Infant (Frag. 7 Vö.)
- B. *On the Three Natures* (Frag. 9 Vö.)
- C. Adam's Faculty of Speech (Frag. 1 Vö.)
- D. Adam's Name (Frag. 5 Vö.)
- E. Jesus' Digestive System (*Epistle to Agathopous*) (Frag. 3 Vö.)
- F. Annihilation of the Realm of Death (Frag. 4 Vö.)
- G. The Source of Common Wisdom (*On Friends*) (Frag. 6 Vö.)
- H. The Vision of God (*Epistle on Attachments*) (Frag. 2 Vö.)

The Fragments are arranged not in the traditional numerical order (established by W. Völker) but according to the order of events in the gnostic myth so far as it is relevant. Völker's "fragment" 8—*Summer Harvest* (VHr)—is put in a separate section, for in fact it is no fragment at all but rather a complete work.

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FRAGMENT A

THE DIVINE WORD PRESENT IN THE INFANT

(VFrA)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The first two sentences of this fragment may summarize an autobiographical or visionary statement by Valentinus. Nothing is known about the title or literary nature of the work in which the statement occurred. Its place of composition is uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

The third sentence is a later commentator's derogatory attempt to explain the source of Valentinus's theology ("pompous tale . . . his attempt at a sect"). This explanation may be compared with the historical one put forward by St. Irenaeus (IrV, "Relation to the gnostic school"). Neither explanation excludes the other. Compare also the introduction to VFr.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.42.2, a work sometimes, but probably wrongly, attributed to St. Hippolytus of Rome. It counts as Frag. 7 in Völker's enumeration. The translation below is based on Völker's text: W. Völker, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften, new ser., no. 5; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1932), 59.

Fragment A

FOR Valentinus says he saw a newborn babe, and questioned it to find out who it was. And the babe answered him saying that it was the Word.^a Thereupon, he adds to this a certain pompous tale,^b intending to derive from this his attempt at a sect.

VHr7?
HPrl?
BasFrG?

GTr 16:33+
GTh+

a. Or “verbal expression, rational faculty” (Gk. *Logos*).

b. Lit. “a certain tragic myth.” Possibly the commentator means that Valentinus added the gnostic myth (“a certain pompous tale”) to his

own theological vision; cf. IrV (“Relation to gnostic myth”). If so, the vision of the babe may refer to HPrl (cf. GTh nos. 22, 46) and the mystical concept of salvation conveyed by the Thomas scripture.

FRAGMENT B

ON THE THREE NATURES

(VFrB)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

This is not really a literary fragment, just a title. It shows that Valentinus, like the gnostics (and also like contemporaneous Platonists), recognized a tripartite structure at some level in his description of the spiritual universe. The work presumably was a theological treatise. Its place of composition is unknown. The language of composition must have been Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the fourth-century theologian Marcellus of Ancyra ("Pseudo-Anthimus of Nicomedia"), *On the Holy Church*, 9. It is not clear whether the terms "subsistent entity (hypostasis)," "person," and "father, son, holy spirit" were used by Valentinus or belong only to Marcellus's characterization of the treatise.

The excerpt counts as Frag. 9 in Völker's enumeration. The translation below is based on Völker's text (cf. VFrA, "Text"), *Quellen*, p. 60.

Fragment B

VALENTINUS, the leader of a sect, was the first to devise the notion of three subsistent entities (hypostases), in a work that he entitled *On the Three Natures*.^a For he devised the notion of three subsistent entities and three persons—father, son, and holy spirit.

GTr 26:35+

a. Apart from its title (*Peri tōn triōn physeōn*), the work apparently does not survive. It must have concerned the structure of the spiritual universe. A threefold division of the Barbēlō aeon is described in certain works that recount the gnostic myth (cf.

EgG 50:23f), but these divisions do not correspond to the three persons of the orthodox trinity. A trio of hypostases also figured in Platonist philosophical speculation starting at least as early as the second century A.D.

FRAGMENT C

ADAM'S FACULTY OF SPEECH (VFrC)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

In this fragment, which is quoted verbatim, Valentinus speaks of the divine or artistic inspiration, and thus superiority, inherent in Adam (“that modeled form”) just after the faculty of speech was imparted to him from the higher realm, as an assistance. For details of the story, the gnostic paraphrase of Gn 2:18 in RR 88:17f may be compared. The rulers are called “angels” as in IrSat, EpS, and generally in Jewish lore of the period. Reference to “the preexistent human being” that provided a model for the creation of Adam makes it clear that this passage is not simply an exegesis of Gn but refers to a more elaborate story, presumably a revision of the gnostic myth (cf. IrV). The “agent who deposited” the faculty of speech (“seed of higher being”) is, at least in RR, the female spiritual principle, but may in Valentinus refer to the Word (son) of the ineffable parent. This principle “speaks freely” through Adam, using him as its mouthpiece so long as it inhabits his body. For free speech of the divine as an aspect of the son, see VFrH and GTr.

The fragment comes from “a certain epistle” by Valentinus, no doubt a treatise in the form of a philosophical epistle. This literary genre was often used in the period; complete Valentinian examples survive in TRs and PtF. The recipient of the epistle is unknown and its place of composition uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria, *Miscellanies (Stromateis)* 2.36.2–4 (132,6–16 Stählin). It counts as Frag. 1 in Völker’s enumeration. The translation below is based on Völker’s text (cf. VFrA “Text”), *Quellen*, 57–58.

Fragment C

AND EVEN as awe^a overcame the angels^b in the presence of that modeled form^c because it uttered sounds superior to what its modeling justified,^d owing to the agent who had invisibly deposited in it a seed^e of higher essence and who spoke freely: so too in the races of worldly people,^f human artifacts become objects of awe for their creators—for example, statues and paintings^g and everything that (human) hands make as representing^h a god. For Adam, modeled as representing a human being, made them stand in awe of the preexistent human being;ⁱ for precisely the latter stood in him. And they were stricken with terror and quickly concealed^j the work.

VFrD

GTr 17:14
ClExc 2.1
TrTr 105:17

VFrH

IrV(c)

GTr 30:19
GTr 17:9+

a. Or “fear.”

b. The “rulers” of gnostic myth.

c. Adam’s body. “modeled form” is Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

d. Cf. RR 88:17f.

e. The Valentinian school characteristically speaks of emanations and the process of emanation in agricultural metaphors.

f. Perhaps meaning “the world at large,” whether non-Christian or Christian.

g. Or “images.”

h. The Greek idiom literally says “in the name of.”

i. Adamas (Ger-Adamas) in gnostic myth. Cf. BJn 8:28f.

j. Or “marred, destroyed.”

FRAGMENT D

ADAM'S NAME

(VFrD)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

In GTr, Valentinus elaborates the idea that the divine son of god, who is also called the father's "name," completes the "lack" within each person that is saved. In VFrD, he explores this theme in regard to Adam ("what has been modeled") and his relationship to the divine image and likeness after which he was formed. Adam was "modeled as representing (literally, in the name of) . . . the pre-existent human being" and also bears that being's name ("human being"): compare VFrC. This archetypal relationship may provide a clue to some of the enigmatic statements about names in GTr.

As narrator of the fragment, Valentinus moves back and forth ambiguously between general statements about artistic verisimilitude and specific comments on Adam's degree of likeness to the divine: this shifting ambiguity has been noted as a salient feature of Valentinus's literary style.

The literary genre of the work excerpted in this fragment is unknown and its place of composition uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of the fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria, *Miscellanies (Stromateis)* 4.89.6–4.90.1 (vol. 2, 287, 21–27 Stählin). It counts as Frag. 5 in Völker's enumeration. It has been suggested that this and VFrF come from the same work because the two fragments are quoted so close to one another by Clement. The translation below is based on Völker's text (cf. VFrA, "Text"), *Quellen*, 59.

Fragment D

HOWEVER much a portrait^a is inferior to an actual face, just so is the world worse than the living realm.^b Now, what is the cause of the (effectiveness of the) portrait? It is the majesty of the face that has furnished to the painter a prototype so that the portrait might be honored by his name.^c For the form was not reproduced^d with perfect fidelity, yet the name completed the lack^e within the act of modelling. And also god's invisible cooperates with what has been modeled^f to lend it credence.

VFrC

TTr 79:10

GTr 21:14

Rm 1:20

a. Or "image."

b. "living" in gnostic myth is jargon indicating association with the spiritual universe. "realm": or "aeon."

c. "by his name": by the name of the majestic subject who is being painted. Or, alternatively, by the painter's reputation.

d. "was not reproduced": the past tense ("was") takes the narrative back to a description of the "act of modeling" of the first human being Adam (the "modeled form") and his relation to the divine prototype (Adamas or Ger-Adamas, cf. BJn 8:28f).

e. Cf. GTr note 24a.

f. Specifically Adam.

FRAGMENT E

JESUS'
DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

EPISTLE TO AGATHOPOUS

(VFrE)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

In this fragment Valentinus discusses Jesus' "continence" (the Greek term, *enkrateia*, means abstemiousness in the use of wine, meat, sex, etc.), perhaps as a model for Christian behavior (cf. IrSat 1.24.2). His exaggerated statement about Jesus' digestion may be based on a New Testament story of Jesus' command to the people of Tiberias in Jn 6:27, playing upon the double meaning of the Greek verb "to labor for," which can also mean "to digest": "Jesus answered them . . . 'Do not *labor for* (or *digest*) the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give to you.'"

The fragment comes from an *Epistle* to a certain Agathopous (otherwise unknown), no doubt a treatise in the form of a philosophical epistle; cf. VFrC ("Introduction"). Its place of composition is uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of the fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* (*Stromateis*) 3.59.3 (223,12–16 Stählin). It counts as Frag. 3 in Völker's enumeration. The translation below is based on Völker's text (cf. VFrA, "Text"), *Quellen*, 60.

Fragment E

HE WAS continent, enduring all things. Jesus digested^a divinity: he ate and drank in a special way, without excreting his solids. He had such a great capacity for continence that the nourishment within him was not corrupted,^b for he did not experience corruption.

VFrF
Ac 13:35
= Ps 16:11

a. Or "labored for."

b. I.e. did not become excrement.

FRAGMENT F

ANNIHILATION OF THE REALM OF DEATH

(VFrF)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The fragment quoted here is a piece of exaggerated artistic rhetoric, spoken before a Christian congregation. The occasion is unknown. The passage makes implicit comparison between the individual Christian elect (“From the beginning”) and Jesus, for both are said to be immortal by nature and superior to corruption (cf. VFrE, “he [Jesus] did not experience corruption”). As in GTr and TRs, the material world is spoken of as unreal compared to the state of being experienced by the saved Christian. The verbatim quotation (printed here in ordinary type) is continued by a summary (in *italics*) phrased in the words of Clement, by whom the fragment is preserved.

Because the fragment comes from a sermon, as the source explicitly states, it should be compared with GTr. The sermon’s place of composition is uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of the fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* (*Stromateis*) 4.89.1–3 (287,10–20 Stählin). It counts as Frag. 4 in Völker’s enumeration. It has been suggested that this and VFrD come from the same work because the two fragments are quoted so close to one another by Clement. The translation below is based on Völker’s text (cf. VFrA, “Text”), *Quellen*, 58, supplemented by a passage from Stählin’s text of Clement: O. Stählin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus: Stromata Buch I–VI* (Griechische christliche Schriftsteller, 15; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906) 4.89.4–5 (vol. 2, p. 287, 15–20).

Fragment F

FROM the beginning you (plur.) have been immortal, and you are children of eternal life. And you wanted death to be allocated to yourselves so that you might spend it and use it up,^a and that death might die in you and through you. For when you nullify^b the world and are not yourselves annihilated, you are lord over creation and all corruption. GTr 21:23
GTr 43:22+
GTr 33:19
GTr 24:20
VFrE

Now,^c like Basilides,^d he supposes that there is a people that by its (very) nature is saved;^e that this race, indeed, has come down to us^f for the destruction of death;^g and that the origination of death is the work of the creator of the world. Accordingly, he understands the scriptural passage (Ex 33:20)^h “No one shall see the face of god and live” as though godⁱ were the cause of death.

a. “allocated . . . spend it . . . use it up”: fiscal imagery was a commonplace way of speaking of death or of the body as a corrupt part of the human being, e.g. on ancient Greek and Latin grave-stones. It is used also in TRs.

b. Or “loosen (the bond of).” For “nullification” of the “realm of appearance” or “world” see GTr 24:20f.

c. The italicized remarks are by Clement.

d. An inaccurate comparison; for what Basilides meant, cf. BasFrC.

e. So also “one is saved by (one’s very) nature” as Valentinus has it” (BasFrC 5.3.3).

f. “us”: Clement speaks as a non-Valentinian, referring to the rest of the human race.

g. “that this race . . . of death”: Clement’s interpretation of the beginning of Fragment F. It may or may not be correct.

h. In the exact wording of the passage (Septuagint Greek version) God speaks: “No person shall see my face and live.”

i. “the creator of the world . . . god”: the craftsman of the world (Ialdabaöth in Gnostic myth).

FRAGMENT G

THE SOURCE OF
COMMON WISDOM

ON FRIENDS

(VFrG)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

In the middle of the second century A.D., non-Valentinian Christians as well as Valentinians were interested in why moral truths were to be found in pagan pre-Christian literature (“publicly available books”), especially the classics of Greek culture such as Plato or the tragedians. For example St. Justin Martyr, a Christian philosopher who was contemporary with Valentinus at Rome, argued that god’s preexistent Word (the son) had created the world, and then up to the time of his incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth had “sowed seeds” of moral enlightenment in the hearts of certain great teachers and writers of pagan classical antiquity. The present fragment must be from Valentinus’s treatment of the same problem, but it is too brief to make his full position clear. Though Valentinus, like Justin, used the agricultural imagery of moral or intellectual “seeds” implanted in humankind (VFrC), here he seems to work with the image of the human heart (moral faculty) as a book in which god writes: cf. GTr 23:2f, where the individual Christians are said to be passages of text that speak aloud.

The fragment is taken from a sermon by Valentinus entitled *On Friends*. The sermon’s place of composition is uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria, *Miscellanies (Stromateis)* 6.52.3–4 (vol. 2, 458,11–16 Stählin). It counts as Frag. 6 in Völker’s enumeration. The translation below is based on Völker’s text (cf. VFrA, “Text”), *Quellen*, 59.

Fragment G

MANY of the things written in publicly available books^a are found in the writings of god's church. For this shared matter is the utterances that come from the heart, the law that is written in the heart. This is the people of the beloved, which is beloved and which loves him.

Rm 2:15?
GTr 19:34
GTr 32:31+
Rm 9:25?

a. I.e. non-Christian or pre-Christian literature.

FRAGMENT H

THE VISION OF GOD

EPISTLE ON ATTACHMENTS^a

(VFrH)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

This fragment concerns the heart's prerequisites for *gnōsis* or acquaintance with god (to "see god") and so belongs to the genre of literature that sets out a theory of spirituality or mysticism. The language is partly biblical (purity of heart, evil spirits dwelling in the heart) but also strongly Platonic. Like the image of "attachments" mentioned in the title (cf. note "a"), the comparison of the soul to a caravansary (found in this fragment) was used by Plato in the *Republic* (580a4); the same comparison was used also by followers of Basilides. Valentinus emphasizes the role of the savior, referred to as son, Word (god's "act of free speaking"), and forethought, in the prelude to *gnōsis*. The saving action of the son is also spoken of as the visitation of the father, so that the distinction of father and son is deemphasized: the theology of GTr may be compared.

The fragment is taken from an "epistle on attachments" (or "appendages"), no doubt a treatise in the form of a philosophical epistle. This literary genre was often used in the period; complete Valentinian examples survive in TRs and PtF. The recipient of the epistle is unknown and the epistle's place of composition is uncertain (possibly Alexandria). The language of composition is Greek.

a. The title of the work is known from Clement of Alexandria (see below). The image of "attachments" or "appendages" does not occur in the surviving fragment; its source may have been Plato's comparison (*Republic* 611cd) of the soul to the sea god Glaucus, who had become like a sea monster

owing to the seaweed, rocks, and shells that had become attached to him because of his mode of life. In the surviving fragment, Valentinus uses another Platonic image of the soul, also taken from the *Republic*; cf. below.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* (*Stromateis*) 2.114.3–6 (vol. 2, 174,31–175,14 Stählin). It counts as Frag. 2 in Völker's enumeration. The translation below is based on Völker's text (cf. VFrA "Text"), *Quellen*, 58.

Fragment H

AND ONE there is who is good!^b His free act of speaking is the manifestation of the son. And through him alone can a heart become pure, when every evil spirit has been put out of the heart. For the many spirits dwelling in the heart do not permit it to become pure: rather, each of them performs its own acts, violating it in various ways with improper desires. And in my opinion the heart experiences something like what happens in a caravansary.^c For the latter is full of holes and dug up and often filled with dung, because while they are there, people live in an utterly vulgar way and take no forethought for the property since it belongs to someone else. Just so, a heart too is impure by being the habitation of many demons, until it experiences forethought.^d But when the father, who alone is good, visits the heart, he makes it holy and fills it with light. And so a person who has such a heart is called blessed, for that person will see god.^e

Mt 19:17
VFrH
GTr 36:35+
VFrC
GTr 32:31+
GTr 31:34+
TrTr 53:5

GTr 21:25

GTr 18: 15
Mt 5:8
GTr 30:14+

b. God the father. Quoted from Mt 19:17.

c. A rural inn of the East, with large enclosed courtyard for pack animals, where caravans may stop overnight.

d. Or "providence, first thought." In gnostic

myth the savior is identified with forethought or first thought (BJn 4:26f, FTh).

e. Thus the passage is an interpretation of Mt 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see god."

SUMMER HARVEST

(VHr)

CONTENTS

Summer Harvest (“Harvest”) is a cosmological poem that is visionary and personal in character [“I see in spirit. . . I know in spirit . . .”]. Its authority, like that of GTr, rests ultimately upon the speaker’s claim to knowledge based upon personal acquaintance (*gnōsis*); thus it stands in sharp contrast to the gnostic sect’s use of pseudepigraphy as a source of authority.

Lines 3–5 describe the world outside the divine realm as a static structure—that which is “hung.” The main elements are common terms suitable to Greek science and philosophy. The linear chain of “flesh-soul-air-upper atmosphere” recalls the genre of cosmological myth, although it starts from below and ascends (compare the introductions to Zs and Fr).

Lines 6–7 describe what is “borne” (carried) from within the godhead downward to our world, and make the connection between our world and the spiritual one. The tone changes from stasis to urgent motion, the vocabulary from science to myth, the epistemology from what is “seen” to what is “known” (lines 1–2). With the word “deep,” the informed reader is plunged into the innermost place in Valentinus’s own version of the gnostic myth (cf. IrV), the ultimate source of all emanations. “Crops” are a typical Valentinian image of emanations. The “womb,” in a cosmological and mythic context, would have recalled the Barbēlō or first emanation of gnostic myth, which was called “a womb for the entirety” (BJn 5:5f). The word “babe” is ambiguous, unless a clue is provided by VFrA, where a newborn babe “seen” by Valentinus is identified as the Word (Logos). If the same is true in VHr, the poem culminates in a reference to the procession of the divine Word—this is the “harvest.” Secondarily, then, it would also refer to the Incarnation or epiphany of a divine “babe.” If so, the poem would be suitable for Advent, despite its metaphorical title of *Summer Harvest*. Compare also VFrA note b.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

Compared to the poetry of the gnostic sect (e.g., BJn 30:13f, FTh, EgG 78:10f), VHr is ostentatiously Hellenistic. Unlike classic gnostic poetry, VHr is composed

in regular verse. The meter of the Greek text is one that was used during Hellenistic and Roman times in “popular” poetry. The poem is described as a “hymn” (*psalmos*) in the source where it is preserved, and indeed Valentinus may have intended the text to be sung. It has even been suggested that the rubric “Summer Harvest” (*theros*) specifies a preexistent tune (otherwise unknown), which the poem would fit; other song tunes named for seasonal occupations are attested in roughly the same period. The place of the hymn’s composition is unknown.

TEXT

The text survives only because it is quoted in the third-century *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.37.7 (167,14–168,4, Wendland), a work sometimes, but probably wrongly, attributed to St. Hippolytus of Rome. It counts as “Fragment” 8 in Völker’s enumeration, though it is no fragment at all, rather, a complete work. The translation below is based on Völker’s text: W. Völker, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften, new ser., no. 5; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1932), 59.

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SUMMER HARVEST^a

I see in spirit^b that all are hung^c
I know in spirit that all are borne^d
Flesh hanging from soul
Soul clinging to air
Air hanging from upper atmosphere

Crops rushing forth from the deep^e
A babe rushing forth from the womb.^f

GTr 36:35+
IrV(e)
VFrA?
TrTr 60:16
ClExc 29

a. This may not be the title, but rather a specification of the tune to which the text should be sung; cf. the introduction. On the other hand, the Valentinian school characteristically speaks of emanations and the process of emanation (cf. lines 6–7) in agricultural metaphors.

b. Or “by means of (my) spirit.”

c. Or “hanging.”

d. Or “being carried.”

e. According to IrV, the “deep” is the part of the divine fullness that comprises the ineffable unengendered parent and silence.

f. In gnostic myth (BJn 5:5f) the first emanation from the ineffable source (the Barbēlō) is “a womb for the entirety.”

Appendix: A Later Allegorical Interpretation of “Summer Harvest”: *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.37.8

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The *Refutation of All Heresies*, which preserves the text of VHR as a quotation, also includes the following allegorical interpretation of it. In the *Refutation*, which was written in Greek shortly after A.D. 222, this interpretation immediately follows a full quotation of Valentinus’s original text. There is no particular reason to believe that the allegory corresponds to Valentinus’s own intentions.

TEXT

The translation below is based on Völker’s text (*Quellen*, p. 60).

He means this: “flesh” according to them^a is matter which “hangs from” the “soul” of the craftsman.^b “Soul clings to air”: i.e. the craftsman (clings) to spirit of the outer fullness.^c And “air hangs from upper atmosphere,” i.e. the outer wisdom (hangs) from the inner boundary^d and the entire fullness. “Crops rush forth from the deep,” having become the complete emanation of the aeons^e from the parent.^f

a. “they” are presumably Valentinian theologians giving an allegorical interpretation of what “He” (Valentinus) “means.”

b. Cf. IrV note p. “soul” may refer to what Plato called “world soul” in the *Timaeus*; cf. “power” in gnostic myth and “spiritual substance” in IrV.

c. In IrV the spiritual universe (“fullness”) is

divided into “the deep,” comprising “the ineffable” and “silence,” and the rest of the fullness (here called “the outer fullness”).

d. Cf. IrV (e).

e. Cf IrV note s.

f. Two beings are designated “parent” in IrV; cf. IrV note d.

THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

(GTr)

CONTENTS

The Gospel of Truth is a Christian sermon on the theme of salvation by acquaintance with god (*gnōsis*). One of the most brilliantly crafted works of ancient Christian literature, in the original Greek it must have had a rhetorical power that ranked with the great masterpieces of Christian prose. It is the earliest surviving sermon of Christian mysticism. And since very few sermons survive from the ancient gnostic sect and its offshoots, GTr affords a rare glimpse of the actual human atmosphere of a church meeting, in which a magisterial gnostic preacher addresses a congregation, speaking from personal authority. The main themes of the work are established in the opening sentence: search for the father (god) and the hope of deliverance on the part of those who had fallen ignorant and needed a savior to ransom them from ignorance; and emission of the saving divine Word, who proclaimed the truth about the father and brought joy and acquaintance with the father. The contents are thus a dynamic description of Christian *gnōsis* or acquaintance with god.

The characters of this theological drama are simply the *father* (the unknowable god), the *Word* or *son* (god's manifestation), and the *ignorant*, who become transformed into *those who have acquaintance*. The work is overtly Christian, and makes no specific reference to the gnostic myth. It speaks of Jesus' crucifixion as the central object of Christian faith, and contains many paraphrases of New Testament passages.

Two possible states of being are contrasted in GTr: repose (true being, wakefulness) and movement (illusory existence, nightmare). A similar distinction is observed in Platonism, but the basic world view of GTr is not simply Platonist. Rather, the cosmological model of GTr is provided by Stoic pantheistic monism and by astronomy. God (the father) is held to be uncontained and to contain all things. Individuals within him are also said to contain god: thus god permeates, or can permeate, all individual things. Accordingly, the model is not linear (as in gnostic mysticism, cf. Zs, Fr) but three-dimensional and nested, like the ancient astronomical concept of nested heavenly spheres, with god as the most encompassing sphere.

Yet unlike Stoic cosmology, the system of GTr is strongly antimaterialist, even illusionist, as regards the reality of material structures. One consequence of ac-

quaintance (*gnōsis*) with the all-containing divine father is to see the illusion that there are material things—indeed the illusion of distinction and structure—fade away into nothingness. This amounts to reunion with the father; it is salvation, and repose. The main register of GTr is thus not description of the universe but discussion of knowledge and psychology. In this, the concept of salvation in GTr closely resembles that of *The Gospel According to Thomas*. In the few passages where mythic cosmology may covertly come into view (e.g., 17:4f) the figures and events of myth are psychological. In this sense, GTr is to cosmological myth (IrV) as allegory (cf. the “Historical Introduction” to Part Three) is to text. In this almost complete allegorization, the underlying dynamic of gnostic myth (fullness—lack—recapture of the lacked) is reapplied microcosmically, at the level of the individual Christian.

The theology of GTr uses the simple biblical language of “father” and “son” (or possibly “parent” and “offspring,” though 43:11f seems to apply a specifically male anatomical metaphor to the parent). It has been demonstrated that in GTr Valentinus paraphrases, and so interprets, some thirty to sixty scriptural passages, almost all from New Testament books (Gn, Jn, 1 Jn, Rv, Mt, Rm, 1 Co, 2 Co, Ep, Col, and Heb). Of these, it has been shown that the Johannine literature (including Rv) has had the most profound theological influence upon Valentinus’s thought; the Pauline literature, less so; and Mt hardly at all. To a large degree the paraphrased passages have been verbally reshaped by abridgement or substitution, to make them agree with Valentinus’s own theological perspective (cf. the paraphrase of Gn in RR).

Though carefully controlled, the rhetoric of GTr is not linear but atmospheric, just as its cosmology is not linear but concentric: GTr aims not to argue a thesis by logic, but to describe, evoke, and elicit a kind of relationship. Ideas and images are developed slowly by repeating key points with minor changes. As in gnostic myth a great many epithets used substantively are applied to each main character. Ambiguity of the pronouns “he” and “it” plays a major role in this development; this is one of the striking aspects of Valentinus’s style, and can be seen also in the Fragments. Valentinus’s style—quite apart from his mystic theology or theory of salvation—is probably unique within ancient Christian literature; it has been described as a gnostic rhetoric.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The manuscripts do not specify the title or author of GTr. The conventional title has been supplied by scholarship; it may be a mistake to suppose that Valentinus ever gave a title to the work. In any case, the second-century father of the church St. Irenaeus of Lyon states that the Valentinian church read a *Gospel* (or *Proclamation*) of Truth. Since this is the opening phrase of GTr, some scholars have concluded that Irenaeus must be referring to the present work.

The author’s name does not appear in the manuscripts, and thus the attribution of GTr to Valentinus remains hypothetical. Nevertheless, it is extremely likely for several reasons: the work’s stylistic resemblance to the Fragments

(whose attribution is explicit) and the uniqueness of that style; the alleged genius and eloquence of Valentinus and the lack of a likely candidate for the authorship among later Valentinian writers; and the absence of a developed system in the work, perhaps suggesting that it belongs early in the history of the Valentinian church.

The place and exact date of composition of GTr are unknown (Valentinus died ca. 175); the language of composition was Greek.

The work is a sermon and has nothing to do with the Christian genre properly called “gospel” (e.g., the Gospel of Mark).

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive, though a remark by St. Irenaeus (see above, “Literary background”) may be taken as testimony to its existence. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by two manuscripts, NHC I (16–43) and NHC XII (fragments), which were copied just before A.D. 350 and are now in the Cairo Coptic Museum. The two Coptic manuscripts contain different versions of the text, one (NHC I) in a Subachmimic dialect of Coptic and the other (NHC XII) in the Sahidic dialect of Coptic. The two versions seem to have been translated from slightly different ancient editions of the Greek text. The Sahidic manuscript (NHC XII) has been almost completely destroyed and survives in the form of a few fragments; the Subachmimic manuscript (NHC I) is virtually complete. For that reason, the present translation is from the Subachmimic MS (NHC I) alone.

The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Coptic by Malinine et al., with some alterations and with improved readings introduced from an unpublished collation of the manuscript made by S. Emmel and kindly supplied by him: M. Malinine et al., *Evangelium Veritatis*, 2–48, and *Evangelium Veritatis [Supplementum]*, 2–8 (see “Select Bibliography”).

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The Gospel of Truth^a

Prologue

- 31 **16** The proclamation^b of the truth is a joy for those who have
33 received grace from the father of truth, •that they might learn
to know him^c through the power of the Word^d that emanated
from the fullness^e that is in the father’s thought^f and intellect—
36 the Word, •who is spoken of as “savior”: for, that is the term for
the work that he^g was to accomplish to ransom those who had
1 fallen ignorant 17 of the father; •while the term “proclamation”
refers to the manifestation of hope, a discovery for those who are
searching for him.
- Mk 1:1?
18:11
TrTr 51:3
IfV (c)
VFrA
IfV (e)

I. THE ORIGIN OF IGNORANCE

The creation

- 4 Inasmuch as the entirety^a had searched for the one from
whom they had emanated, and the entirety was inside of
him—the inconceivable uncontained, who is superior to all
9 thought^b—•ignorance of the father caused agitation and fear.
- IfV (i)
TrTr 65:15
18:34
IfV (b)
29:1, VFrC
Rm 1:21

16 a. Or “*The Proclamation of Truth*.” No title is given in the MSS. The present title has been supplied by modern scholars, following a statement by St. Irenaeus (cf. the introduction to GTr).

b. “proclamation” (Gk. *euaggelion*): the Greek word can be translated also “gospel.” The title plays on this double meaning.

c. “father . . . him” (or “parent . . . it”): traditional anthropomorphic Christian language for reference to the highest deity is used in this work.

d. “Word” (Gk. *Logos*): or “verbal expression.”

e. “fullness”: Valentinian jargon for the spiritual universe.

f. Or “thinking”; cf. BJn 4:26f.

g. “he” (or “it”): traditional Christian anthropomorphic language for reference to the mediating principle (Word, son) is used in this work.

17 a. “entirety”: gnostic jargon for the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the Barbêlō aeon or second principle; here it refers especially to spiritual reality as alienated from its source.

b. cf. BJn 3:22–26.

- 11 •And the agitation grew dense like fog, so that no one could see.
 14 •Thus error^c found strength and labored at her matter^d in emp- VFrC
 17 tiness. •Without having learned to know the truth, she took up
 residence in a modeled form,^e preparing by means of the power,^f
 in beauty, a substitute for truth. IrV(g)

The unreality of creation

- 21 Now, to the inconceivable uncontained this was not humili-
 23 ating; •for the agitation and forgetfulness and the modeled form
 of deception were as nothing, whereas established truth is un-
 28 changeable, imperturbable, and cannot be beautified. •For this
 reason despise error, since she has no root.^g

Forgetfulness

- 30 She dwelt in a fog as regards the father, preparing, while TrTr 77:22
 33 she dwelt there, products and forgetfulness and fears, •so that
 by them she might beguile those of the middle^h and take them
 36 captive. •The forgetfulness that belongs to error is not apparent; TrTr 98:14
 1 it is not (?) 18 [. . .] with the father. •It was not in the father's TrTr 119:20
 company that forgetfulness arose, and surely then not because of
 4 him! •Rather, what comes into being within him is acquaintance,
 which appeared so that forgetfulness might perish and the fa-
 7 ther might come to be known. •Inasmuch as forgetfulness arose
 because the father was unknown, from the moment the father
 comes to be known, there will no longer be forgetfulness.

II. DISCOVERY OF THE FATHER

The crucified Jesus is god within

- 11 It is to the perfect^a that this, the proclamation of the one they Col 1:25
 search for, has made itself known, through the mercies of the 16:31

c. "error": a feminine personification corresponding to both wisdom and Ialdabaōth in gnostic myth. The present section (17:4–17f) is an allegorical equivalent of the production of Ialdabaōth and the creation of the universe and humankind in gnostic myth.

d. "her matter": the material universe, which belonged to error.

e. Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth. The word (Gk. *plasma*) also means "fiction, fabrication."

f. "the power": cf. BJn 10:20f.

g. "root": source.

h. I.e. ordinary Christians (?). In later Valentinian theology, "the middle" is the realm of the "just," who can waver between good and evil, as distinct from the realm of the spirituals (Valentinians) and the father; cf. IrPt 1.7.1 TrTr calls the animate powers "the middle ones" (TrTr 98:14) and appears to identify non-Valentinian Christians as members of "the animate race," which, it says, "is in the middle" (TrTr 119:20). Valentinus's own teaching on this subject is unknown.

18 a. "the perfect": the elect, who have been chosen for salvation.

15 father. •By this the hidden mystery Jesus Christ shed light upon VFrH
 18 those who were, because of forgetfulness, in darkness. •He en-
 lightened them and gave them a way, and the way is the truth, Jn 14:6
 21 about which he instructed them. •For this reason error became
 23 angry at him and persecuted him. •She was constrained by him,
 24 and became inactive. •He was nailed to a tree^b and became fruit Gn 2:17
 26 of the father's acquaintance. •Yet it did not cause ruin because it Gn 3:7
 27 was eaten. •Rather, to those who ate of it, it gave the possibility
 that whoever he discovered within himself might be joyful in the
 31 discovery of him. •And as for him, they discovered him within
 them—the inconceivable uncontained, the father, who is perfect, 19:7, Col 1:16
 who created the entirety.

Existence within the father

34 Because the entirety was within him and the entirety was in
 need of him^c —since he had retained within himself its comple- 17:4
 tion, which he had not given unto the entirety—the father was TrTr 60:20
 not grudging; for what envy is there between him and his own ClExc 7.1
 40 members? •For if 19 this realm had [. . .] them, they would not TrTr 53:11
 be able to [. . .] the father, retaining their completion within him-
 self, in that it [was] given them in the form of return to him and
 7 acquaintance and completion. •It is he who created the entirety, 18:31
 9 and the entirety is in him. •And the entirety was in need of him: Col 1:16
 10 •just as someone who is unknown to certain people might wish TrTr 57:2
 14 to become known, and so become loved, by them. •For what did
 the entirety need if not acquaintance with the father?

The savior as teacher

17 He became a guide,^a at peace and at leisure for classrooms.
 19, 21 •He came forward and uttered the word as a teacher. •The
 self-appointed wise people came up to him, testing him, but he
 refuted them, for they were empty; and they despised him, for
 27 they were not truly intelligent. •After them all, came also the little 43:22+
 30 ones, to whom belongs acquaintance with the father. •Once they
 were confirmed and had learned about the outward manifesta-
 tions of the father they gained acquaintance, they were known;
 they were glorified, they gave glory.

b. "a tree": Christian jargon for the cross, but here also contrasted with the tree of acquaintance with good and evil, Gn 2:17, which in the non-gnostic reading "caused ruin" to Eve and Adam.

c. "in need of him": had a lack of him, cf. note 24a.

19 a. Or "pedagogue," a trained slave who accompanied schoolchildren to the classroom and supervised their conduct.

III. PREDESTINATION TO SALVATION

The book of the living

- 34 In their hearts appeared the living book of the living, which
 1 is written in the father's thought and intellect. **20** •And since the
 foundation of the entirety it had been among his incomprehen-
 3 sibles: •and no one had been able to take it up, inasmuch as it was
 ordained that whoever should take it up would be put to death.
 6 •Nothing would have been able to appear among those who be-
 lieved in salvation, had not that book come forward.

32:31 +
 VFrG
 Rv 13:8
 Rv 5:3

The crucifixion and publication of the book

- 10 Therefore the merciful and faithful Jesus became patient and
 accepted the sufferings even unto taking up that book: inasmuch
 14 as he knew that his death would mean life for many. •Before a will^a
 is opened, the extent of the late property owner's fortune remains
 19 a secret; just so, the entirety was concealed. •Since the father of
 the entirety is invisible—and the entirety derives from him, from
 whom every way emanated—Jesus appeared, wrapped himself in
 that document, was nailed to a piece of wood, and published the
 27, 28 father's edict upon the cross. •O, such a great lesson! •Drawing
 himself down unto death, clothed in eternal life, having put off
 the corrupt rags,^b he put on incorruptibility, a thing that no one
 34 can take from him. •Having entered upon the empty ways of fear,
 he escaped the clutches of those who had been stripped naked
 38 by forgetfulness, •for he was acquaintance and completion, and
 1 read out [their] contents **21** [. . .]. •When [. . .] instruct whoever
 3 might learn. •And those who would learn, [namely] the living
 enrolled in the book of the living, learn about themselves, recov-
 ering themselves from the father, and returning to him.

Heb 2:17

Rv 5:7
 Mt 20:28
 v.14
 Heb 9:17?

Col 2:14

I Co 15:53
 Ph 2:8?
 IrV (c)
 Jn 10:17

Predestination of the elect

- 8 Inasmuch as the completion of the entirety is in the father, the
 11 entirety must go to him. •Then upon gaining acquaintance, all
 individually receive what belongs to them, and draw it to them-
 14 selves.^a •For whoever does not possess acquaintance is in need,
 and what that person needs is great, inasmuch as the thing that
 18 such a person needs is what would complete the person.^b •In-
 asmuch as the completion of the entirety resides in the father,
 23 and the entirety must go to him and all receive their own, •he

VFrD

Jn 12:32
 VFrF

20 a. Or "testament."

b. "corrupt rags": it was a Platonist cliché that the human body is the garment of the soul.

21 a. "and draw it to themselves": or "and he draws them to himself."

b. "what would complete the person": or "what would complete him."

inscribed these things in advance, having prepared them for assignment to those who (eventually) emanated from him.

Calling of the elect

- 25 Those whose names he foreknew were called at the end, as
 28 persons having acquaintance. •It is the latter whose names the
 30 father called. •For one whose name has not been spoken does
 32 not possess acquaintance. •How else would a person hear, if that
 34 person's name had not been read out? •For whoever lacks ac-
 37 quaintance until the end, is a modeled form of forgetfulness, and
 1 persons have no 22 name? •Why do they not possess the faculty
 of speech?

Rm 8:29
 VFrH
 TrTr 127:10

Jn 10:3?
 TrTr 105:27

Response to the call

- 2, 4 So that whoever has acquaintance is from above: •and if
 called, hears, replies, and turns to the one who is calling; and
 7, 9 goes to him. •And he knows how that one is called.^a •Having ac-
 quaintance, that person does the will of the one who has called;
 11, 12 •wishes to please him; and gains repose. •One's name becomes
 13 one's own. •Those who gain acquaintance in this way know
 16 whence they have come and whither they will go; •they know
 in the manner of a man who, after having been intoxicated, has
 18 recovered from his intoxication: •having returned into himself,
 he has caused his own to stand at rest.^b
- 20 •He has brought many back from error, going before them
 unto their ways from which they had swerved after accepting er-
 27 ror because of the depth of him who surrounds every way, while
 nothing surrounds him. •It was quite amazing that they were
 in the father without being acquainted with him and that they
 alone were able to emanate, inasmuch as they were not able to
 perceive and recognize the one in whom they were.

Jn 3:31?

Jn 3:8

Jn 10:4?

Contents of the book

- 33, 35 For had not his will emanated from him < . . . >^c •For he re-
 38 vealed it to bestow an acquaintance in harmony with all its em-
 anations, •that is to say, acquaintance with the living book, an
 acquaintance which at the end appeared to the 23 aeons^a in the
 form of [passages of text from] it.

22 a. Or "he knows how he is called."

b. To "stand at rest" is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, nonchange, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

c. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

23 a. Or "eternal realms." In gnostic myth, the aeons are emanations of the first principle and compose the structure of the spiritual universe, which contains only aeons.

- 2,3 •When it is manifest, they speak: •they are not places for
 use of the voice, nor are they mute texts for someone to read
 8 out and so think of emptiness; •rather, they are texts of truth,
 11 which speak and know only themselves. •And each text is a
 perfect truth—like a book that is perfect and consists of texts
 written in unity, written by the father for the aeons: so that
 through its passages of text the aeons might become acquainted
 with the father.

IV. SALVATION

The advent of the Word

- 18 Its^b wisdom meditates upon the Word.
 20 Its teaching speaks him^c forth.
 21 Its acquaintance has revealed <him>.^d
 23 Its forbearance is a crown upon him.
 24 Its joy is in harmony with him.
 26 Its glory has exalted him.
 27 Its manner has manifested him.
 29 Its repose has taken him to itself.
 30 Its love has clothed him with a body.
 31 Its faith has guarded him.

Ingathering of the elect

- 33 In this manner the Word of the father goes forth in the en-
 tirety, being the fruition 24 [of] his heart and an outward man-
 ifestation of his will, personally supporting the entirety and
 choosing it, and also taking the outward manifestation of the
 6 entirety and purifying it, •bringing it back into the father, into
 the mother, Jesus of the infinity of sweetness. 42:16
 9 •And the father uncovers his bosom—now, his bosom is the Jn 1:18
 14 holy spirit, and reveals his secret—his secret is his son, •so that Ep 3:9?
 out of the father’s bowels they (the entirety) might learn to know
 him, and the aeons might no longer be weary from searching
 for the father, might repose in him, and might know that he is
 20 repose, •for he has supplied the lack^a and nullified the realm of
 22 appearance. •The realm of appearance, which belongs to it (the ICo 7:31b?
 lack), is the world, in which it served. VFrF

b. “Its”: here and throughout the passage (23:18–31f) the Coptic word also can be translated “His.”

c. “him”: here and throughout the passage (23:18–31f) the Coptic word can be translated also “it.”

d. Through an inadvertence, the MS omits this word.

24 a. “lack”: in gnostic myth, the missing power stolen by Ialdabaöth from its mother wisdom. In GTr the lack is mutual, between the divine fullness and the individual aeon.

Disappearance of the material world

25 For where there is envy and strife there is a lack, but where
 28 unity is, there is completion. •Inasmuch as the lack came into
 being because the father was not known, from the moment that
 32 the father is known the lack will not exist. •As with one person's
 ignorance (of another)—when one becomes acquainted, igno-
 37 rance of the other passes away of its own accord; •and as with
 1 darkness, which passes away when light appears: 25 •so also lack
 passes away in completion, and so from that moment on, the
 realm of appearance is no longer manifest but rather will pass
 away in the harmony of unity. TrTr 119:10

7, 8 •For now their affairs are dispersed. •But when unity makes TrTr 132:16
 the ways complete, it is in unity that all will gather themselves,
 and it is by acquaintance that all will purify themselves out of
 multiplicity into unity, consuming matter within themselves
 2C0 5:4?
 19 as fire, and darkness by light, and death by life. •So since these
 things have happened to each of us, it is fitting for us to meditate
 22 upon the entirety, •so that this house might be holy and quietly
 intent on unity.

A parable of jars

25, 27 It is like some people who moved to a new house. •They had
 some jars that in places were no good, and these got broken; but
 the owner of the house suffered no loss, rather the owner was
 glad because instead of the bad jars it was (now) the full ones
 35 that they would be going to use up. •For this is the judgment Jn 3:19
TrTr 118:25
Heb 4:12?
Jn 1:14
 that has come 26 from above, having judged everyone—a drawn
 two-edged sword cutting this way and that, since the Word that
 7 is in the heart of those that speak it, has come forward. •It is not
 8 just a sound, but it became a body. •A great disturbance has come
 to pass among the jars; for some have leaked dry, some are half
 full, some are well filled, some have been spilled, some have been
 washed, and still others broken.

Lament and downfall of error

15 All the ways moved and were disturbed, for they had neither
 18 basis nor stability; •and error became excited, not knowing what
 20 to do; •[she] was troubled, mourned, and cried out that she un-
 derstood nothing, inasmuch as acquaintance, which meant the
 destruction of her and all her emanations, had drawn near to her.
 26, 27 •Error is empty, with nothing inside her. •Truth came forward:
 all its emanations recognized it, and they saluted the father in TrTr 89:15
 truth and power (so) perfect that it set them in harmony with
 32 the father. •For everyone loves truth since truth is the father's
 35, 36 mouth; •his tongue is the holy spirit. •Whoever attaches 27 to the IfV (j)
VFrB

2 truth attaches to the father's mouth; •it is from his tongue that
 this person will receive the holy spirit, that is to say, the revealing
 7 of the father and the uncovering of him to his aeons. •He has Col 1:26?
 9 revealed his secret; he has unloosed himself.^a •For who but the
 father alone contains (anything)?

Potential being and real being

10,11 All the ways^b are his emanations. •They know that they have TrTr 61:20
 emanated from him like children who were within a mature man
 but knew they had not yet received form nor been given name.
 18 •It is when they receive the impulse toward acquaintance with
 22 the father that he gives birth to each. •Otherwise, although they
 23 are within him they do not recognize him. •The father himself Mt 5:48
 26 is perfect and acquainted with every way that is in him. •If he Ijn 3:20?
 29 wills, what he wills appears, as he gives it form and name. •And
 he gives it name, and causes it to make them come into existence.
 31 •Those who have not yet come to be are not acquainted with
 34 the one who put them in order. •Now, I am not saying that those
 36 who have not yet come to be are nothing: •rather, that they exist TrTr 60:26
 28 within him who might will that they come to be, if he wills at
 4 some future time, as it were. •Before all things have appeared he
 7 is personally acquainted with what he is going to produce. •But
 the fruit that has not yet appeared recognizes nothing, nor is it at
 10 all active. •Just so, also all the ways that reside in the father derive
 13 from the existent, •that being which has caused itself to stand at
 16 rest from out of the nonexistent. •For what has no root also has
 18 no fruit: •truly, although it may think to itself, “I have come into
 22 being,” next it will wither of its own accord. •Accordingly, what
 24 was wholly nonexistent will not come into being. •What then
 26 does he want it to think? •This: “I have come into being (only)
 28 in the manner of shadows and apparitions of the night.” •O the
 light's shining on the fear of that person, upon knowing that it
 is nothing!

The nightmare state and awakening

32 Thus they were unacquainted with the father, since it was he
 1 whom 29 they did not see. •Inasmuch as he was the object of fear 17:9+
 and disturbance and instability and indecisiveness and division,
 there was much futility at work among them on his account,
 8 and (much) empty ignorance—•as when one falls sound asleep TrTr 82:27
 11 and finds oneself in the midst of nightmares: •running toward

27 a. Or “he has explained it” (with this translation
 cf. possibly Jn 1:18).

b. “ways”: this obscure term apparently refers to
 the aeons or potential aeons.

somewhere—powerless to get away while being pursued—in hand-to-hand combat—being beaten—falling from a height—
 20 being blown upward by the air, but without any wings; •sometimes, too, it seems that one is being murdered, though nobody is giving chase—or killing one’s neighbors, with whose blood
 25 one is smeared: •until, having gone through all these dreams,
 28 one awakens. •Those in the midst of all these troubles see nothing, for such things are (in fact) nothing. •Such are those who
 32 have cast off lack of acquaintance from themselves like sleep,
 37 considering it to be nothing. •Neither do they consider its **30**
 2 other products to be real things. •Rather, they put them away like
 a dream in the night, and deem acquaintance with the father to
 6 be the light. •That is how each person acted while being with-
 10 out acquaintance: as though asleep. •And the person who has
 12 acquaintance is like one who has awakened. •And good for the
 14 person who returns and awakens! •And blessed is the one who
 has opened the eyes of the blind! 42:37
VFrH
Gn 3:5?

16 •And the quick spirit hastened after that person when the
 19 person had awakened; •having helped the one who lay prostrate
 on the ground, it made that one strong enough to stand up; for VFrC
 that person had not yet arisen.

V. THE FATHER’S INTERVENTION

Mediation of the son

23 Acquaintance from the father and the appearance of his son
 26 gave them a means to comprehend. •For when they saw and 1Jn 1:1?
 heard him, he let them taste and smell of himself and touch the
 32 beloved son, •after he had appeared to tell them about the fa-
 ther, the uncontained, and had breathed into them what was in Jn 20:22?
Gn 2:7?
Jn 6:38
 36 the thought^a (of the father), doing his will. •When many had re-
 1 ceived the light, they converted **31** to him, •for they were strang-
 ers and did not see his image and had not recognized him.

4, 4 •Matter < . . . >^a •for he had come out of it in a fleshly likeness Rm 8:3
 7 without anything’s blocking his progress—•for incorruptibility
 9 is tantamount to unseizability^b—•speaking moreover in new
 terms while yet speaking about what was in the father’s heart,
 11 •for he had produced the Word that has no defect; and light
 15 spoke forth from his mouth. •And his voice gave birth to life.
 16 •He gave them thought and intelligence and mercy and salvation

30 a. Or “thinking.”

31 a. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

b. Cf. RR 87:17f.

and the powerful spirit from the father's infinity and sweetness,
 21, 22 •having made punishments and torments cease: •for it was they
 who had gone astray from the presence of certain others, who fell
 26 short of mercy, in error and bondage.^c •And, allied with power,
 he unchained them and reproved them by acquaintance.

A parable of sheep

28 He became a way for those who had gone astray and acquaint-
 31 tance for those who were without acquaintance; •discovery for
 those who were seeking, and strength for those who were trem-
 34, 35 bling; •purity for those who were defiled: •since it is he who is
 the shepherd^d who left behind the ninety-nine 32 sheep that had
 2 not gone astray, •and came and searched for the one that had
 3, 4 gone astray. •He rejoiced when he found it, •for 99 is a number
 6 expressed with a gesture of the left hand. But when 1 is found,
 9 the sum total transfers to the right hand.^a •In this way the thing
 that is in need of one, namely the whole right hand, draws what
 is missing, and takes it from the left-hand part so that it transfers
 15, 16 to the right hand. •And thus the number becomes 100. •This is a
 17 symbol of the spoken forms of these numbers. •The father is he
 who, even on the Sabbath, when the sheep^b that he had found
 had fallen into the ditch, labored over it and kept the sheep alive,
 once he had brought it up from the ditch. Mt 12:11

VI. DUTIES OF THE ELECT

22, 38 Understand the interior meaning,^c •for it is you who are the
 23 children of interior understanding. •What is the Sabbath? That
 26 day on which salvation cannot be idle. •Speak from (the perspec-
 29 tive of) the superior day, in which there is no night; •and from
 31 the star that does not set, since it is perfect. •Speak, therefore,
 from the heart, for it is you who are the day that is perfect, and it
 35 is within you that there dwells the star that does not set. •Speak 43:22+
Rv 21:25
19:34
VFrG
VFrH
TrTr 129:1

c. "bondage": a Platonist cliché for the material body.

d. "the" shepherd known to readers from Mt 18:12f.

32 a. The Romans used a system of numerical gestures, in which one to ninety-nine could be expressed by ninety-nine different postures of the left hand alone. Starting with one hundred, the postures were made by fingers of the right hand. Thus ninety-nine is "a number expressed with a

gesture of the left hand," while one hundred is a right-hand gesture. Independent of these numerical gestures, the "left" was superstitiously considered to be sinister, and the "right" auspicious. Thus the "transfer" of the numerical gesture to the right hand is an auspicious change.

b. "the" sheep known to readers from Mt 12:11.

c. In the MS the rest of this sentence is written on the thirty-eighth line of the page with an indication that it had been inadvertently omitted and should be inserted between lines 22 and 23.

of the truth with those who seek it, and of acquaintance with those who have sinned in the midst of their error.^d 33

- 1, 2 •Make steady the feet of those who have stumbled, •and
 3 stretch out your hands to those who are sick. •Feed those who
 4, 5 are hungry, •and unto those who are weary give repose; •and Mt 11:28
 7, 8 awaken those who wish to arise, •and get up from your sleep.
 9 •For it is you who are unsheathed intelligence. •If strengthening
 is thus, it is truly strong.
- 11, 12 •Focus your attention upon yourselves. •Do not focus your
 13 attention upon others,^a that is, •ones whom you have expelled.
 14, 16 •Do not return to eat what you have vomited forth. •Do not be- Mt 6:19
 17 come eaten by moths; do not become infested with worms; •for
 19 you have already cast him^b out. •Do not become the place of Ep 4:27
 22 the devil, for you have already brought him to naught. •Do not VFrF
 strengthen the elements that impede you—those who fall—sup-
 24 posing that this is a kind of improvement. •For the lawless is
 24, 26 nothing. •Treat such a one more forceably than the just, •since
 the lawless acts on the supposition of being lawless, while the just
 30 acts toward others on the supposition of being just. •For your
 own part, then, do the will of the father, for you are from him.

VII. THE FATHER AND THE ELECT

The father's fragrance

- 33, 35 For the father is sweet and in his will is goodness; •he is ac- 36:35+
 37 quainted with your own, upon whom you rely. •For by their Mt 7:16
 39 fruits your own are known: •for the father's children 34 are Mt 7:20
 themselves his fragrance, for they are from the loveliness of his
 3 face. •Therefore the father loves his fragrance and manifests it
 5 everywhere. •And when it mingles with matter it imparts his
 7 fragrance to the light, •and by his silence he makes it superior IrV(b)
 9, 10 in every way to every sound. •For it is not the ears that smell
 the fragrance, •rather it is the spirit^a that possesses the faculty of
 smell and draws the fragrance toward itself for itself and sinks
 14 down into the father's fragrance; •thus it nourishes it and takes it
 18 to what^b it emanated from, the original cold fragrance. •And it is Gn 2:7?
 a soul-endowed modelled form, being like a cold liquid that has 1Co 15:45?
 22 sunk into some loose earth; •and those who see it suppose that

d. For line 38, see above after line 22.

34 a. Or "wind current," perhaps meaning breath;
 Gk. *pneuma*.

33 a. Or "other things."
 b. Or "it."

b. Or "where."

24 (only) earth is there. •Afterward, it reevaporates when a gust
 (of wind) draws it off and it becomes warm. •Cold fragrances,
 26, 28 then, result from division. •For this reason, faith came and did
 away with division, and it brought the warm fullness of love,
 33 so that coldness might not return: •rather, it is unity of perfect
 thought.

The father's restoration of the lack

34 This is the account of the good news about the discovery of
 the fullness, for those who strain toward 35 the salvation coming
 2 from above. •Their hope, toward which they strain, is straining VFrH
 4 (toward them): •it is their image, the light in which there is no IJn 1:15
 6 shadow. •How truly at that time the fullness is on the way to
 8 coming! •The lack belonging to the realm of matter did not re-
 sult from the infinity of the father as he came to bestow time
 12 upon the lack. •Of course, it could not properly be said that the
 14 incorruptible would “come” in such a way. •Rather, the father's
 depth is immense, and it is not with him that the thought of error Irv (e)
 18 resides. •It is a fallen (?)^a thing, that can easily be made upright
 through the discovery of him who came to that which he would
 bring back.
 22, 24 •For the restoration is called repentance. •The reason why RR 95:8
 incorruptibility exhaled and followed the one who had sinned,
 27 was so that that one might gain repose. •For the remainder of the
 light, within the lack, is forgiveness—the Word of the fullness.
 30 •For, a doctor hurries to where sickness is;^b that is the doctor's
 33 wish. •A person who has something wrong, then, will not hide
 35 the fact, for the one has what the other needs. •Thus the fullness,
 which has no defect, supplies such a person's lack <with>^c what it
 has 36 bestowed so as to supply what that person needs, so that
 3 the person might thus receive grace. •While in need, this person
 5 did not have grace. •For this reason, it was diminution that re-
 8 sided where there was no grace. •When the diminished portion
 was received, the one who needed it was manifestly a fullness.
 11 •And this is the discovery about the light of truth that has risen
 upon such a person: that it is unchangeable.

Anointment of the elect

13 Because of the coming of Christ (the anointed) it was said pub-
 15 licly: •Seek, and those that are disturbed will receive restoration,
 Mt 7:7?
 IJn 2:27?
 GTh 2?

35 a. Translation uncertain.

b. This saying is attributed to Jesus by St. Ephraem Syrus, a fourth-century father of the Syrian church (*Syr. Evang. Concord. Expos.*, chap. 17); in A. Resch's collection of sayings attributed to

Jesus that are not in the canonical New Testament (*Agrapha* [Leipzig: Henrichs, 1906]) it counts as no. 176 [A76].

c. Through an inadvertence, the MS omits this word.

17 and he will anoint them with ointment. •The ointment is the
 21 mercy of the father, who will be merciful to them; and those
 22 whom he has anointed are the perfected. •For it is full jars that
 22 get coated (with sealing wax). •But whenever some jar's coating
 is ruined it leaks, and the cause of its defectiveness lies in the
 27 fact of its not being coated: •for in such a case a gust (of wind)
 29 and the power of what is with it will make it evaporate. •While
 from the one that has no defects, no seals are broken; neither do
 33 such ones leak in any way. •Rather the father, since he is perfect,
 resupplies it with anything it lacks.

An allegory of paradise

35, 35 He is good. •He is acquainted with his plants, for it is he who
 38 has planted them in his paradise (garden). •Now, his paradise
 39 is his realm of repose: •it 37 is the perfection within the father's
 thought, and they (his plants) are the verbal expressions of his
 4 meditation.^a •Each of his verbal expressions is the product of his
 will and the manifestation of his speaking.
 7 •Since the time when they constituted the depth of his
 thought, uttered discourse has manifested them, and intellect
 12 uttering the discourse, and silent loveliness. •It (the discourse)
 was called thought, inasmuch as they dwelled in it (silent loveli-
 15 ness) without becoming manifest. •So it came to pass that it was
 uttered in the beginning, when it pleased the will of him who
 willed. TrTr 60:16

The father's incomprehensible will

19, 20 Now, will is what the father reposes in. •And nothing comes to
 pass without what pleases him, nor does anything happen with-
 24, 25 out the father's will. •Rather, his will is incomprehensible. •His
 27 will is his imprint, and no one can understand him; •nor does
 he exist so that they might observe him in order to lay hold of
 29 him. •Rather, when he wills, what he wills is this—even if the
 sight is not at all pleasing in the presence of god: the father's
 34 will. •For he is acquainted with the beginning and the end of all.
 36, 37 •For at their end he will greet them. •Now, the end is reception
 of acquaintance with him who is hidden, and he is the father,
 1 38 •from whom the beginning came and to whom all who em-
 4 anated from him will return. •And they appeared so that there
 might be glory and joy in his name. Mt 10:29?

37 a. Possibly a reuse of the allegorical interpretation of Gn 2:8, by the brilliant exegete of Alexandria, Philo Judaeus (ca. 30 B.C.–A.D. ca. 45) as found in his *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.6 (trans. R. Marcus; *Philo, Supplement I*; Loeb

Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953): “And His ideas the Creator planted like trees in the most sovereign thing, the rational soul.” See also Philo, *On the Creation*, 153–54.

VIII. THE FATHER AND THE SON

The father's name

- 6,7 Now, the name of the father is the son. •It is he who in the beginning named what emanated from him, remaining always
 10 the same. •And he begot him as a son and gave him his name,
 12 which he possessed. •It is he in whose vicinity the father has all
 14, 15 things: •he has the name, and he has the son. •The latter can be
 16 seen; •but the name is invisible, for it alone is the mystery of the
 18 invisible, which comes into ears that are wholly full of it, because
 21, 23 of him. •And yet the father's name is not spoken. •Rather, it is
 24 manifest in a son. •Thus, great is the name!
- 25 •Who, then, can utter his name, the great name, but him
 alone who possesses the name—and the children of the name
 in whom the father's name reposed and who in turn reposed in
 32 his name! •Inasmuch as the father is unengendered, it is he who
 alone bore him unto himself, as a name, before he had put the
 36 aeons in order, •so that the name of the father might be supreme
 38 over them as lord. •And this is the **39** true name, confirmed by
 3 his command in perfect power. •For this name does not result
 from words and acts of naming, but rather his name is invisible.
- 7 •He alone gave him a name, for he alone saw him, and it was
 11 he alone who was able to name him: •for what does not exist
 has no name—indeed, what would a nonexistent be named?—
 16 but what exists, exists along with its name. •And he alone is
 acquainted with him and < . . . >^a for him alone to give him a
 19, 20 name. •He is the father: his name is the son. •So he did not hide
 23 it within action, rather it existed. •The son alone gave names.
 24 •So the name belongs to the father, just as the name of the father
 27 is the son, the beloved. •For where would he find a name except
 from the father?
- 28 •Yet perhaps someone will say to another, “Who could name
 33 one that preexisted before him? •Do not children get names
 2 **40** from their parents?” •First, we must consider the ques-
 5 tion of what sort of thing a name is. •For he is the true name.
 6 •Thus it is he who is the name from the father; for it is he who
 9 exists as the most lordly name. •Accordingly, he did not get the
 name on loan—unlike others, all of whom individually get their
 13 names according as they are created. •But this one is the most
 14 lordly name. •There is no other being that bestowed it upon him.
 16 •Rather, he is unnameable and indescribable until such time as

ClExc 31.4
GPh 8Heb 1:5
Jn 17:11

GJd 35:19+

Rv 19:12?

Ph 2:9
TrTr 134:20

39 a. The Coptic text is corrupt ; one or more words may be inadvertently omitted here.

- 20 the perfect alone has spoken of him. •And it is the latter who is able to speak his name and see him.
- 23 •So when it pleased him that his uttered name should be his son, and when he who had emanated from the depth gave him his name he spoke of his secrets, knowing that the father is without evil. •Precisely for this reason he produced him—so that he might speak concerning the place from which he had emanated and his realm of repose, 41 and that he might glorify the fullness, the greatness of his name, and the father’s sweetness.

IX. REPOSE

Proclamation of the place of repose

- 3 All, individually, will speak concerning the place from which they have emanated and the lot according to which they have received their establishment in the state of rest. •They will hasten to return and to receive from that place in which they (once) stood at rest, tasting of it and being nourished and growing.

Repose in the father

- 12, 14 And his own realm of repose is his^a fullness. •Thus all the father’s emanations are fullnesses; •and he is the root of all his emanations, within that (place) where he caused all to sprout and gave them their destinies. •So each is manifest in order that from their own thought < . . . >^b •For they send their thought to where their root is, their root which carries them up above all the heights to the father.
- 28, 30 •They cling to his head, which is repose for them. •And they hold themselves close to him so that, as it were, they receive from his face something like kisses, although they do not give 42 this impression. •For they have neither surpassed themselves nor fallen short of the glory of the father. •And they do not think of him as trivial or bitter or wrathful: •rather, that he is without evil, imperturbable, sweet, acquainted with all ways before they have come into being. •And he does not need to be instructed. •Such are they who have possessions from above, from the immeasurable greatness, straining toward the solitary and perfect, •he who is a mother to them. •And they will not descend into Hades, nor do they have envy or groaning; nor is death within them. •Rather, they repose in that being who gives unto himself

TrTr 51:3

TrTr 58:22

Rm 3:23

24:6

Rv 21:4?

41 a. “his . . . his”: or “their . . . their.”

b. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

repose, and in the vicinity of truth they are neither weary nor entangled. VFrH

- 25, 26 •But it is precisely they who are the truth. •And it is in them that the father dwells, and in the father that they are, being perfect, undivided in what is truly good, and imparting no defect to anything, but rather imparting repose and being fresh in spirit.
- 33 •And it is to their root that they will listen, being occupied with the things in which one might find one's root and not damage one's soul.

Conclusion

- 37, 39 This is the place of the blessed. This is their place. •As for the others, then, let them know in their own places that it is not right for me 43 to say more, for I have been in the place of repose. •No, it is there that I shall dwell, continually occupied with the father of the entirety •and the true siblings, upon whom the father's love is poured out and in whose midst there is no lack of him; who truly and obviously dwell in true and eternal life, •and speak of the light that is perfect and full of the father's seed, and which is in his heart and in the fullness. •In this his spirit rejoices, and it glorifies what it dwelt in. •For he is good, and his children are perfect and worthy of his name. •Truly, it is children of this kind that the father loves.
- 30:14+
Rm 5:5
36:35+
19:27, 32:38
VFrF

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Part Three

THE SCHOOL
OF VALENTINUS

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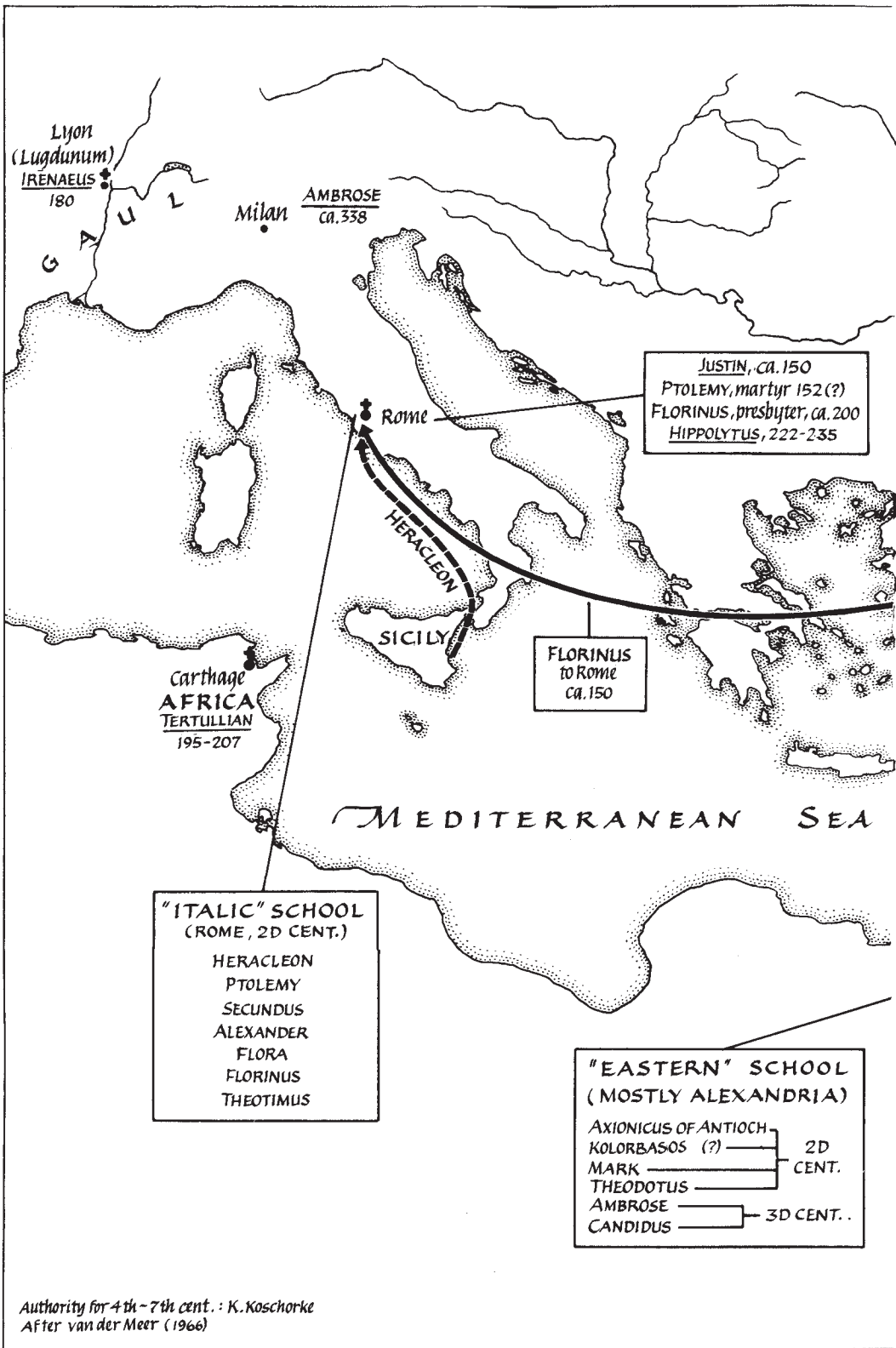
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

VALENTINUS'S SCHOOL

Valentinus's genius and eloquence must have been matched by his gifts as a teacher, for after he arrived in Rome his followers blossomed into a brilliant international school of theologians and biblical commentators. Their activity began while Valentinus was still alive. Like their master, the first and second generations of Valentinians aspired to raise Christian theology to the level of pagan philosophical studies. The first Christians to begin this process of intellectualization had been Basilides (cf. IrB) and the gnostic sect, followed soon after by Christian intellectuals of proto-orthodox and Valentinian theology.

Thus the Valentinian movement had the character of a philosophical school, or network of schools, rather than a distinct religious sect. Because of its brilliant efflorescence, the number of second- and third-century Valentinians still known by name is remarkably large, a fact that indicates their importance in the ancient churches: Alexander, Ambrose, Axionicus, Candidus, Flavia Sophē, Flora, Florinus, Heracleon, Mark, Ptolemy, Rheginus, Secundus, Theodotus, Theotimus.

In a certain sense the very purpose of the school was speculation, and so in the nature of things diversity was not discouraged. Two distinct branches seem to have emerged by the middle of the third century (see Map 5): an "Italic" or Western branch, whose founders had been Ptolemy and Heracleon, and an Eastern branch, represented initially by Theodotus and Mark. The Italic branch accepted that Jesus had been born with a body of animate essence (IrPt 1.6.1; ClExc 59.3) to which the holy spirit (the "Word" of wisdom) later united at his baptism, while the Eastern one held that he had been conceived by the holy spirit and born as a body of spiritual essence (cf. TrTr 114:4f; GPh 55:23f; ClExc 1.1). Although Valentinian sources manifest these two views, it is debated whether the two branches can be assigned to geographic regions as the traditional terminology implies. Valentinian Christianity, just like the gnostics, spread to almost all parts of the Roman world: Gaul (southern France), Rome, Asia Minor (Turkey), Syria, all parts of Egypt, Carthage (modern Tunis), and eventually Mesopotamia. The movement was long-lived. Records from the end of the seventh century still speak of Valentinians as well as gnostics (see Map 2)—by that time fully separated from the imperial Catholic church.



Authority for 4th-7th cent.: K. Koschorke
 After van der Meer (1966)

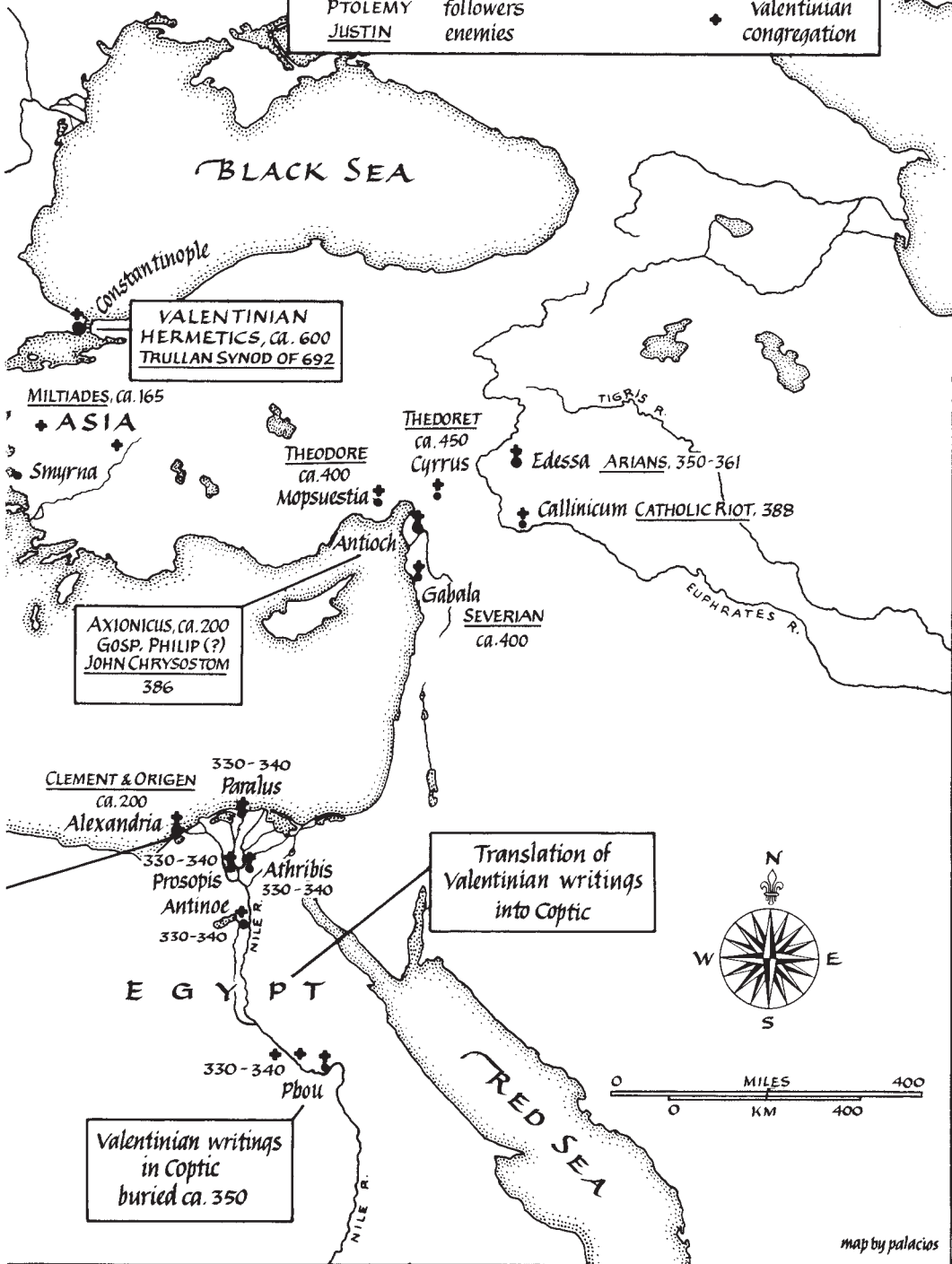
MAP 5
**FOLLOWERS OF VALENTINUS
 AND THEIR ENEMIES**

A. D. 150 - 692

PTOLEMY
 JUSTIN

followers
 enemies

◆ valentinian
 congregation



VALENTINIAN
 HERMETICS, ca. 600
 TRULLAN SYNOD OF 692

MILTIADES, ca. 165

THEODORET
 ca. 450
 Cyrrus

THEODORE
 ca. 400
 Mopsuestia

TIGRIS R.

Edessa ARIANS, 350-361

Callinicum CATHOLIC RIOT, 388

EUPHRATES R.

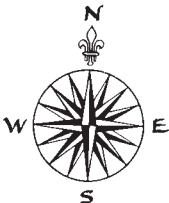
AXIONICUS, ca. 200
 GOSP. PHILIP (?)
 JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
 386

SEVERIAN
 ca. 400

CLEMENT & ORIGEN
 ca. 200

330-340
 Paralus

Translation of
 Valentinian writings
 into Coptic



E G Y P T

330-340
 Prosopis

330-340
 Athribis

330-340
 Antinoe

330-340
 Pboii



Valentinian writings
 in Coptic
 buried ca. 350

ITS ACTIVITY WITHIN THE CHURCH AT LARGE

Although the followers of Valentinus eventually became distant from the established church of the Roman empire, in the second and third centuries they were members, however eccentric, of the universal church at large. Their teachings were an interpretation of Christianity, not a rival religion. In fact they do not seem to have called themselves by any special sectarian name, as did the sect of the gnostics; rather, they referred to themselves by traditional Christian epithets already used in the very early church, “people endowed with spirit, spirituals” (Greek *pneumatikoi*, 1 Co 2:15) and “the perfect” (*teleioi*, Mt 19:21). The term “Valentinians” must have been coined by their enemies, to imply that they followed not Christ but Valentinus; this term began to appear about A.D. 160 in pamphlets attacking the followers of Valentinus and other theologians of the time.

In this period Christian theological schools, whatever theological tradition they taught, normally had a loose and ill-defined relation to local Christian congregations and bishops. Their meetings, which were open to qualified students, would be held in private quarters under the direction of a scholar, as a supplement to the regular church life of worship and service. The scholar might issue various kinds of academic publications—elementary, propagandistic, and technical.

The structure of the Valentinian movement is a typical, early instance of this pattern. The spectrum of its theological and mythical speculation was held together not only by academic tradition, but also by the members’ allegiance to ordinary Christian congregations. Followers of Valentinus read and interpreted the same scripture that most Christians read today (cf. IrPt, PtF), presumably in services attended by other kinds of Christian as well; they accepted the usual sacraments of the second-century church (cf. GPh); and referred to the same kind of creed, or rule of faith, as what in retrospect seems to have been proto-orthodox Christianity (cf. TRs). Although there is no evidence that Valentinians ever attained the rank of bishop, by the year 200 it was still possible for a follower of Valentinus to hold the ecclesiastical rank of presbyter in the church at Rome. The writings of the Valentinian school were not simply dismissed out of hand by all opponents, but were sometimes taken as a topic of serious discussion, especially by philosophically minded theologians such as Clement of Alexandria (A.D. ca. 150–ca. 215) and Origen (A.D. ca. 185–ca. 254). For a long time, then, the Valentinian movement remained firmly within the church at large, causing their opponents to call them bitterly “wolves in sheep’s clothing.”

VALENTINIAN LITERATURE

The scholastic character of the Valentinian movement is reflected in the typical forms of Valentinian literature, which are mostly academic ones. The selections translated below illustrate all these forms: the metaphysical treatise

(TrTr), the philosophical epistle (PtF, TRs), the scriptural commentary (IrPt), and the anthology (GPh). In addition, a theologian's prayer (PPI) used by Valentinians illustrates their emphasis on St. Paul as founder and patron of their academic tradition. Two of the works (PtF, TRs) are propagandistic, that is, designed to attract beginners and introduce them to Valentinian teaching. It should be noted that no complete example of a Valentinian biblical commentary will be found here, for none is known to have survived intact, though fragments of such commentaries are quoted by early Christian writers. But the allegorical technique used in these commentaries is very clearly illustrated by passages in St. Irenaeus's summary of Ptolemy's theology (IrPt), among which is a long citation of an allegorical commentary on John.

OPPOSITION

As early as A.D. 160, opponents of the Valentinian school began their attempt to label, alienate, and oust the movement from the church. It may be stated, parenthetically, that the Valentinians did not reply in detail to these attacks (though see PtF), but their mythic theology contained an answer of sorts: it foresaw in god's final reckoning a provision for non-Christians to be destroyed; for Valentinians to be reunited with the heavenly father; and for ordinary Christians (that is, the opposition) to enter only a second-class paradise and rest forever—not with god the father, but merely with the craftsman of the world (IrPt 1.7.1).

The earliest attempts to alienate the Valentinians, such as those of St. Justin Martyr (A.D. ca. 100–ca. 165), were ineffective; but starting about A.D. 200, more and more ordinary Christians, or at least clergy and theologians, began to think of a distance between themselves and the private classes of the Valentinian school. To a large extent this was thanks to the efforts of St. Irenaeus of Lyon, a Greek-speaking bishop of Gaul (A.D. ca. 130–ca. 200).

ST. IRENAEUS'S ATTACK

Irenaeus's work is now best represented by his full-scale masterpiece of anti-Valentinian polemic, *The Detection and Overthrow of "Gnōsis" Falsely So Called*, usually cited as *Against Heresies*. Written in Greek about A.D. 180, it is today a precious source of information about the Valentinian movement. When it was written, the work was also the occasion for a precedent-setting discussion of what the ordinary Christian ought to believe, and an early assertion of the idea that this formulation of ordinary Christian beliefs had been handed down uncontaminated by a chain of teachers stretching back to the apostles. Born a Greek speaker and educated in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and Rome, Irenaeus spent the most mature part of his life as bishop of the diocese of Lugdunum in the Roman province of Gaul, now Lyon, France. He was a strident enemy of gnostics, Valentinians, and various other groups about whom he had

learned from the earlier pamphlet literature and from personal contact. Like his predecessors, he tended to lump all these enemies together. From his strategic vantage point in Lugdunum, St. Irenaeus kept in close touch with the church in Rome, for there was a flow, between the capital and Lyon, of Christian messengers and missionaries, among whom were teachers of the Valentinian school. It was to defend his flock against the “depredations of these wolves” that he wrote the *Detection and Overthrow*.

Irenaeus’s arguments were serious and intelligent, but another main part of his strategy was to establish a derogatory image of the newly arrived Valentinians as esoteric and absurd, practitioners of sorcery, given to debauchery, and teachers of an academic tradition that extended not back to St. Paul but rather to the Samaritan sorcerer Simon Magus (Ac 8:9–24). The image he painted was much sharper than similar attempts by his predecessors. In fact, it became a popular image of Valentinian gnostic Christianity that was destined to last, and which survives to the present day.

SEPARATION OF VALENTINIANISM AS A HERESY

At the time of Irenaeus the Valentinian school must have begun to edge toward a separate existence as a Christian sect, for the evidence of works like GPh seems to indicate that some Valentinians went beyond the usual sacraments of Christianity to add distinctive ones of their own.

Starting in the fourth century, the Roman government began to lend its official support to the Christian church in various ways. Pro-Christian emperors tried tentatively to encourage the unification of Christianity into a more monolithic and universal organization, and in the process issued various legislations against one or another movement within the church. Valentinians appear in a list of “sectarians” (“heretics”) against whom the emperor Constantine legislated A.D. ca. 326, officially forbidding them to hold any further meetings. While the edict could not be enforced (it specified no penalties for disobedience), it did mark the beginning of official, that is, governmental, nonrecognition of the Valentinian movement.

In this century (if not before)—about the time that the Coptic manuscripts of Nag Hammadi had to be buried in the desert—the Valentinian Christians must have become self-consciously separate from the rest of Christianity. But they continued to exist. In A.D. 388, a Valentinian chapel (Latin *fanum*) was burned by a Christian mob in the Eastern garrison city of Callinicum, on the Euphrates; this incident provides, by chance, the first literary reference to a distinct church building designated as Valentinian. In A.D. 428, the emperor Theodosius II again included the Valentinians (as well as gnostics called Borborites, cf. EpG) in a decree forbidding certain sectarians to assemble—thus indicating that Valentinians *did* assemble at that time. As late as A.D. 692, they still continued to be mentioned, for Canon 95 of the Trullan Synod tells how to receive a repentant Valentinian into the imperial Catholic church.

ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

The fact that Valentinians, despite their acceptance of the extraordinary gnostic myth, could remain so long within the loose folds of the Christian church is due to their use of allegorical interpretation. Allegory made it easy for them to continue affirming ordinary Christian scripture and even the ordinary Christian creed or rule of faith, while reserving in their own minds a “deeper” Valentinian meaning of these texts. For an example of allegory, see IrPt 1.1.3 (“Allegories of the thirty aeons”).

The use of allegory is a characteristic of the Valentinian movement. But the Valentinians by no means invented allegorical interpretation. Rather, the technique goes back in Greek culture almost as far as literature itself. Although it was always controversial, allegory was a standard method of interpretation. It had been in use by Jews and Christians for a century before the time of Valentinus and continued to be used long afterward.

Greek allegory had developed as early as the fifth century B.C., with the pre-Socratic philosophers. It was used extensively by Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (ca. 30 B.C.–A.D. ca. 45), who very often employed it to read Platonic philosophy into the text of the Pentateuch. St. Paul had used it as well (Ga 4:21–31), and later it was developed by Christian theologians such as Origen of Alexandria. Thus the use of the allegorical method was not itself the ultimate bone of contention in gnostic scriptural interpretation. Rather, the most serious objections lay in what Valentinians “found” when they allegorized the New Testament and creed; in their implicit denial that the obvious meaning was of much importance; and in the esoteric nature of their philosophy, which they claimed to have received in an apostolic tradition transmitted not by bishops but by scholars.

Generally speaking, allegory had two essential functions. On the one hand, it permitted thinkers to assert that their own philosophical views (the “allegorical meaning”) had been recognized long before by an even more authoritative person, such as Homer, Moses, Jesus, or St. Paul. This function is analogous to the pseudepigraphy of classic gnostic scripture, in which a modern thinker’s views are passed off as an ancient document left by an authoritative figure of the past.

On the other hand, the method enabled the allegorist to negate unacceptable or offensive passages in texts whose authority was already beyond question. Thus by allegory the literal sense of a line of Homer, a Mosaic law, or a verse of the New Testament could be neutralized; at the same time, the authority of Homer, Moses, or St. Paul could be used to sponsor the allegorist’s own religious or philosophical speculation.

Being embedded within the ordinary Christian church at large, Valentinus and the Valentinian theologians accepted the canonical scriptural status of the writings now called the Old and the New Testament, or at any rate most of them. It was precisely in the middle of the second century that some Christians began to use the New Testament books as a body of literature having the same kind of authority as the Old Testament (see “Gnostic Scripture and the Christian Bible” in the “General Introduction”). Furthermore, it was in this period that

ordinary Christians began developing a consensus about the list (“canon”) of Christian works that ought to be used in this way. On this score, neither Valentinus himself nor his followers seem to have been especially different from ordinary Christianity.

As a result, their writings are not meant to replace the canonical scripture of the Old and the New Testament. Rather, they aim to bring out the meaning of canonical scripture and provide a key to its interpretation. In their literary posture, they do not claim to rival the antiquity of works like the gospels or letters of St. Paul. Yet it must not be forgotten that Valentinian writers claimed to speak *on the authority* of a secretly transmitted academic tradition, whose origin they traced back to St. Paul. For this reason, the authority of Valentinian academic writings—based, so they thought, on the secret key—was considered equal to, or even greater than, the text itself of the New Testament.

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See also the “Select Bibliography” at the end of the “Historical Introduction” to Part Two.

Important Valentinian Writing Not in This Volume

Heracleon. Fragments from *Commentary on John*. Text and translation in Smith, *Valentinian Christianity* (see above), 31–55.

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PTOLEMY'S VERSION OF THE Gnostic MYTH

ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON,
AGAINST HERESIES 1.1.1–1.8.5

(IrPt)

CONTENTS

This selection was the best-known account of gnostic myth until the discovery of the Coptic manuscripts of Nag Hammadi.

Ptolemy was one of Valentinus's first and most brilliant students. In this excerpt St. Irenaeus of Lyon, writing in Greek about A.D. 180, gives a detailed account of Ptolemy's teaching of the myth, "the blossom of Valentinus's school." Just as Valentinus's own mythic doctrine was a highly modified version of classic gnostic myth, so Ptolemy's must have been a further modification of his master's version—a revision of a revision.

An adequate historical interpretation of IrPt would therefore need to compare Ptolemy's myth with the teaching of Valentinus, taking note of Ptolemy's alterations. But this is easier said than done, for Valentinus's teaching is known only in very sketchy form (cf. IrV), and modern scholars disagree on the extent to which Ptolemy simply reproduces what he had learned from Valentinus. One view sees the Ptolemaean myth as closely following a written text, now lost, of Valentinus's original version, but slightly altered so as to mitigate its most shocking features. On this assumption, comparison of Ptolemy's doctrine with the teachings of Valentinus's other disciples makes it possible to isolate the original teaching of Valentinus, and thus to distinguish passages in which Ptolemy has altered that teaching.

A quite different view reconstructs Valentinus's original doctrine from another set of evidence, arriving at a relatively simple theology—in which, for example, only one figure of wisdom (Sophia) is involved in disaster. Set against such a reconstruction, the Valentinian myth of Sophia or wisdom as taught by Ptolemy would appear to be an elaborate piece of scholasticism, going far beyond Valentinus to resolve inner inconsistencies and contradictions within the speculative system. The doctrine of two wisdoms (higher wisdom and Achamōth) would then be an invention of Valentinus's disciples or perhaps a reintroduction of a classic gnostic doctrine of two wisdoms.

The Ptolemaean version, as summarized here by St. Irenaeus, parallels the full extent of classic gnostic myth from the description of the first principle down to the end of material creation and final restoration of the missing spiritual “seeds” to their spiritual home. It also touches on the issues of biblical interpretation and ethics. In this summary Irenaeus has woven together several written works. He gives two versions of the restraint of wisdom, for example (1.2.2–1.2.4), and reports two somewhat different descriptions of the perfect parent (1.2.4). From yet another source may come the lengthy excerpts in which New Testament passages are allegorically interpreted to refer to the myth. A commentary on the prologue to the Gospel of John (1.8.5) can also be isolated.

However much it may be indebted to the original doctrine of Valentinus, in any case Ptolemaean teaching stands at some distance from the myth of classic gnostic scripture. The overall tone and diction of Ptolemy’s teaching—if St. Irenaeus’s summary paints a representative picture—lacks the many Eastern or quasi-Jewish features of classic gnostic scripture. It is Hellenic, placid, clear, and deeply Christian, though unorthodox. The metaphysical realm of aeons in Ptolemy’s myth is clearly and arithmetically structured. Its unity and equality are emphasized (1.2.6), so that the aeons both share in the passion of wisdom (1.2.1) and cooperate in the emission of a savior to rectify her error (1.2.6). Stability—the underlying systemic goal of gnostic as well as Valentinian myth—is here linked with androgyny, the permanent unification of sexual opposites in one entity. Androgyny is thus the structure of the ultimate first principle (1.2.4) and the goal of the individual Christian. Corresponding to the self or spirit within each Valentinian Christian, Ptolemaean myth postulates a corresponding other self or “angel,” with which it will ultimately unite (1.7.1), in a union that could be expressed sacramentally or metaphorically in the “mystery of bridal chamber” (cf. GPh). In keeping with this theme, a certain amount of apparently sexual language appears in the names of the aeons (“intercourse, union, pleasure, mixture”); it is, however, paired with terms that express stability, the goal of androgynous union (“deep-sunken, unaging, self-produced, motionless”), cf. 1.1.2.

The tendency, already found in classic gnostic myth, to pair higher and lower entities (Barbēlō and wisdom, wisdom and life, first thought and afterthought) is less ambiguous in Ptolemy; it is limited to higher and lower Christs and higher and lower wisdoms (also called “Christ” and “Jesus”; “wisdom” and “Achamōth”). The heavenly rulers, though recognizably identical with their counterparts in gnostic myth, are demystified and domesticated. The divine particles that the chief ruler (craftsman) sows in humankind are not his by virtue of having stolen them from his mother (BJn 10:20f), but because she secretly deposited them in him; thus the theme of ultimate divine providence, which is still unintegrated in gnostic myth (cf. RR 87:20f), has been fully incorporated into the Ptolemaean version. The threefold genealogical division of classic gnostic historiography (descendants of Cain, Abel, Seth) has in Ptolemy been coordinated with a traditional philosophical analysis of the human makeup, as comprising material body, animating soul, and contemplative intellect or spirit. As in gnostic myth, the end of time is seen as a moment when the system reattains stability and all

parts are installed in their proper places. Yet the Ptolemaean vision of the end is more complex, ambiguous, and systemically unstable than the gnostic one; for, Ptolemy must provide for two kinds of salvation, corresponding to two classes of saved Christians, that is, Valentinians and ordinary Christians, “the spirituals” and “the just” (1.7.1). At this point, Ptolemaean myth clearly reflects the social position of the Valentinian school within a larger Christian organization.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

Almost nothing is known about Ptolemy, the author of the main material summarized in this excerpt; he is also the author of a work on the sources of the Pentateuch, which survives in its original wording (cf. PtF). Ptolemy is reported to have been a leader of an “Italic” branch of the Valentinian school, and so scholars have often suggested that he taught in Rome. According to ancient report, he was one of Valentinus’s first students. Because “Ptolemy” was a rare name at Rome, some scholars have identified him with the only Roman Christian intellectual of that name who is otherwise known in the period, Ptolemy the martyr (died ca. 152); this identification is controversial. The martyr Ptolemy is stated (by St. Justin Martyr, *Apology II*) to have been a Christian teacher; his death resulted from his efforts to convert a wealthy Roman matron to Christianity, which ultimately led to his denunciation before hostile Roman authorities. The Valentinian Ptolemy’s theological career must therefore fall after the date of Valentinus’s migration to Rome (A.D. 136–40) and before the time of Irenaeus’s summary (written ca. 180)—and furthermore, before circa 152 if he is identical with the Roman martyr. His language of composition was Greek.

As mentioned above, St. Irenaeus has combined several written works—presumably treatises—in this excerpt. Their exact literary structures are masked by Irenaeus’s summary.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Invisible Spiritual Fullness

A. The THIRTY SILENT AND UNRECOGNIZABLE AEONS

(1) The PRIMAL OCTET OF AEONS:

The DEEP. The perfect parent, prior source, and ancestor.

SILENCE, its notional consort. Thought, loveliness.

INTELLECT. The only-begotten, the parent and source of the entirety.

TRUTH, its consort

The WORD. The parent and source of the fullness.

LIFE (Zōē), its consort

The HUMAN BEING

The CHURCH, its consort

(2) The TEN AEONS, emanations from the Word and life. Five pairs:

The DEEP-SUNKEN = INTERCOURSE

The UNAGING = UNION

The SELF-PRODUCED = PLEASURE

The MOTIONLESS = MIXTURE

The ONLY-BEGOTTEN = The BLESSED

(3) The TWELVE AEONS, emanations from the human being and the church. Six pairs:

The INTERCESSOR = FAITH

The FATHERLY = HOPE

The MOTHERLY = LOVE

The EVER-FLOWING = INTELLIGENCE

The ECCLESIASTICAL = BLESSEDNESS

The WISHED-FOR = WISDOM

(Sophia), "higher wisdom"

B. OTHER BEINGS WITHIN THE FULLNESS

The ANOINTED (Christ) or upper anointed. An emanation from intellect.

The HOLY SPIRIT, his consort

An inner hexagonal BOUNDARY between the perfect parent and intellect, created by the anointed and the holy spirit: BOUNDARY, CROSS, REDEEMER, EMANCIPATOR, BOUNDARY-SETTER, CONVEYER

JESUS, an emanation from all the fullness of aeons. Called savior, second-anointed (Christ), Word, son, and entirety. Ultimately, Achamōth's bridegroom.

The ANGELS, Jesus' bodyguards, emanations from all the fullness of aeons. Models of the spiritual elements within Valentinian Christians, and, ultimately, their bridegrooms.

An outer palisade or BOUNDARY at the outer limits of the fullness

II. Non-Human Beings Outside the Fullness

ACHAMŌTH, the thinking of higher wisdom, wisdom's offspring.

Called wisdom (or lower wisdom) and holy spirit; the mother; the eighth; lord. Ultimately, bride of Jesus the savior.

Her offspring, the CRAFTSMAN (demiurge) of material beings; parent of animate beings; an angel. Called the parentless mother-father; god and king of all; the seventh. The god of Israel and of ordinary Christians.

SEVEN ANGELS OR HEAVENS, made by the craftsman

SPIRITS (spiritual hosts) OF WICKEDNESS:

The DEVIL or WORLD-RULER. A creature of the craftsman.

DEMONS

III. Humankind

ADAM, comprising three elements:

- (1) The ANIMATE HUMAN BEING; the spirit of life (Zōē); soul; the right.
- (2) The MATERIAL ADAM. Body; the left.
- (3) The SPIRITUAL HUMAN BEING, an element secretly sown in Adam at the instigation of Achamōth; Achamōth's offspring, patterned after the angels.

SUBSEQUENT HUMAN BEINGS:

- (1) POSTERITY OF SETH. SPIRITUALS: those who possess the seed of Achamōth as well as soul and matter; whose spirits are ultimately to be the brides of the angels. Valentinian Christians. [Among them, according to some followers of Ptolemy, was: JESUS BORN OF MARY, a son of the craftsman. The lower or animate anointed (Christ); a spiritual human being, upon whom the savior (higher Jesus) descended.]
- (2) POSTERITY OF ABEL. ANIMATES; those who consist merely of soul and matter. Other Christians.
- (3) POSTERITY OF CAIN. Those who consist merely of dust or matter. Other people.

TEXT

St. Irenaeus's original Greek text survives in the form of a word-for-word citation in St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against Heresies* 31.9.1–31.32.9 (vol. 1, 398–435 in K. Holl's edition of Epiphanius); Epiphanius's text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts, whose accuracy is a matter of debate among scholars. One short passage is also quoted in Pseudo-Ephraem of Edessa, *On Virtue*. An ancient Latin version of Irenaeus's work (containing the entire selection) also survives; two short passages exist in Syriac, as quoted by Severus of Antioch's *Against the Impious Grammarian*, and two more in Armenian are found in a Patristic florilegium conserved in Istanbul (MS Galata 54). The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Greek and Latin texts, which uses the Syriac and Armenian evidence, by Rousseau and Doutreleau, with alterations: A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies: Livre I* [Book 1] (Sources chrétiennes, no. 264; Paris: Le Cerf, 1979), vol. 2, 18-137.

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I. THE VALENTINIAN Gnostic MYTH

The perfect parent

1.1.1 Within invisible and unnameable heights^a there was—they say—a preexistent, perfect eternity;^b this they call also prior source, ancestor, and the deep. And it existed uncontained, invisible, everlasting, and unengendered. Within infinite eternal realms it was in great stillness and rest.

IrV (e)
TrTr 60:16
IrV (e)

And with it coexisted thought, which they also call loveliness and silence.^c

TrTr 55:35
ClExc 29

Production of intellect (the only-begotten)

And eventually the aforementioned deep took thought^d to emit a source of the entirety.^e And it deposited this emanation that it had thought to emit, like sperm, in the womb of the silence that coexisted with it. And the latter received this sperm, conceived, and brought forth intellect, which was like and equal to the emitter and was the only being that comprehended^f the magnitude of its parent. And this intellect they call also only-begotten, parent,^g and source of the entirety.

IrV (b)

IrV (c)

And truth was emitted along with it.

1.1.1 a. I.e. at the highest level of abstraction. The negative epithets of this paragraph (“invisible, unnameable, uncontained, unengendered”) may be compared with the description of the parent in BJn 2:26f.

b. Or “aeon.”

c. The reality of the parent’s consort is called into question in 1.2.4.

d. In classic gnostic myth, the second principle (Barbēlō) is called the parent’s thinking or thought, cf. BJn 4:26f.

e. In classic gnostic scripture, the “entirety” means the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the second principle (Barbēlō). In IrPt it seems to have the same meaning as “fullness,” cf. 1.2.6, and note 1.1.1k.

f. Or “contained.”

g. The three first principles of the myth (the deep, intellect, and the Word) are all called “parent.”

And this is equivalent to the first, primal *tetraktys*^h of Pythagorean philosophy. They call it also the root of the entirety. For it consists of

the deep;
silence;

and then

intellect;
truth.

Production of more aeons by intellect: the Word

Now, when this only-begotten perceived the ends for which it had been emitted, it emitted the Wordⁱ and life (Zōē)—a parent^j of the entirety of beings that were to exist after it and a source and forming of the entire fullness.^k

IrV (c)

IrV (e)

The human being

And from the Word and life (Zōē) emanated the human being and the church, as a pair.

IrV (c)

And these constitute the primal octet—a root and source^l of the entirety. It is designated by them with four names:

the deep;
intellect;
the Word;
human being.

For each of them is androgynous, as follows:

ClExc 32.1

first, the ancestor united with its thought—called also loveliness and silence—forming a pair;
the only-begotten, i.e. intellect, united with truth;
the Word united with life (Zōē);
the human being united with the church.

TrTr 57:33

h. A quartet consisting of the first four integers or their sum ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$), sometimes represented as



i. “Word” (Greek *Logos*): the same term (throughout this selection) also means “rational faculty, reason, utterance”; it is used in the prologue of the Gospel of John.

j. Cf. note 1.1.1g.

k. “fullness”: Valentinian jargon for the spiritual universe.

l. Or “substance.”

Emission of the ten aeons

1.1.2 Now, the aforementioned aeons were emitted for the glory of the parent.^a And wishing to glorify the parent with something of their own, they too emitted emanations in pairs. And after emitting the human being and the church, the Word and life (*Zōē*) emitted another ten aeons to whom they give the following names: Irv (c)

the deep-sunken and intercourse;
 the unaging and union;
 the self-produced and pleasure;
 the motionless and mixture;
 the only-begotten and the blessed.

These are <the> ten aeons that emanated—they say—from the Word and life (*Zōē*).

Emission of the twelve aeons

Now, in addition the human being and the church emitted twelve Irv (c) aeons, upon which they bestow the following names:

the intercessor and faith;
 the fatherly and hope;
 the motherly and love;
 the ever-flowing and intelligence;
 the ecclesiastical and blessedness;
 the wished-for and wisdom (*Sophia*). Irv (i)

1.1.3 The aforementioned are—according to their erroneous teaching—the thirty silent and unrecognizable aeons. They constitute the invisible, spiritual fullness according to them. And it is divided into three parts: an octet, a group of ten, and a group of twelve.

Allegories of the thirty aeons^a

And, they say, the reason that the savior—for they do not wish to call him the lord—did nothing publicly for thirty years, was in order Lk 3:23 to manifest the mystery of these aeons. Indeed, also in the parable of Mt 20:1 the workers sent to the vineyard—they say—these thirty aeons are disclosed very openly. For some get sent at the first hour; others at the third; others at the sixth; others at the ninth; still others at the eleventh. If these are added together they make the sum of thirty. For, $1 + 3 + 6 + 9 + 11 = 30$. And they maintain that the aeons are disclosed

1.1.2 a. I.e. the deep.

1.1.3 a. For allegory, see the “Historical Introduction” to Part Three.

in the mention of these hours. And these great, admirable, secret mysteries are the fruit that they bear wherever they have been able to accommodate and adapt some passages of scripture to their own fictitious creation.

Contemplation of the parent by intellect

1.2.1 Now, in their system the only being that was acquainted with the ancestor was—they say—the only-begotten, or intellect, which derived from it. To all the others, this (ancestor) was invisible and incomprehensible. Only the intellect—according to them—had the pleasure of contemplating the parent and the joy of understanding its immeasurable magnitude.

And it thought to communicate the size and extent of the parent's magnitude to the other aeons, and the fact that it was beginningless, uncontained, and not capable of being seen. But by the will of the parent, silence restrained it because it wanted to elevate all of them into thought and into longing for a search for the aforementioned ancestor of theirs.

ClExc 29

Wisdom's passionate search for the parent

Now, the other aeons^a in similar fashion and more or less in stillness longed to see the emitter of their seed and to inquire about the beginningless root. 1.2.2 But wisdom (Sophia)—the very last, most recent aeon of the group of twelve that had been emitted by the human being and the church—charged forward and experienced passion without the involvement of her consort, the wished-for.

IrV (d)?
TrTr 76:6
ClExc 31.2

The passion originated in the region of intellect and truth; but it collected in this (last aeon), which had been diverted—ostensibly out of love but really out of recklessness—because it had not communicated with the perfect parent as intellect had.

Zs 128:19+

The passion consisted of a search for the parent; for—they say—she wanted to comprehend its magnitude. She was unable to, for she had tried to accomplish the impossible. And she became engaged in a very great struggle, owing to the magnitude of the depth, the unsearchability of the parent, and her affection for that (parent).

TrTr 75:17
ClExc 31.3

Her restraint by the inner boundary (1)

Then she strained forward more and more. And she would have been swallowed and would have dissolved into universal essence had she not encountered a power that established the entirety and kept it outside of the ineffable magnitude. And this power they call the boundary.^a By it she was held back and established. With difficulty, she turned back to herself and became convinced that the parent was

IrV (e)
TrTr 76:21

1.2.1 a. Except for wisdom (Sophia).

1.2.2 a. Greek *horos*.

incomprehensible: and so she put off her former thinking, along with its consequent passion, which had come from terrifying amazement.

Production of her offspring (Achamōth)

1.2.3 And some of them tell the following tale about the passion of wisdom (Sophia) and her turning back.

In attempting the impossible and incomprehensible, she gave birth to essence without form,^a of that nature which a female must give birth to.^b And when she understood it, first she was grieved because of the imperfection of its origin. Next, she was afraid lest the thing should die.^c And then she became distraught and uncertain, searching for the cause and searching for the means to hide what had come into being. After being occupied with passions she accepted a turning back: having tried to hasten up to the parent and having, for a while, acted recklessly, she became exhausted. She became a suppliant before the parent; and the other aeons, especially intellect, joined her entreaty.

TrTr 77:28

TrTr 85:33
ClExc 30.2

The essence of matter—they say—had its first source in the aforementioned lack-of-acquaintance, grief, fear, and terror.^d

TrTr 78:28,
80:11
ClExc 48.3

Her restraint by the inner boundary (2)^e

1.2.4 Through the agency of the only-begotten,^a over against these the parent emitted in its own image the aforementioned boundary, having no consort and having no female component. For sometimes they maintain that the parent is with a consort, silence; but other times, that it is beyond (the categories) male and female. And this boundary^b they call also cross, redeemer, emancipator, boundary-setter, and conveyer. By this boundary—they say—wisdom (Sophia) was purified, established, and restored to membership in a pair.

IrV (e)
ClExc42.1

Separation of Achamōth and passions by the outer boundary

For, thinking and its consequent passion^c were separated from her: she remained inside the fullness; but her thinking and the passion were bounded apart^d by the boundary, were fenced off with a palisade,^e and existed outside the fullness. This (thinking) was a spiritual essence,

TrTr 77:37

TrTr 76:30

1.2.3 a. The same words also mean “to a misshapen essence.”

b. It was a philosophical cliché that the material constituent of an entity was “female,” while its form (or ideal form) was “male.”

c. Lit. “have an end.”

d. As St. Irenaeus goes on to explain (1.5.4), wisdom’s passions are subsequently experienced by her offspring Achamōth, and it is Achamōth’s passions that are the source of material essence in the world.

e. Section 1.2.4 partly repeats 1.2.2 (“Her restraint by the inner boundary [1]”).

1.2.4 a. I.e. intellect.

b. I.e. the inner boundary.

c. Wisdom’s passionate search consisted of passion and the abortive attempt to conceive of the perfect parent by means of thinking.

d. Or “defined.”

e. “fenced off with a palisade”: a single verb in Greek. The word (*apo-staurizein*) is obviously related to the words “crucify” (*staurizein*) and “cross” (*stauros*). It might also be taken to mean “fenced off by a cross.” The outer boundary is meant.

since it was a natural impulse to action on the part of an aeon. Yet it was without form^f and imageless^g because she had not comprehended anything. And—they say—for this reason it was a weak and female fruit.

Emission of the anointed and the holy spirit

1.2.5 After it had been bounded apart outside the fullness of the aeons and its mother had been restored to membership in her own pair, the only-begotten emitted another pair by the parent's foresight, for the fixing and establishment of the fullness, lest any of the aeons should experience the same as she had. This consisted of the anointed (Christ) and the holy spirit; by them the aeons were set in order.

Proclamation of the parent's incomprehensibility by the anointed

Now, the anointed (Christ) taught them the nature of membership in a pair,^a . . . and among them to proclaim publicly acquaintance with the parent, saying that it is uncontained, incomprehensible, and cannot be seen or heard except through the only-begotten.^b And the eternal permanence of the entirety is due to the incomprehensible aspect of the parent; but its origination and forming is due to the parent's comprehensible aspect, which is to say, its child.^c And that is what the newly emitted anointed (Christ) did for the entirety. Mt 11:27

Equalization of the aeons by the holy spirit

1.2.6 Moreover, once they had all been made equal with one another the holy spirit taught them to give thanks and brought in true repose. And in this way—they say—the aeons were appointed equal in form and intention, so that all of them were intellects, all were Words, all were human beings, and all were anointed (Christs); while the female ones were likewise all truths, were all lifes (Zōē's), were all spirits, and were all churches. When the entirety had been established for this end and was perfectly at repose, very joyfully it lifted up praise unto the ancestor, sharing in much good cheer. TrTr 86:11

Emission of Jesus and the angels

And in response to these good deeds, with a single design and intention, as the anointed (Christ) and the spirit joined in the consent and their parent joined in the approval, the entire fullness of aeons—each of the aeons—joined in bringing and contributing the most beautiful and splendid that it had within itself. And interweaving these elements fittingly and uniting them harmoniously, in honor and to the glory of the deep they emitted an emanation that was a kind IrV (i)
TrTr 86:23
ClExc 23.2

f. Or "misshapen."

g. Or "formless."

appears to say "recognizing comprehension of the ungendered, sufficient to be."

b. I.e. intellect.

c. Or "son" (as in GTr).

1.2.5 a. The text that follows is corrupt and cannot be translated coherently. The incoherent phrase

of utterly perfect beauty and star of the fullness, a perfect^a fruit,^b Jesus: after his parent he was named also savior, anointed (Christ), and Word; and also entirety, because he is from the entirety.

Simultaneously, in honor of it (the entirety) angels of the same ancestry were emitted as bodyguards for him.

TrTr 87:22
ClExc 35.2

1.3.1 Such then are the system of the interior of the fullness, as expressed by them; the misfortune of the aeon that suffered and nearly perished in vast matter through a search for the parent; the hexagonal construction consisting of

the boundary;
cross;
redeemer;
emancipator;
boundary-setter;
conveyer;

the creation of the first-anointed (Christ) and the holy spirit by their parent, subsequent to that of the aeons, as a result of a repentance;^a and the constructing of the second-anointed (Christ), also called savior, compounded out of contributed elements.

But these things are not openly spoken of, for not all people can comprehend acquaintance with them. Rather, they are mysteriously disclosed in parables by the savior for those who can understand, as follows.

Mt 19:11

Further allegories of the aeons

As I already mentioned,^b the thirty aeons are disclosed by the thirty years in which—they say—the savior did nothing in public; and by the parable of the workers of the vineyard. And Paul—they say—speaks of the aeons by name very openly, even maintaining their order, when he says

to all generations of aeon belonging to the aeons.^c

Ep 3:21
TrTr 58:29

But also when we say “to aeons belonging to aeons”^d we are supposed to be signifying the aforementioned aeons. And wherever the Greek

1.2.6 a. Or “ripe.”

b. “fruit” (cf. also note 1.2.6a): the Valentinian school characteristically spoke of emanations and the process of emanation with agricultural metaphors.

1.3.1 a. For the repentance of wisdom in classic gnostic scripture, see BIn 13:32f.

b. Cf. 1.1.3.

c. In its original context (Ep 3:21) this Greek phrase means “to all generations, for ever and ever.”

d. In its ordinary liturgical context, this Greek phrase means “for ever and ever.”

words *aiōn* (“ever,” “aeon”) and *aiōnes* (“ever,” “aeons”) are spoken of, they maintain that the reference is to these (aeons).

1.3.2 The emission of the group of twelve aeons is supposed to be disclosed by the fact that the lord held a discussion with the teachers of the law when he was twelve, and by the selection of the apostles, for there were twelve apostles. And the remaining eighteen aeons are supposed to be shown forth by the fact that it says he conversed with his disciples for eighteen months after his resurrection from the dead. But the eighteen aeons are even supposed to be clearly disclosed by the two initial letters of his name in Greek (*Iēsous*, “Jesus”), that is, the letters *I* (iota) and *ē* (eta).^a Similarly, they say that the ten aeons are signified by the initial letter *I* (iota) of his name, and this is why the savior said, “Not an iota, not a dot, will pass until the entirety comes into being.”^b

Lk 2:42

Mt 10:2

Lk 6:13

Mt 5:18

1.3.3 The passion (suffered) by the twelfth aeon^a is—they say—signified by the apostasy of Judas, who was the twelfth of the apostles; and because he^b suffered in the twelfth month. For they maintain that after his baptism he preached for only a single year. Furthermore, it is very plainly made clear in (the passage concerning) the woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage. For she had already suffered for twelve years before she was made well by the advent of the savior through touching the fringe of his garment.^c And the reason why the savior said, “Who was it that touched me?” was to teach the disciples about the mystery that had taken place among the aeons and the cure of the suffering aeon. For, the woman who had suffered for twelve years is—they say—that female power while it was straining forward and its essence was flowing into the infinite. And had she not come in contact with what the son^d was wearing,^e namely truth—which belongs to the first quartet, and is disclosed by the fringe—she would have dissolved into her essence.^f But she came to stand at rest and was cured of her passion. For the son’s power—which, they maintain, is the boundary—healed her, and the passion was separated from her.

Lk 4:19

Lk 8:43

Allegories of Jesus the savior

1.3.4 The fact that the savior, who derives from all, is the entirety, is—they say—made clear by the phrase “the entirety, being male, ex-

Lk 2:23

Ex 13:2

1.3.2 a. In Greek the letters of the alphabet were used as numerical figures. *I* was equivalent to 10, *ē* to 8. Thus *Iē*=18.

b. The usual translation of this passage (Mt 5:18) is “Not an iota, not a dot, will pass . . . until all is accomplished.”

1.3.3 a. Wisdom (Sophia).

b. Jesus according to Christian scripture.

c. “the fringe of his garment”: lit. “his fringe.”

d. I.e. the savior.

e. Or “bearing along.”

f. Probably the original reading of the text here is “into universal essence,” as in 1.2.2.

plaining^a the womb”:^b the savior, who is the entirety, explained^c the womb of the thinking of the aeon who had suffered and had been put outside the boundary of^d the fullness. Her they call also the second eighth being—of which we speak below. Paul speaks of this openly—they say—with the phrases,

and he is the entirety;^e Col 3:11
 the entirety is in^f him, and derives from him;^g Rm 11:36
 in him the whole^h fullness of deity dwells. Col 2:9

And the phrase

to unite the entirety in the anointed (Christ),ⁱ Ep 1:10

and other such passages, have been divinely spoken according to their interpretation.

Allegories of the inner boundary

1.3.5 Furthermore, as for the boundary, which they call by many names, they declare that it has two activities: one that stabilizes, the other that divides. In stabilizing and establishing, it is the cross; in dividing and bounding, it is the boundary. And—they say—the savior disclosed its activities in the following words. First, he disclosed its stabilizing activity when he said

That which does not lift up its cross and follow me cannot be my disciple;^a Mt 10:38
Lk 14:27
ClExc 42.1

and

Lift up the cross, follow me.^b Mk 10:21 var.

But he disclosed its bounding activity, when he said

I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. Mt 10:34

1.3.4 a. or “opening.”

b. The more normal translation of this passage (Lk 2:23 = Ex 13:2) is “every male that opens the womb,” meaning every first-born male child

c. Or “opened.”

d. “put outside the boundary of”: or “banished from.”

e. The more normal translation of this passage (Col 3:11) would be “He (Christ) is all.”

f. Or “into.”

g. The text of this verse (Rm 11:36), as it is now found, is normally translated “from him and

through him and to him are all things.” But the Valentinians may have known a slightly different form of the text and based their interpretation upon that.

h. Or “entire.”

i. The more normal translation of this passage (Ep 1:10) is “to unite all things in (him).”

1.3.5 a. The more normal translation of these words would be “He who does not bear his cross . . .”

b. These words are found in some ancient MSS of Mk 10:21.

John, too—they say—disclosed this (boundary) when he said

His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor,
and he will gather his wheat into his granary, but the chaff he
will burn with unquenchable fire. Mt 3:12
Lk 3:17

In this passage the activity of the boundary is supposedly disclosed. For according to their interpretation, that winnowing fork is the cross; the latter also consumes all the material elements as fire consumes chaff, and winnows^c the saved as a winnowing fork winnows wheat. Moreover, Paul the apostle, too—they say—makes mention of this cross in the following words:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but
to us who are being saved it is a power of god; 1Co 1:18

and

But far be it for me to glory in anything except the cross of the
anointed (Christ), by which the world has been crucified to me,
and I to the world.^d Ga 6:14
GPh 46

* * *

The essential formation of Achamōth by the anointed

1.4.1 The following are the events that they say happened outside the fullness. Once the higher wisdom's (Sophia's) thinking, which they call also Achamōth,^a along with her passion had been bounded apart from the fullness it was—they say—cast forth in a region of shadow and emptiness: and necessarily so, for it had come to be outside the light and the fullness, without form^b and imageless^c like an aborted foetus,^d because it had not comprehended anything. But the anointed (Christ) took pity on this female being^e and stretched out along the cross. By his own power he formed (her as) a concrete formation, (formed) not by acquaintance, but rather in essence alone. Once he had done this he hastened back upward, gathering in his power; and he left her, so that as she perceived the passion that was hers because of her removal from the fullness she might yearn for the superior realm; (for) she had a fragrance of incorruptibility left in her by the anointed (Christ) and the holy spirit. Accordingly, she is called by two names: GPh 34
ClExc 23.2

c. Or "purifies."

d. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by St. Irenaeus.

1.4.1 a. Biblical Hebrew *hokhmōth* (Pr 8–9), "wisdom"; in Ptolemaean Valentinianism, the name

of lower wisdom, as opposed to Sophia; cf. GPh 34.

b. "without form": or "misshapen."

c. Or "formless."

d. Cf. RR 94:14f.

e. I.e. Achamōth.

wisdom (Sophia) after her father, for her father^f is called wisdom; and holy spirit, from the spirit belonging to the anointed (Christ).

Achamōth's passionate search for the light (the anointed)

Now, once she had been formed and come to her senses, and then had been immediately emptied of the Word that was invisibly with her, i.e. the anointed (Christ), she rushed to search for the light that had left her; and she could not comprehend it, being prevented by the boundary.^g It was here that the boundary, in preventing her from the impulse to forward motion, said, "Iaō!" This—they say—is the origin of the name Iaō. TrTr 81:20

Origin of matter

Because she was unable to pass through the boundary since she was involved with passion, and she had been left outside and alone, she became subject to every aspect of manifold and diverse passion: she suffered grief, because she had not understood; fear, lest life should leave her just as light had done; uncertainty, at all of these; and everything in lack of acquaintance.

And unlike the aeon first wisdom (Sophia), her mother, in these passions she experienced not alteration but rather contrariety; and a different condition came to be present in her, one of turning back^h toward the one who had made her alive.

1.4.2 She—they say—accounts for the genesis and essence of the matter out of which this world came into being. For, the entire soul of the world and the craftsman had its origination in her turning back;^a other things had their beginning in her fear and her grief. Indeed, all moist essences came into being from her tears; luminous ones, from her laughter; and the bodily elements of the world, from her grief and terror. For sometimes—they say—she cried and felt grief because of being left alone in the darkness and emptiness; sometimes she proceeded to thought about the light that had left her, and she relaxed and laughed; sometimes she was afraid; and yet other times she became uncertain and distraught.^b * * * TrTr 78:28

The concrete formation of Achamōth by Jesus the savior

1.4.5 So when this mother of theirs^a had gone through every passion and had, with difficulty, surfaced again,^b she turned—they say—to supplicate the light that had left her, i.e. the anointed (Christ).

f. "father . . . father": or "parent . . . parent."

g. I.e. the outer boundary.

h. Or "conversion."

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by St. Irenaeus.

1.4.5 a. St. Irenaeus speaks sarcastically of Achamōth.

b. Cf. IrUnid 1.30.3.

1.4.2 a. Or "conversion."

Since he had returned to the fullness it is likely^c that he hesitated to descend for a second time in person. But he dispatched the intercessor to her, i.e. the savior, endowing him with all the parent's power and delivering all things to be under his authority. And the aeons did likewise. Thus "in him the entirety was established, the visible and the invisible, thrones, divinities, dominions."^d And he was sent to her along with his comrades, the angels.

ClExc 43.2

Mt 11:27
Lk 10:22
Col 1:16

ClExc 35.2

At first—they say—Achamōth was ashamed before him and put on a veil out of shame. But then when she saw him and all his harvest^e she ran to him, for she had gotten power from his appearing. And that (great one) formed her as a concrete formation (formed) by acquaintance, and he effected a cure of her passions.

ClExc 44.1

VHr
TrTr 88:8
ClExc 45.1

He separated them from her, but he could not ignore them; for it was impossible to make them disappear as the passions of the earlier (wisdom)^f had, since they were already habitual and powerful. Rather, he set them apart, poured them together, fixed them, and transformed them from incorporeal passions into incorporeal matter. Next he endowed them with suitable properties and with such a nature that they would enter into compounds and bodies, so that two essences came into being, a bad one, deriving from the passions; and a mixed one tainted with passion,^g deriving from the turning back.^h And that is why they say that the savior acted virtually as a craftsman.ⁱ

TRs 46:36?
TrTr 90:18
ClExc 45.2

ClExc 47.1

Achamōth, once separate from her passions, from joy became pregnant with the contemplation of the lights that accompanied him, i.e. the angels with him; and—they teach—craving (?) them^j she produced fruits after their^k (?) image, a spiritual offspring generated after the likeness of the savior's bodyguards.

TrTr 88:15
ClExc 44.1

The three essences

1.5.1 Now, of the three (essences) that—they say—were by this point extant, one derived from her passion, and this was matter; another derived from her turning back^a and this was the animate; another was what she brought forth, and this was the spiritual. So she turned to their forming.

TrTr 82:10

But she could not form the spiritual, inasmuch as it was of the same essence^b as she.

c. The sarcasm of this remark may indicate that the whole clause is a comment by St. Irenaeus.

d. The more normal translation of this passage (Col 1:16) is "in him all things were created . . ."

e. Lit. "all his gathering of crops (or fruit)." Cf. note 1.2.6b.

f. I.e. the twelfth aeon.

g. "a mixed one tainted with passion": or simply "a passive one."

h. Or "conversion."

i. Just as two beings within the system are called "wisdom," so two are called "craftsman."

j. Or "delighting in their conception."

k. "their": or "his."

1.5.1 a. Or "conversion."

b. "of the same essence": Greek *homouios*.

(1) Animate essence: The origin of the craftsman

So she turned to the forming of the animate essence that derived from her turning back,^c and she emitted what the savior had taught (her to emit). And first, from the animate essence she formed the god and parent and king^d of all, that is, of both those which are of the same essence^e as he, i.e. the animates, which they call those on the right; and those which derive from passion and matter, which they call those on the left. For they say that he formed all that were after him, being moved surreptitiously by the mother. Hence they call him mother-father, parentless, craftsman, and parent. And they say that he is parent of those on the right, i.e. animaters; craftman of those on the left, i.e. materials; and king of all.

IrV (g)
TrTr 100:18
ClExc 7.5,
47.2

1.5.6+

Prototypes of the created universe

Now, the aforementioned thinking^f wished to make all things to the honor of the aeons, and so—they say—she made images of them; or, rather, the savior did, through her. She kept the image of the invisible parent, since the craftsman was not acquainted with it; he (the craftsman) kept the image of the only-begotten child;^g and the archangels and angels that were with the latter kept the images of the other aeons.

Creation of the universe

1.5.2 Thus they say that he became parent^a and god of things outside the fullness, being the maker of all things, both animate and material. For he separated the two essences that had been poured together, made bodies out of incorporeal things, and created things both heavenly and earthly. And he became the craftsman of material and animate things, of right and left, of light and heavy, of upward-tending and downward-tending. For he constructed the seven heavens, above which—they say—is the craftsman. For this reason they call him the seventh, and the mother they call the eighth,^b preserving the count of the primal and first octet of the fullness.

TrTr 88:33
ClExc 48.1

TrTr 98:14

Creation of the rulers

They say that the seven heavens are intellectual and postulate that they are angels; and the craftsman, too, is supposed to be an angel, but resembling god. Likewise they say that paradise is above the third heaven and is virtually the fourth archangel; and that Adam got something from it^c when he passed time within it.

TRs 44:35

ClExc 51.1

c. Or "conversion."
d. The text attested by the Latin version instead has "the god and savior and father and king."
e. Greek *homoousios*.
f. Achamōth.
g. I.e. intellect.

1.5.2 a. In so being, the craftsman parallels the three first principles of the myth; cf. note 1.1.1g.
b. Cf. RR 95:19f.
c. Or "him."

1.5.3 Now, the craftsman—they say—supposed that he was constructing these things of his own accord, but he (really) made them through Achamōth's act of emission. For he made a heaven without knowing about heaven, modeled a human being without being acquainted with the human being, and showed forth earth without knowing earth. And in the case of all things he was in a like fashion unacquainted—they say—with the ideal forms of the things he was making and with the mother; rather, he supposed that he was totally alone. The cause—they say—of this supposition of his was his mother, who wished to promote him by making him head and source of his own essence and lord of the whole affair. TrTr 101:3

This mother^a they call also the eighth, wisdom (Sophia), land, Jerusalem, holy spirit, and “lord” in the masculine gender.^b She occupies the place of the midpoint;^c and until the end, she is above the craftsman but below or outside the fullness.

(2) Material essence

1.5.4 So material essence—they say—was generated from three kinds of passion: TrTr103:13
ClExc 48.2

fear;
grief;
uncertainty.

From fear and turning back, animate things received generation. From turning back,^a the craftsman—they maintain—had his generation; and from fear, all the rest of animate substance such as souls of irrational living things, both animals and human beings.

The craftsman's arrogance

So because he (the craftsman) was incapable of being acquainted with spiritual beings, he thought that he alone was god; and he said through the prophets, “It is I who am god; apart from me there is no one.”^b

BJn 13:8+
Is 45:21
Is 46:9?

The devil and demons

From grief—so they teach—the spiritual hosts of wickedness were generated. From this source originated the devil, whom they call the world-ruler; the demons; and all the substance of wickedness having to do with spirits. So they say that the craftsman was an animate offspring of their mother, while the world-ruler was a creature of the TRs 44.35
Ep 6:12
PtF 33.7.8

1.5.3 a. Achamōth.

b. They call her “master” rather than “mistress.”

c. Cf. 1.7.1.

1.5.4 a. “turning back . . . turning back”: or “conversion . . . conversion.”

b. Cf. BJn 11:19f.

craftsman.^c The world-ruler recognized the things that were superior to it because it was a spirit of wickedness. But the craftsman did not recognize these because he was (merely) animate. Their mother is supposed to reside in the supracelestial place, i.e. the midpoint; the craftsman, in the celestial place, i.e. the seventh (heaven); and the world-ruler in our world.

The elements

From terror and despair the elements comprising the world were generated, just as bodily things were generated from what is more stationary, as we said above: earth (was generated) by the fixity of terror; water, by the activity of fear; air, by the fixing^d of grief. But fire is naturally present in all of these, as (a principle of) death and corruption, just as lack of acquaintance—so they teach—is hidden in the three aforementioned passions. GTr 17:9

Material Adam and animate Adam

1.5.5 When he had crafted the world, he made also the human being consisting of dust—not by taking some of the dry soil of this world, but rather by taking some of the invisible essence, the liquid, flowing (essence) of matter. And into it—they state—he breathed the animate human being.^a This^b is the one who came into being “after the image and likeness.” It is the material human being who is “after the image,” for it is near to, though not of the same essence as, god. It is the animate human being who is “after the likeness,” hence its essence is called a spirit of life (Zōē), for it derives from a spiritual emanation. ClExc 50.1
TrTr 104:4
GPh 71
Gn 1:26
ClExc 50.2

And then—they say—it was clothed in the “garment of skin”: this, they maintain is the perceptible flesh Gn 2:7
GPh 71
Gn 3: 21
ClExc 55.1

(3) Spiritual essence sown in Adam

1.5.6 Now, their mother Achamōth's offspring, which she had brought forth by contemplating the angels around the savior, was of the same essence as the mother, i.e. was spiritual. And—they say—the craftsman was unacquainted with it; without his knowing it, this (offspring) was secretly deposited in him,^a so that it might be sown by him into the soul^b that comes from him and into this material body;^c might 1.5.1
VFrC
GPh 12
GPh 30
TrTr 105 :17

c. Just so, in some versions of classic gnostic myth, Ialdabaōth (the devil) is said to be the son of Sabaōth (the god of Israel and ordinary Christianity); cf. EpA 40.5.1.

d. Or “coagulation.”

1.5.5 a. St. Irenaeus's summary of the myth does not describe in detail the creation of the animate Adam, but cf. BJn 15:1f.

b. “This”: the union of the material “human

being consisting of dust” and the “animate human being.”

1.5.6 a. The craftsman has within him the spiritual seed of his mother, just as Ialdabaōth, the craftsman of classic gnostic myth, had the power of its mother; cf. BJn 10:20f.

b. The animate human being.

c. The material human being that encloses the animate one, cf. 1.5.5.

be carried by these (as it were by a pregnant woman), and increase; and might become ready for the reception of the perfect Word. So by ineffable power and forethought the spiritual human being escaped the notice of the craftsman after he had been sown by wisdom^d (Sophia) into the craftsman's breath. For just as he had not recognized his mother so he did not recognize her seed;^e and this (seed)—they say—is the church, and it is an earthly representation (antitype) corresponding to the spiritual church.

Gn 2:7

TrTr 94:20
ClExc 41.2

This latter, they think, is the human being that is within them,^f so that they have their souls from the craftsman, their bodies from dust, their fleshly elements from matter, and the spiritual human being from their mother Achamōth.

TRs 47:38

Fates of the three essences

1.6.1 Now, of the three (elements) that exist, the material one, also called left, will—they say—necessarily perish, in that it is unable to receive any breath of incorruptibility. The animate one, also called right, will proceed in whatever direction it has an inclination toward, in that it is intermediate between the spiritual and the material. The spiritual has been sent so that it might be formed by being coupled to the animate and learning along with it during its time of residence in this place. And this, they say, is the meaning of (the teachings about) the salt and the light of the world. Indeed, the animate needs perceptible lessons, too. The world was constructed—they say—and the savior came to this animate (element) in order to save it, for it has free will.

TrTr 119:16
ClExc 56.3

GTr 17:33

PPI A:22?
TRs 49:9Mt 5:13
Mt 5:14

The savior's body was apparent and not material

For he took the firstfruits—they say—of those which he was to save: from Achamōth, the spiritual (element); from the craftsman he put on the animate anointed (Christ); from^a the providential arrangement of events^b he became enveloped in a body that had animate essence but was constructed in some ineffable way so as to be visible, touchable, and capable of experiencing passion. And he did not take anything material^c—they say—for the material essence is not capable of receiving salvation.^d

ClExc 1.1

TRs 44:14?

VFrE?

Formation of all spiritual elements will bring the end

The end is supposed to come when every spiritual element has been formed and perfected^e in acquaintance—that is, spiritual human be-

TrTr 104:18

d. I.e. lower wisdom, Achamōth.

e. Or "posterity."

f. "This latter" is the inner human being or "spiritual human being." A spiritual human being (Valentinian Christian) thus consists of a material body ("from dust") that contains a soul or animate body, within which is a spiritual body.

1.6.1 a. Or "by."

b. Lit. "from the *oikonomia*," by divine economy.

c. The doctrine of docetism: that the real Jesus did not exist as human flesh, but only appeared to do so.

d. Or "preservation."

e. Cf. IrUnid 1.30.14 ("His ingathering of souls will bring the end").

ings who possess perfect acquaintance concerning god and who have been initiated into the mysteries of Achamōth. And they assume that they themselves are the people in question.

Ethics

1.6.2 But animate persons have been taught animate lessons, being strengthened by works and mere faith and not possessing perfect acquaintance. And they say that we, who belong to the church, are the people in question.^a Hence—they declare—good behavior is necessary for us, for otherwise we could not be saved; but they hold to the doctrine that they are spirituals not by behavior, but by nature, and that they will be saved^b (or preserved) no matter what. For just as the element that consists of “dust” cannot have a share in salvation^c—for, they say, it is not capable of receiving it—so also the spiritual element, which they themselves claim to be, cannot receive corruption, no matter what sorts of behavior it has to pass its time in the company of. For a piece of gold does not lose its beauty when it is put into the filth but rather keeps its own nature, since the filth cannot harm the gold. And, of course, just so—they say—they themselves do not suffer incidental harm no matter what sorts of material behavior they pass their time with, nor do they lose their spiritual substance.^d * * *

TrTr 118:37

TRs 46:57

VFrF
GPh 93VFrE
TRs 48:38GPh 20
GPh 41

1.6.4 * * * Thus for us—whom they call “animates,”^a saying that we are from the world—contenance and good behavior are necessary, so that thereby we might get to the place of the midpoint. But for them—who call themselves “spirituals” and “perfect”—this is not supposed to be the case. For (they say), what leads one into the fullness is not behavior but the seed,^b which was sent hither as an infant and grows to maturity in this place.

L6.1
GPh 55TRs 44:30
L7.5+

Final restoration of the spirituals

1.7.1 When all the seed has grown to maturity,^a Achamōth their mother will—they say—leave the place of the midpoint, enter the fullness, and

L7.5
CTr 43:11?
TRs 44:30
GPh 4

1.6.2 a. St. Irenaeus refers to himself and his non-gnostic readers.

b. “Salvation” and “preservation” are the same word.

c. Or “preservation.”

d. In the following polemical passage (not translated here), St. Irenaeus claims to be reporting on the ethical conclusions that the Valentinians draw from the principle of the gold in the filth. He specifically charges that they have no hesitation to eat meat offered to idols, participate in pagan religious banquets, and attend gladiatorial games; that the male teachers of the group seduce female converts (sometimes married ones), whose personal confessions Irenaeus claims to know about; and that male and female ascetics pretend to dwell together

as brother and sister but actually cohabit sexually, with resulting pregnancies. Many scholars reject St. Irenaeus’s report as just a malicious rumor or even a deliberate libel. Doubt has also been cast upon the accuracy of certain details of the preceding passage, and upon the next two sentences that are translated below. Cf. EpG, introduction.

1.6.4 a. “us . . . animates”: i.e. people who possess body and soul (the animate human being) but not spirit. St. Irenaeus refers to himself and his non-gnostic readers.

b. Or “posterity.”

1.7.1 a. Or “has been perfected.”

receive as her bridegroom the savior, who derives from all (the aeons), so that a pair is produced consisting of the savior and wisdom (Sophia) who is Achamōth: they are the bridegroom and bride, and the entire fullness is the bridal chamber.^b And the spirituals are supposed to put off their souls; become intellectual spirits; unrestrainably^c and invisibly enter the fullness; and become brides of the angels that are with the savior.^d

Jn 3:29?

1.7.2
TRs 45:36 +
GPh 24 +
ClExc 21.3

Final repose of the just (animates)

The craftsman for his part will move into the place of wisdom (Sophia) the mother, namely in the midpoint. And the souls of the just,^e also, will gain repose in the place of the midpoint. For nothing animate goes inside the fullness.

TrTr 122:24

GPh 55
GPh 90

Final destruction of the world

After such things have happened—so they teach—the fire that lurks within the world will flare up, catch fire, overcome all matter, be consumed along with it, and enter into definitive nonexistence.^f And the craftsman—they declare—was not acquainted with any of these facts before the advent of the savior.

Begetting of the earthly Jesus by the craftsman

1.7.2 There are some people who say that he (the craftsman) emitted a (different) anointed (Christ), who was his own son yet was animate; and that it was about this one that he spoke through the prophets. This (they say) was the one who passed through Mary as water goes through a pipe.

Heavenly savior descends into earthly Jesus

And also it was into him at his baptism that the savior, who comes from the fullness and derives from all (the aeons), descended in the form of a dove.^a In him was also the spiritual seed^b that comes from Achamōth.

Mt 3:16
Lk 3:22
ClExc 1.1, 16

So, they say that our lord was compounded of these four elements, maintaining the pattern of the primal, first *tetraktys*:^c

the spiritual, from Achamōth;
the animate, from the craftsman;

b. The imagery of the bridal chamber is developed especially in GPh.

c. Or “incomprehensibly.”

d. All the spirituals (Valentinians), both men and women, become as it were female; all the savior’s angels are as it were male.

e. I.e. including the souls of ordinary Christians like St. Irenaeus as well as the souls put off by the spirituals on their way toward the fullness.

f. The idea of a fire that lurks within the world

and in due time will flare up and consume the world was a well-known part of ancient physics, as taught by the Stoic school. But the belief that the world will then “enter into definitive nonexistence” is not a part of Stoic physics.

1.7.2 a. Cf. IrUnid 1.30.12 (end).

b. Or “posterity.”

c. Cf. note 1.1.1h.

the providential arrangement of events, which was constructed
in some ineffable way;
the savior, who was the dove that descended into him.

Crucifixion of Jesus

And he continued to be without suffering^d—for it was not possible for him to suffer, since he was unrestrainable^e and invisible. Because of this, when this (anointed or Christ) was brought before Pilate, the spirit of the anointed that had been deposited in him was taken away. But the seed^f from the mother did not—they say—suffer, either. For it too was without suffering,^g inasmuch as it was spiritual and was invisible even to the craftsman. What suffered, therefore, was what they consider to be the animate anointed (Christ), who was mysteriously constructed^h out of the providential arrangement of events, so that through him the mother might display a representationⁱ of the superior anointed (Christ), who had stretched out along the cross and who had formed Achamōth as a concrete formation in essence. For all these things—they say—are representations^j of ones in that other (realm).

L71
TRs 45:36+

ClExc 1.2

Principles of biblical interpretation

1.7.3 The souls who had the seed^a of Achamōth were—they say—superior to the rest. Accordingly, they were loved by the craftsman more than any others, although he did not know the reason why, and rather supposed that they were as they were on account of him. Thus—they say—he assigned them to be prophets, priests, and kings. And many (utterances)—they explain—were spoken by this posterity through the prophets, as being of a more sublime nature; but also the mother—they say—spoke many (utterances) about the higher realm; and also, (many utterances were spoken) through this (craftsman) and the souls that came into being because of him.

TrTr III:13

TrTr 100:33

And therefore they divide up the prophecies.^b One part—they maintain—was spoken by the mother; another part, by the seed;^c yet another part by the craftsman.

PtF
TrTr III:13

But so also, (the teachings of) Jesus: one part (was spoken) by the savior; another part by the mother; yet another part by the craftsman. This we demonstrate in our exposition below.

d. Or "passions."

e. Or "incomprehensible."

f. Or "posterity."

g. Or "passions."

h. "What suffered, therefore . . . was mysteriously constructed": or "What mysteriously suffered, therefore . . . was constructed."

i. Or "symbol."

j. Or "symbols."

1.7.3 a. Or "posterity."

b. Cf. also PtF.

c. Or "posterity."

Role and authority of the craftsman

1.7.4 Now inasmuch as the craftsman was unacquainted with the realm superior to him, he was moved by the utterances but had no respect for them, attributing them to various causes—either the prophesying spirit, which has a kind of motion all its own; or the person in question; or an admixture of inferior things. And he continued in this lack of acquaintance until the advent of the savior. But when the savior came—they say—he learned everything from him, and was delighted to defect to him, accompanied by all his army.^a It is he who is the centurion in the gospel, who says to the savior, “For I have under my authority soldiers and slaves, and whatever I command they do.” He (the craftsman) will bring about a providential arrangement of events in the world until the appropriate time, especially because of his care for his church and his knowledge of the reward that awaits him, namely occupying the place of the mother.

Mt 8:9
Lk 7:8

TrTr 135:3

Three species of human beings

1.7.5 They postulate three species of human beings:

TrTr 118:14
ClExc 54.1

spirituals;
animates;
those consisting of dust;^a

according as Cain, Abel, and Seth were these.^b And from them derive the three natures, no longer in one individual but distributed among three ancestries.

The element consisting of dust is proceeding to corruption.

1.6.1+

The animate will gain repose in the place of the mother if it chooses the better, and if it chooses the worse, it will proceed to the realm of those like itself.

ClExc 63.1

The spirituals, which down to this day Achamōth has continued to sow into just souls, learn here; are nourished, for they are sent as infants; later are deemed worthy of maturity;^c and are given as brides to the angels of the savior—according to their doctrine. Yet their souls must necessarily repose with the craftsman in the midpoint forever.

GPh 27

1.6.4
VFRA?

Moreover, they subdivide the kinds of souls, saying that some are good by nature, others wicked by nature. Now, the good ones are those that become capable of receiving the seed; but those that are wicked by nature never receive that seed.^d * * *

VFrF

1.7.4 a. Or “force.” Reference to this word virtually identifies the craftsman with Sabaōth of classic gnostic myth; cf. RR note 95c.

dust and soul (animate element); Seth consisted of dust, soul, and spiritual seed.

c. Or “perfection.”

d. “seed . . . seed”: or “posterity . . . posterity.” The following passage (not translated here) is a polemic by St. Irenaeus.

1.7.5 a. Greek *pneumatikoi*, *psychikoi*, *khōikoi* (pneumatics, psychics, choics).

b. Cain consisted only of dust; Abel consisted of

II. SCRIPTURAL ALLEGORIES OF THE MYTH^a

1.8.1 * * * They extract phrases, words, and parables from one passage or another, intending to accommodate the sayings of the lord to their tales.^b We have already spoken of the ones that they accommodate to events inside the fullness. **1.8.2** But the passages of scripture that they try to adapt to events outside the fullness are such as the following.

Wisdom's passionate search

The lord came to his passion^a "at the last times" of the world—they say—so as to manifest the passion that occurred with the last of the aeons^b and so that the end of the affairs of the aeons might be reflected in his end.^c IP 1:20

The essential formation of Achamōth

The young woman twelve years old who was the daughter of a ruler of the synagogue, over whom the lord stood and whom he raised from the dead,^d is—as they describe—a representation^e of Achamōth: this anointed (Christ) of theirs stretched himself out over her, formed her, and led her to perception of the light that had left her. Lk 8:41

The concrete formation of Achamōth

The fact that the savior appeared to her while she was outside the fullness and had the appointed lot of an aborted foetus, is—they say—spoken of by Paul in 1 Corinthians:

Last of all, as to an aborted foetus,^f he appeared also to me. 1Co 15:8

The advent of the savior with his comrades before Achamōth is likewise shown by him in the same epistle, when he says

A woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels. 1Co 11:10

The fact that Achamōth put on a veil out of shame when the savior came to her, was shown by Moses putting a veil on his face. Ex 34:33

Separation of Achamōth and passions by the outer boundary

Her passions that she experienced were indicated—they say—by the lord. And by saying on the cross

1.8.1 a. Cf. also 1.1.3 and 1.3.1–5; and for allegory, see the "Historical Introduction" to Part Three.

b. St. Irenaeus describes the Valentinians' use of scripture in an openly hostile way.

1.8.2 a. Or "suffering."

b. The Valentinians thus interpret "times" to mean "aeons."

c. Or "death."

d. The story in Luke (Lk 8:40–56) is interrupted by an episode in which Jesus heals a woman suffering from a hemorrhage; for the Valentinian interpretation of that passage, see above 1.3.3.

e. Or "symbol?"

f. Or "one untimely born."

My god, my god, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mk 15:34

he disclosed that wisdom^g (Sophia) had been left by the light and had been prevented from the impulse to forward motion by the boundary.^h

Her grief he disclosed by saying

My soul is very grief-stricken.ⁱ

Mt 26:38

Her fear he disclosed by saying

My father, if it be possible, let the cup pass from me.

Mt 26:39

And likewise, her uncertainty he disclosed by saying

And what shall I say? I do not know!

Jn 12:27

Three species of human being

1.8.3 The fact that there are three species of human beings was—they teach—disclosed by him as follows.

The material (species) he disclosed when a man said

I will follow you (sing.)

Mt 8:19
Lk 9:57

and he replied

The child of the human being^a has nowhere to lay his head.

The animate (species) he disclosed when a man said

I will follow you (sing.); but let me first say farewell to my own^b

and he said to him

No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of heavens.

For the latter (“heavens”) means—they say—“the middle region.”^c

Also belonging to the animate species—they maintain—was the man who declared that he had carried out most of the parts of righteous-

Mt 19:20

g. The lower wisdom, Achamōth.

h. The outer boundary.

i. Or “sorrowful.”

1.8.3 a. Or “son of man.”

b. Or “those of my household.”

c. Or “For this person—they say—belongs to those of the middle.”

ness and then refused to follow, being instead overcome by wealth, so that he did not become perfect.

The spiritual (species) he disclosed by saying

Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you (sing.), go and proclaim the kingdom of god Lk 9:60

and when he said to Zacchaeus the tax collector

Make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today. Lk 19:5

For they declare that these people belonged to the spiritual species.

And—they say—the three species are made clear by the parable of the leaven that the woman is said to have hidden in three measures of meal. For—they teach—wisdom (Sophia) is called a woman; while the three species of human beings, namely the spiritual, the animate, and the one consisting of dust, are called three measures of meal. And—they teach—the savior himself is called leaven. And furthermore Paul spoke expressly of ones consisting of dust, animates, and spirituals. In one passage he says Mt 13:33
Lk 13:20

As was the one consisting of dust, so are those who consist of the dust. 1Co 15:48

Elsewhere he says

A merely animate person does not receive the realm of the spirit,^d 1Co 2:14

and elsewhere,

The spiritual judges all things. 1Co 2:15

The words “a merely animate person does not receive the realm of the spirit” were spoken—they say—about the craftsman: because he was merely animate he could not recognize his mother, since she was spiritual; her seed^e; or the aeons within the fullness.

The fact that the savior took the firstfruits of those which he was to save was spoken of by Paul, when he says

If the firstfruit is holy, so is the mixture.^f Rm 11:16

d. The more normal translation of this passage (1 Co 2:14) is “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the spirit.”

e. Or “posterity.”

f. The more normal translation of this passage

Here the spiritual (element)—so they teach—is called a firstfruit; while we, the animate church,^g are called the mixture. He took it—they say—and made it rise by his agency, for he was leaven.

The formation of Achamōth

1.8.4 The fact that Achamōth wandered outside the fullness, was formed by the anointed (Christ), and was searched out by the savior, is—they say—disclosed by him when he says that he came unto the lost sheep. For this mother of theirs—they explain—is called a sheep; from her, they maintain, the church was sown into this world. Her time spent outside the fullness in all the passions, from which matter came into being, they assume to be a wandering.

Mt 18:12
Lk 15:4
GTr 31:28

Production of Achamōth and her final restoration

The superior wisdom (Sophia) is—as they describe it—called the woman who swept the house and found the silver coin (drachma), in that wisdom lost her thinking; then later, after all things had been purified by the savior's advent, she found it, because this^a too is restored to the inside of the fullness, according to them.

Lk 15:8

Final repose of the craftsman

Simeon, who took the anointed (Christ) up in his arms and gave thanks to god and said

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace

Lk 2:29

is—they say—a representation^b of the craftsman, who by the savior's coming learned of his change of position and gave thanks to the deep.

Achamōth's wait for restoration

Through Anna the prophet, who—so the gospel proclaims—lived with a husband seven years and spent all the rest of her time as a widow until she saw the savior, recognized him, and spoke of him to all—through her, they state, Achamōth is very openly disclosed, in that she saw the savior and his comrades for a brief moment and remained thereafter in the midpoint, waiting for when he would return and restore her to membership in her pair.

Lk 2:36

Her name is disclosed by the savior when he says

Yet wisdom (Sophia) is justified by all her children

Lk 7:35

(Rm 11:16) is "If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump."

1.8.4 a. Or "she."
b. Or "symbol."

g. St. Irenaeus refer to himself and his non-gnostic readers.

and by Paul, as follows:

Yet we speak of wisdom (Sophia) among the perfect.^c

1Co 2:6

Pairs of aeons in the fullness

The pairs within the fullness are—they say—spoken of by Paul, who shows this in one instance: for, writing on the subject of the marriage bond he said

This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to the anointed (Christ) and the church.

Ep 5:52

The primal octet of aeons (commentary on John)

1.8.5 Further, they teach that John the disciple of the lord disclosed the first octet, and their exact words^a are as follows.

“John the disciple of the lord intentionally spoke of the origination of the entirety, by which the parent emitted all things. And he assumes that the first being engendered by god is a kind of ‘beginning’; he has also called it^b ‘child’ and ‘only-begotten god.’^c ‘In this’ (the only-begotten) ‘the parent’^d emitted ‘all things’ in a process involving seeds.^e By this (child), he says, was emitted the Word, in which was the entire essence of the aeons that the Word later personally formed.”

Jn 1:3

Jn 1:1

Jn 1:18 var.

Jn 1:3

“Now, since he is speaking of the first origination, he does well to begin the teaching at the beginning, i.e. with the child^f and the Word. He speaks as follows.

The Word was in the beginning, and the Word was with god, and the Word was god. It was in the beginning, with god.

Jn 1:1

CIExc 6.1

First, he distinguishes three things,

god;
beginning;
Word.

Then he unites them: this is to show forth both the emanation of the latter two, i.e. the child and the Word, and their union with one

c. The more normal translation of this passage (1 Co 2:6) is “Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom.”

1.8.5 a. From the last sentence of the selection, it appears that the following is an exact quotation from a work by Ptolemy or one of his followers.

b. The more normal translation of the prologue

of Jn refers to the Word as a person (“he”). The original Greek makes no distinction here between personal and impersonal.

c. “child”: or “son.” “only-begotten god”: these words are found in some ancient MSS of Jn 1:18.

d. Or “father.”

e. Or “posterity.”

f. Or “son.”

another and simultaneously with the parent.^g For the beginning was in the parent and from the parent; and the Word was in the beginning and from the beginning. Well did he say

The Word was in the beginning,

Jn 1:1

for it was in the child.^h

And the Word was with god.

So was the beginning.

And the Word was god;

reasonably so, for what is engendered from god is god. This shows the order of emanation.

All things wereⁱ made through it, and without it was not anything made.

Jn 1:3
PtF 33.3,6

For the Word became the cause of the forming and origination of all the aeons that came after it.

“But furthermore (he says)

That which came into being in it was life (Zōē).

Jn 1:3-4 var.

Here he discloses a pair. For he says that the entirety came into being through it, but life (Zōē) is ‘in it.’ Now that which came into being ‘in’ it more intimately belongs to it than what came into being ‘through’ it: it is joined with it and through it it bears fruit. Indeed, inasmuch as he adds

and life (Zōē) was the light of human beings,

Jn 1:4

in speaking of ‘human beings’ he has now disclosed also the church by means of a synonym, so that with a single word he might disclose the partnership of the pair. For from the Word and life, the human being and the church come into being. And he called life (Zōē) ‘the light of human beings’ because they are enlightened by her, i.e. formed and made visible. Paul, too, says this:

g. Or “father.”
h. Or “son.”

i. Or “The entirety was.”

For anything that becomes visible is light.

Ep 5:13

So since life (Zōē) made the human being and the church visible and engendered them, she is said to be their light.

“Now among other things John plainly made clear the second quartet, i.e.

the Word;
life;
the human being;
the church.

“But what is more, he also disclosed the first quartet. Describing the savior, now, and saying that all things outside the fullness were formed by him, he says that he is the fruit of the entire fullness. For he calls him a light that ‘is visible^j in the darkness’ and was not overcome by it, inasmuch as after he had fitted together all things that had derived from the passion they did not become acquainted with him. And he calls him child,^k truth, life (Zōē), and Word become flesh. ‘We have beheld the latter’s glory,’ he says. And its glory was like that of the only begotten, which was bestowed on him by the parent,^l ‘full of loveliness (grace) and truth.’ And he speaks as follows.

Jn 1:5

Jn 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; we have beheld its glory, glory as of the only-begotten^m from the parent.ⁿ

Jn 1:14

So he precisely discloses also the first quartet when he speaks of

the parent;
loveliness;
the only-begotten;
truth.

Thus did John speak of the first octet, the mother of the entirety of aeons. For he referred to

the parent;^o
loveliness;
the only-begotten;^p

j. Or “shines.”

k. Or “son.”

l. Or “father.”

m. Or “only son.”

n. Or “father.”

o. Or “father.”

p. Or “only son.”

truth;
the Word;
life (Zōē);
the human being (or man);
the church.”

These are the words of Ptolemy.

A PRAYER OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

(PPI)

CONTENTS

A Prayer of Paul the Apostle (PPI) is a theologian's intercessory prayer addressed to "the existent and prior existent," perhaps meaning the perfect parent or ultimate first principle, and invoking the name of "Jesus Christ, [the lord] of lords, the king of eternities." In addition, the central petitions (A:19f) invoke the authority of "the preacher of the gospel" (Greek *euaggelistēs*). This must mean St. Paul, since he is the only such person mentioned by name in the work. The title PPI therefore does not indicate that Paul is the author of the prayer, but characterizes it as a prayer that invokes his authority as an early apostle and preacher of the gospel.

Valentinian teachers claimed the apostle Paul as their theological ancestor, patron, and source of authority, maintaining that Valentinus had been instructed by a certain Theudas, who himself was said to have been a pupil of Paul. It was this chain of authority that supposedly empowered Valentinian teachers to compose treatises and commentaries under their own name.

While authors of classic gnostic scripture wrote their revelations as pseud-epigraphy, attributed to venerated religious heroes of the past or to spiritual beings (Adam, Seth, the spiritual Seth, John the apostle, Barbelō), Valentinian teachers almost always spoke on the authority of their school tradition. This "apostolic tradition" (PtF 33.7.9, GPh 74:16f) or academic genealogy has an exact parallel in secular philosophical schools (and indeed in Jewish rabbinical traditions), whose leaders strengthened their own personal authority by producing lists of academic predecessors going back to some venerated teacher of the past, such as Socrates.

PPI has a simple tripartite structure. The opening stanza (A:1–11f) speaks of the petitioner's emanation from the fullness and looks forward to ultimate return ("receive me . . . give me . . . completion"); it recalls the petitioner's intimate closeness to god. The second (A:15–23f) is a prayer for theological authority, healing of body, redemption of soul and spirit, and intellectual inspiration. It is this stanza that invokes the authority of St. Paul. The third (A:25–end) asks additionally for majesty and mystery; it concludes with a doxology.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author of PPl and its place of composition are unknown. The prayer was used by Valentinians, and so it may be Valentinian in origin. Alternatively, it may be a product of one of the schools of Pauline imitators, such as produced the deutero-Pauline epistles. Some echoes of Paul's vocabulary and phraseology occur in the work. The date of composition of PPl must be before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. The language of composition was Greek.

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single MS from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC I (pp. A–B), which was copied just before A.D. 350, and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum. This MS (the “Jung Codex”) contains only Valentinian works (including GTr, TRs, and others); the prayer is copied on the front flyleaf of the MS (paginated A/B by modern editors) as an invocation of apostolic authority for the whole MS.¹ The first three lines of text are mostly missing owing to damage of the MS.

The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Coptic by Kasser et al., with alterations: R. Kasser et al., eds., *Tractatus Tripartitus*, vol. 2 (Pars II, Pars III) (Bern: Francke, 1975), 248–50. In the critical edition, the prayer is erroneously paginated 143–44, and the line numbering differs from the one used here.

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1. Erroneously called a “colophon” to the manuscript by earlier scholarship.

A Prayer of Paul the Apostle^a

1	A [...]	
4, 5	Ransom me; for [I am(?)] ^b yours; •[from you (sing.)] have I emanated.	TRs 46:25+ GTr 27:10?
6	It [is] you [who are my] intellect: engender me.	
7	It is you who are my treasure: ^c [give] unto me.	
7	[It is] you [who are] my fullness: receive me.	
8	It is [you] who are <my> ^d repose: give me unrestrainable completion, ^e	TRs 45:36+?
11	I pray you, O existent and prior-existent, in the name [which is] above every name, through Jesus Christ, ^f [the lord] of lords, the king of eternities. ^g	Ph 2:9
15	[Give] me your unregretted gifts ^h through the child of the human being, ⁱ [by ^j the] spirit, the intercessor, of [truth].	TRs 45:9? Jn 14:16
18	Give me authority, [I] request of you.	
19	Give me [healing] for my body, as I request [of] you through the preacher of the gospel; ^k	
22	[And] redeem my luminous soul [for] ever, and my spirit.	IrPt 1.6.1?
23	And [disclose] unto my intellect the [first-born] of the fullness of grace,	Jn 1:14
25	Bestow what eyes of angels have not [seen], what ears of rulers have not heard, what [has not] come upon	1Co 2:6
30	the hearts of human beings who have become	

Title A a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at B:9f). Three lines of Coptic have been mostly destroyed at the beginning of the prayer.

b. Restoration uncertain.

c. Or “treasury.”

d. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

e. Or “perfection.”

f. Or “Jesus the anointed.”

g. Or “eternal realms, aeons.”

h. Or “emanations.”

i. Or “the son of man.”

j. Or “and”

k. Or “evangelist” (Greek *euaggelistēs*).

- 33 angels,^l •and is after the image of the animate god when
 he was modeled in the beginning; •for I have faith be-
 longing to hope. Gn 1:26?
Gn 2:7?
- 35 And give me also^m your beloved, chosen, blessed majesty: O
 3 first-born, O first-produced, **B** [. . .]^a the [wonderful]
 mystery of your house.
- 4 [For] thine [is] the kingdom [and] the glory and the praise and
 the [greatness] for ever and ever. [Amen.]^b Mt 6:13 var.

l. Or "human beings, but has happened to angels."

m. Lit. "add to me."

B a. About two lines of text are missing here.

b. In the manuscript, the title of the work is written after the text (at B:9f): "A Prayer of Paul the Apostle. In peace. Holy is the Christ!"

THE TRIPARTITE TRACTATE

(TrTr)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The *Tripartite Tractate* is a theological treatise that narrates and interprets a Valentinian version of the gnostic myth, from the description of the first principle down to the end of the material creation and the return of spiritual beings to God. In scope it resembles St. Irenaeus's account of Ptolemy's teaching of the myth (ItPt), but Irenaeus drew on several written sources for his summary, while TrTr is a single work, one of the longest from a gnostic or Valentinian to survive. Because its author was a Valentinian, TrTr provides a rare opportunity to study Valentinian theological reflection directly and at length rather than through the reports of opponents or in fragments.

The author of TrTr and its place of composition are unknown. It has been identified with the so-called Eastern school of Valentinianism (see "Historical Introduction" to Part Three). Like the Eastern Valentinian theologian Theodotus, it teaches that the church of spirituals constituted a body for the incarnate savior (114:4f; 115:25–116:5f; 122:12f; cf. ClExc 1.1; 26.1) and that the savior required ransom, as did those he came to save (124:32f; cf. ClExc 22.7). Even the title is unknown: no title appears in the manuscript; the final page, where a title would be expected if there was one, is heavily damaged. The name *Tripartite Tractate* has become conventional among modern scholars and refers to the division of the treatise into three parts, which are separated by decorative patterns in the manuscript. The language of composition was Greek.

The three parts vary greatly in length and may not reflect divisions that the author intended. The first part (51:1–104:2f) describes a primal triad in the fullness, consisting of the first principle, the unengendered father; the son, who is the father's thought of himself; and the church, the collection of innumerable aeons that represent the father's properties and qualities. The aeons possess their own procreative nature, which expresses itself in a threefold movement of glorification (67:37–71:5f): the aeons collectively give glory to the father; the father makes a return of glory to them; and the aeons once again glorify the father, this time individually, yet harmoniously, in accord with each one's self-determination and with the capacity of the father that it embodies. The individuality of the third glorification produces a hierarchy of aeons and creates the possibility of individual action apart from the collective. Acting on this possibility, the youngest aeon, the Word, audaciously approaches the father in an attempt to gain acquaintance

of him, but he is prevented by the boundary. The fallen Word consequently resides outside the fullness, but his perfect self returns to it.

The Word's fall, turning back, and subsequent joy generate the material, animate, and spiritual essences, respectively, in the form of cosmic powers. His arrogant thought produces an order of material powers, and his turning back to himself and the fullness ("the remembrance") results in a similar order of animate powers. The two orders fall into combat, as the material powers' aggressive love of command infects the animate powers as well. The Word's appeal to his perfection in the fullness prompts the aeons to unite in intercession to the father, and their joyous harmony produces the savior as its fruit. The savior's self-revelation outside the fullness heals the Word and separates the warring forces: the animate powers worship the savior, while the material ones fall into chaos. The Word's gratitude to and praise of the aeons generate the spiritual powers. The three sets of powers are distinguished not only by their essences, but also by their differing modes of correspondence to the aeons of the fullness. The spiritual powers are images of the aeons; the animate powers, likenesses of them; and the material powers, imitations of them.

The Word then gives order to the cosmos outside the fullness. He directly forms an aeon for the spiritual powers ("the aeon of the images"), modeled after his vision of all things, including those in the fullness; it includes a place called the church. The Word organizes the animate and material powers into a hierarchy, harnessing their shared love of command to their divinely ordained places of domination and subordination. The Word places the craftsman and ruler, the creator god of Genesis, in charge of the animate and material realms and uses him as a "hand" and "mouth" to arrange their structures. A reference to a servant of the craftsman indicates the existence of a devil-like ruler over materiality (102:32–103:11f).

Throughout this first part the author emphasizes that all things happen in accordance with the father's will, so that even the Word's audacious act should not be criticized (77:6–8f). Here and throughout the treatise the author refers to the "plan"—in Greek, *oikonomia*, a term that pertained fundamentally to household management, but which in Christian discourse came to refer to God's providential arrangement of events, often mediated through divinely appointed agents like Christ and the angels (cf. Ep 1:10; 3:9). The father wishes to be known, but only in accordance with his plan, a process of education and formation that his will directs (e.g., 62:14–28f). Among the aeons in the fullness, unity and order come from the providential harmony of the individual aeons' self-determining wills; among the animate and material powers of the cosmos, a hierarchical order of domination and subordination both depends on and restrains the love of command that motivates them.

In comparison to the prolonged exposition of the first part, the brief second section (104:4–108:9f) provides a terse account of the creation of the first human being out of "flowing matter," his fall and expulsion from paradise, and the resulting rule of death over subsequent human beings. It is likely that the author assumes knowledge of more detailed narratives of these events. As in other versions of gnostic myth, the craftsman and his angels create the human being (who

is not named), although the Word sets their work in motion and provides the form. In a garbled passage, the Word seems to place in the human being a seed of spiritual essence without the craftsman's knowledge (105:17–22f), and thus the human being is “a mixed modeled form” of all three essences. It is the evil serpent who inspires the human being to transgress the rulers' commandment and so to bring death, defined as “complete lack of acquaintance,” on himself and his descendants. Once again the author argues that these events were “a work of forethought,” that is, planned by the father, so that humanity would experience evils and death before receiving eternal life, defined as “certain acquaintance with the entirety and sharing in all good things” (107:22–108:1f).

The third and final part of TrTr (108:13–138:27) explains the deficiencies in the cosmos and how the immortals work to rectify them and to grant salvation to all those who merit it. The mutual influence of the animate and material orders on each other creates confusion in the cosmos. The allegedly wise among the Greeks and barbarians offer conflicting explanations for the way things are. Although the Hebrews similarly fail to gain acquaintance of higher realities, the prophets and righteous ones among them are inspired to offer prophecies of the savior's advent. Like the Greeks and barbarians, however, the Jews have divided into competing schools of thought. The savior's incarnation in physical life, which the spirituals from above join as a body, makes available salvation as the ransom from lack of acquaintance, the freedom of acquaintance, and the return to the fullness. His advent precipitates humanity's division into three essential kinds: the spiritual race welcomes the savior at once; the animate race hesitates before following him in faith; and the material race responds to the savior with hostility. The savior's participation in the world of suffering provides ransom to himself as well as to others.

The author devotes considerable discussion to the salvation of animate beings, whether they are cosmic forces (“angels”) or human beings, a problem to which he circles back multiple times. Whatever their origins, animate beings must embrace the savior and turn away from their love of command. Cosmic powers must forsake their own lordships and kingdoms, renounce their claims to worship, and acknowledge the one who has no lord. Animate human beings must confess the father, son, and holy spirit and receive baptism into those names, which are a single name. The author emphasizes that the father has designed a plan to lead beings from lack of acquaintance to acquaintance and that the church plays a key role in that plan. The church exists on at least three levels: the union of aeons in the fullness makes up the true church; the spiritual powers in the aeon of images form an image of that church; and spiritual human beings constitute the earthly church—“we in flesh who are his church” (125:4f). Animate beings will be judged in part by the extent to which they served the church or persecuted it. The author refers to himself and his readers as the savior's church in the flesh, that is, as spirituals; his extensive consideration of the animates' ethical dispositions and their potential salvation reflects the responsibility of the spiritual people for guiding and educating animate people (116:8–18f).

The conclusion of the treatise is highly fragmentary, but it appears to envision a consummation to the present age similar to scenarios in other early Christian

works, including the sounding of trumpets and the destruction of the material beings and those who oppose the father (137–38). The author's preferred term for the result of God's plan is "return" (*apokatastasis*), a restoration of the unity and harmony that existed before the Word's movement, "so that the end might be like the beginning" (127:23f).

Numerous aspects of TrTr's theology and mythic narrative parallel those of other Valentinian sources—especially GTr, IrPt, and ClExc—and confirm the treatise's composition by a Valentinian theologian. Above all, the central action of the myth is distinctly Valentinian: the youngest aeon's movement toward the inaccessible father, his split into a higher perfect self and a lower deficient self, his generation of the three essences, and his (apparent) planting of a spiritual seed in the first human being. This scenario matches the career of wisdom (*Sophia*) in IrPt and ClExc. Likewise, the author employs imagery and themes familiar from other Valentinian works, such as agricultural metaphors (e.g., 61:7f; 116:34f) and the importance of names (e.g., 61:14f; 134:20f).

On the other hand, TrTr manifests some significant differences from IrPt, its closest analog as a complete narration of the myth. Instead of IrPt's precisely thirty aeons arranged in male-female pairs that ensure stability and unity, the structure of the fullness in TrTr is much simpler: a trinity of father, son, and church, with the last containing an innumerable multitude of aeons whose unity arises from their identity with the father and from the hierarchical harmony of their independent wills. The fallen aeon is not wisdom (*Sophia*), but simply "a word (*logos*) of the unity" (75:22f); "the Word" is less a name than a specifier of the particular word or aeon in question. During the second and third centuries, the masculine term *logos* (Jn 1:1) emerged in early Christian circles as a privileged term for divine mediation between god the father and the creation, which could also be named by the feminine "wisdom" (Pr 8–9; 1 Co 1:24). Irenaeus reports that, according to Ptolemy, at the final consummation animates will receive repose outside the fullness, in the midpoint, the region once occupied by lower wisdom, but also the final dwelling place of the craftsman (IrPt 1.7.1). Although the author of TrTr discusses how the animates receive salvation at great length, the nature of that salvation is less clear. One passage suggests a scenario similar to that in IrPt: the animates will enter the aeon of the images, located just outside the fullness, "the place where the Word has not yet joined with the fullness" (122:24f). A later passage, however, eloquently claims that "the kingdom that is in the anointed" is without inequality and change, lacking distinctions among human beings (132:16f). Moreover, in comparison to IrPt, ClExc, and other Valentinian works, TrTr rarely explicitly quotes or interprets scriptural passages, but remains at the level of abstract philosophical theology and mythic narrative. In general, although TrTr can be vague, obscure, and confusing at many points, its myth is simpler than that in IrPt and other Valentinian sources, and several of its themes, such as the father's providence and the return of all things to god, would be at home in non-Valentinian Christianity.

Modern scholars disagree about how to interpret these features within any reconstruction of Valentinian intellectual history. One view considers the myth's simplicity and TrTr's numerous parallels to GTr, probably a work of Valentinus

himself, as indications of an origin in the second century, possibly before or at the same time as Ptolemy's version of the myth. Probably the more widespread opinion is that TrTr originated in the third century. In this case many of its revisions of earlier Valentinian mythology, such as the trinitarian structure of the fullness and the replacement of wisdom (Sophia) with the Word, suggest an attempt to make Valentinian thought more similar to the teachings of other Christians and possibly more appealing to them. Or, more simply, Valentinian theologians participated in intellectual trends current among Christian intellectuals of their day. Several of TrTr's ideas, especially that of the return (*apokatastasis*) to an end that is like the beginning, recall those of Origen of Alexandria (A.D. ca. 185–ca. 254), the most significant and influential Christian theologian of the third century. Origen's treatise *On First Principles* resembles TrTr as a comprehensive Christian account of salvation history from god the father to the end of the material creation, with lengthy discussions of specific theological questions like free will and the proper interpretation of scripture. In that treatise and elsewhere Origen sharply criticized Christians, especially Valentinians, who held what Origen characterized as rigidly deterministic views of salvation "by nature." It is possible that TrTr originated among those whom Origen targeted as opponents, even as it shares some of Origen's major teachings.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Fullness

A. The FATHER, SON, AND CHURCH

The FATHER. The root of the entirety, the good, the preexistent one.

The SON. The father's thought of himself, the name of the father.

The CHURCH. Their offspring, the aeon of aeons, the father's qualities and powers, the entirety, a multitude of aeons, including:

The WORD. The youngest aeon. After the movement, his perfection.

B. OTHER BEINGS WITHIN THE FULLNESS

The SPIRIT. The father's will.

An inner BOUNDARY between the father and the aeons.

The SAVIOR. The son of the entirety, the fruit of their harmony, redeemer, good pleasure, beloved, advocate, anointed (Christ).

A BOUNDARY at the outer limits of the fullness

II. Non-Human Beings Outside the Fullness

The WORD. After the movement, his deficiency.

SPIRITUAL POWERS. Offspring of the Word's thanks and praise. Images of the fullness. The aeon of the images, the church. Called also the first ones.

The CRAFTSMAN AND RULER. Father, god, creator, king, judge, place, dwelling, law. The god of Genesis. Of animate essence.

His aeon: a paradise and kingdom.

WORKERS AND SERVANTS, LORDS OF DOMINIONS.

ANIMATE POWERS. Offspring of the Word's remembrance and turning back. Likenesses of the fullness. Called also those on the right, the fires, the middle ones.

ANGELS AND ARCHANGELS, RULERS, KINGS, LORDS,
COMMANDERS.

MATERIAL POWERS. Offspring of the Word's arrogant thought. Imitations of the fullness. Called also those on the left, the darkneses, the last ones.

A ruler of material powers, a servant of the craftsman.

ANGELS AND ARCHANGELS, RULERS, KINGS, LORDS,
COMMANDERS.

The SERPENT.

III. Humankind

The FIRST HUMAN BEING, comprising three elements:

- (1) Spiritual essence. The breath of life, spiritual rationality.
- (2) Animate essence. A deposit of those on the right.
- (3) Material essence. A deposit of those on the left.

Subsequent human beings:

- (1) The SPIRITUAL RACE. The election, the church. Those who receive acquaintance with the savior quickly.
- (2) The ANIMATE RACE. The calling. Those who hesitate before receiving acquaintance and require instruction. Includes the righteous ones and the prophets among the Hebrews.
- (3) The MATERIAL RACE. Those who do not accept the savior's advent. Includes the Greeks and the barbarians.

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single MS from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC I (pp. 51–138), which was copied just before A.D. 350, and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on Thomassen's critical edition of the Coptic, with some alterations: E. Thomassen and L. Painchaud, *Le traité tripartite* (see "Select Bibliography").

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The Tripartite Tractate^a

Introduction

1 51 Whatever we can say about exalted matters, we must be-
3 gin with the father, •who is the root of the entirety and the one GTr 41:16,
6 through whom we have received grace to speak about him. •He 42:33
existed before anything else came into being other than him GTr 16:31
alone.

I. THE FATHER, THE FULLNESS, AND THE CREATION

A. The Father, the Son, and the Church

The father

8 The father is a single one, although he is like a number be-
10 cause he is the first. •And he is only himself, but he is not like
12,14 a solitary one. •Otherwise, how would he be a father? •For a
15 name follows from “father”: “son.” •Still, the single one who is GTr 38:6
only himself is the father, although he is like a root with a tree,
19 branches, and fruit. •It is said about him that he is a father prop-
erly speaking, incomparable and immutable, because he is a sin-
27 gle lord and god, for he has no god and he has no father. •Indeed,
he is unengendered: there is no other who engendered him, nor
31 is there another who created him. •For whoever is the father of
34 someone or a creator has a father of his own and a creator; •he
can become a father and creator of the one who has come into
38 being through him and whom he has created, •but he is not a
father and god in a proper sense because he has someone who
2 engendered [him and] created him. 52 •So properly speaking he
alone is father and god whom no one has engendered, (rather)

Title a. The work lacks a title in the MS. This title has become conventional; cf. the Introduction.

6 who has engendered and created the entirety. •He is without be- GTr 19:7
 beginning and without end.

7 •Not only is he without end—he is immortal because he is
 unengendered—but he is also invariable in his eternal existence,
 that is, in what he is, what makes him stable, and what makes
 14 him great. •He will not remove himself from what he is, nor will
 anyone else force him at any time to produce a result against
 21 his will, for no one initiated his existence. •In this way he is un-
 changing, and no one else will be able to separate him from his
 existence, his identity, his being, or his greatness, so that he will
 27 not be moved. •Nor is it possible for any other to change him to
 some other way, whether by reducing him or by changing him
 30 or by diminishing him. •Inasmuch as this is <how>^a he truly is
 unchangeably immutable, he is clothed in immutability.

34 •Not only is it he who is called “without beginning” and
 38 “without end” because he is unengendered and immortal, •but
 just as he has no beginning and no end, he is unattainable in his
 1 greatness, 53 •inscrutable in his wisdom, incomprehensible in
 his authority, unfathomable in his sweetness.

5 •In the proper sense he alone—the good, the unengendered fa- VFrH+
 ther, the perfect lack of deficiency—is the one who is full, full of
 every one of his offspring, of every excellence, and of every valu-
 11 able thing. •And he has more, namely, lack of envy, so that it will GTr 18:34+
 be found that he gives everything that he has without being dimin-
 17 ished or suffering loss in what he gives. •He is rich in the things
 that he gives, and he finds repose in the favors that he grants.

21 •And thus his manner, form, and greatness are of such mag-
 nitude that no other exists who has been with him from the be-
 ginning, nor is there a place in which he exists or from which
 27 he has come or to which he will return. •Nor is there an older
 form that he uses as a model when he works,^a nor does he suffer
 31 fatigue from what he does. •Nor is there matter available to him
 34 out of which he sets in order that which he sets in order. •Nor
 is there any substance within him from which he engenders the
 36 things that he engenders. •Nor does he have a collaborator work-
 38 ing with him at what he does. •To speak in this way is ignorant.
 39 •Rather, because he is good, without any deficiency, perfect,
 1 54 •and complete, he is the entirety itself.

2 •Among the names that are conceived, spoken, seen, or
 grasped, there is none that suits him, even if they are extremely
 8 radiant, venerable, and honored. •To be sure, it is possible to say

52 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

based on it) in that he needs no model from which to work.

53 a. The father differs from the craftsman of Plato's *Timaeus* (and the craftsmen of other works

12 them to glorify and honor him, in proportion to the ability of
 13 each one of those who glorify him. •Nonetheless, as for the man-
 14 ner in which he exists, the way that he is, and the form that he
 15 has—it is impossible for any intellect to think of it, any word to
 16 express it, any eye to see it, any body to touch it, •because of his
 17 unlimited greatness, his unfathomable depth, his immeasurable
 18 height, and his incomprehensible distance. •This is the nature of
 19 the unengendered—not to undertake anything with another nor
 20 to be partnered like one that is limited. •Rather, he possesses a
 21 stability that lacks any aspect or form that can be perceived with
 22 the senses; that is, he is incomprehensible. •If he is incompre-
 23 hensible, it follows that he is unknowable.

1Co 2:9
GTh 17

The son as the father's thought of himself

35 He who is inconceivable by any thought, invisible to any
 36 thing, unutterable by any word, untouchable by any hand—he
 37 alone is acquainted with himself as he is, 55 •with his form, his
 38 greatness, and his magnitude. •And he can conceive of himself,
 39 see himself,^a and comprehend himself, •for it is he who is intel-
 40 lect for himself alone, eye for himself alone, mouth for himself
 41 alone, and form for himself alone. •And it is the one who is in-
 42 conceivable, ineffable, incomprehensible, and immutable who
 43 conceives of himself, sees himself, speaks himself, and compre-
 44 hends himself. •It is nourishment, gladness, truth, joy, and re-
 45 pose that he conceives, sees, and speaks. •The thought that he
 46 possesses awakens all wisdom, •and it surpasses every intellect,
 47 surpasses every glory, surpasses every beauty, every sweetness,
 48 every greatness, every depth, and every height.

27 •Still, he who is unknowable in his nature, about whom I have
 said all these great things, is capable, if he desires, of bestowing
 acquaintance out of the abundance of his sweetness, so that he
 33, 35 might be known. •He has his power, which is his will. •But now
 37 he is restraining himself in silence, •that is, the great one who is
 the cause of the engendering of the entirety for eternal existence.

1, 3 **56** •For he himself truly engenders himself as ineffable. •It
 <is>^a an act of generating himself alone when he thinks of him-
 7 self and gains acquaintance of himself as he is. •It is the one wor-
 thy of his wonder, glory, value, and honor whom he brings forth
 16 due to the infinity of his greatness, the unfathomability of his
 wisdom, the immeasurability of his authority, and his untastable
 19 sweetness. •It is his own self whom he establishes in this gener-
 ative way, possessing glory, honor, wonder, and love, •that is, he
 who glorifies, wonders at, honors, and loves himself.

Bjn 4:19

IrV(b)
IrPt 1.1.1
ClExc 29

ClExc 7.1

Bjn 4:26

55 a. The MS mistakenly reads "see them."

56 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

23 •This he has as a son who rests in him and keeps silent about
 25 him, •that is, the ineffable within the ineffable, the invisible, the FTh 35:9
 30 uncontainable, the inconceivable in the inconceivable. •This is
 32 how he exists in him eternally. •It is the father, as we have already
 said, who knows his own self and begat him without genera-
 37 tion because he has him as a thought, •which is the thought of
 2 himself, that is, the perception of himself, [. . .] 57 •his eternal
 existence, which is properly silence and wisdom, or grace, as it 55:35+
 (wisdom) is properly called.

8 •Just as the father who exists in the proper sense is the one
 before whom no other [one exists] and after [whom] there is
 12 no other unengendered one, •so too [the son] who exists in the
 proper sense is the one before whom and after whom no other
 18 son exists. •Therefore he is firstborn and an only son—firstborn
 because no one exists before him, and the only son because no
 23 one is after him. •And he has his own fruit,^a which is not known
 26 because of the magnitude of its greatness. •And he wanted to
 30 make it known because of the abundance of his sweetness. •He
 revealed the indescribable power, and he mixed it with the great
 abundance of his generosity.

The church

33 Not only does the son exist from the beginning, but so too the
 36 church exists from the beginning. •If someone thinks that this IrV(c)
IrPt 1.1.1
 statement is contradicted by the finding that the son is an only
 son, such is not the case, because of the mystery of the subject.

40 •For just as the father is a single one and has revealed himself to
 4 be his own father, 58 •so too the son has been found to be his
 9 own brother without generation and without beginning. •And,
 [like] the father, it is his own self at whom he marvels and [to
 12 whom] he gives glory, honor, and [love]. •And it is also himself
 whom he understands as son in accordance with the properties
 16 “without beginning” and “without end.” •Such is the situation,
 which is established.

18 •Although they are innumerable and unending, his offspring,
 22 those that exist, are indivisible. •They have come forth from him,
 the father and the son, like kisses because of (their) abundance,
 27 like some who kiss one another in a good insatiable thought: •it
 29 is a single kiss, yet consists of many kisses. •This is the church GTr 41:30
GPh 27
 of many people, which exists before the aeons, which is properly
 34 called “the aeon of the aeons.”^a •This is the nature of the holy, Ep 3:21
IrPt 1.3.1
 incorruptible spirits, upon which the son reposes himself as his
 essence, just as the father reposes himself upon the son [. . .]

57 a. “his own fruit”: i.e. the church, which is discussed immediately below.

58 a. The normal translation of these words is “forever and ever.”

- 2 59 [...] •the church exists in the (same) properties and qual-
 ities in which the father and the son exist, as I have said earlier.
 6 •Therefore, it exists in the begettings of the innumerable aeons,
 8 •and innumerable they too beget in the qualities and the prop-
 13 erties that [...] in them [...] community [...] •unto one another,
 15 and [...] have come forth [...] •unto the son, because of whom
 16 they exist as glory. •Therefore, it is not possible for any intellect
 19 to understand him—he was the perfection of that place—•nor is
 it possible to express them—for they are ineffable, unnamable,
 22 and incomprehensible. •They alone are the ones capable of nam-
 25 ing themselves in order to understand themselves. •For they are
 not rooted in these places.
- 26 •Those who belong to that place are ineffable and innumera-
 29 ble in accord with the structure, •that is, the manner, the size, the
 joy, and the gladness of the nameless, unnamable, inconceivable,
 invisible, uncontained, unengendered one, the fullness of the fa-
 37 therhood, •so that his abundance becomes generation.

B. The Aeons of the Fullness

The preexistence and engendering of the aeons

- 1 60 [...] •but [...] the aeons existed eternally in the thinking of
 5 the father, who was like a thought and a place for them. •When
 the begettings had been determined, the one who possesses com-
 plete power wanted to grasp and bring forth [what] was lack-
 10 ing from [...] •those who [are] within him, but he exists [as] he
 13 is [...] •a spring that is not diminished by the water that flows
 abundantly from it.
- 16 •As long as they existed in the father's thought—that is, while
 they were in the hidden deep—the deep was acquainted with
 20 them, •but they could not have acquaintance of the deep in
 23 which they existed, •nor could they have acquaintance of them-
 26 selves or have acquaintance (at all). •That is to say, they existed
 29 in the father, but they did not exist for themselves. •Rather, they
 had their existence only like a seed, so that it might be concluded
 34 that they existed like an embryo. •He engendered them like a
 word, which exists seminally before the things he will engender
 come into being.
- 1 61 •Moreover, the father thought beforehand not only that
 they should exist for him, but that they should exist for them-
 5 selves as well; •therefore, they should exist in his thought as in-
 7 tellectual essence, and they should exist for themselves too. •He
 9 sowed a thought as a seed [...] •so that [they might] understand
 11 [...] for them. •He bestowed grace [...] form, so that they might
 14 [understand] who the father is that [they have]. •The name of

VHr
 GTr 37:7f
 IrPt 1.1.1
 ClExc 29
 v.20
 GTr 18:34
 GTr 27:34

the father he gave to them through a voice that calls out to them that the one who exists exists from that name, which they possess
 18 as their existence. •For the exaltation in the name they did not
 20 notice. •An infant, while it exists in the form of an embryo, has
 what suffices for it without having ever seen the one who sowed
 24 it. •Therefore, they had only this thing after which to seek, un-
 understanding that he exists and desiring to discover who the one
 who exists is.

GTr 27:11

28, 29 •But the father is good and perfect: •just as he did not close
 himself off from them,^a so that they might exist in his thinking,
 33 but granted to them that they too might come into being, •so too
 he will be gracious unto them, so that they might learn who the
 36 one who exists is, •that is, the one who has acquaintance with
 2 himself eternally. 62 [. . .] •form [. . .] who the one who exists is,
 4 just like people who are begotten in this place: •when they are
 born, they exist in the light, so that they see those who have be-
 gotten them.

The father's plan for the aeons' perfection

6 As for the entirety, the father brought it forth like a little child,
 like a droplet from a spring, like a blossom from a [vine], like
 12 a [. . .], like a shoot [. . .] •needing [nourishment,] growth, and
 14, 15 [perfection]. •He withheld it (perfection) for a time. •He who
 had thought about it from the beginning and possesses it from
 18 the beginning envisioned it, •but he veiled it from those who
 19 first came forth from him—•not out of envy, but so that the ae-
 ons would not receive their perfection from the beginning, ele-
 vate themselves to glory comparable to the father, and think that
 26 they possessed this (glory) from themselves. •Rather, just as it
 28 pleased him to grant that they should come into being, •so too
 they might become perfect when it pleased him to grant them
 that perfect thought out of his benevolence toward them.

GTr 18:34

The son's mediation of the father to the aeons

33 The one whom he raised up as a light for those who had gone
 forth from himself, the one after whom they were named, is
 38 the complete and flawlessly perfect son. •He brought him forth
 2 joined with the one from whom he came forth 63 [. . .] •jointly
 3 glorified [. . .] •the entirety, according to how each one will re-
 ceive him, although they have not yet received his greatness.
 6 •Rather, he exists partially in his manner, form, and greatness.
 10 •They can see and speak about the one with whom they are ac-
 quainted—for they bear him, and he bears them—[and] they can

61 a. The MS mistakenly reads "did not listen to them."

comprehend [him], although he exists as he exists, the inimitable
 17 one. •The father reveals himself, so that he will be glorified by
 20 each one, •and because in his ineffability he remains hidden and
 23 invisible, they marvel at him by intellect. •For this reason the
 greatness of his elevation is revealed when they talk about him
 and see him, when they will sing to him about the abundance
 29 of his sweetness in the grace of < . . . >^a •And just as the marvels
 of the silences are eternal births—they are intellectual beget-
 tings—so too the dispositions of the word are spiritual emissions.
 36 •Therefore, both of them, because they belong to a word, 64 [. . .]
 1 •and they are thoughts of his begetting and eternally living roots.
 4 •They are manifestly begettings that have come forth from him,^a
 being intellects and spiritual begettings for the father’s glory.

The activity of the aeons

8 There is no need of a voice—[they are] intellectual and ratio-
 nal spirits—nor is there need of [action] toward what they desire
 12 to [do]. •Rather, in the manner in which [he (the father)] exists,
 13 •so too [those] who have come forth from him beget all that they
 desire, that they think, that they say, that they move toward, in
 21 which they reside, that they sing to glorify him. •He has them as
 22 children. •For this is their procreative power, as (it is) with the
 25 father from whom they have gone forth: •(it is) in accordance
 with their assistance to one another, because they have assisted
 one another in the manner of the unengendered ones.

The father’s unknowability

28 The father, in accordance with his elevation above those of the
 31 entirety, is unknowable and incomprehensible. •He possesses
 such greatness and magnitude that, if he had revealed himself
 directly and suddenly, (even) all the most elevated among the
 aeons that had come forth from him would have been destroyed.
 37 •For this reason he withheld his power and impassibility within
 1 that which he is, 65 •[remaining] ineffable, unnamable, tran-
 scending every intellect and every word.

The father’s gift of the son

4 But he extended himself, and what he spread out^a is what gave
 9 a solidity, location, and dwelling place to the entirety—•one of
 his names is “the one through whom” because he is father of
 11 the entirety—•through his suffering in behalf of those who ex-
 ist, after he sowed in their thinking that they should seek him,

Jn 1:3
 1Co 8:6
 Heb 1:2
 IrPt 1.1.1
 v.11
 ClExc 30–31

63 a. One or more words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

64 a. The MS mistakenly reads “from them.”

65 a. “what he spread out”: i.e. the son.

15 the abundance of their [. . .] •through their conceiving that he
 17 exists and their seeking for who he is. •This was given to them GTr 17:4
 for enjoyment, nourishment, joy, and an abundance of illumina-
 tion, that is, his compassion, acquaintance, and union with
 23 them. •This is the one who is summoned and who is the son.
 25 •He is those of the entirety, and the one whose identity they have
 28 gained acquaintance of, and he is clothed (with them). •He is the
 one who is called “son” and whom they understand to exist, and
 31 they were seeking him. •He is the one who exists as father, the
 one about whom they cannot speak, and the one of whom they
 34 cannot conceive. •He is the one who preexists.

The son as names

35 No one can conceive of him or think of him, nor can they draw
 near to there, toward the exalted one, toward the truly preexist-
 39 ent one. •Rather, every name that they conceive or speak about
 3 him they bring forth for glory, **66** •as a trace of him, according
 5 to the capacity of each of those who glorify him. •Therefore, the
 one who dawned from him^a stretches himself out for engender-
 9 ing and acquaintance of the members of the entirety, [. . .] •all the
 names without falsification, and he is truly the father’s only first
 12 human being. •This is the one I [call]

- 13 •the form of the formless,
- 14 •the body of the bodiless,
the face of the invisible,
- 15 •the word of [the] indefinable,
- 16 •the intellect of the inconceivable,
- 17 •the spring that flowed from him,
- 18 •the root of those who are planted,
- 19 •the god of those who are established,
the light of those whom he illumines,
- 20 •the desire of those whom he desired,
- 21 •the forethought of those of whom he thought
beforehand,
- 22 •the intelligence of those whom he made intelligent,
- 23 •the power of those to whom he gives power,
- 24 •the assembly <of>^b those with whom he assembled,
- 25 •the revelation of those who are sought,
- 26 •the eye of those who see,
- 27 •the spirit of those who breathe,
- 28 •the life of those who live,
the single unity of those who are unity.

66 a. “the one who dawned from him”: i.e. the son who dawned from the father.

b. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

The father's identity with the aeons

29 Although all the members of the entirety exist in the single
 one,^c who clothes himself entirely (with them), and in his single
 34 name, they never call him by it (the name). •And in the same
 way, they are both the single one and the members of the en-
 37 tirety. •But he is not divided corporeally, nor is he divided up
 into those names in which he exists—as if this is of one sort, **67**
 1,2 •and this is of another sort—nor does he change in [. . .], •nor
 does he change into [the names] in which he exists so that he is
 7 this way now and then some other way, or this person now and
 that person at some other time. •Rather, he is entirely himself
 forever, and [he exists] as each of the members of the entirety
 9 forever simultaneously. •He is what they all are, because he is the
 father of the entirety, and the members of the entirety are he.
 12 •He is acquaintance of himself for himself, and he is each of
 15 his qualities and powers, •and <he is>^a the eye of all that he has
 acquaintance of, seeing it all in himself, having a son and form.
 19 •Therefore, his powers and qualities are innumerable, and they
 cannot be heard because of the engendering <by which>^b he en-
 23 gendered them. •Innumerable and indivisible are the engender-
 ings of his words, his commandments, and the members of his
 27 entirety. •He is acquainted with them, that is, with himself, for
 29 they exist in the very same name. •It is because they all exist in
 it (the name) that they speak, and when he brings forth, it is so
 that they might be found to exist in a single unity and in accord-
 34 dance their individual qualities. •Moreover, he did not reveal the
 multiplicity to the members of the entirety all at once, and he did
 not reveal his sameness to those who had come forth from him.

The procreative nature of the aeons' glorifications

37 All those who had come forth from him, that is, “the aeons Ep 3:21
 of the aeons,” **68** are engendered emissions whose nature is pro-
 3 creative. •They too, by their procreative nature, <have given>^a
 glory to the father, just as he was the cause of their establish-
 7 ment. •This is what we said earlier: he makes the aeons roots,
 sources, and parents, because the one to whom they give glory
 11 engendered them.^b •For he has knowledge and wisdom, and the
 entirety have understood that they came forth from knowledge
 and wisdom.

c. “the single one”: i.e. the father.

68 a. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

67 a. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. The MS mistakenly reads “they engendered.”

b. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

The first glorification

17 They would have brought forth a glory that imitates the fa-
 18 ther, who is the entireties, if they had been raised up to give glory
 19 as individual aeons. •For this reason, through the chanting for
 20 glorification and through the capacity of the very same unity of
 21 the one from whom they came forth, •they were drawn into a
 22 union, a joining, and a single unity with one another. •They pro-
 23 duced a glory worthy of the father from the assembled fullness,
 24 (a glory) that is a single image even as it is many, •because it
 25 was brought forth for the single one's glory, and because they
 26 came forth toward him who is the entireties. •Therefore, this was
 27 a tribute of the [aeons to] the one who had brought forth the
 28 entireties, 69 •an initial offering of those immortals, and it was
 29 eternal. •For when it went forth from those living aeons, perfect
 30 and full because of the one who is perfect and full, it left them
 31 full and perfect, they who had given glory perfectly from the
 32 fellowship. •For, just as they give glory to the father who lacks
 33 nothing, he [returns] the glory to those who give [him] glory, [so
 34 as to] reveal them as that which he is.^a

The second glorification

14 The cause of the second glorification that came to them is
 15 what was returned to them from the father, when they under-
 16 stood the grace that they produced as fruit from the father for
 17 one another, •so that, just as they were brought forth from the
 18 father's glory, so too, for their manifestation as perfect, they ap-
 19 peared as active in giving glory.^b

The third glorification

24 They were parents of the third glorification in accordance
 25 with the self-determination and capacity that was engendered
 26 with them, although each of them does not exist on its own so as
 27 to give glory in a single unity to the one that it loves. •They are,
 28 therefore, the first and the second (glorifications), and thus both
 29 are perfect and full, •for they are manifestations of the perfect
 30 and full father and of those who came forth perfect from the
 31 glorification of the perfect one.
 32 •The fruit of the third, however, consists of glorifications by
 33 the will of each of the aeons and of each of the father's qualities
 34 and powers. •It (the fruit) exists as a perfect fullness of [. . .]
 35 70 which arises from harmony, •because it comes from each of

69 a. The aeons' first glorification comes from their unity and reveals both the father and themselves.

b. The second glorification demonstrates that

in glorifying the father the aeons are themselves glorified.

the aeons individually, what it desires and what it is capable of as it gives glory to the father.

- 8 •For this reason, they are intellects of intellects, discovered to
be words of words, elders of elders, degrees of degrees, which are
14 elevated over one another. •Each of those who gives glory has its
place, rank, dwelling, and place of repose, which is the glory it
brings forth.^a

The offspring of those who glorify

- 19 All those who glorify the father have their eternal offspring.
22, 24 •They engender by assisting one another. •Those emissions are
25 unlimited and immeasurable. •The father has no envy toward GTr 18:34
those who came forth from him because they engender his equal
29 and likeness: •it is he who exists in the entirety, engendering
31 and revealing himself. •And whichever he wishes to make a par-
ent, he is their father; and (whichever he wishes to make) a god,
35 he is their god. •He makes them the entirety, <whose>^b entirety
1 he is. 71 •It is in that place that all the great names properly exist,
those in which the angels that have come into being in the world
5 share, •along with the rulers, who nonetheless have no resem-
blance with the eternal ones.^a

The aeons' search for the father

- 7 The entire structure of the aeons has a desire and longing for
the total, perfect discovery of the father, and this constitutes their
12 irreproachable unity. •Although the father reveals himself eter-
nally, he did not want them to gain acquaintance of him because
16 he grants them to think about him, •so that they might seek him,
while he keeps to himself his inscrutable preexistence.
18 •It is he, the father, who gave the root impulses to the aeons,
which are stations on the serene pathway toward him, as if to
23 a school of citizenship, •as he spread out [for them] faith and Ph 3:20
prayer for what they do not see, a firm hope in what they do not
27 understand, •a fertile love that looks toward what it does not see, 1Co 13:13
Heb 11:1
31 an eternally acceptable wisdom of the intellect, •a blessedness
that is wealth and freedom, and, for their thinking, a wisdom of
the one who desires the father's glory.

The spirit

- 35 As for the father, the exalted one, he is known by his will,
1 72 •which is the spirit that breathes in the entirety and gives

70 a. The aeons' third glorification comes from their individuality and self-determination, which create a hierarchy and the possibility of an aeon acting on its own; cf. 75:35f.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

71 a. The material rulers of this world are called by divine names ("god," "lord," etc.), but the names are not legitimately theirs; rather, the names belong to the fullness. Cf. 79:4f; GPh 9.

5 them their thoughts, so that they seek what is not known, •just as
 someone is drawn by a fragrance to seek that from which the fra-
 11 unworthy things. •For its sweetness leaves the aeons in unspeak-
 14 able pleasure, •and it gives them their thoughts that they should
 unite with the one who desires that they gain acquaintance of
 19 him in unity, and that they should assist one another by the spirit
 that is sown in them. •Because they exist in a great, plentiful
 breath, they are renewed in an inexpressible way, unable to sep-
 25 arate from that in which they are placed in an incomprehensible
 manner. •Because they cannot speak, they keep silent about the
 father's glory, about him who has the power to speak and from
 whom they receive form.

29 •He revealed [himself], even though it is impossible to speak
 30 of him. •The aeons have <him>^a hidden in their thoughts, so
 that, as a result, they keep silent about how the father exists in
 1 his form, nature, and greatness, 73 •but they have become wor-
 thy of gaining acquaintance of him through his spirit, that he is
 4 unnamable and unattainable. •Through his spirit, which is the
 trace for discovering him, he gives himself to them, so that they
 might conceive of him and speak about him.

2Co 2:14
 GTr 33:39

The aeons as names

8 Each of the aeons is a name belonging to each of the father's
 11 qualities and powers. •Because he exists in many names, they
 can speak of him in unity and harmony with one another, thanks
 14 to the wealth of discourse. •Just as the father is a single name,
 because he is a single one, (so too) he is innumerable in his qual-
 ities and names.

The unity and diversity of the aeons

18 The emission of [the members of] the entirety that comes
 from the existent one did not happen by a division from one
 another, as if it were <a>^a separation from the one who engen-
 23 ders them. •Rather, their birth has the form of a spreading out,
 as the father spreads himself out to those whom he loves, so that
 28 those who have come forth from him might be he as well. •Just
 as the present aeon is a single one but divided into ages, and
 ages divided into years, years divided into seasons, seasons into
 months, months into days, days into hours, and hours into mo-
 36 ments, •so too the aeon of truth is a single one that is multiple,
 3 74 •being glorified by small and great names according to what
 5 each is able to comprehend. •By way of analogy, it is like a spring
 that exists as what it is, even as it flows into rivers, lakes, canals,

72 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS. 73 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

- 10 and aqueducts; •or like a root that spreads out into trees and
 13 branches with its fruits; •or like a human body that is divided in-
 dividibly into limbs of limbs, primary limbs and secondary ones,
 big ones and small ones.

The individuality of the aeons and their pairs

- 18 The aeons, however, were brought forth according to the third
 fruit (of glorification), through the will's self-determination and
 through the wisdom that he (the father) graciously bestowed on
 24 them for their thinking. •They do not desire to give glory [with]
 what arises in unison, although they have produced it as [glorify-
 28 ing] words belonging to each of the fullnesses. •Nor do they wish
 29 to give glory with the entirety. •Nor again does one wish (to do
 so) with another one who has already attained the rank or station
 that is higher than itself, unless it is the one that is established
 35 in the higher name and higher station, •unless it receives from
 the other what it desired, taking it to itself toward the one above
 2 it. 75 •It engenders itself, so to speak, and through that one it
 5 engenders itself with what it is; •it renews itself with what has
 7 come to it through its sibling; •it sees the other and beseeches it
 concerning this matter, that the one who desired might ascend
 to it, so that it might be this way.^a

The boundary within the fullness

- 10 The one who desired to give glory says nothing to the other
 13 about this, except this alone: •that a boundary to speech exists
 in the fullness, so that they might keep silent about the father's
 16 unattainableness, •but so that they might speak about their de-
 sire to attain him.

IrV(ε)
 IrPt 1.2.2,
 1.2.4
 ClExc 42.1

C. The Word's Movement and Division

The youngest aeon's approach to the father

- 17 It occurred to one of the aeons that he should undertake to
 attain to the inconceivability and to give glory to it and to the
 22 father's ineffability as well. •He is a word of the unity, but not
 one from the harmony of the entirety, nor from him who brought
 26 them forth, •for the one who brought forth the entirety <is>^b the
 father.
 27 •This aeon was from among those who had been given wis-
 dom and who preexisted, each one, in its thinking, to be brought

IrPt 1.2.2
 ClExc 31.3

ClExc 25.1

75 a. These are not the male-female pairs of aeons found in, e.g., IrPt 1.1.1, but the pairing of higher and lower aeons for education or guidance.

b. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

31 forth at its desire. •For this he received a wise nature: so that he
might inquire into the hidden structure because he is a wise fruit.

35 •For the self-determining will that was engendered along with
the members of the entirety caused him to do what he wanted,
1 76 •without anyone restraining him.

2 •The intention, then, of the Word was good when he came
6 forward to give glory to the father, •even if <he>^a attempted a
deed beyond his capability when he wanted to bring forth some-
thing perfect from a harmony in which he did not participate
and without having been commanded.

Bjn 9:28
IrPt 1.2.2

12 •This aeon was the last to have been brought forth by mutual
16 assistance, and he was the youngest in age. •And before he had
engendered anything for the will's glory and in the harmony of
the members of the entirety, he acted in greatness of thought,
21 from abundant love, •and he approached that which surrounds
the sphere of perfect glory.^b

The father's will and the boundary around the fullness

23 It was not apart from the father's will that this Word was en-
gendered, •nor without it would he have made his approach.

27 •Rather, the father himself had brought him forth for those
things that he knew must happen.

30 •The father and the members of the entirety withdrew from
him, so that the boundary that the father ordained might be
34 made firm—•for it does not come from attaining the unattain-
1 able, but by the father's will—77 •and also so that the things
that happened might contribute to a plan that was going to hap-
4 pen—•it was not possible for it not to happen—by the revelation
6 of the fullness. •It is not right, therefore, to criticize the move-
8 ment that is the Word; •rather, we should speak about the Word's
movement as a cause for a plan to come to pass.

IrV(e)
IrPt 1.2.4

The division of the Word

11 The Word engendered himself as a perfect single one, to the
glory of the father, who desired him and was pleased with him.

15 •On the other hand, the things that he desired to grasp firmly he
engendered in shadows, phantoms, and imitations, because he
19 could not bear to look at the light, •but he looked to the abyss
20 and hesitated. •From this there was a division, which he suffered,
22 and a turning away; •from the hesitation and division (there
arose) forgetfulness and ignorance of himself and <of that>^a
which exists.

GTr 17:30

76 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. That is, the Word approached the boundary
within the fullness.

77 a. These words are inadvertently missing in the
MS.

25 •His upward movement and his expectation of attaining the
 28 unattainable became firm and remained in him. •But the sick-
 nesses that followed when he became beside himself arose from IrPt 1.2.3
 32 the hesitation, •that is, <. . . >^b the glories of the father, whose
 35 exalted state is infinite. •It is this that he did not attain because
 he did not grasp it.

The return of the Word's perfection to the fullness

37 That which he brought forth from himself as a unitary aeon IrV(f)
 rushed upward to that which is his and to his kin in the fullness. IrPt 1.2.4
 4 **78** •He left behind what had come into being in the deficiency, ClExc 23.2,
 7 those that had come forth from him as an illusion, •because they 32.3
 do not belong to him.
 8 •When the one who brought him forth from himself had
 11 brought him forth as perfect,^a •he became all the weaker, like a
 14 female nature that has been deprived of its masculinity. •Those
 that came into existence from his thought and arrogance existed
 17 from what had become lacking in himself. •Consequently, what
 perfection he had abandoned him and [went] upward to those
 19 who are his own. •He existed in the fullness, living as a remem-
 brance of himself, that [he had been] saved from [. . .].
 23 •The one who had rushed on high and that which drew him
 25 to itself^b were not barren; •rather, they brought forth a fruit in
 the fullness for a reversal of the things that had come into being
 because of the lack.^c

D. The Word's Material and Animate Offspring

The offspring of the Word's arrogant thought: the material powers

28 Those that came into being from the arrogant thought re-
 32 semble the fullnesses of which they are imitations, •but they are IrPt 1.2.3,
 phantoms, shadows, and illusions, deprived of word and light, 1.4.2
 things that belong to the empty thought, offspring of nothing. ClExc 45.2
 37 •For this reason too their end will be like their beginning: **79**
 2 •they come from what does not exist, so that they will also return GTr 21:34
 4 to what will not exist. •But in their own estimation <they>^a are
 great and powerful ones, more [beautiful] than the names [that
 are given] to them, which are only [their] shadows, beautiful by 71:1
 GPh 9

b. One or more words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

78 a. That is, when the fallen Word had produced from himself the perfection that left him.

b. "the one who had rushed on high and that

which drew him to itself": i.e. the Word's perfection and the fullness.

c. The author anticipates the production of the savior, narrated below at 86:23f.

79 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

- 10 imitation. •For [. . .] of the image takes its beauty from the one whose image it is. VFrD
- 12 •Concerning themselves they thought that they alone existed and that they were without origin because they did not see any- Bjn 13:5+
16 thing that existed prior to them. •For this reason they exhibited disobedience and acts of rebellion and did not submit to the one because of whom they came into existence.
- 20 •They wanted to command and dominate one another [in]
23 their vain love of glory. •The glory that they possessed became a
26 cause [of] the structure that would come into existence.^b •Therefore, [because] they were imitations of those on high, <they>^c
exalted themselves to a love of command, each one according to the grandeur of the name of which he was a shadow,^d fantasizing that he would become greater than his companions.
- 32 •The thought of these others was not barren, but in accordance
35 with the likeness <of those>^e whose shadows they were—•every-
1 thing they think potentially has children—**80** •the things that
3 they thought became their offspring. •And thus it happened that
5 many came forth from them as offspring: •they were fighters, warriors, troublemakers, rebels, disobedient ones who love to
9 give orders, •and all the others of this sort who come from them.^a

The Word's uncertainty and confusion

- 11 The Word, therefore, became the cause of those [that] came IrPt 1.2.3
ClExc 48.3
into being, and he became increasingly uncertain and con-
15 founded. •Instead of perfection, he saw lack; instead of unity, he saw division; instead of stability, he [saw] disorder; instead of
19 [repose], agitation. •He [could] not stop their [love of] disorder, nor could he destroy it. •He had become [entirely] weak when
22 his wholeness and [. . .] abandoned him.
- 24 •The ones that came into being lacked acquaintance of them-
selves, •and they lacked acquaintance of the fullnesses from
28 which they had come, •and they lacked acquaintance of the one who had been the cause of their coming into existence.
- 30 •The Word, because he was in such an unstable condition, did
35 not continue to bring forth in the manner of emissions: •those that exist <as>^b glorious fullnesses came into being for the fa-

b. The material powers' love of command and desire to dominate, later shared by the animate powers, will provide the structure for the hierarchy of animate and material powers; cf. 99:19f.

c. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

d. The material powers possess divine names ("god," "lord," etc.) that are not truly theirs; cf. 71:5; 79:7.

e. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

80 a. The author may be drawing on traditions of fallen angels and their offspring, which stemmed from Gn 6:1-4 and were developed in Jewish and Christian literature, such as the various books of Enoch.

b. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

37,1 ther's glory. •Instead, he brought forth small weaklings, **81** •de-
 4 bilitated by the illnesses by which he too was debilitated. •It was
 [an] imitation of the disposition that had been unitary, which
 became the cause of the things that do not originally exist on
 their own.

The Word's turning back and remembrance

8 Until the one who brought forth such deficient beings con-
 demned those who had come into being contrary to reason be-
 14 cause of him—the condemnation that became a judgment—he
 was fighting against them for (their) destruction, that is, those
 who opposed the judgment and whom the wrath was pursuing.
 16 •But it (the wrath) is one that accepts and redeems their incli-
 nation and rebelliousness because from it [comes] the turning
 20 back,^a •which is also called repentance, [when] the Word moves
 24 toward [another] inclination and thought, •having turned away
 from the evil things and turned toward the good.

Bjn 13:32+
 IrPt 1.4.1

26 •After the turning back^b followed the remembrance of those
 that exist and the prayer for the one who turns himself to the
 30 good. •First it was the one in the fullness^c to whom he prayed
 32 and whom he remembered; •next his siblings, one after another,
 35 and yet always together with one another; next all of them; •but
 1 before all of these, the father. **82** •This prayer of supplication
 helped [him] to turn himself <toward>^a himself and the entirety,
 4 •for what caused him to remember those that preexisted was
 their remembrance of him, that is, the remembrance that cries
 out from afar and brings him back.^b

The offspring of the Word's turning back and remembrance: the animate powers

10 This entire prayer of his and this remembrance were numer-
 ous powers, in accordance with the principle that there is noth-
 ing barren in his thinking.

IrPt 1.5.1

15 •These powers were much better and greater than those that
 17 belong to the imitation. •For those that belong to the imitation
 belong to a [false] essence: they came into being from an imita-
 22 tion's illusion and a [vain,] arrogant [thought.] •These, however,
 are from the thought that had possessed acquaintance of them
 beforehand.

81 a. Or "conversion." The Word's condemnation of and wrath against the rebellious powers initiate his turning back to himself and the fullness.

b. Or "conversion."

c. "the one in the fullness": i.e. the Word's perfect self that had returned to the fullness.

82 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. The aeons' remembrance of the fallen Word inspires the Word's remembrance of them.

25, 27 •Therefore, those are like forgetfulness and heavy sleep; •they
 are like the people who have disturbed dreams in which sleep
 32 haunts them and those who dream are trapped. •These others, GTr 29:8
 however, are for him like luminous beings who are expecting the
 sunrise, after they have seen sweet dreams in it (sleep).
 37 •Truly they < . . . > the emissions of the remembrance.^c
 3 **83** •They did not have their essence to a greater degree, nor did
 they have more honor, because they^a are not equal to those that
 8 preexist,^b even if they are superior [to] the imitations. •It is by
 this alone that they are elevated above them (the imitations):
 11 •they are from a good disposition—for they did not come from
 13 the sickness that developed—•that is, (they are from) the good
 disposition belonging to the one who sought for the preexistent
 18 after he had prayed and brought himself to what is good. •He
 sowed in them a will to seek after and pray to the preexistent
 glorious one, and he sowed in them a thought about him and a
 23 contemplation, •so that they might think that something greater
 than they existed before them, even though they did not un-
 26 derstand what it was. •Engendering harmony and love for one
 another through that thought, they acted in unity and with una-
 31 nimity, •because it was from unity and unanimity that they re-
 ceived their existence.

Conflict between the animate and material powers

34 Therefore, they (the animate powers) surpassed them (the
 material powers) in love of command because they were of
 1 greater honors than the earlier ones, **84** •who rose up against
 2 them. •The latter had not humbled themselves: they thought
 that they had originated from themselves alone, had no source,
 and were the first to bring forth in accordance with their birth.
 7 •The two orders assaulted one another and fought for domina-
 tion in such ways that they were swallowed up by powers and
 14 essences, as is the condition of mutual combat. •They too had
 17 love of command and all other such things as well, •for empty
 vainglory draws them all to the desire of love of command, and
 23 not one of them remembers [. . .] •nor do they acknowledge that
 the powers of the remembrance were [prepared] by the preexis-
 tent one's actions, whose likenesses they were.
 28 •The [order] of this kind^a had harmony with itself and with
 31 one another, •but it was fighting against the order of those be-
 longing to the imitation, while the order of those belonging to

c. The sentence is corrupt in the MS, in which one or more words are inadvertently omitted.

b. "those that preexist": i.e. the aeons of the fullness.

83 a. The MS mistakenly reads "he."

84 a. "the order of this kind" i.e. the animate order.

35 the imitation was making war against the likenesses, •and it was
 1 acting against itself because of its wrath. 85 •Because of this it
 2,3 [happened . . .] •there [. . . against] one another, •many [. . .] ne-
 5,7 cessity put them [. . .] •so that they seized [. . .] . . . [. . .] •their
 envy, [their] malice, wrath, violence, desire, and paralyzing lack
 10 of acquaintance, •engendering diverse forms of matter and all
 kinds of powers, mixed up with one another and numerous,
 12 •while the intellect of the Word who had been their generative
 cause awaited the revelation of the [hope] that would come to
 him from above.

E. The Savior's Revelation and the Word's Spiritual Offspring

The lower and higher Words

15 The Word that had moved^a placed hope and expectation
 18 in what is superior. •As for those belonging to the shadow, he
 turned away from them in every way because they were opposing
 21 him and extremely arrogant, •but he reposed himself in those
 belonging to the remembrance.
 22 •And as for the one that [. . .] in this way, exists in the elevated
 25 region, and remembers the one who had become deficient,^b •the
 Word begat him invisibly among those who had come into being
 according to the remembrance,^c according to the one who ex-
 29 isted with them, •until the light would shine upon him from the
 life-giving upper realm, (the light) that was engendered from the
 remembrance of the brotherly love of the pre-existent fullnesses.

The aeons' intercession for the fallen Word

33 As for the fall that had happened, the aeons of the father of
 the entirety, who had not suffered, took it unto themselves
 36 as if it belonged to them, •with solicitude, goodness, and great
 1 sweetness. 86 •[. . . the] entirety, so that they might be instructed
 2 about [. . .] •by the one [. . .] them all through [. . .] to end the
 deficiencies.
 4 •The [order that came into being] for him (the Word) came
 into being through <the one>^a who had hastened on high,
 through that which he had brought forth for himself, and through

CIExc 30.2
IrPt 1.2.3

85 a. "the Word that had moved": i.e. the lower Word.

b. "the one that . . . who had become deficient": i.e. the higher Word.

c. Perhaps meaning that the lower Word produced among the animate powers a latent knowl-

edge of his higher self, which prepared them for the savior's revelation; cf. 89:8–10f.

86 a. These words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

8 the entire fullness.^b •The one who had hastened on high became,
 on behalf of the one who had become deficient, an intercessor
 with the aeonic emission that had come into being in accordance
 11 with the one that exists. •And as for them (the aeons), when he
 had entreated them, they consented joyfully, benevolently, and
 harmoniously to the agreement that they should help the one
 15 who had become deficient. •They gathered to one another, and
 with a beneficial thought they asked the father for help to come
 19 from above through the father for his glory. •For the one who
 had become deficient could not be made perfect in any way other
 than if the fullness of the father consented, drew him to itself,
 revealed him, and gave what he lacked.

IrPt 1.2.6

The savior as son and fruit of the fullness

23 Therefore, through the joyously desired agreement that came
 into being, they (the aeons) brought forth the fruit as an offspring
 26 of their harmony. •He was a single one because he belonged to
 29 the entirety and revealed the countenance of the father, •about
 whom the aeons thought as they glorified and prayed for help
 for their sibling in the disposition that the father accepted along
 with them, so that willingly and joyfully they brought forth this
 34 fruit. •And the harmony of the revelation of his mingling with
 1 them, which is the son of his will, revealed itself.^c 87 •The son
 of the entirety's good pleasure placed himself over them like a
 garment, by which he bestowed perfection on the one who had
 become deficient and bestowed stability on the perfect ones.
 6 •It is he who is properly called "savior," "redeemer," "good plea-
 10 sure," "beloved," "advocate," "anointed one" (Christ), and "the
 light of those who are destined," •in accordance with the ones
 13 from whom he had been brought forth, because he came into
 existence clothed with the names of the established ones. •For
 what name is there to call him other than "son," which we have
 15 already said? •He is acquaintance with the father, who desired
 to be known.
 17 •Not only did the aeons engender the countenance of the fa-
 ther whom they glorified, as was written earlier, but they engen-
 20 dered their own as well. •For the aeons that glorified engendered
 22 their countenance and their appearance, •and they engendered
 them as an army for him,^a as for a king, because those belonging

IrV(i)
IrPt 1.2.6
ClExc 23.2Mk 1:11
Jn 15:26 etc.
ClExc 23.1Jn 1:18
ClExc 7.1

b. The Word's remembrance or turning back and hence the animate order's existence depended on the assistance of the Word's higher self and the fullness. Cf. 82:1–7f for the role of the aeons in inspiring the Word's remembrance.

c. The savior, who is here called "son," should not be confused with the second principle, the

son who is the father's thought of himself (cf. 54:35–57:29f).

87 a. I.e. for the savior. Probably a reference to the angels emitted as bodyguards for the savior; cf. IrPt 1.2.6; ClExc 35–36.

to the thought possessed a shared authority and a united agreement. •They went forth as a multiform appearance, so that the one that they were going to help might see those whom he had petitioned for help as well as the one who had given it to him.

The savior's authority

31 The fruit of the harmony with him, of which we have spoken earlier, bears the authority of the entirety. •For the father has entrusted him with all things, whether those that preexisted or those that exist or those that are going to exist. **88** •He was capable. •He revealed that the things with which he had been entrusted—he had not given them (to him) but entrusted them to him. •He guided the plan of everything in accordance with the authority that was given to him from the beginning and with the power that the task involved.

Mt 28:18
Lk 10:22

The revelation of the savior: the completion of the fallen Word

6,8 This is how he accomplished the revelation of himself. •He in whom the father exists and in whom the entirety exists appeared first to the one who lacked sight,^a •and he showed himself to those who sought their sight, through the shining of that perfect light. •He (the savior) first completed him (the Word) with unspeakable joy. •He completed him for himself as a perfect one, and gave him what belongs to each one, for such is the ordinance of the first joy. •And he^b invisibly sowed in him a word ordained for understanding, and he gave him power, so that he might separate and cast away from himself those who were disobedient to him. •Such is how he showed himself to him.

IrPt 1.4.5
ClExc 45.1

The revelation of the savior: the separation of the warring powers

27 On the other hand, in the case of those who had come into being because of him (the Word), to them he revealed himself in a form [nonsensical] to them. •He was^c like a sudden blow to them, as he appeared to them suddenly and withdrew like lightning. •And he stopped and brought to an end the entanglement they had with one another through this sudden revelation, **89** •for which they were unprepared and which they did not expect because they did not know about it.

Bjn 14:18

IrPt 1.5.2

88 a. “the one who lacked sight”: i.e. the fallen Word.

b. The MS mistakenly reads “we.”

c. The MS mistakenly reads “we were.”

The powers' reactions to the revelation of the savior

4 Therefore, they became afraid and fell down, unable to bear
 7 the blow of the light that struck them. •What appeared was a
 8 sudden blow to the two orders. •But just as the ones belonging
 10 to the remembrance had been called “little,” •so they had a little Mt 10:42
 thought that they have the exalted one who exists before them
 and that they have a sowing within them of the expectation of the
 15 exalted one who would appear. •Therefore, they greeted his revelation, GTr 26:28
 16 •and they worshiped him, became convinced witnesses
 to [him], and acknowledged the light that had appeared as some-
 one stronger than those who opposed them.

20 •Those belonging to the imitation, however, became very CIExc 34.1
 afraid, because from the beginning they had been unable to hear
 24 that there was such a sight. •Therefore, they fell into the depth
 of lack of acquaintance, which is called “the outer darkness,” Mt 8:12 etc.
 28 “chaos,” “Hades,” and “the abyss.” •He placed <them>^a below
 the order of those belonging to the remembrance because it had
 31 come to be stronger than they, •and they deserved to come to
 rule over the unspeakable darkness because it belonged to them
 34 and was the lot that fell to them. •He granted to them that they
 too should be useful for the plan that was coming into being,
 1 90 •of which they were oblivious.^a

Differing modes of the savior's revelation

1 There is a [great] difference between the revelation to the one
 who had come into being and then became deficient^b and (the
 4 revelation) to those who came into being because of him. •For
 in his (the Word's) case he (the savior) revealed himself to him
 5 within him by existing with him, •participating in suffering with
 him, giving him rest little by little, making him grow, raising him
 up, and at last giving himself to him as refreshment through a
 10 vision. •But to those who fell outside he (the savior) revealed
 himself fleetingly and in a sudden blow, and he withdrew to him-
 self immediately without allowing them to see him.

The offspring of the Word's thanks and praise: the spiritual powers

14 After the Word that had become deficient was illuminated,
 16 his fullness originated. •He escaped from those who had been
 18 disturbing him earlier and became disentangled from them. •He IrPt 1.4.5
 20 stripped himself of that arrogant thought. •He received the uni- CIExc 45.2

89 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. “the one who had come into being and then became deficient”: i.e. the fallen Word.

90 a. The MS mistakenly reads “of which he had forgotten them.”

fication of repose, while those who previously had been disobedient to him bowed down and humbled themselves before him.

23 •And he^c rejoiced over the care of his siblings who had visited
 25 him. •He gave glory and praise to those who had revealed them-
 29 selves to him for assistance, giving thanks that he had escaped
 and praising both the greatness and those who had revealed them-
 selves to him from their regions.

31 •He engendered living images of the living faces, which are
 33 beautiful and good. •Because they derive from those that exist,
 35 they resemble them in beauty, •but they are not truly equal to
 them because they do not come from a union between him who
 brought them forth and the one who revealed himself to him. **91**

1 •Still, he worked with wisdom and understanding, uniting the
 4 discourse with himself entirely: •therefore, those that came forth
 from him are great, just as the one who exists is truly great.

7 •After he had admired the beauty of the ones <that>^a had ap-
 10 peared to him, he professed gratitude for their care. •The Word
 accomplished this work through those from whom he received
 assistance for the establishment of those who had come into be-
 ing on his account, and so that they might receive something
 14 good, •because he was thinking that he should pray that the
 plan for all those who had come forth from him should extend
 17 to them. •For this reason, the ones that he brought forth in ac-
 cordance with this intention are in chariots, like the ones that
 had come into being and became manifest, so that they might
 23 pass through all regions of lower activities, •and so that each one
 might be given the place that is established as each one exists.

25 •This was a reversal for those belonging to the imitation, but
 27 it was beneficial for those belonging to the remembrance, •and
 a revelation of the things that are from the unanimous and com-
 passionate ordinance, which are seeds that have not yet come
 into being on their own.

IrPt 1.4.5
 ClExc 44.1

Plato *Ti.* 41e.

The Word's care for the spiritual powers

32 The one who appeared^b was a countenance of the father and
 34, 35 the harmony. •He was a garment of every grace, •and he was food
 for those whom the Word had brought forth when he prayed and
 1 gave glory and honor. **92** •It is he whom he glorified and hon-
 ored,^a while he gazed at the ones for whom he prayed, so that he
 might bring to perfection the images that he had brought forth.

c. The MS mistakenly reads "they."

92 a. That is, it is the savior whom the Word glori-
 fied and honored.

91 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. "the one who appeared": i.e. the savior.

4 •The Word greatly enhanced their mutual cooperation and
 the hope of the promise, as they possessed joy, great repose, and
 10 undefiled pleasures. •The things that he had previously remem-
 14 bered—•these he now engendered, while that which can be seen
 15 was before him.^b •He existed in faith and hope of the entirely
 perfect father, who appeared to him but was not yet united with
 him, lest those that had come into being would perish by looking
 20 at the light, •for they cannot receive the great exalted grandeur.^c

F. The Word's Organization of the Cosmos

The aeon of the images

22 The Word's thought, when he returned to his stability and
 ruled over those who had come into being on his account, was
 called "aeon" and "place" for all those whom he had brought
 forth in accordance with the decree.

28 •It is called also "salvific congregation" because it healed
 him of the dispersion, that is, the multiform thought,
 and turned him toward the single thought.

33 •Likewise, it is called "granary" because of the repose that
 he received and gave to himself.

Mt 3:12
 Lk 3:17

1 93 •And it is called also "bride"^a because of his joy, which
 it gave him over the fruitful hope of the union that was
 revealed to him.

4 •It is called "kingdom" as well because of the establish-
 ment that he received when he rejoiced over (his)
 control of those who opposed him.

8 •And it is called "the joy of the lord" because of the glad-
 ness with which [he] clothed himself when the light
 11 was before him, •giving him recompense for the good
 things that are in him and the thought of liberation.

Mt 25:21

14 •The aeon about which we have spoken is above the two
 17 orders of those who fight against one another. •It holds no fellow-
 ship with those that dominate, nor is it infected by the illnesses
 and infirmities <of those that> belong to the remembrance and
 20 the imitation. •For that in which the Word established himself,
 which is filled with joy, was an aeon that had the form of matter
 24 but also had the establishment of its cause, •namely, the one who

b. The Word follows the model of the fullness.

93 a. Possibly to be corrected to "bridal chamber."

c. Cf. the situation of the aeons of the fullness

at 64:31f.

revealed himself as an image of those that exist in the fullness,^b those that had come into being from the abundant joy of the one that exists joyfully. •And as for him, the countenance of the one who had revealed himself in the pleasure, expectation, and promise concerning the things that he had requested, •he had the word of the son, along with his essence, power, and form, •the one whom he loved, in whom he took pleasure, 94 •and to whom he lovingly prayed. •It (the aeon) was light, a desire to be established, an openness to instruction, and an eye for vision— things that it has from the exalted ones. •And it was wisdom for his thinking against the ones that exist under [the] plan, a word for speaking, and the perfections of such things. Mk 1:11

The members of this aeon: The church

The ones that received form with him according to the image of the fullness have their parents, . . .^a each one being a small impress of each of the faces. •They are masculine forms because they do not come from the illness, that is, femininity, but from the one who has already left the illness behind. •They have the name^b “church,” for in harmony they resemble the harmony in the assembly of the ones that have revealed themselves. IrPt 1.5.6
ClExc 41.2

•That which came into being according to the light’s image is itself perfect because it is an image of the single light that exists, which is the entirety. •Even if it was smaller than that whose image it is, it nevertheless possesses its indivisibility because it is a countenance of the indivisible light. •On the other hand, the ones that came into being according to the image of each of the aeons are in terms of essence what we have already said, •but in terms of capability they are not equal (to the aeons) because capability is in each one individually. •In their unity with one another, they have equality, 95 •but individually they have not cast off what belongs to each one. •Therefore, they are passions— for passion is illness—because they are engendered not from the agreement of the fullness but from the one who has not yet received the father.^a •Hence, the agreement with his entirety and will was beneficial for the plan that would come to be because it had been granted to them that they should pass through the lower places, •but the places are unable to receive their coming through them rapidly, unless they do so individually, one by one. •Their coming is necessary inasmuch as everything will be perfected though them.

b. “the one who revealed himself . . .”: i.e. the savior.

b. The MS mistakenly reads “it has the name.”

94 a. The text is corrupt. Possibly, “that is, those who revealed themselves.”

95 a. The spirituals, derived from the fallen Word, are not yet perfect, but require education and formation.

The Word's role in the plan

- 17 To sum up, then, the Word received the vision of all things—
 those that preexist, those that exist now, and those that will exist—because he has been entrusted with the plan of all that exists. •Some are already in the entities because it was profitable
 22 for them to come into being, •but the seeds that will come into
 24 being he has within himself through the promise that came into
 being when he conceived it as pertaining to the seeds that will
 28 come into being. •And he engendered his offspring, that is, the
 31 manifestation of what he had conceived, •but the promised seed
 is for a time kept from coming to being, because they were appointed as those designated to be sent forth through the advent
 33 of the savior and of those with him—•it is they who are “the first ones”^b—for acquaintance with and the glory of the father.^c
- 38 •It is fitting, through the prayer that he made and the turning
 3 back^d that happened because of it, 96 •that some will perish, others
 6 will benefit, and others will be set apart.^a •He first prepared
 the punishment for the ones that are disobedient, making use of
 9 a power of the one who had appeared, •the one from whom he
 had received the entirety's authority to separate himself from
 12 the lower things.^b •And he situated himself apart from what is
 superior, until [he] prepared the plan of all the external things
 and gave to each one the area assigned to it.

The spiritual places

- 17 As he set everything in order, the Word first established himself as origin, cause, and ruler of the things that had come into
 21 being, •in the manner of the father, who was the cause of the
 preexistent establishment.
- 23 •Next he created the preexistent images, which he brought
 27 forth in thanksgiving and glorification.^c •He set in order the
 place for those he had brought forth in glorification,^d •which is
 called “paradise,” “enjoyment,” “delight full of nourishment,” and
 32 “delight <of>^e the preexistent ones,” •as he also preserved the
 image of all the good things in the fullness.
- 35 •Next he set in order the kingdom, which is like a city filled
 37 with everything pleasing, •namely, brotherly love and great generosity,
 and which is filled with the holy spirits and [the] mighty

b. In contrast to the middle ones and last ones; cf. 98:14f.

c. The spirituals are reserved for the incarnation of the savior; cf. 115:33f.

d. Or “conversion.”

96 a. These are the destinies of the materials, the animates, and the spirituals, respectively.

b. “the one who appeared . . .”: i.e. the savior.

c. Narrated at 90:31f.

d. “the place for those he had brought forth in glorification”: i.e. the aeon of the images, the creation of which was narrated at 92:22–94:6f. What follows here is a more detailed description of that aeon's structure and places.

e. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

powers that govern the ones that the Word brought forth. 97

4 •And he established it strongly.^a

5 •Next (he set in order) the place of the church that is assembled here and possesses the form of the church that exists in the aeons that glorify the father.

9 •After these (he set in order) the place of the faith and obedience [that come from] hope, the things that [the Word] received when the light appeared.

13 •Next (he set in order) the disposition that is prayer and supplication, the things that forgiveness followed, and the word about the one who will be revealed.

Separation of the spiritual places from those below

16 All these spiritual places are set apart by a spiritual power from the ones belonging to the remembrance: the power is established as an image, which is what separates the fullness from
21 the Word. •The power is at work, so that there is prophecy concerning the things that will be, as it directs the ones that belong to the remembrance and that have come into being toward the
25 preexistent, •but it does not permit them to mix with those who came into being through a vision of those who are with him.

27 •To be sure, those belonging to the remembrance that is outside are subordinate. •They nonetheless preserve the likeness of what belongs to the fullness, all the more because of the sharing in the names with which they are adorned.

The animate and material orders

32 The turning back^b is subordinate to those belonging to the remembrance, and so too the law of judgment, which is condemnation and wrath, is subordinate to them. •Subordinate to them as well is the power that separates the ones that are below them, which casts them at a distance and does not allow them [to] spread upward over those who belong to the remembrance
2 [and] the turning back.^c 98 •It (the power) is fear, confusion, oblivion, astonishment, lack of acquaintance, and the things that
6 came into existence as an imitation through an illusion. •They too are called by the exalted names, these ones that became subordinate. •There is no acquaintance for the ones that have come
8 forth from them in an arrogant thought, love of command, disobedience, and falsehood.

12 •Each of them he named, for the two orders are based on a
14 name. •Those belonging to the remembrance and the likeness are called “those on the right,” “animate,” “the fires,” and “the GTr 17:33

97 a. The MS mistakenly reads, “he established him strongly.”

b. Or “conversion.”

c. Or “conversion.”

- 17 middle ones,” •while those belonging to the arrogant thought
and the imitation are called “those on the left,” “material,” the IrPt 1.5.2
darknesses,” and “the last ones.”

The arrangement of the three sets of powers

- 20 After the Word had established each one in its rank—the im-
24 ages, the likenesses, and the imitations^a—•he kept the aeon of
the images pure from all those who fight against them, as a joyful
place.
- 27 •To those belonging to the remembrance, however, he re-
vealed the thought that he had stripped from himself, because
he wanted to draw them into a material fellowship for the sake of
32 their structure and dwelling place, •and so that they would pro-
duce a diminished impulse from their attraction to evil things,
and they would not take excessive pleasure in the glory of their
37 environment and be exiled, •but instead so that they would see
the illness in which they were suffering and so produce an en-
during desire and search for the one who can heal them from
their weakness.
- 4 **99** •As for those belonging to the imitation, he placed over
them the ordering discourse, so that he might bring them to a
7 form. •He placed over them as well the law of judgment, and
still more, he placed over them [the] powers that are rooted [in]
11 the love of command, •and he [appointed] them to rule over
them, so that, either [through] the firmness of the wise word, or
through the threat of the [law], or through the power of the love
16 of command, •the order would be preserved from those who
have reduced it to evil things, as long as the Word was pleased
with them as useful for the plan.

The hierarchy of animate and material powers

- 19 The Word is aware of the shared love of command belong-
ing to the two orders, and he granted to these and all the others
23, 25 their desire. •He gave to each one the appropriate rank, •and it
was commanded that each should rule over a place and an ac-
tivity and should concede the place of the one who is more than
29 exalted than it, •so that it might command the other places in
an activity that was allotted to it as appropriate for it to control
33 because of its mode of being. •As a result, there came to be com-
manders and subordinates in positions of domination and of
1 servitude, angels and archangels, **100** •because the various kinds
3 of activities differ. •Each of the rulers, along with its race and
rank that its allotment gave it according to the way in which they

98 a. I.e. the spiritual, animate, and material powers.

- 7 appeared, stood guard as it had been entrusted for the plan. •And
 none is without command, and none is without a kingship, from Mt 24:31
 11 the [end] of the heavens to the end of the [earth], •even unto the
 inhabited regions of the [earth and] the places under the earth.
 12 •There are kings, lords, and commanders, some to punish, oth-
 16 ers to render judgment, •others to grant rest and healing, others
 to teach, and still others to keep watch.^a

The craftsman and ruler

- 18 Over all these rulers he placed a ruler with no one command- IrV(g)
IrPt 1.5.1
ClExc 47.2
 21 ing him. •He is the lord of them all, that is, the countenance
 that the Word brought forth from his thinking according to the
 23 likeness of the father of the entreties. •Therefore, he is adorned
 with every name^b that is a likeness of him and that belongs to all
 27 his virtues and glories. •For he is called “father,” “god,” “creator,”
 “king,” “judge,” “place,” “dwelling,” and “law.”^c
 30 •The Word uses him like a hand to set in order and labor at
 33 the things below,^d •and he uses him like a mouth to speak the
 things that will be prophesied. IrPt 1.7.3
 37 •When he (the ruler) saw that the things that he had said and Gn 1:4 etc.
 38 labored at were great, good, and wondrous, •he was glad and
 rejoiced, as if he by his own thoughts had been the one who said Bjn 13:5
 3 and did them, **101** •because he did not know that the movement IrPt 1.7.4
GPh 12
ClExc 49.1
 within him came from the spirit that moved him in a predeter-
 mined way toward the things that he wanted.

The craftsman’s organization of the animate realm

- 6,7 The things that came into being through him he spoke,^a •and 96:17f
 they came into being according to the spiritual likeness <of>^b the
 places that we mentioned previously in the discourse concerning
 the images.
 9 •Not only by laboring, but also [as the one who] had been
 appointed father of [his] plan, he engendered in accordance
 13 with him^c and the seeds, but [. . .] •elect that would come down
 15 [through] him to the lower places. •Not only speaking spiritual
 words of his own <but also . . . >^d invisibly through the spirit VFrC
IrPt 1.7.3
 that cries out and engenders things greater than his own essence.

100 a. These beneficial functions of the lower rulers contrast with the rulers’ malevolent activities in classic gnostic myth, befitting the author’s emphasis on a divine plan behind all events.

b. The MS mistakenly reads “every food.”

c. The title “law” makes clear that this figure is the god of the Old Testament.

d. St. Irenaeus calls the son and the holy spirit “the hands” of the father in the creation of humanity (*Against Heresies* 4.20.1; 5.28.4).

101 a. Just as in Genesis god creates through speaking.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

c. I.e. in accordance either with the ruler himself or with the Word.

d. These and other words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

- 20 •Because in his own essence he is “god” and “father” and all the
 25 rest of the honorable names, he thought that they were from his
 29 own essence. •He established repose <for>^e those who obey him,
 33 but for those who disobey him, punishments as well. •Moreover,
 there also exist with him a paradise, a kingdom, and everything
 1 else that exists in the aeon that is with him.^f •They are more valu-
 1 able than the imprints because of the thought that is joined to
 because he cannot see how the things that exist actually exist.^a
- 3 •He established for himself workers and servants to assist him Bjn 10:27
 7 in what he would do and say. •For everywhere he worked he left
 his countenance through his beautiful name, as he created and
 spoke whatever he thought of.
- 11 •[He] established in his places images of the light that had ap-
 16 peared and of spiritual [. . .], which derived from his essence. •In
 19 this way they were honored everywhere by him as a seal from the
 countenance of the one who had established them. •And there
 24 were established paradises, kingdoms, reposes, promises, and
 multitudes of servants of his will. •Although they are lords of the
 dominions, they are placed beneath the one who is lord, the one
 who appointed them.

The craftsman’s organization of the material realm

- 26, 28 After he (the craftsman) listened to him (the Word) well, •he
 set the lights, which are the starting-point and structure, over Gn 1:14
 32 the organization of the lower things.^b •The invisible spirit moved
 him in such a way that he wanted to administer a plan through
 2 his own servant,^c 103 •which he used like a hand and a mouth
 6 and as if he were his face. •The things that he (the servant) brings
 8 forth <are> order, threat, and fear, •so that those [with whom]
 he had done what is ignorant might retain the rank to which
 11 [they had been assigned,] •being fettered [. . . rulers] over them
 in their places.^a

Three ranks of material powers

- 13 The entire arrangement of matter [is divided] into three. IrPt 1.5.4
 14 •The [. . .] powers that the spiritual Word brought forth in ac-
 cordance with illusion and arrogance he placed in the first spir-
 itual rank.

e. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

f. The craftsman’s places follow the pattern of those in the aeon of the images; cf. 96:27f.

b. “the lower things”: i.e. the region including and below the stars and planets.

c. “his own servant”: i.e. the devil, the lower ruler of materiality.

102 a. The craftsman’s ability to see the immortal model for his work is deficient.

103 a. The devil keeps the material rulers in their assigned roles and places.

- 19 •Then the ones that these brought forth from love of com-
 22 mand he placed in the middle region, as powers who love to give
 25 commands, •so that they might exercise dominion and com-
 28 mand the lower stratum with compulsion and violence.
 32 •But those that had come into being from envy and jealousy,
 35 along with all the other products from dispositions of this kind,
 38 •he set as a servile order, controlling the last things and com-
 41 manding all those that exist and all procreation. •What comes
 44 from these are the rapidly destructive diseases. •They are im-
 47 patient about procreating and yet are nothing in the place from
 50 which they derive and to which they will return. •Therefore, he
 53 appointed over them commanding powers that continuously la-
 56 bor at matter, so that the products of those that exist will also
 59 exist continuously. 104 •For this is their glory.^a

II. THE CREATION AND FALL OF HUMANITY

The formation of matter

- 4, 5 As for flowing matter, what is its form? •A cause, that is, the IrPt 1.5.5
 7 blindness that comes from the powers [. . .] •in it for them all
 8 [. . .] •as they engender beside them and they [. . .].
 9 •The thought that is placed between those on [the right and]
 11 those on the left is a [. . .] power [. . .] •all those that [. . .] will in-
 13 tend to make, •so to speak, a likeness of them similar to a shadow
 16 from a body that it (the shadow) follows, •those that <are>^b the
 roots of the manifest creations.
 18 •The entire establishment of the ordering of the images,
 likenesses, and imitations has come into being for the sake of
 23 those who need nourishment, instruction, and form, •so that IrPt 1.6.1
 the smallness might gradually grow as if through the likeness
 26 in a mirror. •This is why he (the Word) created humanity last, ICō 13:12
 after having first prepared and provided for it the things that he
 created for its sake.^c

The creation of the first human being by the Word, the craftsman, and the lower rulers

- 30 The creation of the human being is like that of everything ClExc 50.1
 32, 34 else. •The spiritual Word set it in motion invisibly, •but it was
 brought to completion through the craftsman and his servile an-

104 a. A decorative pattern in the MS separates the preceding section of the text from the following.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

c. The cosmos is fashioned to facilitate the education and formation of those in need of salvation.

- 2,3 gels, **105** •who cooperated in the modeling [...] •thought with his
 4 rulers. •<The>^a earthly human being is like a shadow, so that he Gn 1:26
Bjn 15:1
VFrC
 shares in the manner of [those who are] cut off from the entire-
 6 ties, •and he is [a] preparation of all of them, those on the right
 8 and those on the left, •because each of these orders gives form
 to [...] it exists.
- 10 •The [form that] the Word brought forth [was] deficient in
 13 such a way that it [fell] into illness. •It (the form) did not resem-
 ble him because he brought it forth [forgetfully,] ignorantly, and
 16 [...] •with all the rest of the infirmities, when he gave the first
 form.
- 17 •The Word <. . .>^b through the craftsman without him (the VFrC
IrPt 1.5.6
ClExc 2.1,
53.2
 craftsman) knowing, so that he (the human being) would gain
 the acquaintance that the exalted one exists and recognize that
 22 he needs [him.] •This is what the prophet called “breath of life,” Gn 2:7
 25 “[. . .] of the exalted aeon,” and “invisible.” •And this is the “living Gn 2:7
 27 soul” that gave life to the essence that had been dead at first.^c •For GTr 21:34
 29 what is dead is lack of acquaintance. •It is therefore necessary for
 us to establish that the first human being’s soul derives from the
 32 spiritual Word, •even though the creator thinks that it belongs
 to him inasmuch as what was breathed came through him as
 through a mouth.
- 35 •The creator also sent down souls from his essence because
 1 he too possesses the ability to engender, **106** •for he <is>^a from
 the father’s likeness. ClExc 50.2
- 2 •Those on the left also brought forth ones like human beings
 of their own because they possess the imitation of. . .^b

The three essences in the first human being

- 6,8 The spiritual essence is one and a single likeness [...] •its ill-
 9 ness is the condition [...] form. •As for the essence of the ani-
 mate ones, its condition is double because it possesses <the>^c
 understanding and confession of what is superior but is also
 inclined toward evil^d on account of [the] inclination of the (ar-
 14 rogant) thought. •But as for the material essence, its direction
 16 is diverse and of many forms: •it was an illness that came into
 being in many kinds of inclination. PtF 33.7.7

105 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. One or more words are inadvertently omitted in the MS. They probably referred to the Word depositing a seed or some other spiritual gift in the human being.

c. The MS mistakenly reads “to the authority that had been dead at first.”

106 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

b. The MS is corrupt.

c. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

d. The MS mistakenly reads “but is not inclined toward evil.”

- 18 •The first human being is a mixed modeled form and a mixed
 creature, a deposit of those on the left and those on the right,
 22 •and a spiritual rationality whose judgment is divided between
 each of the two essences from which he takes his existence.

Paradise and the fall

- 25 On this account it is said that a paradise was planted for Gn 2:8
 him, so that he might eat of the food of the three kinds of trees, GPh 75, 82
 29 •because it was a garden of threefold order and one that gives
 enjoyment.^e
 31 •The nobility of the superior essence that was in him was
 34 greatly sublime; •it (the essence) bestowed honor^f and caused
 35 no harm to them.^g •On this account he was given a command,
 1 threatened, and brought into [a] great danger, **107** •which is
 1 death. •He^a permitted him to eat from the enjoyment of the evil Gn 2:17
 4 ones alone, •and he did not permit [him] to eat from the other
 tree that was double in character, much less from the one of life,
 7,10 •lest [he] acquire an honor [. . .] and he [. . .]. •By means of that
 evil power called “the serpent”—and he is craftier than all the Gn 3:1
 13 evil powers—•he deceived the human being with the ordinance
 of those that belong to the (arrogant) thought and the desires,
 15 •so that he^b caused him to transgress the commandment and he
 17 would die. •And he was expelled entirely from enjoyment of that Gn 3:19
 place. Gn 3:24

The father’s plan for humanity

- 18 This is the expulsion [that] was inflicted on him, when he was
 expelled from the pleasures of those who belong to the imitation
 22 and those who belong to the likeness. •But it is a work of fore-
 thought, so that it might it might be discovered that it is only a
 short time until humanity receives the enjoyment of the eternal
 27 good things, in which exists the place of repose. •This is what
 the spirit determined when it first planned that humanity should
 experience the greatest evil, which is death, that is, complete lack
 32 of acquaintance with the entirety, •and that it (humanity) should
 also experience all the evils that arise from this, and that after the
 36 graspings and anxieties that come from these, •it should partake
 1 of the greatest good, **108** •which is eternal life, that is, certain
 acquaintance with the entireties and sharing in all good things.

e. The garden is threefold because it has three kinds of trees, corresponding to the three essences: the tree of life (spiritual), the tree of knowledge (animate), and the other evil trees (material).

f. The MS mistakenly reads “it (the essence) created.”

g. “to them”: i.e. to the rulers (?).

107 a. Possibly the devil as the chief evil power, or “he” here and in the remainder of this paragraph might be corrected to the plural to include the evil powers as a group.

b. The MS mistakenly reads “she.”

5 •Because of the first human being's transgression, "death ex- Rm 5:14
 7 exercised dominion" and became the companion of all human
 7 beings, •so that it killed them as the manifestation of its [domi-
 9 nation], •which had been given to it [as a] kingdom because of
 <the> plan of the father's will, which we have discussed earlier.^a

III. SALVATION AND THE RETURN TO THE FATHER

A. Circumstances Before the Savior's Advent

Mutual influence of the two orders

13 When each of the orders, [those] on the right and those on the
 left, are brought together with one another by the thought that is
 set between them and that gives them a plan with one another,
 18 •it happens that they both eagerly perform the same deeds, with
 those on the right imitating those on the left and those on the left
 23 also copying those on the right. •And as soon as the evil order
 begins to do something evil in a foolish manner, the wise order
 emulates (it) in the form of an abusive person, also doing evil as
 31 if it were an abusive power. •So too when the wise order attempts
 to do good, the devious order imitates it, eager to do it as well.

Competing theories of how and why things exist

36 This is how it is with the circumstances that have been thus
 1 established by these activities: 109 •they came into being resem-
 bling things that do not resemble one another, with those who
 have not been instructed unable to understand the cause of the
 5 things that exist. •Therefore, they have produced different kinds
 7 (of explanations).^a •Some say that it is by forethought that the
 existing things exist; they are the ones who observe the stability
 11 and conformity of the creation's movement.^b •Others says that it
 is (due to) something alien; they are the ones who observe the ri-
 15 gidity, arbitrariness, and evil of the powers.^c •Others say that the
 things that exist are what was destined to be; they are the ones
 18 who have devoted themselves to this issue.^d •Others says that it

108 a. A decorative pattern in the MS separates the preceding section of the text from the following.

109 a. It is uncertain whether the following explanations are meant to be attributed to specific philosophical schools or other groups, and if so, to which ones.

b. Possibly Stoics, who taught that god's forethought directs all things.

c. Possibly Epicureans, who taught that the gods do not direct affairs in this world.

d. Possibly astrologers, who taught that the stars determine one's fate.

20 is in accordance with nature.^e •Others say that what exists just
 21 is. •But the great majority have attained only as far as the visible Rm 1:20
 elements, and they have not gained acquaintance of anything
 beyond these.

The errors of the Greeks and the barbarians

24 Those who have become wise by the standards of the Greeks 1Co 1:22
 and the barbarians have advanced as far as the powers that came TRs 43:25
 into being in accordance with an illusion and a vain thought,
 28 •<as well as>^f those that derived from these in accordance with
 the mutual conflict and the manner of rebellion in which they
 32 had been active. •Derivatively, arrogantly, and in illusory think-
 36 ing, they talked about the things that they considered wise. •The
 imitation deceived them into thinking that they had attained the
 1 truth, **110** •although they had attained error—not merely in mi-
 2 nor terms, •but the powers themselves, in order to hinder them,
 pretend that they are the entirety.
 5 •As a result of this, it happened that this order got caught up
 in fighting against itself because of the arrogant hostility of [. . .]
 9,11 •of the ruler that [. . .] that exists before him. Therefore, nobody
 13 agreed with one another about anything—•neither (in) philoso-
 phy, nor in medicine, nor in rhetoric, nor in music, nor in me-
 17,18 chanics—•but they are all opinions and theories. •It happened
 that confused speechlessness prevailed because of the inexplica-
 ble quality of the rulers who give them the thoughts.^a

The teachings of the righteous ones and prophets among the Hebrews

22 As for the things that derived from the creation (?) of certain
 Hebrews, those which are written by the material people who
 26 speak after the example of the Greeks (and) the powers^b—•all the
 ones about whom they think and assign to the right are the pow-
 ers that move them all to think the words and their likenesses.^c
 29 •And they set out to attain the truth and made use of the mixed TRs 43:25
 powers that are at work in them.
 33 •After these they attained to the order of the unmixed ones,
 <before>^d they attained to the unique one who is set up accord-
 36 ing to the father's likeness.^e •He is [not] invisible in his nature,

e. Possibly Stoics, who taught that nature reveals the divine will.

f. These words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

110 a. The translation of this sentence is uncertain due to multiple errors in the text.

b. The author refers to the widespread Jewish

and Christian claim that pagan philosophers copied their ideas from those in the Bible.

c. The translation of this sentence is uncertain due to multiple errors in the text.

d. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

e. "the unique one who is set up according to the father's likeness": i.e. the craftsman.

1 **III** •but it is [a] wisdom that veils him, so that he might preserve 2Co 3:13
ClExc 38.2
 4 the pattern of the truly invisible one. •For this reason, many an-
 gels have not attained to seeing him, nor have as well the people
 of the Hebrew race whom we have mentioned earlier, that is, the Mt 13:17
 9 righteous persons and the prophets. •They did not think or say
 anything based on an illusion or derived from an imitation or
 13 a veiled thought. •Instead, each one, thanks to the power that IrPt 1.7.3
 was at work in him and by paying attention to what he saw and
 17 heard, spoke confidently, •for they had complete harmony with
 one another in accordance with [the] manner of those who were
 at work in them preserving the connection and the mutual har-
 21 mony, •especially in the confession of the one more exalted than
 23 they.^a •There is one who is greater than they, who was appointed
 because they had need of him and whom the spiritual Word en-
 27 gendered with them as one who needs what is superior, •as a
 hope and expectation in accordance with the remembrance, that Rm 8:20
 30 is, the seed of salvation. •And he is an illuminating word, that is,
 the remembrance and its offspring and emanations.
 32 •As for the righteous ones and the prophets, whom we men- Mt 13:17
11:4
 35 tioned earlier and who preserve their fathers' confession and
 testimony concerning the great one, •they came into being in
 2 anticipation of the hope and the hearing, **112** •because in them
 was sown <the>^a seed of prayer and seeking, which is sown in
 6 many who have sought for strengthening. •It (the seed) is man-
 ifest and draws them to love the exalted one, so as to proclaim
 these things as concerning a single one, and it was a single one
 10 that was at work in them. •When they speak, what they see and
 what they say differ because of the multitude of those that gave
 them the vision and the discourse.

Schools of thought among the Jews

14 Therefore, those who have listened to what they have said
 about this do not discard any of it; rather, in diverse ways they
 19 have accepted the scriptures by interpreting them. •They have
 established numerous schools of thought that exist until now
 22 among the Jews.^b •Some say that it is one god that proclaimed
 27 the ancient scriptures, but others say that there are many. •Some
 30 say that god is simple and was consistent in nature; •others say
 that his activity is tied to the establishment of good and evil.
 33 •Moreover, still others say it is he who labors at the things that

III a. This may suggest a more unified view of the Old Testament than that found in PtF.

112 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

b. The teachings that follow can be documented in various works of ancient Jewish and Christian literature, but cannot be assigned to specific groups of ancient Jews.

35 have come into being, •but others say that it is through his angels
that he labored.

Prophecies concerning the savior

1 **113** The multitude of such ideas reflects the many modes and
forms of the scriptures, which resulted in their teachers of the law.
5 •The prophets, however, said nothing from themselves alone;
8 •rather, each one (spoke) from what he saw and heard through
11 the proclamation concerning the savior. •What (each one) pro-
claimed and is the main subject of their proclamation is what he
15 said about the savior’s advent, that is, That Advent. •Sometimes
17 the prophets speak about it as if it is going to happen, •but other
times it is as if the savior is saying through them that the savior is
going to come and give grace to those who had no acquaintance
20 of him. •They did not share the same confession with one an-
22 other entirely, •but each one, relying on the activity that enabled RAAd 77:27
him to speak about him and the place that he had happened to
26 see, •thought that the one who would be born would be (born)
28 from that place and that he would come from there. •None of
them knew where he would come from or from whom he would
31 be born; •rather, it was this alone that they were deemed worthy
34 to say: that it was he who would be born and would suffer. •But
as for his preexistence and his eternal existence, that he is unen-
37 gendered and impassible, •namely, the Word, if he were to come Jn 1:14
1 in the flesh—**114** •that did not come into their thinking.

1 •And this is the word that they were empowered to speak con-
4 cerning his flesh that was going to appear: •they say that it is a ClExc 1.1
product derived from all of them, but above all, that it derives
from the spiritual Word, who is the cause of the things that have
9 come into being. •The one from whom the savior received his
flesh had conceived him in the revelation of light in accordance
with the word that promised his revelation from the seminal
14 state. •For the one who exists is not a seed of the things that exist
16 because he (the father) engendered him last. •As for him whom
the father appointed to be the one in whom salvation would be
made manifest and who is the fulfillment of the promise because
he received all the instruments for descending to (this) life, by
22 means of which he descended—his father is one, and he alone
truly exists as his father, he who is invisible, unknowable, in-
26 comprehensible in his nature, •he who alone is god in his will
and grace,^a and he who has given himself to be seen, known, and
comprehended.

114 a. “in his will and grace”: possibly an error for
“in his will and form.”

B. The Savior's Advent

The incarnation of the savior

30 What the savior became through participation in voluntary
 34 suffering is what they (human beings) became, •for it was on
 36 their account that he appeared in involuntary suffering.^b •They
 39 had become flesh and soul, which perpetually rule over them,
 and along with corruptible things they die. •But he^c who [came
 into being] invisibly as an invisible human being instructed them
 3 about himself invisibly as well. **115** •Not only did he accept their GTr 20:28
 6 death for the sake of those whom he had in mind to save, •but
 he accepted also their smallness, into which they had descended
 9 when they were born in body and soul. •For he caused himself to
 be conceived and born as a child with body and soul.

11 •He came exalted amidst all the other circumstances in which
 he participated with those who had fallen and received the
 14 light, •because he caused himself to be conceived without sin, Heb 4:15
 18 defilement, or pollution. •He was begotten in physical life and
 remained in physical life, because these and those, in the pas-
 sion and changing opinion of the Word that moved, had been
 23 destined to become body and soul. •But he himself welcomed
 the one who comes for the sake of those whom we previously
 mentioned.^a

The spiritual seed's advent with the savior

25 He came into being from the radiant vision and unchang-
 ing thought of the Word when he returned to himself after his
 29 movement,^b through the plan, •just as those who came with
 him received body and soul along with stability, confirmation,
 33 and discernment of things. •They too had thought they would
 come, for when they thought about the savior, they came when
 36 he thought.^c •They too came, being superior, (even) in the fleshly
 emanation, to those who had been brought forth from lack. **116**

1 •In [this way] they too received corporeal emission along with
 the savior's body through the manifestation and union with him.

5 •These others are the ones who belong to the single essence, that 114:4
ClExc 1.1
 is, the spiritual.

8 •The plan, however, is diverse: this is one thing, that is an-
 10 other. •Some came forth from passion and division, and they

b. The text may be corrupt.

c. The MS mistakenly reads "they."

wake of the Word's turning back and remembrance
 (85:15–88:4f).

c. The text is corrupt.

115 a. That is, the Word welcomed the savior.

b. The author refers to the savior's origin in the

13 need healing. •Others are derived from supplication, so that they
 15 might heal those who are sick, •and they have been appointed
 to care for those who have fallen, namely, the apostles and the
 18 evangelists. •They are the savior’s disciples, and they are teachers
 for those who need instruction.^a IrPt 1.6.1

20 •Therefore, why did they share also in the passions in which
 24 those who were brought forth from passion shared, •if, in accor-
 dance with the plan, they are derived corporeally with the savior,
 27 who did not participate in the passions? •For his part, the sav-
 or was a corporeal image of a single thing, namely the entirety. Col 1:15

31 •Therefore, he preserved the form of indivisibility, from which
 34 is derived impassibility. •They, on the other hand, are images
 36 of each one that has appeared. •Therefore, they receive division
 from the form, and they took shape for the planting that exists in
 39 the lower region,^b •which also shares in the evil that exists in the
 3 places where they have arrived. 117 •For the will (of the father) Rm 11:32
 held the entirety under sin, so that by that will he might have
 6 mercy on the entirety and they might be saved, •for a single one
 has been appointed to give life, while all the rest need salvation.

Salvation as ransom, return, and acquaintance

8 Because of this, it was under these circumstances that <the>^a
 grace began to distribute the gifts that had been proclaimed by ClExc 24.1
 Jesus <and by>^b those who are deemed worthy by him to pro-
 14 claim to the rest, •because there was deposited <the>^c seed of
 the promise of Jesus Christ, <whom>^d we have served in the
 17 revelation and the union. •Thus, the promise included both the
 instruction and the return to what they had been from the be-
 20 ginning, •of which they possessed a drop for them to return to
 23 it, which is what is called “ransom.” •And it is the release from
 captivity and the reception of freedom, (from) the captivity of GPh 104
 those who were enslaved to lack of acquaintance, which rules in
 its places.

28 •Freedom, however, is acquaintance with the truth that has
 30 existed before lack of acquaintance came into being. •It (ac-
 32 quaintance) rules eternally, without beginning or end, •for it is
 good, and a return of things, and a release from the servile nature
 in which they have suffered, they who were brought forth from a
 38 lowly thought of vanity, •that is, (the nature) that inclines toward
 evil things through the thought that draws them down to love of

116 a. The author refers to the spirituals as those responsible for teaching and guiding the animates.

b. “the planting that exists in the lower region”: i.e. the earthly church of the spirituals.

b. These words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

c. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

d. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

117 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

2 command. **118** •But they have received the possession, which is
 freedom, through the abundance of grace that watches over the
 5 children. •It is a disruption <of>^a the passions and a destruction
 of those things that the Word cast off from himself at first, after
 he separated them from himself, although he had been the cause
 10 of their coming into existence. •He reserved their destruction for
 12 <the>^b end of the plan, •and he permitted them to exist because
 even they were useful for the things that had been ordained.

The three kinds of human beings

- 14 Humanity came to exist in three kinds with respect to es- IrPt 1.7.5
 17 sence—spiritual, animate, and material—•preserving the pattern ClExc 54.1
 of the triple disposition of the Word, from which were brought
 forth the material ones, the animate ones, and the spiritual ones.
- 21 •Each of the essences of the three races is recognized from its Mt 7:16
 24 fruit. •They were not recognized at first, however, but only at the
 advent of the savior, who shed light upon the saints and revealed
 what each one was. Jn 3:19
 GTr 25:35
- 28 •The spiritual race, because it is like light from light and
 like spirit from spirit, when its head appeared, ran toward him
 34, 35 immediately, •and right away it became a body for its head. •It Ep 1:22, 4:15
 quickly received acquaintance with the revelation. Col 1:18
- 37 •The animate race, however, because it is light from fire, hes-
 itated before it received acquaintance of him who had appeared
 1, 3 to it, **119** •still more before it ran to him in faith. •Although it
 was instructed rather through a voice, such was sufficient, for it
 6 is not far from hope, in accordance with the promise, •and it has
 received, in the form of a pledge, so to speak, the assurance of Heb 11:1
 IrPt 1.6.2
 the things that will be.
- 8 •The material race, on the other hand, is alien in every way,
 10 •for it is like the darkness that avoids the shining of light be- Jn 1:5
 cause its appearance destroys it, and it did not accept his advent. GTr 24:37
- 14 •What is more, it is hateful toward the lord because he revealed Jn 7:7, 15:18
 himself.
- 16 •The spiritual race will receive complete salvation in every
 18 way, •while the material will receive destruction in every way,
 20 like an enemy. •But the animate race, because it is in the middle GTr 17:33
 due to how it was brought forth and established, is double in
 24 accordance with its determination—good and evil. •It takes to IrPt 1.6.1, 1.7.5
 itself the salvation^a that is suddenly available and, no doubt, the ClExc 56.3
 flight to the good things.

118 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.
 b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

119 a. The MS mistakenly reads “the outflow.”

C. The Salvation of Spiritual and Animate Beings

The diverse fates of animate angels and human beings

- 28 Those whom the Word brought forth in accordance with what
 33 is superior and prayed for salvation, have salvation [. . .]. •At any
 34 rate, they will be saved [because of] the salvific thought: •just as
 he was brought forth from it, so too they were brought forth, **120**
 1,2 •whether angels or human beings. •Thanks to the confession that
 there is one who is superior to them and thanks to the prayer to
 5 and search for him, •they will attain the salvation that belongs to
 those who were brought forth, for they derive from the good dis-
 8 position. •They were appointed for service to the proclamation
 of the savior's advent that was going to happen and of his man-
 12 ifestation after he has come. •Whether angels or human beings,
 when they were sent for their service, they received the essence
 of their being in that activity.
- 14 •On the other hand, those who are derived from the thought
 17 of love of command, •who came into being through the attack of
 20 his opponents, whom that thought brought forth—•out of these,
 because they are mixed, <they>^a will receive their end quickly.
- 22 •Those who remove themselves from the love of command that
 is given to them temporarily and for certain periods, who glorify
 26 the lord of glory, •and who abandon their anger will receive as 1Co 2:8
 recompense for their humility endurance to the end.
- 29 •But those who become arrogant because of their lust for am-
 32 bition, who love fleeting glory, •who forget that they have been
 entrusted with authority only for certain times and seasons,
 35 •who for this reason have not acknowledged that the son of god
 2 is the lord of the entirety and the savior, **121** •and who have not
 removed themselves from their angry behavior and imitation of
 4 the evil ones—•these will receive suffering as judgment for their
 7 lack of acquaintance and senselessness, •along with those who
 have gone astray, all those who among them have turned aside—
 10 and all the more evil!—•so that they too performed against the 1Co 2:8
 lord such unworthy things that the powers of the left worked
 14 against him, including even his death. •They continued to think,
 “We will become rulers of the entirety if the one who has been
 18 proclaimed king of the entirety is murdered,” •which the human
 beings and angels who are derived, not from the good disposi-
 tion of the ones on the right, but from the mixture, struggled
 22 to accomplish. •Willingly they had first chosen for themselves

120 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

- 25 fleeting glory and lust, •although the path to eternal repose leads from humility to salvation for those on the right who will be saved.

Contrasting treatments of the church

- 29 After they have professed the lord, the way of thinking that is pleasing to the church, and the hymn of the humble ones with it (the church)—to the full extent that they are able to do what
34 is pleasing to it—•so that they share in its weaknesses and afflictions like those whose thoughts are for what is good for the
37 church, •they will receive participation in [its] hope.
38 •But this is to be said about the human beings and angels of the kind whose path leads from the order of those on the left to
5 error: 122 •not only did they reject the lord and take counsel
7 to do evil against him, •but their hatred, envy, and jealousy are
10 directed against the church as well. •And this is the basis for the judgment against those who have moved and risen up against the experiences of the church.

The election and the calling

- 12 The election is a corporeal and essential partner with the savior, like a bridal chamber because of its unity and harmony
17 with him. •For, before every way, it was on its account that the kind one^a came. •The calling, on the other hand, has the place of
19 those who delight in the bridal chamber and who are glad and
24 rejoice over the union of the bridegroom and bride. •Therefore, the place that will belong to the calling is the aeon of the images, the place where the Word has not yet joined with the fullness.
- ClExc 42.3
Ep 5:32
TRs 43:35
ClExc 65
IrPt 1.7.1

The salvation of the church

- 27 And because the human being belonging to the church^b rejoices over this, is glad about it, and hopes for it, •that person has divided spirit, soul, and body in the plan of the one who thinks
33 that he is unique, •but in him exists the human being who is the entirety and who all are.^c •And he possesses salvation through
36 [. . .] just as the places will receive him, 123 •and he possesses the members that we have already mentioned.
3 •When the ransom was proclaimed, the perfect human being
6 received acquaintance immediately, •so that he quickly returned
8 to his unity, to the place from which he derived, •so that he joy-

122 a. “the kind one”: the Greek word (*chrēstos*) was pronounced exactly like the word for “Christ.”

b. “the human being belonging to the church”: possibly, a spiritual human being or the savior.

c. That is, according to the plan of the crafts-

man (“the one who thinks that he is unique”), the spiritual human being is divided into spirit, soul, and body, but in fact within that person dwells the single savior, who may be the subject of the following sentence.

fully returned to the place from which he derived, the place out
 11 of which he flowed.^a •But his members^b needed a schoolroom,
 14 which is in the places that have been set in order, •so that he re-
 ceives a likeness through the images, the archetypes, in the form
 16 of a mirror, •until all the members of the body of the church
 19 < . . . >^c and single places, •and they receive the return^d together,
 after they have been manifested as the healthy body < . . . >^e the
 return to the fullness.

Ransom and the final return

23 It (the fullness) possesses an original concord with a mutual
 27 harmony, which is the concord that exists with the father until
 the entirety receive a countenance that matches him. •The final
 return, however, (will take place) after the entirety reveals itself
 30 as the one who is the son—•the one who is the ransom, that is,
 the way toward the incomprehensible father, that is, the return to
 33 the preexistent one—•and after the entirety reveal themselves
 1 properly as the one who is [in]conceivable, ineffable, **124** •invis-
 ible, and incomprehensible, so that it receives ransom.

Jn 14:6
 GTr 31:28

3 •It (ransom) is not only a release from the domination of
 those on the left and not only an escape from the authority of
 7 those on the right, •to each of whom we thought we were slaves
 and children and from whom no one quickly escapes without
 12 becoming theirs again. •Rather, ransom is also an ascent to^a the
 15 levels that exist in the fullness, •along with all those who have
 been given names and who understand them in accordance with
 18 the ability of each of the aeons, •and an entrance into that which
 is silent, where there is no need of voice, nor understanding, nor
 23 intellection, nor illumination, •but all things are luminous with-
 out need of illumination.

GTr 21:25

The need of all for ransom, including the savior

25 Not only the earthly people need ransom, but so too the an-
 29 gels need both ransom and the image, •and even the fullnesses
 of the aeons and the wondrous light-giving powers, lest we have
 32 any doubt about any others. •Rather, even the son, who is ap-
 pointed as a redemptive pattern of the entirety, [needed] ransom,
 1 **125** •the one who became human and gave himself for every-
 4,5 thing that we needed, •we in flesh who are his church. •There-

ClExc 22.5

ClExc 22.7

123 a. That is, the savior rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.

b. “his members”: i.e. the spirituals.

c. One or more words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

d. Or “return from exile.” The Greek word (*apokatastasis*) is Valentinian jargon for the return of

the self to its true home within the fullness; cf. TRS 44:30; GPh 59.

e. One or more words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

124 a. The MS mistakenly reads “and.”

fore, after he had received ransom first through the Word that came down upon him, all the rest who had received him received ransom through him. •For those who have received the one who has received, they have received also the one who is in him.^a

•Among the human beings who are in flesh, he began to give the ransom, his firstborn and love, the son who came in flesh, while the angels who are in heaven became worthy of forming a community, so that they might create a community with him on earth. •This is why he is called the angelic ransom of the father, he who comforted those who had suffered for the sake of the entirety on account of acquaintance with him, •for he had been given grace before everyone.

Mt 3:16
Lk 3:22
IrPt 1.7.2
ClExc 16

ClExc 22.5

The father's plan

The father had prior acquaintance of him (the savior), because he existed in his (the father's) pondering before anything had come into existence, and he possessed also those to whom he revealed him. •He placed the lack on the one who remains as glory for his fullness for seasons and times. •Inasmuch as he was not known, he had a reason for him to bring forth his [. . .]

126 •Just as the reception of acquaintance with him reveals his lack of envy and is the manifestation of the abundance of his sweetness—that is, the second glorification—•so he has been discovered to be a cause of lack of acquaintance as well as one who engenders acquaintance.^a

•In hidden and incomprehensible wisdom he has kept acquaintance until the end, •so that the entireties might labor by seeking god the father, whom no one has discovered through his own wisdom and power. •He grants that they should receive acquaintance with the additional thought about his great glory, which he has given, and the cause, which he has given, •that is, the ceaseless thanksgiving to him, he who, through the unchangeable character of his counsel, reveals himself eternally to those who have proved worthy of the father who is unknowable in his nature, •so that they might receive acquaintance of him through his will, which is that they should come to experience lack of acquaintance and its pains. •Those whom he predetermined to attain acquaintance and the good things that exist in him thought—this is the father's wisdom—that they might taste the evil things and train themselves by them, •like a [. . .] temporarily [. . .] •receive the [. . .] forever.

127 •Because they possess the transformation, the persistence of renunciation, and the motivation of their adversaries as a

53:11, 62:19
69:14

GTr 18:34

Heb 6:17

125 a. "the one who is in him": i.e. the Word (?).

126 a. The father withheld acquaintance and perfection as part of his plan.

5 virtue and an amazing indication of the higher things—•so that
 it is clear that the lack of acquaintance of those who are ignorant
 8 of the father belongs to them—•it was thanks to his power, the
 one who gave them acquaintance of him, that they should attain
 10 it (acquaintance). •Acquaintance is accurately called “acquain-
 tance with all the things that will be thought,” “the treasure,”
 14 •“the addition to the increase of acquaintance,” “the revelation
 of those who were foreknown,” and “the way to the harmony and
 19 to the pre-existent,” •that is, the growth of those who have aban-
 23 doned their own greatness in the will’s plan, •so that the end
 might be like the beginning.^a

GTr 21:25

True baptism

25 As for the baptism that truly exists, to which the entireties
 28 will descend and in which they will come into being, •there is no
 other baptism except that one alone, that is, the ransom into god
 32 the father, son, and holy spirit, •after there has been confession
 through faith in those names, which are a single name of the gos-
 1 pel, 128 •after they have believed that the things they have been
 3 told do exist. •It is for this reason that those who have believed
 5 that they do exist have their salvation, •which is the attainment
 in an invisible way of the father, son, and holy spirit, through a
 9 faith without doubt. •And when they have borne witness to them
 and by a firm faith have adhered to them, that they will come to
 13 be—•this is the fulfillment of the things in which they have be-
 lieved, the return to them, and the father being one with them,
 15 •the father, the god whom they have confessed in faith and who
 has granted their union with him in acquaintance.

Mt 28:19
GPh 59
ClExc 80.3

19 •The baptism that we have just mentioned is called “garment
 22 of those who do not strip themselves of it,” •because those who
 ever put it on and have received ransom wear it and call it “the
 27 confirmation of the unfailing truth.” •Without wavering and
 without movement it embraces them, while they embrace it,
 those who have received removal.

GPh 69, 90
GTh 21

30 •It is called “silence” because of the tranquility and lack of
 disturbance.

33 •It is called “bridal chamber” because of the harmony and
 inseparability of those who have known that they have
 been known.^a

GPh 60, 70,
83, 105
1Co 13:12
Ga 4:9
Jn 10:15

127 a. In his discussion of the return (*apokatastasis*), Origen of Alexandria (d. ca. 254) writes, “The end is always like the beginning” (*First Principles* 1.6.2).

128 a. The MS mistakenly reads “who have known that they have known it.”

- 35,1 •And it is also [called] 129 •“the light that neither sets nor
burns” because it does not give light, but those who
have worn it are made light, that is, those whom it has
worn.
- 6 •And it is also called “eternal life,” that is, immortality.
- 8 •And it is called “that which exists entirely in itself,” in
11 short and accurately, what is pleasing—•without divi-
sion, without diminishment, without deficiency, and
13 without deviation—•to him who exists for those have
received a beginning.
- 14 •For what else is there to call it except “god” because it
exists as the entirety?

GTr 32:31
GPh 83, 90
GPh 107

17 •That is, even if it is called by innumerable names, they have
20 been said as a way of talking about it, •just as it transcends every
word, transcends every voice, transcends every intellect, tran-
25 scends every entity, and transcends every silence. •This is the
way that exists, and this is how it is with those who exist for the
28 one who is himself. •This is the one who is discovered as the one
31 who is himself, ineffable and inconceivable in aspect, •who yet
exists in those who have acquaintance through the one whom
they have attained, that is, the one whom they glorify.

The salvation of those belonging to the calling

- 34,1 Concerning the election, 130 •even if there are many more
2 things for us to say, as in fact it would be appropriate to say, •it
is nevertheless necessary for us to return to those who belong to
8 the calling—for this is how those on the right are called—•and
9 it is not profitable for us to forget them. •We have spoken about
11 them as if there was enough in the limited things above. •But
how can one speak partially?
- 13 •Inasmuch as I have said that all those who have gone forth
16 from the Word, •whether from the condemnation of the evil
things, or from the wrath that fights against them, or (from) the
turning away from them, which is the turning back^a to the higher
20 things, •or (from) the supplication and the remembrance of the
pre-existent things, or (from) hope and faith that he might se-
25 cure salvation by the good work—•(they all) have become wor-
thy because they derive from the good dispositions and have as
the cause of their begetting an intention from the one who exists.
- 30 •Moreover, (I have said) that, before the Word concerned
33 himself with them invisibly and willingly, •the exalted one, be-
1 cause they [. . .] him, added this thought, 131 •which became the

130 a. Or “conversion.”

2 cause of their existence. •They did not exalt themselves when
 3 <they>^a were saved, as if nothing existed before them; •rather,
 they acknowledge that their existence has a beginning, and they
 7 desire this: •to become acquainted with that which exists before
 9 them. •Even more, they worshiped the light's revelation like 89:15
 lightning, and they testified that it appeared for their salvation.
 14 •Not only those who came forth from the Word, about whom
 19 alone we said that they would attain the good work, •but also
 those whom these engendered in accordance with the good dispo-
 sitions will share in the repose, thanks to the abundance of grace. Ep 2:7
 23 •And even those who were brought forth from the lust for love of
 command, although they have within them the seed that is love of
 27 command, •will receive the recompense for (their) good deeds,
 29 •namely, those who have worked together with those who have
 31 the predisposition toward the good things,^b •if they have a good
 intention and want to give up the vain, temporal love of glory
 [and perform] the commandment of the lord of glory instead of
 2 temporary glory, 132 •and they will inherit the eternal kingdom.

Summary: The end will be single like the beginning

3 But now it is necessary for us to summarize the causes and the
 7 effects of the grace for them as well as the impulses, •for it is ap-
 propriate that we explain what we said earlier about the salvation
 of all those on the right, the unmixed as well as the mixed ones,
 12 in order to join them [with] one another. •And it is also appro-
 priate that we set forth briefly the repose, that is, the revelation
 of the grace^a <in which>^b they believed.
 16 •If we confess the kingdom that is in the anointed (Christ),
 then they have escaped from the entire multiplicity of forms and
 20 from inequality and change. •For the end will receive the exist-
 23 tence of a single one, just as the beginning was a single one—the
 place where “there is no male and female, no slave or free, no cir-
 cumcision or uncircumcision,” no angel and human being, but
 “the anointed (Christ) is all in all.”
 GTr 25:7
 ClExc 36.2
 Ga 3:28
 1Co 12:13
 Col 3:11

The salvation of angels and human beings

28 How is it that the one who did not exist at first will be found
 31 to be coming into existence, •unless < . . . > the nature of the one
 who is not a slave when he is going to receive a place with a free
 1 person?^c 133 •For they will gain increasing vision naturally, not
 GPh 2, 97,
 106

131 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MS.

b. I.e. those who have worked together with the spiritual ones.

132 a. The MS mistakenly reads “form.”

b. These words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

c. The sentence is corrupt in the MS, which must be missing several words.

merely by a small word, so that they will believe, only through a voice, that this is the way it is, that the return to what once was is

8, 9 a single one. •Even if some are exalted because of the plan—•because they have been appointed as causes for the things that came into being, are more productive than natural forces, and

13 for these reasons are pleasing—•angels [as well as] human beings will receive the kingdom, the confirmation, [and] the salvation.

15, 16 •These are the reasons: •They believed without hesitation that the one^a who appeared in flesh is the son of the unknown Ac 17:23 god, the one who had not been previously spoken about and

21 whom no one had been able to see. •And they abandoned their gods whom they had previously served and the lords that exist 1Co 8:5

26 in heaven and those on the earth. •Before he was^b lifted up, but Jn 3:14 while he was still a child, it was testified that he had already begun to preach.^c •And when he was lying in the tomb as a dead

30 person, the [angels] thought that he was alive [and (so) received] Mt 28:5 life through the one who had died. **134** •They wanted . . . their many earlier services and wonders, which took place in the temple.^a •The confession is what made them able to do this, through

10 their hastening to him. •That institution, which they had (formerly) accepted, they (now) rejected because of the one whom

12 they had not concerned themselves with everywhere, •but [they accepted] the anointed (Christ), [who] they thought existed in

15 the [. . .] place, •the place from [which] they had come together with him, •from a place of gods and lords whom they worshiped, served, and assisted.

20 •The names that they had received on loan they handed over GTr 40:9

23 to the one who is properly called by them (the names), •and after his assumption they had the experience that he is their lord, Ac 2:36

27 who has no lord over him. •They gave him their kingdoms, and Ph 2:9, 11 they got up from their thrones and disposed of their crowns.

30 •He revealed himself to them for the reasons that we mentioned

32, 1 earlier, •for their salvation and [. . .] good [thought . . .] **135** •companion[s] and the angels [. . .] •and the abundance of good that

2 they have done for it. •In this way they were entrusted with the IrPt 1.7.4 services that produce good for the elect, by which they offer their

7 iniquity up to heaven. •They were handed over forever to the inextinguishable and infallible [judgment], although they will endure for their sake until they all enter into life and depart from

11 life, •while their bodies [remain] on earth and they assist [. . .]

13 all of them, •and they participate in the sufferings, persecutions,

133 a. The MS mistakenly reads “the ones.”
 b. The MS mistakenly reads “they were.”
 c. Cf. Lk 2:46. The author may have in mind

also works like the so-called *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, in which the child Jesus teaches.

134 a. The sentence is corrupt in the MS.

and oppressions that have been brought down upon the saints more than on anyone else.

- 18 •But the servants of the evil ones, because evil is worthy of destruction, < . . . >^a

Recompense for those who serve the church

- 21 [. . . firmly] through the [citizenship] that is above all worlds, Ph 3:20
 25 which is their good thought and fellowship, •while the church will remember them as good friends and faithful servants. •After
 28, 29 it (the church) has received ransom [. . .] •recompense, which
 32 is the joy that exists in [the] bridal [chamber] and [. . .] •in its
 33, 1 house [. . .] •in the thought [. . .] and what it owes [. . .] **136** •the
 2 anointed (Christ), who is with it [. . .] •expectation of [the father
 3 of] the entirety, •and it will engender for them guiding and serving
 angels.
 5 •The aeons will remember their good thought of service to it
 (the church) and will give them their recompense [for] all that
 10 they will think. •It is an emission from them, so that, just as [the
 12, 13 anointed (Christ) . . .] will, •which he brought forth [. . .] •ex-
 14 alted things of the church, giving them to it, •so too it will be a
 thought for them and will give to the human beings [their] eter-
 17 nal dwelling places, •in which they will be [when they abandon] 2Co 5:1
 20 the downward attraction of the deficiency, •as the power of the
 fullness draws them upward in the abundance of the generosity
 and sweetness of the pre-existent aeon.
 24 •This is the nature of the entire engenderment of those whom
 27 he possessed when he shone upon them [with] a [light . . .] •he
 29, 31 revealed [. . .] •like his [. . .] will come into being [. . .] •like his
 32 [. . .] •the sole recompense that exists among those who have
 been [. . .]

The final consummation

- 8, 9 **137** [. . .]^a •in the manner that I have previously said, •while
 the material ones will remain until the end for destruction [. . .] IrPt 1.7.5
 10, 12 •will not be given [. . .] •they returned again to that which [. . .]^b
 19 •to do something else through their control that they have over
 the establishment [. . .]
 22 •For although I continue to make use of these words [. . .]
 25 •his thought [. . .]

135 a. One or more words are inadvertently missing in the MS.

137 a. Seven lines of text in the MS are illegible.

b. Six lines of text in the MS are too fragmentary to translate.

6,7 138 [...] ^a •angel [...] •speak [through] a trumpet [sound], ^{1Co 15:52}
 which will proclaim the great perfect amnesty from the beau- ^{1Th 4:16}
 11 tiful east, •in the bridal [chamber], which [is] the love of God ^{GPh 68}
 20,21 [...] ^b •the praise, the power, and the [glory], •through Jesus the
 anointed (Christ), the savior, the lord, the redeemer of all those
 23 belonging to the one full of love, •through [his] holy spirit, from
 26 now until the [...] of the generations, •until ages [...] of the ages.
 27 •Amen.

138 a. Seven lines of text in the MS are illegible.

b. Six lines of text in the MS are too fragmen-
 tary to translate.

PTOLEMY'S EPISTLE TO FLORA

(PtF)

CONTENTS

The meaning and value of the Jewish bible—which Christians eventually called “the Old Testament”—was one of the burning issues faced by Christianity in the second century. At this time, more and more Christians came from a non-Jewish background, and Christian theologians began to measure themselves against the teachings of secular Hellenistic philosophy. Many branches of Christianity had to face this issue, the gnostics no less than any other. Classic gnostic myth (cf. BJn) and its Valentinian successor (IrV, IrPt) obviously expressed a massive revision of the cosmogony and history taught in the books of Moses. Other sources show that gnostics and Valentinians addressed also the problem of the Old Testament prophecies and their authenticity; compare IrSat 1.24.2, IrUnid 1.30.10, IrPt 1.7.3.

To Valentinian gnostics all these aspects of the Old Testament problem were systematically related, for the Valentinian myth of origins provided an interpretive key to all religious scripture, expression, practice, and belief. A presentation of Valentinian Christianity might therefore begin at almost any point in the system. In PtF, the great Valentinian teacher Ptolemy chooses to begin a systematic course of instruction by starting with the question of religious laws and observances. His addressee is a female adherent of ordinary Christianity named Flora. His manner of presentation is elementary, using terms that are moral and nonmetaphysical, and almost entirely within the realm of conventional Christian language (for another example of elementary Valentinian instruction, see TRs). Ptolemy begins with a clear and careful analysis of the multiple authorship of Old Testament laws, characterizes the nature of the laws by comparing them with the teachings of Jesus, and from their nature draws conclusions about the god who legislated them.

Ptolemy's conclusions take him to the very edge of metaphysics and myth, which he promises will form the next lesson of his course (for a summary of Ptolemy's metaphysics, see IrPt; his next lesson to Flora does not seem to have survived). One can distinguish, Ptolemy concludes, a perfect god, who is good; the god of Israel and the Old Testament, who is just; and the devil, who is evil. He carefully contrasts this view with positions that assert only two principles (god and the devil). In comparison with the theology of BJn or RAd, Ptolemy's tripartite scheme shows a relatively positive attitude toward the craftsman of

the world or god of Israel; some classic gnostic scriptures also follow the same tripartite scheme; compare RR 95:13f.

In the opening of the *Epistle*, Ptolemy sets out to refute two other opinions on the source of the Old Testament law. One opinion identified the legislator with the highest god; this was the view of ordinary Christianity and a great part of Judaism. The other identified the legislator with the devil; scholars have been uncertain about the source of this opinion, but it may refer to gnostics who followed a myth like that of B_{Jn} or R_{Ad}, where the craftsman of the world (Ialdabaōth) appears to be identical with the god of Israel.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

Ptolemy, the author of PtF, is discussed in the introduction to IrPt (“Literary background”). The place of composition is unknown, but since Ptolemy was active in the western part of the Roman empire some scholars have suggested Rome. The exact date of composition is unknown; Ptolemy flourished roughly between A.D. 136 and 180 (or 136 and 152). His language of composition is Greek.

According to its title, the work is a *philosophical epistle*, that is, a short formal essay couched in the framework of a letter. The genre of philosophical epistle was used by both Valentinus (VFrC, E, and H) and the author of TRs; it was much favored by academic writers of the period. However, PtF lacks the customary epistolary salutation (“I greet you”) at the end. Apart from its opening formula (“Ptolemy to Flora”) PtF is simply a treatise addressed by name to a dedicatee, as was customary.

TEXT

The text is known only from a word-for-word quotation by the fourth-century father of the church St. Epiphanius of Salamis in his work *Against Heresies* 33.3.1–33.7.10, written about A.D. 375. St. Epiphanius’s original Greek text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts, whose accuracy is a matter of debate among scholars. The translation below is based on Quispel’s critical edition of the Greek, with very minor alterations: G. Quispel, ed., *Ptolémée* (see “Select Bibliography”), 50–73.

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See also items listed under IrPt, "Select Bibliography."

Ptolemy to Flora

A. PROLOGUE

Difficulty of the topic

33.3.1 The law established by Moses,^a my dear sister^b Flora, has in the past been misunderstood by many people, for they were not closely acquainted with the one who established it or with its commandments. I think you will see this at once if you study their discordant opinions on this topic. IfPt 1.7.3

False opinions on the topic

33.3.2 For some^c say that this law has been ordained by god the father;^d while others,^e following the opposite course, stoutly contend that it has been established by the adversary, the pernicious devil; and so the latter school attributes the craftsmanship of the world to the devil,^f saying that he is “the father and maker of the universe.”^g Plato *Ti* 28e

33.3.3 <But> they are <utterly>^h in error, they disagree with one another, and each of the schools utterly misses the truth of the matter.

The law not established by the perfect god

33.3.4 Now, it does not seem that the law was established by the perfect god and father: for, it must be of the same character as its giver; and yet it is imperfect and needful of being fulfilled by another and contains commandments incongruous with the nature and intentions of such a god.

33.3 a. In the first five books of the Old Testament.

b. I.e. “my dear fellow Christian.”

c. Ordinary Christians and many Jews.

d. I.e. the perfect “parent” or deep. Traditional Christian language (“father”) has been retained in this English translation of PtF, in keeping with the deliberately conventional nature of its vocabulary

e. Possibly meaning gnostics; cf. Introduction, “Contents.”

f. Ialdabaōth in classic gnostic myth like that of Bjn.

g. With this phrase, Ptolemy evokes the philosophical myth of creation in Plato’s *Timaeus* (28e).

h. “<But>, <utterly>”: these words are inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

Nor by the devil

33.3.5 On the other hand to attribute a law that abolishes injustice to the injustice of the adversaryⁱ is the false logic^j of those who do not comprehend the principle of which the savior spoke. For our savior declared that a house or city divided against itself will not be able to stand. Mt 12:25

33.3.6 And, further, the apostle^k states that the craftsmanship of the world is his, and that “all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made,” thus anticipating these liars’ flimsy wisdom. And the craftsmanship is that of a god who is just and hates evil, not a pernicious one as believed by these thoughtless people,^l who take no account of the craftsman’s forethought and so are blind not only in the eye of the soul but even in the eyes of the body.^m Jn 1:3
1Pt 1.8.5

The topic

33.3.7 Now, from what has been said it should be clear to you (sing.) that these (schools of thought) utterly miss the truth, though each does so in its own particular way : one (school) by not being acquainted with the god of righteousness,ⁿ the other by not being acquainted with the father of the entirety, who was manifested by him alone who came and who alone knew him. Mt 11:27

33.3.8 It remains for us, who have been deemed worthy of <acquaintance>^o with both, to show you (sing.) exactly what sort of law the law^p is, and which legislator established it. We shall offer proofs of what we say by drawing from our savior’s words, by which alone it is possible to reach a certain apprehension of the reality of the matter without stumbling.

B. EXPOSITION: THE NATURE OF THE LAW

1. The Three Divisions of the Law

Multiple authorship of the law

33.4.1 Now, first you must learn that, as a whole, the law contained in the Pentateuch of Moses was not established by a single author, I mean not by god alone: rather, there are certain of its commandments that were established by human beings as well. Indeed, our savior’s words teach us that the Pentateuch divides into three parts. 33.4.2 For one division belongs to god himself and his legislations; while

i. The devil.
j. The Greek text is corrupt here, and the exact meaning is disputed by scholars.
k. John.
l. Or “these people without providence.”
m. The creator’s forethought is evident in the

orderly and providential workings of the natural world, which can be seen with the eyes.
n. Cf. 33.7.5.
o. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.
p. I.e. in the first five books of the Old Testament.

<another division>^a belongs to Moses—indeed, Moses ordained certain of the commandments not as god himself ordained through him, rather based upon his own thoughts about the matter; and yet a third division belongs to the elders^b of the people, <who>^c likewise in the beginning must have inserted certain of their own commandments. 33.4.3 You will now learn how all this can be demonstrated from the savior's words.

Legislation of god distinct from legislation of Moses

33.4.4 When the savior was talking with those who were arguing with him about divorce—and it has been ordained (in the law) that divorce is permitted—he said to them: “For your (pl.) hardness of heart Moses allowed divorce of one's wife. Now, from the beginning it was not so.” For god, he says, has joined together this union, and “what the lord has joined together, let no man put asunder.” 33.4.5 Here he shows that <the>^d law of god is one thing, forbidding a woman to be put asunder from her husband; while the law of Moses is another, permitting the couple to be put asunder because of hard-heartedness. 33.4.6 And so, accordingly, Moses ordains contrary to what god ordains; for <separating>^e is contrary to not separating.

Mt 19:8

Mt 19:6

Dt 24:1
Mt 19:7

Yet if we also scrutinize Moses' intentions with which he ordained this commandment, we find that he created the commandment not of his own inclination but of necessity because of the weakness of those to whom it was ordained. 33.4.7 For the latter were not able to put into practice god's intentions, in the matter of their not being permitted to divorce their wives. Some of them were on very bad terms with their wives, and ran the risk^f of being further diverted into injustice and from there into their destruction. 33.4.8 Moses, wishing to excise this unpleasant element through which they also ran the risk of being destroyed, ordained for them of his own accord a second law, the law of divorce, choosing under the circumstances the lesser of two evils, as it were, 33.4.9 so that if they were unable to keep the former (that is, god's law) they could keep at least the latter and so not be diverted into injustice and evil, through which utter destruction would follow in consequence. 33.4.10 These are Moses' intentions, with which we find him ordaining laws contrary to those of god. At any rate, even if we have for the moment used only one example in our proof, it is beyond doubt that, as we have shown, this law is of Moses himself and is distinct from god's.

33.4 a. These two words are inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

b. Or “presbyters.” Ptolemy refers here to the elders who were with Moses “in the beginning.”

c. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

d. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

e. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

f. By leaving their wives, thus breaking god's original command and entering upon a course of lawbreaking.

Traditional legislation of the elders

33.4.11 And the savior shows also that there are some traditions of the elders interwoven in the law. He says, “For god spoke: ‘Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you.’ **33.4.12** But you have declared,” the savior says, addressing the elders,^g “‘What you would have gained from me is given to god.’ And for the sake of your tradition, O ancients, you have made void the law of god.”^h **33.4.13** And Isaiah declared thisⁱ by saying, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”

Mt 15:4

Mt 15:5

Mt 15:8
Is 29:13

33.4.14 Thus it has been clearly shown from these passages that, as a whole, the law is divided into three parts. For we have found in it legislations belonging to Moses himself, to the elders, and to god himself. Moreover, the analysis of the law as a whole, as we have divided it here, has made clear which part of it is genuine.^j

2. The Three Subdivisions of God’s Own Law

33.5.1 Now, what is more, the one part that is the law of god himself divides into three subdivisions.

Nature of the subdivisions: (1) Pure but imperfect

The first subdivision is the pure legislation not interwoven with evil, which alone is properly called law, and which the savior did not come to abolish but to fulfill.^a For what he fulfilled was not alien to him, <but stood in need of fulfilment>:^b for it did not have perfection.

Mt 5:17

(2) Interwoven with injustice

And the second subdivision is the part interwoven with the inferior and with injustice, which the savior abolished as being incongruous with his own nature.

(3) Symbolic

33.5.2 Finally, the third subdivision is the symbolic and allegorical^c part, which is after the image of the superior, spiritual realm: the sav-

g. Cf. note 33.4b.

h. This exchange is reported in Mt 15:3–6, where Jesus disputes with Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem: “He (Jesus) answered them, ‘And why do you transgress the commandment of god for the sake of your tradition? For god commanded, “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die.” But you say, “If anyone tells his father or his mother, ‘What you would have gained from me is given to god,’ he need not honor his father.” So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the

law of god.” In the succeeding verses of Mt, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13, exactly as below.

i. As quoted by Jesus in Mt 15:8f.

j. I.e. only god’s own law is genuinely divine.

33.5 a. Mt 5:17, part of the Sermon on the Mount: “[Jesus said,] ‘Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.’”

b. These words, or a phrase like them, is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

c. Or “prefigurative.”

ior changed (the referent of) this part from the perceptible, visible level to the spiritual, invisible one.

(1) The decalogue is pure but imperfect

33.5.3 The first, the law of god that is pure and not interwoven with the inferior, is the decalogue or Ten Commandments inscribed on two stone tablets; they divide into the prohibition of things that must be avoided and the commanding of things that must be done. Although they contain pure legislation they do not have perfection, and so they were in need of fulfillment^d by the savior. 33.6.1
Ex 20:3
Ex 34:1

(2) The *lex talionis* is interwoven with injustice

33.5.4 The second, which is interwoven with injustice, is that which applies to retaliation and repayment of those who have already committed a wrong, commanding us to pluck out an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth^e and to retaliate for murder with murder. This part is interwoven with injustice, for the one who is second to act unjustly still acts unjustly, differing only in the relative order in which he acts, and committing the very same act. **33.5.5** But otherwise, this commandment both was and is just, having been established as a deviation from the pure law because of the weakness of those to whom it was ordained; yet it is incongruous with the nature and goodness of the father of the entirety. **33.5.6** Now perhaps this was apt; but even more, it was a result of necessity. For when one who does not wish even a single murder to occur—by saying, “You shall not kill”^f—when, I say, he ordains a second law and commands the murderer to be murdered, acting as judge between two murders, he who forbade even a single murder has without realizing it been cheated by necessity.^g Lv 24:20
Lv 24:17
Mt 5:38

33.5.7 For this reason, then, the son who was sent from him abolished this part of the law, though he admits that it too belonged to god: this part is reckoned as belonging to the old school of thought,^h both where he says, “For god spoke: ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die’” and elsewhere.ⁱ Ex 20:13
Ex 21:12
Lv 24:17

33.5.8 And the third subdivision of god’s law is the symbolic part, which is after the image of the superior, spiritual realm: I mean, what

d. Or “completion.”

e. The phrase is found in Mt 5:38, again in the Sermon on the Mount as above, cf. note 33.5a. In the Old Testament, this commandment is found in Lv 24:20–21, which also specifies death as the penalty for murder, as in the next phrase.

f. One of the Ten Commandments.

g. The so-called necessity he thought to be im-

posed by the weakness of those to whom the law was ordained (33.4.6) in fact cheats him of his desire that murder should cease.

h. The religion of the Old Testament before the son’s advent.

i. The rest of the Matthean passage is quoted above, cf. note 33.4h.

is ordained about offerings, circumcision, the Sabbath, fasting, Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the like.^j

33.5.9 Now, once the truth^k had been manifested, the referent of all these ordinances was changed, inasmuch as they are images and allegories. As to their meaning in the visible realm and their physical^l accomplishment they were abolished; but as to their spiritual meaning they were elevated, with the words remaining the same but the subject matter being altered. **33.5.10** For the savior commanded us to offer offerings, but not dumb beasts or incense: rather, spiritual praises and glorifications and prayers of thanksgiving, and offerings in the form of sharing and good deeds. **33.5.11** And he wishes us to perform circumcision, but not circumcision of the bodily foreskin, rather of the spiritual heart; **33.5.12** and to keep the Sabbath, for he wants us to be inactive in wicked acts; **33.5.13** and to fast, though he does not wish us to perform physical fasts, rather spiritual ones, which consist of abstinence from all bad deeds.

Rm 2:29
GTh 53

GTh 27

GTh 6
GTh 14

The justification for fasting

Nevertheless, fasting as to the visible realm is observed by our adherents,^m since fasting, if practiced with reason, can contribute something to the soul, so long as it does not take place in imitation of other people or by habit or because fasting has been prescribed <for>ⁿ a particular day. **33.5.14** Likewise, it is observed in memory of true fasting, so that those who are not yet able to observe true fasting might have a remembrance of it from fasting according to the visible realm. **33.5.15** Likewise, the apostle Paul makes it clear that Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were images, for he says that “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed” and, he says, be without leaven, having no share in leaven—now, by “leaven” he means evil—but rather “be fresh dough.”

1Co 5:7

Summary: (1) The pure but imperfect has been fulfilled

33.6.1 And so it can be granted that the actual law of god is subdivided into three parts. The first subdivision is the part that was fulfilled^a by the savior: for “you shall not kill,” “you shall not commit adultery,” “you shall not swear falsely” are subsumed^b under not being angry, not looking lustfully at another, and not swearing at all.

33.5.3

Mt 5:21
Mt 5:27
Mt 5:33

j. Ritual laws specifically affirming identity as a child of Israel.

k. I.e. the savior and his teaching.

l. Or “literal.”

m. I.e. Valentinians.

n. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

33.6 a. “fulfilled”: i.e. rephrased according to an even more exacting general principle.

b. By Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:21–37), where also the three Old Testament commandments are mentioned.

(2) The part interwoven with injustice has been abolished

33.6.2 The second subdivision is the part that was completely abolished. For the commandment of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” which is interwoven with injustice and itself involves an act of injustice, was abolished by the savior with injunctions to the contrary, 33.5.4

33.6.3 and of two contraries one must “abolish” the other: “For I say to you (pl.), Do not in any way resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you (sing.), turn to him the other cheek also.” Mt 5:39

(3) The symbolic has been physically abolished

33.6.4 And the third subdivision is the part whose referent was changed and which was altered from the physical^c to the spiritual—the allegorical^d part, which is ordained after the image of the superior realm. **33.6.5** Now, the images and allegories^e are indicative of other matters, and they were well and good while truth^f was not present. But now that truth is present, one must do the works of truth and not those of its imagery. Mk 2:19 par.
GTh 104

Paul a source of these teachings

33.6.6 His disciples made these teachings known, and so did the apostle Paul:^g he makes known to us the part consisting of images, through the passage on the paschal lamb and the unleavened bread, which we have already spoken of.^h The part consisting of a law interwoven with injustice, he made known by speaking of “abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances”; and the part not interwoven with the inferior, when he says, “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.” Ep 2:15
Rm 7:12

33.7.1 Thus I think I have shown you, as well as possible in a brief treatment, both that there is human legislation which has been slipped into the law and that the law of god himself divides into three subdivisions.

3. Nature of the God Who Is Author of the Law

33.7.2 Now it remains for us to say what sort of being this god is, who established the law. But this too I believe I have demonstrated to you (sing.) in what I have already said, providing you have followed carefully.

The lawgiver is an intermediate god

33.7.3 For since this division of the law (that is, god's own law) was established neither by the perfect god, as we have taught, nor surely

c. Or “literal.”

d. Or “prefigurative.”

e. Or “figures.”

f. I.e. the savior and his teachings.

g. Valentinians considered Paul to be the ultimate source of their esoteric tradition, cf. PPL.

h. Cf. 33.5.15.

by the devil—which it would be wrong to say—then the establisher of this division of the law is distinct from them. 33.7.4 And he is the craftsman and maker of the universe or world and of the things within it. Since he is different from the essences of the other two <and>^a (rather) is in a state intermediate between them, he would rightfully be described by the term intermediateness.^b

He is neither good nor evil, merely just

33.7.5 And if the perfect god is good according to his nature—as indeed he is, for our savior showed that “one only is there who is good,” namely his father whom he manifested—and if furthermore the law belonging to the nature of the adversary is both evil and wicked and is stamped in the mold of injustice, then a being that is in a state intermediate between these and is neither good, nor evil or unjust, might well be properly called just, being a judge of the justice^c that is his.

Mt 19:17
VFrH

He is engendered in the image of the good god

33.7.6 And on the one hand this god must be inferior to the perfect god and less than his righteousness precisely because he is engendered and not unengendered—for “there is one unengendered father, from whom are all things,”^d or more exactly, from whom all things depend; and on the other hand, he must have come into being as better and more authoritative than the adversary; and must be born of an essence and nature distinct from the essences of the other two. 33.7.7 For the essence of the adversary is both corruption and darkness, for the adversary is material and divided into many parts; while the essence of the unengendered father of the entirety is both incorruptibility and self-existent light,^e being simple and unique. And the essence of this intermediate produced a twofold capacity,^f for he is an image of the better god.^g

1Co 8:6

TrTr 106:14

C. EPILOGUE

How could the just and the devil derive from the good?

33.7.8 And now, given that the good by nature engenders and produces the things that are similar to itself and of the same essence, do not be

33.7 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

b. He will eventually become the god of the “midpoint,” according to IrPt 1.7.1 (“Final repose of the just”).

c. Or “righteousness.”

d. The original text of this passage (1 Co 8:6) says: “For us, there is one god, the father” etc.

e. Cf. BJn 4:9f.

f. Cf. IrPt 1.5.1 (“[1] Animate essence”).

g. With this sentence, Ptolemy begins to speak of the esoteric Valentinian metaphysics, about which he will instruct Flora in the following lesson (cf. 33.7.9).

bewildered as to how these natures—that of corruption and <that>^h of intermediateness—which have come to be different in essence, arose from a single first principle of the entirety, a principle that exists and is confessed and believed in by us,ⁱ and which is unengendered and incorruptible and good. IrPt 1.5.4

Promise of further instruction

33.7.9 For, god permitting, you will next learn about both the first principle and the generation of these two other gods, if^j you are deemed worthy of the apostolic tradition,^k which even we^l have received by succession; and along with this you will learn how to test all the propositions by means of our savior's teaching. TRs 49:37
GPh 83

Conclusion

33.7.10 I have not failed, my sister Flora, to state these matters to you briefly. And what I have just written is a concise account, though I have treated the subject adequately. In the future these teachings will be of the greatest help to you—at least if, like good rich soil that has received fertile seeds,^m you bear fruit. Mk 4:20 par.

h. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

i. I.e. the Valentinians.

j. Or possibly "since."

k. The esoteric tradition that Valentinians believed had been established by St. Paul, transmitted by him to a certain Theudas, thence to Valentinus, and finally to his successors like Ptolemy.

l. Or "which we too."

m. Cf. IrPt 1.7.5, "The spiritual (elements), which down to this day Achamōth has continued to sow into just souls, learn here; are nourished, for they are sent as infants; later are deemed worthy of maturity; and are given as brides to the angels of the savior."

TREATISE ON RESURRECTION (EPISTLE TO RHEGINUS)

(TRs)

CONTENTS

Almost the earliest known Christian text is a fragment of oral tradition that was quoted by St. Paul when he wrote to the Christians in Corinth about A.D. 54 (1 Co 15:3f). It is a creedal summary—a stylized formulation of beliefs, suitable for memorization—about the death and resurrection of Jesus, which Paul says he received from his even earlier predecessors.

Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.
He was buried.
He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.
He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve . . .

Such creedal declarations, whose wording varied from church to church, must have been a central reference point in the theological teaching of many early Christians.

From the time of Valentinus, no manuscript copy of a creedal formula seems to have survived; but the typical wording of such formulas can be roughly reconstructed from passing references found in Christian literature of the second century. Typically, a creedal formula about A.D. 150 might have asserted that Jesus

. . . was in the beginning.
He became incarnate.
He was crucified (or suffered) and died.
He arose from the dead.
He ascended into heaven.
He sits at the right hand of his father.
He shall come again to judge the world.

What did these words really mean? Precisely what did they refer to? And what did Jesus' resurrection and ascension indicate about the ultimate fate of the individual Christian? The answers to such questions were a matter of keen debate

from the earliest moment in the history of the church (as 1 Co 15 shows)—nor was the debate any less lively at the time of Valentinus.

To some extent, answers might depend on an ancient teacher's prior assumptions about Jesus' manner of existence while he was on earth (was it material? animate? spiritual?) and, similarly, assumptions about the makeup of the individual Christian believer. A Valentinian interpretation of Christian resurrection would not be simple, for Valentinians conceived of three basic components in the human makeup: the material body ("dust"), which is destined to perish; an animate element (soul) that vivifies it, and which is ultimately destined for distinct preservation; and the intellect (spiritual element) or true self, which is destined for reunion and repose with god the father; compare IrPt 1.6.1, 1.7.1.

Many ordinary Christians in the second century understood that just as Jesus had truly died and in his "resurrection" come back to life on the third day, so they too would die and then ultimately "arise" or come back to life in their same body. But Valentinian teachers, or at least some of them, did not accept that the animate element and the intellect (spirit) were capable of death; nor that the material body was capable of ultimate preservation. From these assumptions they concluded that the words "arise" and "resurrection" must not refer to a process of death and revivification, but to an upward movement in a different, more abstract or metaphorical sense—in which the soul and intellect escape from material existence, and then "ascend" or change into another state of existence. It is the intellect's escape and change of condition that are the main topic of the *Treatise on Resurrection* ("Epistle to Rheginus").

For the author of TRs the "resurrection" and "ascension" of the intellect result from its contemplation of the divine, presumably at higher and higher degrees of abstraction until it contemplates the realm of permanent, pure being. A similar kind of mystical contemplation is described in several classic gnostic scriptures (cf. Zs and Fr); it was also discussed in non-Christian philosophy of the time. This, says the author of TRs, is "resurrection of the spirit" which makes the question of other kinds of resurrection irrelevant (46:1f). In the light of this Valentinian teaching, Jesus' "suffering"—traditionally understood to mean his real death on the cross—would not refer to biological death but simply to the suffering sojourn of his spirit or soul on earth within the illusory realm of matter. Like Valentinus in GTr, the author of TRs (48:19f) even goes so far as to deny the reality of the material world.

Thus for the author of TRs, the believer's true self—the "superior element"—never dies; its "resurrection" begins as soon as it starts to contemplate greater and greater intellectual objects (46:19f). This process begins here and now, while the believer dwells within the illusory material world. In this sense, the believer "already has resurrection" (49:13f). TRs is thus a classic exposition of the doctrine that "the resurrection is past already," a doctrine combated in the pastoral epistles of the New Testament (cf. 2 Tm 2:18).

The *Treatise* is addressed to an ordinary Christian believer named Rheginus (otherwise unknown), who seems to have become interested in Valentinian Christianity and to have inquired about the Valentinian interpretation of the lo-

cal creedal formula, specifically as it concerned the doctrine of resurrection. The answer proposed in TRs is very ambiguous, shifting constantly between the traditional language of the creedal text and the author's allegorical interpretation of it phrased in philosophical terms. A certain amount of Valentinian jargon is introduced, but without any direct explanation or definition. The *Treatise* concludes with an offer to explain these ambiguities: no doubt the next instalment of Rheginus's instruction would have been more systematic and technical. Thus TRs is an exhortation ("protreptic"), inviting ordinary Christians to a "deeper," Valentinian understanding of Christian faith.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author of TRs and its place of composition are unknown. Because of its elementary, introductory character, the Valentinian teaching of the treatise is vague; it is therefore difficult to identify it with a particular school of Valentinianism (it does not seem to agree perfectly with IrPt). The date of composition of TRs must be before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS. The language of composition was Greek.

TRs has a complex mixture of genres in which certain traditional materials are subordinated to others.

- I. Philosophical epistle
 - A. Introductory treatise (*eisagogē*)
 1. Philosophical sermon (diatribe)

The concluding salutation has led most critics to classify TRs as a *philosophical epistle*, that is, a short formal essay couched in the framework of a letter. The genre of philosophical epistle was used by both Valentinus (VFrC, E, and H) and Ptolemy (PtF); it was much favored by academic writers of the period. TRs lacks the customary epistolary greeting at the beginning; this has led some scholars to suppose that the first sentence of the work (with the author's name) is now missing.

The internal structure of TRs corresponds to the form of the Greek *introductory treatise* or *eisagogē*:

1. Topic; proper orientation for success
2. Exposition of the subject matter
3. Special problems

But the rhetoric of the treatise belongs not to the formal essay but rather to the *philosophical sermon* or animated classroom lecture, sometimes called "diatribe style." Several characteristic devices of this style appear in TRs: sarcastic rhetorical questions; questions spoken as though by an imaginary opponent; an example of famous men (48:6f); patronizing moral exhortation ("Instruction") introduced at the end; incomplete philosophical exposition; overall brevity.

Useful comparative material from roughly the same period can be found in the philosophical *Sermons* of Epictetus (A.D. ca. 55–ca. 135).

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single MS from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC I (pp. 43–50), which was copied just before A.D. 350, and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic: B. Layton, ed., *The Gnostic Treatise* (see “Select Bibliography”), 10–32. An earlier version of the translation appeared in that publication and is revised here with the kind permission of the series editor.

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Treatise on Resurrection^a

A. PROLOGUE

Personal orientation appropriate to the subject

25 **43** There are certain persons, my child^b Rhexinus, who wish to
become learned:^c that is their aim when they set out to solve
29 unsolved problems, •and if they succeed they regard themselves
32 highly. •But I do not think their results lie within the account of
34 the truth; •rather, it is repose^d (in the sense of recreation) that
35 they are after. •This (true repose, that is) we obtained from our
1 savior, our lord, the kind:^e **44** •we obtained it when we gained
acquaintance with the truth and rested our confidence upon^a it.

TrTr 109:24,
110:29

GTr 22:11
TrTr 122:17

Importance and difficulty of the topic

3 However, since it is the essential points on resurrection after
7 which you^b so sweetly inquire, I am writing to you. •For resur-
8 rection is a basic matter; •and not only do many give it no cre-
11 dence,^c but few are they who understand^d it. •So let this be the
topic of our discussion.^e

Mt 7:13

B. EXPOSITION

Dual nature of the savior

12 How did the lord handle the circumstances of this world?^f
14 •While he was incarnate,^g and after he had revealed himself

IfPt 1.6.1?

Title 43 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 50:17f).

b. I.e. “my disciple.”

c. The author’s antiphilosophical stance is developed at 46:3f.

d. The Greek word (*anapausis*) has many meanings including “recreation” (i.e. fun) and “heavenly repose.” The author plays on this ambiguity.

e. The Greek word (*khrestos*) was pronounced exactly like the word for “Christ.”

44 a. Or simply “rested upon.”

b. “you” is always singular in TRs, except where otherwise indicated.

c. Or “have no faith in it.”

d. Lit. “find.”

e. Or “our treatise.”

f. Or “handle his affairs.”

g. The lord preexisted before his incarnation, cf. 44:33f.

17 to be a divine son, •he walked about in this region where you
 20 dwell^h speaking about the law of the natural order:ⁱ •I mean,
 21 death. •Moreover, O Rheginus, the son of god was a human son.^j
 23 •And he was master of his circumstances in two respects—hav-
 27 ing both humanity and divinity, •so that he might conquer death
 30 through being a divine son, •and that through the son of man^k
 33 might come to pass the return^l to the fullness:^m •since from the
 35 beginning he existed as a seedⁿ of the truth from above, •before
 there came into being this cosmic structure,^o in which lordships
 and divinities^p have become so numerous.

IrPt 1.7.1
 GPh 59

IrPt 1.5.2
 IrPt 1.5.4

The savior's resurrection

39 I know that I am phrasing this explanation in difficult terms.
 2 45 •Yet consider: nothing within the account of the truth is truly
 4 difficult. •At any rate, since he came forward for the sake of ex-
 planation, to leave nothing obscure, rather to reveal in simple
 9 terms everything about coming into being^a—•the undoing of
 evil^b and the manifestation of the superior element,^c these are the
 13 offshoot of the truth and the spirit: •this grace is bestowed by^d
 14, 15 the truth. •The savior swallowed^e death. •You must not be unper-
 16 ceptive: •for I mean that laying aside the corruptible world,^f he
 19 exchanged it for an incorruptible eternal realm.^g •And he raised
 himself up,^h having “swallowed” the visible by means of the in-
 22 visible, •and gave us the way to our immortality.

GTr 26:32+
 PPI A:15
 v.14
 46:1 +

Spiritual resurrection of the Christian believer

23, 25 So then, as the apostleⁱ said of him, •we have suffered with
 him, and arisen with him, and ascended with him.
 28 •Now, since we are manifestly present in this world, the world
 31 is what we wear (like a garment).^j •From him (the savior) we

h. I.e. the material world

i. I.e. the inevitable fate of all material things; cf. IrPt 1.7.1 (“Final destruction of the world”).

j. I.e. he was a human during his incarnation. This sentence contains the only mention of the word “god” in TRs.

k. “son of man”: a traditional Christian epithet of the human savior.

l. Or “return from exile.” The Greek word (*apokatastasis*) is Valentinian jargon for the return of the intellect to its true home within the fullness.

m. Valentinian jargon for the spiritual universe.

n. The Valentinian school characteristically spoke of emanations and the process of emanation with agricultural metaphors.

o. The material world, including the heavens.

p. The heavenly rulers.

45 a. The natural order, where things come into being and pass out of existence; cf. note 44i.

b. Or “the undoing of the inferior element.”

c. I.e. the intellect or spirit.

d. Lit. “belongs to.”

e. Overcame.

f. Especially the body of flesh.

g. Or “eternity, aeon.”

h. The Coptic word can be translated also “arose.”

i. Paul. The formula that follows uses sacramental metaphors known from the Pauline and Deuteropauline epistles: cf. Rm 8:17, Ep 2:4–6, Col 2:12, Col 3:1–3.

j. A Platonist cliché for the material body, but in the present context perhaps an allusion to Rm 13:12, Ep 4:22, Col 3:10, 1Co 15:49.

32 radiate like rays;^k •and being held fast by him until our sun-
 34,36 set—•that is, until our death in the present life—•we are drawn
 upward by him as rays are drawn by the sun, restrained by noth-
 39,1 ing. •This is spiritual resurrection,^l 46 •which “swallows”^a ani-
 mate resurrection^b along with fleshly resurrection.^c

GTr 31:4
 IrPt 1.71
 IrPt 1.72
 PPl A:8
 GPh 54
 GPh 90
 v.39
 IrPt 1.6.1
 45:14, 49:2
 GTr 25:8
 1Co 15:54
 2Co 5:4
 v.5
 IrPt 1.6.2?
 GPh 3

Philosophy versus gnōsis

3 Now, if there is anyone who is not a believer,^d that person
 5 cannot be convinced. •For it is the domain of faith,^e my child,
 and not that of argumentation, to assert that the dead will arise.
 8 •And suppose that, among the scholars^f here, there is one
 10,10 who believes. •Why, then, that person will arise. •And let not the
 13 scholar here trust in one who is self-converted (to faith). •And
 because of our faith < . . .>^g
 14 •For we are^h acquainted with the son of man,ⁱ and have come
 17 to believe that he arose from the dead.^j •And he is the one of
 whom we say, “He became death’s undoing.”

Salvation of the intellect

19 Even as the object of belief^k is great, great too are the be-
 21 lievers: •the thought^l of those who are saved will not perish,
 23 •the intellect of those who have acquaintance with such an object
 25 will not perish. •Thus, we are chosen for salvation^m and ransom,ⁿ
 28 having been set apart from the beginning, •so that we might not
 stumble in the folly of the ignorant, but might enter into the in-
 telligence of those who are acquainted with the truth.
 32 •Indeed, that truth, to which they are wakeful, cannot be
 34 brought to naught; and it will not. •The structure of the fullness^o
 36 is mighty. •That which broke loose and became the universe is
 38 trifling. •But what is held fast^p is the entirety:^q it did not come
 into being;^r it simply was.

PPl A:4
 GPh 5+
 Rm 8:29
 Ep 1:4
 VFrF
 GTr 21:23

GTr 30:10
 IrPt 1.4.5?
 GTr 17:4

k. Lit. “it is from him that we are rays.”

l. Or “resurrection of the spirit.”

46 a. Makes irrelevant.

b. Or “resurrection of the soul.”

c. Or “resurrection of the flesh.”

d. The author takes pains to use ordinary Christian language. As emerges in 46:19f, “belief” (or “faith”) actually means acquaintance with the truth, i.e. *gnōsis*.

e. Or “belief” (Greek *pistis*).

f. Or “philosophers.”

g. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

h. Or “have become.”

i. “the son of man”: cf. note 44j.

j. In the allegorical sense explained in 45:16f.

k. I.e. the truth (cf. 46:28f).

l. Or “thinking.”

m. The word can also be translated “preservation.”

n. A traditional, Pauline way of speaking.

o. Cf. 44:30f.

p. Or “encompassed.”

q. Cf. IrPt note 1.1.1e, and below 47:26f.

r. Cf. note 45a.

C. SPECIAL PROBLEMS⁵

(1) Will the flesh be saved?

1 47 So do not be doubtful about resurrection, my child Rheginus.^a •Now (you might wrongly suppose), granted you^b did not
 4 preexist in flesh—indeed, you took on flesh when you entered GPh 21
 5 this world—why will you not take your flesh with you when you
 9 return to the realm of eternity? •It is the element superior to the
 11 flesh^c that imparts vitality to it; •(furthermore, you might suppose)
 12 does not whatever comes into being for your sake (that is, the flesh) belong to you? •So may we not conclude that whatever is yours will coexist with you?^d

14 •Nay, rather, while you are here, what is it that you are alienated from?^e •Is this what you have endeavored to learn about: the
 15 bodily envelope—that is, old age?^f •And are you (the real you) mere corruption?^g

19 •You can count absence^h—or (in another sense of the Greek
 21 word) shortage—as your profit. •For you will not pay back the
 22 superior elementⁱ when you depart.^j •The inferior element^k takes
 24 a loss;^l but what it owes is gratitude.^m •Nothing then buys us
 26 backⁿ while we are here;^o •yet the entirety, and we as members of
 27, 29 it, are saved. •We have had salvation from start to finish. •Let us think in this way. Let us accept in this way.

s. Ancient Greek introductory treatises often had an appendix that treated special problems (called *aporiai*) in a somewhat disjointed way; cf. “Literary background” in the introduction to TRs.

47 a. The author now begins an open attack on the ordinary, literal understanding of the resurrection of the Christian believer.

b. I.e. the real self, the intellect.

c. The soul or animate body, which contains the intellect. It was a tenet of Platonism that the soul is the material body’s source of vitality.

d. This paragraph refers, rather sketchily, to a traditional Christian argument for resurrection of the body of flesh: since the fleshly body has been created by god’s providence with the explicit goal of being alive, it would contradict the notion of god’s providence and omnipotence to suppose that the flesh would ever cease to exist forever and not, at least eventually, continue to coexist with its source of vitality; but god is providential and omnipotent—therefore the flesh must not perish forever.

e. Or “lack.”

f. The text is corrupt here, obscuring the author’s rebuttal of the argument summarized in the preceding paragraph. A few words must have inadvertently been omitted.

g. I.e. the traditional argument (47:1f) equates the real self with the realm of corruption and so is repugnant.

h. Greek and Latin funerary rhetoric spoke of the body (the “inferior element”) as money borrowed from the bank of nature; when the soul (“superior element”) departs from it at death, the body must be “paid back.” In keeping with this rhetoric the author here plays on two meanings of the Greek word *apousia*: (1) “absence,” the state of disconnection from the fleshly body; (2) “shortage,” a technical word from the reminting of old coins—the amount of physical wear suffered by an old coin of silver or gold is its “shortage”: thus the greater the body’s “shortage,” the greater the soul’s “profit,” since the body always impedes the soul.

i. The real self is identical with the “superior element”: hence the true self does not “pay back” the superior element at death.

j. I.e. “when you die.”

k. The body.

l. Or “is diminished.”

m. It is only thanks to the soul that the fleshly body ever lived at all.

n. Or “ransoms us.”

o. I.e. “while we are incarnate in the world.”

Salvation is immediate

30 However, certain persons desire to know—in the investiga-
 36 tion of their investigations—whether one who is saved will, upon
 taking off^p the body, be immediately saved: •let no one doubt
 this!^q

“Resurrection” is uncovering

38 “Surely, then,” (so might run the argument) “the dead, visible
 members^r will be preserved: for the living, interior members^s are
 3 supposed to arise.” 48 •But what is the meaning of resurrection?
 4 •It is the uncovering^a at any given time^b of the elements that have
 “arisen.”

IrPt 1.5.6

(2) Is spiritual resurrection unreal?

6 Now, if you should recall having read in the gospel that Eli-
 jah appeared—and Moses—in his (Jesus’) company, do not sup-
 12 pose that resurrection^c is an apparition.^d •It is not an apparition;
 13 rather, it is something real. •Instead, one ought to maintain that
 16 the world is an apparition, rather than resurrection, •which be-
 came possible^e through our lord, the savior, Jesus the kind.

Mk 9:4 par.
GPh 2348:26
GTr 24:25**D. INSTRUCTION****The material world is unreal**

19 And what am I telling you? Suddenly the living are dy-
 22 ing—•surely they are not alive at all in this world of appa- 48.13+
 24 rition!ⁱ—•the rich have become poor, rulers overthrown:
 26 •all changes,^g the world is an apparition.
 28 •But let me not deprecate the circumstances of this world at
 30 too great a length. •Simply: resurrection is not of this sort, for
 it is real.

p. Cf. note 45j.

q. Traditional arguments for a general resurrection of the flesh (cf. note 47d) implied that there is a period of waiting between death and resurrection. The author here denies this.

r. Or “limbs.”

s. Or “limbs,” i.e. the soul and psychic faculties, and the intellect within it.

48 a. The body is again compared to a garment, cf. note 45j.

b. Or “for all time.”

c. I.e. resurrection of the spirit.

d. I.e. “do not suppose that resurrection is existence in a ghost-like body of flesh.”

e. Or “which came into being.”

f. “in this world of apparition”: lit. “in an apparition.”

g. Paraphrasing a famous doctrine of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus (cf. Frag. 12 Diels, and Plato, *Cratylus* 402a).

The nature of resurrection

- 33 It is what stands at rest:^h
 34 And the revealingⁱ of what truly exists.
 35 And it is what one receives in exchange for the circumstances of this world:
 36 And a migration into newness. GTr 31:9
 38 For incorruptibility [is streaming] down upon corruption: **49** 1Co 15:53
IrPt 1.6.2
 2 And light is streaming down upon darkness, swallowing it. GTr 24:37
 4 And the fullness is filling up its lack^a GTr 25:28
GPh 106
- 6 —these are the symbols and the likenesses of resurrection:
- 8 This is what brings about goodness. VFrH+

Resurrection has already come

- 9 Therefore do not concentrate on particulars, O Rheginus, nor live according to (the dictates of) this flesh; do not, for the sake of unity.^b •Rather, leave the state of dispersion and bondage,^c IrPt 1.6.1
 13 •and then you already have resurrection. •For if the dying part GTr 24:7
 15, 16 (flesh) “knows itself,”^d •and knows that since it is moribund it GPh 8
 18 is rushing toward this outcome (death) even if it has lived many v.15
 22 years in the present life, •why do you^e (the intellect) not examine GPh 19
 23 your own self and see that you have arisen? •And you are rushing toward this outcome (that is, separation from the body) since you possess resurrection.

Training is necessary

- 26, 27 Yet you persist as though you were dying, •even though it is
 28 the former (the moribund flesh) that “knows” it has died.^f •Why
 30 then am I so lenient, except because of your inadequate training? •Everyone should practice^g in many ways to gain release
 34 from this element (the body), •so that one might not wander aimlessly^h but rather might recover one’s former state of being. GTr 22:20
GTr 21:3

h. To “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, nonchange, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

i. Cf. 45:9f and 48:4f.

49 a. Cf. GTr note 24a

b. Or “harmony, oneness.”

c. A Platonic cliché for the material body.

d. The Delphic maxim, “know thyself,” ex-

pressed a central theme of traditional Greek wisdom.

e. I.e. the real self.

f. The body in itself (apart from the soul or vivifying element) has no life, and so as such has never been alive

g. Or “lead an ascetic life.”

h. The Greek word (*planasthai*) sometimes refers to reincarnation of the soul in another body.

E. EPILOGUE

Offer of further instruction

37 What I receivedⁱ through the generosity of my lord, Jesus PtF 33.7.9+
 the kind, I have taught to you and your siblings—who are my
 children^j—without omitting any of the points necessary to
 5 strengthen you. **50** •But if anything in the exposition of the treatise
 is too profound, I shall explain it to you if you inquire.

Salutation

8 Since this is so, do not hesitate to share with any other mem-
 bers of your circle, for that (which I have taught you) has the
 11 power to be of benefit. •Many people are awaiting what I have
 13 written for you: •to them I address this lesson, to bring about
 15 “peace” among them “and grace.” •I greet you^a and whoever, with
 familial love, love you.^b

i. “received” through the Valentinian school tradition.

j. The author considers all members of Rheginus’s congregation to be his potential disciples; cf. note 43b.

50 a. A salutation such as might occur at the end of an epistle.

b. In the manuscript, the title is written after the text (at 50:17f).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PHILIP

A VALENTINIAN ANTHOLOGY

(GPh)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The work called *The Gospel According to Philip* is a Valentinian anthology containing some one hundred short excerpts taken from various other works. None of the sources of these excerpts have been identified, and apparently they do not survive. To judge from their style and contents, they were sermons, treatises, or philosophical epistles (typical Valentinian genres), as well as collected aphorisms or short dialogues with comments. Only some of the sources can definitely be identified as Valentinian. Because of their brevity and the lack of context it is difficult to assign any of them to particular schools of Valentinian theology. On the other hand, nothing indicates that all come from one and the same branch of the Valentinian church. It is possible that some of the excerpts are by Valentinus himself. Others, however, refer to etymologies in Syriac, the Semitic language (a dialect of Aramaic) used in Edessa and western Mesopotamia; these must be the work of a Valentinian theologian of the East, writing in a bilingual milieu such as Edessa (see Map 5). Probably the language of composition of all the excerpts was Greek.

GPh is not the only anthology of Valentinian sources to survive; another is Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpts from Theodotus* (ClExc). Much of the information that can be gleaned about Valentinus's successors survives only in fragmentary form, and the exact interpretation of their theologies is therefore difficult.

The compiler, place of compilation, and purpose of GPh as it now stands are completely unknown though some scholars have placed it in Syria because of references to the Syriac language in a few of the excerpts. The principle governing the order of the excerpts is obscure (see also "Text"). In some instances it appears that several excerpts come from a single source but without being quoted side by side or even in the original order.

The present title of the work may have been added after the anthology had been put into circulation in antiquity; in any case, the term "gospel" does not here refer to the Christian literary genre called gospel (e.g., the Gospel of Mark) but, rather, has its earlier meaning of "preaching" or "good news." Philip is the only apostle mentioned by name in the excerpts (see excerpt no. 80); it may be

for this reason that his name is attached to the title of the anthology as though he were its compiler and patron saint. If indeed it is the apostle Philip to whom the title refers, and not some other person of that name, then with its present attribution GPh is one of the few instances of Valentinian pseudepigraphy; usually Valentinian theologians wrote under their own name and authority, as bearers of the Valentinian apostolic tradition (see excerpt no. 83 and PtF33.7.9).

The date of compilation of GPh must be before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the MS.

Because probably more than one Valentinian theological perspective is represented in GPh, it would be misleading to reconstruct a single theological system from the whole anthology. Rather, individual groups of excerpts can profitably be studied in isolation, with comparison of other works or fragments of Valentinianism or of classic gnosticism.

Nevertheless, a certain number of keywords and themes (listed below) strikingly recur in many of the excerpts. They indicate the particular interest of the ancient compiler, who was especially concerned with theology of the sacraments (possibly baptism most of all). With due caution, they can be used to identify excerpts that belong together.

Especially striking are the many references to sacraments (“mysteries”), presumably ones recognized by the Valentinian Christian community or communities. As many as five are distinguished (cf. no. 60): baptism, chrism (anointment with holy oil), eucharist, ransom, and bridal chamber. Of these terms, the most distinctively Valentinian is “bridal chamber.” Nothing in GPh indicates whether bridal chamber was expressed by an actual ritual or was merely a theological metaphor of salvation. In “the imaged bridal chamber” the intellectual spirit or “image” joins with an angel and becomes as it were an androgyne, safe against sexual temptations (no. 53). This union rectifies the separation of Adam and Eve, the original androgyne (no. 70, cf. RAd). In such a union one embarks upon “return” (*apokatastasis*) to one’s spiritual home (no. 59); this is the reception of resurrection and the holy spirit (no. 83). It is striking that the term “acquaintance” (*gnōsis*) plays only a very minor role in the excerpts.

INDEX OF KEYWORDS AND THEMES

The spiritual world:

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light: nos. 6, 7, 24, 48, 57, 58, 67, 69, 73, 83, 90, 96, 102, 106

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resurrection: nos. 7, 19, 21, 55, 59, 68, 79, 80, 83

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single MS from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC II (pp. 51–86), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and now is in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

In the Coptic MS the excerpts are not divided from one another, probably through an inadvertence, nor are they numbered. The modern division and numbering of excerpts is thus purely hypothetical, being based on the style and contents of the text. Scholars have differed slightly in how they divide up the text, and there is no standard system of division and excerpt numbers. It is therefore desirable, for scholarly purposes, to cite GPh only according to page and line of the MS, for example, “51:29f” (and not “Excerpt no. 1”).

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic: Isenberg and Layton, “The Gospel According to Philip” (see “Select Bibliography”).

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The Gospel According to Philip^a

(1)

Making a convert

29 **51** A HEBREW makes a Hebrew, and such a person is called a
31 convert. •But a convert does not make a convert. [. . .] are as they
[. . .] and they make others [. . .] is enough that they exist.

(2)

Those who inherit the living

2, 3 **52** ALL that a slave wants is to be free; •the slave does not hope
4 for the riches of its master. •But a child is not merely a child;
5, 6 •rather, the child lays claim to the father's legacy. •Those^a who in-
8 herit dead things are also dead, •and what they inherit are dead
8, 10 things. •Those who inherit the living are alive, •and they inherit
11 both the living and the things that are dead. •Dead things inherit
13 nothing, for how could a dead thing inherit anything? •If a dead
person inherits the living, that person will not die, but rather
will greatly live.

TrTr 132:23
3, 27, 31, 32,
33, 41, 85, 87,
100, 101
GTr 43:19+

(3)

The state of being a Christian

15 A GENTILE does not die, for the gentile has never become alive
17 so as to die. •One who has believed in the truth has become alive;
18 •and this person runs the risk of dying, because of being alive. TrRs 46:5
19 •Since^a Christ came, the world has been created, cities have
21 been organized, and the dead have been buried. •When we were

Title a. In the manuscript, the title is found after 2 a. Possibly a new excerpt begins here.
the text (at 86:18f).

3 a. Possibly a new excerpt begins here.

Hebrews we were orphans with (only) our mother, but when we became Christians we got father and mother.

2+

(4)

Sow in the world and reap in the other realm

- 25, 26 WHOEVER sows in the winter reaps in the summer. •“Winter” 92, 98, 106
 27 means the world; “summer” means the other realm. •Let us sow Mt 13:24
 28 in the world so that we might reap in the summer. •For this reason GTh 57
 29 we ought not to pray in the winter. •What emerges from the VTr
 30 winter is the summer. •But if one reaps in the winter, one will not IrPt 1.7.1
 31 actually reap but only pluck out young plants, for such will not v.28
 32 bear a crop. •Not only does it come [. . .] but even on the sabbath GTr 42:9?
 33 [. . .] is barren.

(5)

Christ came to rescue the soul

- 35 THE ANOINTED (Christ) came to purchase some, to rescue
 3 some, and to ransom some. 53 •He purchased those who were 40, 60, 68,
 4 alien and made them his own. •And he brought back his own, 72, 106
 6 whom he had voluntarily laid down as a deposit. •Not only, once TRs 46:25+
 he had appeared, did he lay down the soul (as a deposit) when Jn 10:17
 he wished, but from the moment the world existed he laid down
 10 the soul for such a time as he should wish. •Then he emanated^a
 so that he might take it back, since it had been laid down as a
 11 deposit. •It had fallen into the hands of brigands,^b and they had VFrH
 12 taken it captive. •But he rescued it; and he ransomed those who
 are good in the world, and the bad.^c

(6)

Mutual dependence of opposites in this world

- 14 LIGHT and darkness, life and death, right and left, are siblings
 (that is, mutually dependent); it is impossible for them to sepa-
 17 rate. •Accordingly, the good are not good, the bad are not bad,

5 a. Or “came forth.”

b. A traditional name for rulers, forces, and spirits of wickedness.

c. “and the bad”: One or more words may have inadvertently been omitted after “bad.”

- 20 life is not life, death is not death. •So each will be dispersed^a to
 21 its original source. •But things that are superior to the world are
 23 indissoluble: •they are eternal.

(7)

Real names and unreal names

- 23 NAMES given to worldly things are very deceptive,^a since they
 27 turn the heart aside from the real to the unreal. •And whoever
 hears the word “god” thinks not of the reality, but has been think-
 ing of what is not real: so also, with the words “father,” “son,”
 “holy spirit,” “life,” “light,” “resurrection,” “church,” etc., it is not
 the real that one thinks of but the unreal, although the words
 35 have referred to the real. •The names [that one has] heard exist
 1 in the world [. . .] deceive. 54 •If the names were situated in the
 eternal realm, they would not be uttered on any occasion in the
 3, 4 world, •nor would they have been assigned worldly things: •their
 goal^b would be in the eternal realm

8, 9
 GTr 39:3

(8)

The name of the father belongs to the son

- 5 ONLY one name is not uttered in the world, the name that the
 7 father bestowed on the son;^a •it is above every other—that is,
 8 the name of the father. •For son would not become father had
 10 he not put on the name of the father. •Those who possess this
 12 name think it but do not speak it. •Those who do not possess it
 13 do not think it. •Yet for our sakes truth engendered names in the
 15 world—truth, to which one cannot refer without names. •Truth
 16 is unitary, < . . . >^b is multiple, •and it is for our sakes that <it>^c
 lovingly refers to this one thing by means of multiplicity.

GTr 38:6
 CIExc 31.4
 88, Ph 2:9–11
 PPI A:11

7+

TRs 49:9

6 a. Or “dissolved.”

7 a. Or “have great error.”
 b. Or “reference.”

8 a. Or “parent . . . child”: Traditional Christian language has been retained in the English translation of this work, as in GTr.

b. One or more words are inadvertently omitted here.

c. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.

(9)

Slavery to false names

- 18 THE RULERS^a wanted to deceive humanity, inasmuch as they
 21 saw that it had kinship with truly good things; •they took the 7+
 names of the good (plur.) and gave them to the nongood, to de-
 ceive humanity by the names and bind them to the non good
 25,26 •and—then what a favor they do for them!^b— •to remove them
 (the names) from the non good and assign them to the good!
 28,29 •These they were acquainted with: •for they wanted the free to
 be taken and enslaved to them in perpetuity.

(10)^a

Sacrifices to the forces and to god

- 31 THERE exist forces^b that [...] human beings, not wanting
 them to [attain salvation], so that they might become [...].
 34 •For if human beings attain salvation, sacrifices [will not] be
 made [...], and animals will not be offered up unto the forces.
 1 55 •Indeed, the ones to whom offerings used to be made were
 2,3 animals. •Now, they were offered up alive: •but when they had
 4 been offered up, they died. •Human beings were offered up dead GJd 38:13
 unto god; and they became alive.

(11)

Christ the bringer of bread

- 6 BEFORE the anointed (Christ) came there was no bread in the
 7 world:•just as paradise, where Adam was, had many trees for
 the food of the animals but did not have wheat for the food of
 10 human beings, •and human beings were nourished like the an-
 11 imals. •But when the anointed (Christ), the perfect human be-
 ing, came, he brought bread from heaven so that human beings Jn 6:32
 might be fed with the food of the human being.

9 a. I.e. the heavenly rulers, the spirits of wickedness.

b. Ironic.

10 a. Cf. excerpt no. 43.

b. I.e. the heavenly rulers, or a subdivision

of them (cf. RR). In this passage the “forces” are equated with pagan deities. Many early Christians accepted the existence of pagan deities, but equated them with fallen angels (*daimones*) or spirits of wickedness.

(12)^a**The holy spirit active in the rulers**

- 14 THE RULERS^b thought that it was by their own power and will TrTr 101:3
 16 that they did what they did: •but the holy spirit was secretly ac- IrPt 1.5.6+
 tivating the entirety^c through them, as it willed.

(13)

Truth sowed everywhere

- 19 TRUTH, which has existed from the first, is sowed everywhere.^a
 20 •And there are many who see it being sowed, but few who see it Mt 7:13
 being reaped. 4+

(14)

Mary the virgin did not conceive by the holy spirit

- 23 SOME said that Mary conceived by the holy spirit: they are mis- ClExc 60
 25 taken, they do not realize what they say. •When did a female^a
 ever conceive by a female?^b 30
 27, 28 •Mary^c is the virgin whom the forces did not defile. •Her ex- RR 92:2
 istence is anathema to the Hebrews, meaning the apostles and
 31 apostolic persons. •This virgin whom the forces did not defile
 [. . .] forces defiled them(selves?).

12 a. Cf. excerpt no. 30.

b. See note 10b.

c. In classic gnostic scripture, “the entirety” is the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the second principle or Barbēlō aeon.

13 a. Cf. introduction to VFrG (“Contents and literary background”).

14 a. Mary. The Eastern branch of Valentinianism (see “Historical Introduction” to Part Three) accepted that “Mary conceived by the holy spirit” and that Jesus’ body was a spiritual entity. In contrast, the Italic branch rejected this, holding that

Jesus’ body was of animate essence (IrPt 1.6.1), and that the holy spirit descended upon him at his baptism in the Jordan (IrPt 1.7.2). The Italic view seems to be reflected in this excerpt; cf. possibly also excerpt no. 72.

b. The holy spirit. In Syriac and other Semitic languages the word for “spirit” is usually grammatically feminine (this is not so in Greek), thus the author of this excerpt seems to presuppose an audience accustomed to the grammar of a Semitic language. This excerpt may have been composed in a bilingual milieu.

c. Possibly a new excerpt begins here.

(15)

The lord's two fathers

- 33 AND THE LORD [would] not say, "My [father who is in] the heavens," if [he] did not have a second father: rather, he would just have said, "[My father]." Mt 7:21

(16)

The disciples should gather, not remove

- 37 THE LORD said to the disciples, "[. . .] from every house. 56
1,2 •Gather (things) into the father's house; •but do not steal and remove (anything) while in the father's house."

(17)^a

Names of Jesus Christ

- 3 "JESUS" is a private name,^b "Christ (the anointed)" is a public
5 name.^c •Therefore "Jesus" does not exist (as a word) in any lan-
7 guage, but rather his name by which he is called is "Jesus." •But
the word for Christ in Syriac is *messias*, and in Greek is *khristos*,^d
and probably all the others have it according to the particular
12 language of each. •"The Nazarene"^e is the public name^f of the
private name.^g

(18)

All are in Christ

- 13 THE ANOINTED (Christ) has each within him, whether hu-
man being or angel or mystery, and the father.

17 a. Cf. excerpt no. 40.

b. Or "personal name."

c. Or "epithet."

d. Christ, "the anointed."

e. Cf. notes 40b–d.

f. Or "epithet."

g. Or "personal name."

(19)

Resurrection must precede death

- 15 THOSE who say that the lord first died and then arose are mis-
 18 taken, for he first arose and then died. •If one does not first ^{55, 79}
 19 get^a resurrection, one will not die. •As god lives!^b that person ^{TRs 49:13}
 would^c . . .

(20)^a

The precious hidden in the worthless

- 20 NO ONE would hide a precious expensive object within an ex- ^{IrPt 1.6.2}
 pensive thing, yet often someone has kept vast sums in some-
 24 thing worth a penny. •Such is the case with the soul: it is a pre-
 cious thing, and it has come to reside in a lowly body.

(21)

Eucharistic bread and resurrection

- 26 CERTAIN PERSONS are afraid that they may arise (from the ^{26, 2Co 5:3}
 28, 29 dead) naked;^a •therefore they want to arise in the flesh. •And ^{TRs 47:1}
 they do not know that those who wear the flesh are the ones who
 31 are naked.^b •Those who [. . .] to divest themselves are not na-
 32 ked. •“Flesh [and blood will not] inherit the kingdom [of god].” ^{1Co 15:50}
 34, 1 •What is this flesh that will not inherit it? 57 •The one that we
 1, 2 are wearing. •And what, too, is this flesh that will inherit it? •It is
 Jesus’ flesh, along with his blood.^c
 3 •Therefore he said, “He who does not eat my flesh and drink ^{Jn 6:53}
 5 my blood does not have life within him.” •What is meant by
 6 that? •His “flesh” means the Word,^d and his “blood” means the
 holy spirit: whoever has received these has food, and has drink
 9 and clothing.^e •For my part I condemn (also) those others who

19 a. Or “produce.”

b. A traditional oath to guarantee the truth or one’s words, cf. Jg 8:19, 1 S 14:39, etc.

c. “that person would . . .”: One or more words are inadvertently omitted after “would” so that the sentence is incomplete.

20 a. Cf. excerpt no. 41.

21 a. “naked”: without a fleshly covering. It was a Platonist cliché to compare the body to a garment.

b. I.e. those who have only the material flesh are lacking (“naked of”) what might bring them resurrection. The point is developed below.

c. The elements of the eucharist.

d. Or “rational faculty, teaching.”

e. I.e. is “clothed” in the Word.

- 10 say that the flesh will not arise. •Accordingly, both positions are deficient.^f
- 11 •(As to an imaginary discussant:) You say that the flesh will
 12 not arise?^g •Come now, tell me what element is going to arise,
 14 so I can congratulate you! •You say it is the spirit that resides
 15 within the flesh, and also the light that is within the flesh?^h •This
 thing “that also is within the flesh” is the Word (or teaching or
 16 rational faculty); •for what you are talking about is none other
 18 than flesh!ⁱ •It is necessary to arise in this kind of flesh,^j since
 19 everything exists in it. •In this world those who wear garments^k
 21 are superior to the garments; •in the kingdom of heavens the
 garments are superior to those who put them on.

(22)

Baptism and chrism

- 22 BY WATER^a and fire the entire place is sanctified—the vis-
 ible (elements of it) by the visible, the hidden by the hidden.
 25, 27 •Some (elements) are hidden by the visible: •there is water
 within water, there is fire within chrism.

CIExc 81.1

(23)

Jesus' many appearances

- 28 JESUS tricked everyone, for he did not appear as he was, but
 32 appeared in such a way that he could be seen. •And he appeared
 to all of them—he [appeared] to [the] great as someone great,
 he appeared [to] the small as someone small, he [appeared] [to
 the] angels as an angel and to human beings as a human being.
 2, 3 58 •For this reason he hid his discourse from everyone. •Some
 5 saw him and thought they were seeing their own selves.^a •But TRs 48:6

f. Position (1) maintains that material flesh will arise; position (2), that there is no sense in which “flesh” will arise. The author maintains (3) that only Jesus’ “flesh” in the sense of the eucharistic bread (the “Word,” “life”) arises; by partaking of it and “wearing” it the Christian can “arise.”

g. For the debative style of this passage, the so-called “diatribe style,” cf. TRs, “Literary background.”

h. The author attacks a fourth position (for which see TRs), namely that only the spirit arises; and retorts that the way in which the spirit is ob-

tained is within the eucharistic bread or “flesh,” here equated with the “Word.”

i. “flesh”: in the sense of the eucharistic element.

j. The Word.

k. I.e. fleshly bodies, cf. note 21a.

22 a. Probably referring to baptismal water, since “chrism” (an oil of anointment used in the baptismal ceremony) is mentioned below.

23 a. Cf. “The model of divine twinship” in the “Historical Introduction” to Part Four.

when he appeared to his disciples in glory upon the mountain
 8 he was not small, (for) he became great: •or, rather, he made the
 disciples great so that they might be able to see that he was great.

(24)

Our union with the angels

10 HE SAID that day in the prayer of thanksgiving,^a “O you who
 have joined the perfect light with the holy spirit, join the angels
 with us, too, as images.”

53, 59, 60, 68,
 73, 83, 105,
 107
 IrPt 1.7.1

(25)

The lamb and the door of the fold

14 DO NOT despise the lamb, for without it one cannot see the
 door.^a Jn 10:7

(26)

Encounter with the king

15 NO ONE can encounter the king while naked. 21+

(27)

The offspring of the perfect human being

17 THE HEAVENLY person has many offspring, more than the
 18 earthly. •If the offspring of Adam are many and yet die, how
 much more numerous are the offspring of the perfect human
 22 being, who do not die but are being born at every moment! •A
 parent makes children and a (young) child is powerless to make
 24 children. •For one who has (recently) been born cannot be a par-
 26 ent: rather, a child gets brothers, not children. •All those born in
 28 the world are born from the natural order. •And the others here
 31 [are nourished] from that whence they are born. •Human be-
 ings [take nourishment] from the promise of the heavenly place.

2+
 IrPt 1.7.5

24 a. Greek lit. “eucharist.”

25 a. I.e. the gate of the sheepfold (cf. Jn 10:7f).
 Some scholars emend “door” to “king,” referring
 to excerpt 26.

33 • [...] from the mouth, [and if] the Word^a had emanated from
 there, he^b would be nourished from the mouth, and would be
 2 perfect. 59 •For it is through a kiss that the perfect conceive and TrTr 58:22
 3 give birth. •For this reason we too kiss one another: •it is by the
 grace residing in one another that we conceive.

(28)

The three Marys

6 THREE WOMEN always used to walk with the lord—Mary his
 mother, his sister, and the Magdalene, who is called his compan-
 10 ion. •For “Mary” is the name of his sister and his mother, and it
 is the name of his partner.

(29)

Names of the trinity

11 “FATHER” and “son” are simple names: “holy spirit” is a two-
 13 part name. •For they exist^a everywhere—above, below; in the
 16 hidden, in the visible. •The holy spirit is in the visible, and in the
 below; and in the hidden, and in the above.

(30)^a

The holy spirit active in evil forces

18, 20 THE HOLY are ministered to by evil forces:^b •for the latter have
 been blinded by the holy spirit so that while they help the holy
 they think that the ones they help are human beings who belong
 to them.
 23 •Thus^c a disciple once asked the lord about a matter concern-
 25 ing the world. •He said to him, “Ask your mother, and she will 14
 give (it) to you from out of the alien realm.”

27 a. Greek *Logos*, as in Jn 1:1.

b. Or “it.”

29 a. Or “they are such.”

30 a. Cf. excerpt no. 12.

b. The heavenly rulers, the spirits of wickedness.

c. Possibly a new excerpt begins here.

(31)

Wisdom the salt of offerings to god

- 27 THE APOSTLES said to the disciples, “May all of our offering
 30 get salt!” •They were referring [to wisdom] as “salt.” Without it^a Lv 2:13
 31 no offering is acceptable. •Now wisdom [is] barren, [without]
 32 offspring. •For this reason, [she] is called “[. . .] . . . of the salt.”
 34.1 •Wherever [. . .] can [. . .] like them, the holy spirit [. . .], 60 •[and]
 many are her offspring. 2+

(32)

The child’s inheritance

- 1,2 WHAT a father owns belongs to his child. •And so long as the 2+
 4 child, too, is little, it will not be entrusted with its own. •When
 the child grows up, its father will give it all that it owns.

(33)

The spirit gives birth

- 6 IT IS the ones who have gone astray that the spirit gives birth to. 2+
 7,8 •Moreover, they go astray because of the spirit. •Thus from one
 and the same spirit the fire is kindled and is quenched.

(34)

Ekhamōth and ekh-mōth

- 10,11 EKHAMŌTH^a is one thing; and ekh-mōth,^b another. •Ekhamōth IrPt 1.4.1
 12 refers to wisdom proper; •but ekh-mōth, to the wisdom of
 death—that is, the wisdom who is acquainted with death, and
 who is called the little wisdom.

31 a. Or “her.”

34 a. I.e. Achamōth, biblical Hebrew *hokhmōth* (Pr 8-9), “wisdom.” In Ptolemaean Valentinian-

ism, Achamōth is the name of lower wisdom, as opposed to Sophia; cf. IrPt.

b. I.e. *’ēkh-mōth*, “like death” (biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic).

(35)

Plowing with domesticated animals

15 SOME animals are domesticated by human beings, such as the
 17 calf, the donkey, and so forth. •Others are undomesticated and
 19 live apart in uninhabited areas. •Human beings plow the fields
 with domesticated animals, and as a result both they and the
 animals, whether domesticated or undomesticated, are nour-
 23 ished. •Just so, the perfect human being plows with domesticated
 26 forces, preparing everything to come to pass. •For thus does the
 whole place stand at rest^a—the good and the evil, the right and
 28 the left. •The holy spirit pastures each and rules [all] the forces,
 32 whether domesticated or undomesticated and living apart. •For
 it [. . .] shut(s) them in, so that if [it] wishes,^b they might not get
 [out].

(36)

Cain

34 [THE ONE who] was modeled^a was beautiful, [but] his offspring
 1 were <not>^b like noble modeled forms.^c 61 •If he had not been
 modeled but rather born, his posterity would be like what is
 3 noble. •But as a matter of fact he was modeled, and then pro-
 4 duced offspring. •What sort of nobility is this?^d First adultery
 6 occurred,^e then murder! •And he^f was born of adultery; for he
 8 was the son of the snake.^g •Therefore he became a murderer like Jn 8:44
 10 his father^h and slew his brother. •Every act of sexual intercourse
 that has occurred between beings that do not resemble one an-
 other is adultery.

35 a. To “stand at rest” is philosophical jargon for the state of permanence, nonchange, and real being, as opposed to what exists in instability, change, and becoming.

b. Or “[they] wish.”

36 a. Adam.

b. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MS.
 c. “modeled form”: Jewish and Christian jargon

for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

d. Sarcastic.

e. In classic gnostic scripture, Cain is often said to have been begotten by the adulterous intercourse of the chief ruler and Eve, cf. BJn 24:8f.

f. Cain.

g. The snake is identified with the chief ruler.

h. The snake.

(37)^a

God's dyes

- 12.13 GOD is a dyer. •Just as the good dyes called “true” dyes dissolve into the things that have been dyed in them, even so the things that god has dyed become imperishable^b through his colors, in-
 19 asmuch as his dyes are imperishable.^c •Yet those whom god dips, he dips^d in water.

(38)

Only like can see like

- 20 PEOPLE cannot see anything in the real realm unless they be-
 23 come it. •In the realm of truth, it is not as human beings in the world, who see the sun without being the sun, and see the sky
 27 and the earth and so forth without being them. •Rather, if you have seen any things there, you have become those things: if you have seen the spirit, you have become the spirit; if you have seen the anointed (Christ), you have become the anointed (Christ);
 32 if you have seen the [father, you] will become the father. •Thus [here] (in the world), you see everything and do not [see] your
 34 own self. •But there, you see yourself; for you shall [become] what you see.

(39)

Faith and love

- 36,36 •FAITH receives, love gives. •[No one can receive] without faith,
 2 no one can give without love. 62 •Thus in order to receive we
 3 believe, and in order to love we give. •For if one gives without
 5 love, one has no profit from what one has given. •Anyone who has received something other than the lord is still a Hebrew.

37 a. Cf. excerpt no. 47.
 b. Or “colorfast.”

c. Or “fast.”
 d. Or “baptizes.”

(40)^a

Names of Jesus Christ

- 6 THE APOSTLES before us used to employ the terms “Jesus the
 Nasorae^ban^b Messiah,” which means “Jesus the Nasorae^ban the
 9 Christ (anointed).” •The last name is “Christ (anointed),”
 the first name is “Jesus,” the middle name is “the Nazarene.”^c
 11 •*Messias* has two meanings, “Christ (anointed)” and “the mea-
 13, 14 sured.”^d •“Jesus” in Hebrew means “ransom.” •*Nazara* means 5+
 15 “truth,” thus “the Nazarene” means “truth.” •It is the anointed
 (Christ) whom they have measured out:^e it is the Nazarene and
 Jesus^f who have been measured out.

(41)^a

The pearl in the mud

- 17, 20 IF A PEARL is cast into the mud, will it be less valuable? •Also, if IrPt 1.6.2
 21 it is anointed with balsam will it become more valuable? •Rather,
 23 it always has its value for its owner. •Just so, the children of god 2+
 still have their value for their father, whatever the circumstances
 in which they live.

(42)

The name Christian

- 26, 27 IF YOU say, “I am a Jew,” no one will tremble. •If you say, “I am a Col 3:11
 28 Roman,” no one will be bothered. •If you say, “I am a Greek—or
 31 a barbarian, a slave, free” no one will be disturbed. •If you [say],
 32 “I am a Christian,” the [. . .] will shake. •If only I could [. . .] this
 sort, who [. . .] cannot bear to [hear] his name.

40 a. Cf. excerpt no. 17.

b. Greek *nazōraios*. In antiquity this Christian term was sometimes taken to mean “person from Nazareth,” i.e. Nazarene (as below); and sometimes, “one who is (religiously) observant.” Cf. Bjn 1:13f.

c. Greek *Nazarēnos*, “person from Nazareth.”

d. Two meanings of Syriac *mšihā* (“Messias”); (1) “anointed” or “Christ”; (2) “measured.”

e. Or “who has been measured out.” The text may be corrupt here; more logical might be “who measured them out.”

f. I.e. truth and ransom.

41 a. Cf. excerpt no. 20.

(43)^a

Sacrifice to god

- 35,1 GOD is a cannibal. 63 •Therefore, human beings are [sacrificed]
 2 to him. •Before human beings were sacrificed, animals used to
 be sacrificed, because those to whom they were sacrificed were
 not gods.

(44)

Glass and ceramics

- 5,7 GLASS and ceramic vessels are produced with fire, •but if glass
 vessels break they are remade, since they have been produced by
 means of blown air;^a while if ceramic vessels break they perish,
 since they have been produced without blowing.

(45)

A donkey at a millstone

- 11 A DONKEY turning a millstone did a hundred miles of walk-
 13 ing. •When it was let loose it found itself still in the same place.
 15 •There are people who do much traveling and make no prog-
 ress toward anywhere: when evening falls they have seen neither
 cities nor villages nor constructions nor the natural order nor
 forces nor angels—the wretches have labored in vain.

(46)

The name of the eucharist

- 21,21 THE EUCHARIST is Jesus. •Now, in Syriac it is called *phari-*
 24 *satha*,^a that is, “that which is spread out.”^b •For Jesus came to
 crucify^c the world.

Ga 6:14
 GTr 24:20
 IrPt 1.3.5

43 a. Cf. excerpt no. 10.

44 a. Or “spirit.”

46 a. The Syriac word meant “broken bread” and

was a liturgical term for the host, the bread of the eucharistic sacrament. In ancient Christianity the host was sometimes called “the eucharist.”

b. Another meaning of the Syriac word.

c. I.e. “spread out” on the cross.

(47)^a**The lord's dyes**

- 25 THE LORD entered the dye works of Levi, and took seventy-two
 27 hues and cast them into the caldron. •He brought them all out
 28 white. •And he said, "For this did the child of the human being^b
 come—to be a dyer."

(48)

Jesus and Mary Magdalene

- 30 THE WISDOM who is called barren wisdom is the mother [of
 32 the] angels. •And the companion of the [. . .] Mary Magdalene.
 34 •The [. . . loved] her more than [all] the disciples, [and he used
 to] kiss her on her [. . . more] often than the rest of the [disciples]
 1 [. . .] 64 •They said to him, "Why do you love her more than all
 2 of us?" •The savior answered, saying to them, "Why do I not love
 you like her? If a blind person and one with sight are both in the
 7 darkness, they are not different from one another. •When the
 light comes, then the person with sight will see the light, and the
 blind person will remain in the darkness."

(49)

The preexistent is blessed

- 9 THE LORD said, "Blessed is that which existed before it came^a
 into existence. For the existent came into existence, and will
 exist."

(50)

Human beings dominate other animals

- 12 THE SUPREMACY of human beings is not externally appar-
 14 ent, but rather resides in a hidden faculty. •For this reason they
 dominate animals that are stronger than they and larger in exter-
 17 nal appearance and hidden capacity. •And this enables them to

47 a. Cf. excerpt no. 37.

b. Or "the son of man," a traditional Christian epithet of the heavenly savior.

49 a. Or "the person who existed before coming."

- 17 survive. •But when human beings withdraw from them they kill
 20 and devour one another. •And they ate one another because they
 did not find food; but now they have found food because human
 beings have worked the land.

(51)

Baptism and the name Christian

- 22 ANYONE who goes down into the water^a and comes up without CIExc 22.4
 having received anything and says, “I am a Christian,” has bor-
 25 rowed the name. •But one who receives the holy spirit has the
 27 gift of the name. •Anyone who has received a gift will not have it
 28 taken away. •But one who has borrowed something will have it
 29 taken back. •So it is with us, if something comes to pass through
 a mystery.

(52)

Marriage

- 31 [THE] MYSTERY of marriage [is] a great mystery, for [without]
 33 it the world would [not] exist. •For [the] structure of [the world]
 34, 35 [. . .] •But the structure [. . .] marriage. •Consider the sexual in-
 37 tercourse [. . .] pollute(s), for it possesses [. . .] force(s). •It is in
 pollution that its image resides.

(53)

Bridal chamber: androgyny protection against unclean spirits

- 1 65 AMONG the shapes of unclean spirits there are male ones
 3 and female ones. •It is male spirits that have sexual intercourse
 with souls who conduct their lives within a female shape, and
 female ones that mingle promiscuously with those within a male
 7 shape. •And no one can escape if seized by them, unless by tak-
 ing on a male or female power, namely (one’s) bridegroom or
 11 bride. •Now, one takes on this power from the imaged bridal
 12 chamber. •Whenever foolish female (spirits) see a male sitting
 by himself they leap upon him and fondle him and pollute him.
 15 •So also when foolish male ones see a beautiful woman sitting

51 a. In baptism.

alone they seduce her and do violence to her in order to pollute
 19 her. •But when they see a man and his wife sitting together, the
 female ones cannot make advances to the male, nor can the male
 23 ones make advances to the female. •Just so, if the image and the
 angel join with one another none can dare to make advances to 24+
 the male or the female.

(54)

The person who has left the world

27 AND WHOEVER leaves the world will no longer be restrained TRs 45:36+
 29 as though (?) in the world. •This person obviously is above desire
 32 [. . . and] fear, dominates [. . .], and is superior to envy. •If [. . .]
 33 then that person is seized and strangled. •And how can that per-
 35 son escape the [great] forces^a [. . .]? •How can that person [. . .]?
 36 •There are some people who [say], “We are faithful,” in order that
 2 [. . .] [unclean]spirit(s) and demons. 66 •For if they possessed
 4 the holy spirit, no unclean spirit could attach itself to them. •Do
 5 not fear the flesh or love it. •If you fear it, it will dominate you; if
 you love it, it will swallow you up and strangle you.

(55)

We must acquire resurrection now

7 AND THAT person will exist either in the present world or in IrPt 1.6.4
 resurrection or in the place in between—god forbid I should be
 9 found there! •Within the present world, (reputedly) there is good
 11 and there is evil, •(but) the world’s goods are not (really) good,
 12,13 •and its evils not (really) evil.^a •But after this world, there are
 15 evils that are truly evil—the thing called “midpoint.” •It is death. IrPt 1.7.1 +
 16 •While we exist in this world we must acquire resurrection, so 19+
 that when we put off the flesh we might be found in repose and
 20 not walk in the midpoint: •for many get lost along the way.

54 a. The heavenly rulers, the spirits of wickedness. 55 a. Cf. excerpts nos. 6, 23, 88.

(56)^a**Sin and righteousness**

- 21 IT IS good to leave the world before a person commits sin.
 23,24 •There are some who neither want to nor can; •and others for
 26,27 whom, even if they wanted to, there would be no use, for they
 have not acted •since [. . .] act of will makes them sinners. •But if
 they do not want to, righteousness will be hidden from them in
 29 both cases. •And [it is] always a matter of the will, not the action.

(57)

An apostolic vision of hell

- 29 IN A VISION, an apostolic person saw certain people imprisoned in a house of fire and bound with fiery [. . .], lying [. . .] fiery
 34 [. . .] them in [. . .] faith [. . .]. •And they said to them [. . .] them
 36 able to rescue^a [. . .] they did not wish. •They received [. . .] punishment that is called the [. . .] darkness. 67 •For it [. . .].

(58)

Otherworldly fire

- 2,3 SOUL AND SPIRIT are constituted of water and fire; •a bride- CIExc 81.1
 5 groom's attendant^a is constituted of water,^b fire, and light. •Fire is chrism; light is fire—I do not mean worldly fire, which has no form, but another kind of fire, whose appearance is white, which is beautifully luminous, and which bestows beauty.

(59)

Resurrection an image of the return

- 9 TRUTH did not come to the world nakedly; rather, it came in
 11 prototypes and images: •the world will not accept it in any other
 12,13 form. •Rebirth exists along with an image of rebirth: •by means
 14 of this image one must be truly reborn. •Which image? Resurrection.
 15,16 •And image must arise by means of image. •By means 24+

56 a. The translation of this excerpt is uncertain.

58 a. Or "a son of the bridal chamber."

b. Baptismal water.

57 a. Or "able to be rescued?"

of this image, the bridal chamber and the image must embark
 19 upon the realm of truth, that is, embark upon the return.^a •Not TRs 44:30+
 only must those who produce the names of father, son, and holy TrTr 127:28
 21 spirit do so, but also <those who>^b have acquired these. •If some ClExc 80.3
 one does not acquire them, the name too will be taken from that
 23, 24 person. •But if one gets them in the chrism of [. . .] •of the force
 26 of the cross, which the apostles called right and left. •For this
 person is no longer a Christian but rather is Christ (anointed).

(60)

The five sacraments

27 THE LORD [did] all things by means of a mystery: baptism,
 chrism, eucharist, ransom, and bridal chamber.^a 5+, 24+

(61)

Innermost, outer, and outermost

30 [. . .] said, “I have come to make [the lower] like the [upper] GTh 22
 and the] outer like the [inner, and to join] them in [. . .] here
 36 by means of prototype(s) [. . .].” •Those who say that [there is
 a heavenly person and] one who is still higher [are] mistaken:
 38, 2 •[for] they call the visible heavenly [person] “lower”; 68 •and
 maintain that the one to whom the hidden realm belongs is still
 4 higher. •Now, it would be better if they spoke of inside, outside,
 6 and what is outside the outside. •Thus the lord called corruption
 8 “outer(most) darkness,” so that nothing exists outside of it. •He
 9 said, “My father who is in secret.”^a •He said, “Go into your room Mt 8:12?
 Mt 22:13?
 Mt 25:30?
 v.9
 Mt 6:6
 13 is, the one who is innermost of all. •Now, what is innermost of
 14 all is the fullness. •Beyond that, there is nothing further within.
 15 •This is what is called the uppermost.

59 a. Or “return from exile.” The Greek word (*apokatastasis*) is Valentinian jargon for the return of the self to its true home within the fullness.

b. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

60 a. See the “Index of keywords and themes” in the introduction to GPh.

61 a. Or “in the hidden realm.”

(62)

Fall and return of the spiritual element

- 17 BEFORE the anointed (Christ), certain beings came from a realm that they could not reenter,^a and went to a realm^b that they could not yet leave. •Then the anointed (Christ) came: he brought out those who had entered^c and brought in^d those who had left.

(63)

Separation of Eve from Adam

- 22 IN THE DAYS when Eve was [in] Adam,^a death did not exist.
 24 •When she was separated from him, death came into existence.
 24 •If he [reenters]and takes it^b unto himself death will not exist.

GTh 22
 GTh 106
 GTh 114
 ClExc 21.2

(64)

The crucifixion

- 26, 27 “[MY] GOD, my god, why O lord hast thou forsaken me?” •He spoke these words on the cross; for he [had] withdrawn from that place.

Mk 15:34
 Mt 27:46
 IrPt 1.7.2

(65)

Flesh and the genuine one

- 29, 31 [...] born from [...] by god. •The [...] from the dead [...] exist(s), but [...] is perfect [...] flesh, but [...] it is genuine flesh [...] is not genuine; rather [...] image of the genuine one.

62 a. I.e. spiritual seeds came from the fullness (IrPt 1.5.6, 1.7.5).

b. The material realm outside the outer boundary (IrPt 1.2.4).

c. I.e. entered into the lower material realm.

d. I.e. back into the fullness.

63 a. When the two were joined in the beginning as an androgyne; cf. RAAd 64:22f (with note 64k).

b. Or “him.”

(66)

The bridal bedroom

- 1 69 ANIMALS have no bridal bedroom,^a nor do slaves or defiled
3 women. •Rather, free men and virgins have one.

(67)

Baptism

- 4, 6 WE ARE reborn by the holy spirit. •And we are born by the
7 anointed (Christ) through two things. •We are anointed by the
8, 8 spirit. •When we were born we were joined. •No one can see
10 himself in the water or in a mirror without light. •Nor, again, can
12 you see by the light without water or a mirror. •For this reason
13 it is necessary to baptize with two things—light and water. •And
light means chrisem.

(68)^a

An allegory of the Temple: baptism, ransom, bridal chamber

- 14, 15 THERE were three offering places in Jerusalem:^b •one opening
17 to the west and called the holy; •another open to the south and
19 called the holy of the holy; •the third open to the east and called
the holy of holies, into which the high priest alone could enter.
22 •The holy building is baptism, the holy of the holy is ransom, the
25 holy of holies is the bridal chamber. •[Baptism] possesses resur- 24+
27 rection [and] ransom; ransom is in the bridal chamber. •[The] 5+
bridal chamber is within what is superior to [. . .] its [. . .] is like
[. . .] those who pray [. . .] Jerusalem [. . .] Jerusalem [. . .] Jerusa-
lem, expecting [. . .] who are called [the holy] of the holies [. . .]
veil rent [. . .] bridal bedroom except for the image [. . .] above.
1 70 •Thus, its veil was torn from top to bottom, because certain Mk 15:38
people from below had to ascend.

66 a. “bridal bedroom”: or “wedding bed.” In GPh this Greek word is distinct from the one translated “bridal chamber” but is used with roughly the same meaning.

68 a. Cf. excerpt no. 105.

b. In the Jewish Temple of god.

(69)^a**The garment of light**

- 5 THE FORCES^b do not see those who have put on the perfect TrTr 128:19
 7 light and cannot seize them. •One will put on the light in a mys-
 7 tery, through the act of joining.

(70)^a**Reunion in the bridal bedroom**

- 9 IF THE FEMALE had not separated from the male, she and the CIExc 21.2
 11 male would not die. •That being's separation became the source
 12 of death. •The anointed (Christ) came to rectify the separation
 15 that had been present since the beginning •and join the two
 17 (components); and to give life unto those who had died by sep-
 19 aration and join them together. •Now, a woman joins with her
 19 husband in the bridal bedroom, •and those who have joined in
 20 the bridal bedroom will not reseparate. •Thus Eve became sep-
 arate from Adam because it was not in the bridal bedroom that
 she joined with him.

(71)

Passage of the spirit into Adam

- 22, 23 ADAM'S SOUL resulted from an act of blowing. •Its partner is Gn 2:7
IrPt 1.5.5
 24 the [spirit]. •The element that was imparted to him is his mother.
 25 •His soul was [taken away] and he was given a [spirit in] its place.
 26 •When it had become joined (to him) the forces envied him be- VFrC
 29 cause [he] spoke words superior to them •[. . .] spiritual partner
 [. . .] hidden [. . .] them alone [. . .] bridal bedroom, so that [. . .].

(72)

The arrival of Jesus in the world

- 34 JESUS appeared [. . .] Jordan, the fullness [of the] kingdom of
 36 heavens. •The person who [was born] before all things was re-

69 a. Cf. excerpt no. 90.

b. The heavenly rulers, the spirits of wickedness.

70 a. Cf. excerpt no. 63.

born; the one anointed in the beginning was reanointed; the one who had been ransomed ransomed others in turn. 5+

(73)

The virgin birth

3, 4 71 HOW FITTING it is to speak of a mystery! •The parent of the
5 entirety joined with the virgin who came down, •and fire illumi-
6, 8 nated him. •On that day he revealed the great bridal bedroom; •it 24+
9 was for this purpose that his body came into being. •On that day
he came forth from the bridal bedroom as from what comes to
11 pass between^a a bridegroom and a bride. •Just so, through these
13 things Jesus made the entirety^b stand at rest^c within it: •and it is
fitting for each of the disciples to proceed into his or her repose.

(74)

Virgin birth of Adam and Christ

16 ADAM came into being from two virgins: from the spirit and
18 from the virgin earth.^a •The anointed (Christ) was born of a vir-
gin so that he might rectify the fall that occurred in the beginning.

(75)

The two trees of paradise

22 THERE are two trees growing in paradise: one produces [ani- TrTr 106:27
24 mals], the other produces human beings. •Adam [ate] from the
tree that had produced animals; [he] became an animal and be-
26 got animals. •For this reason the children of Adam worship the
28 [animals].^a •The tree [...] fruit [...] they became numerous [...] ate the [...] [...] fruit [...] begot human beings^b [...] human
beings [...] god made human beings [...] human beings made

73 a. Or “as from what is born of.”

b. Cf. note 12c.

c. Cf. note 35a.

74 a. Adam’s name in biblical Hebrew is a pun on *adamah*, meaning “earth.” This pun was widely known in Greek theological circles.

75 a. Egyptian religion was famous in antiquity for its animal-headed deities and was often the target of Christian criticism leveled against pagan religion in general.

b. Or “begot [...] for humankind.”

- 1 god. 72 •Just so, in the world human beings make gods and bow
 3 down to their products: •it would be more fitting for the gods to
 worship human beings!

(76)

Deeds are forces

- 4 A PERSON'S deeds, insofar as they are real,^a result from that
 7,8 person's force: •thus deeds can be called "forces."^b •Children are
 8 a kind of "deed," •and furthermore they result from a moment of
 9 repose. •For this reason, one's force is active within one's deeds.
 11,12 •But it is obviously in children that repose is found. •And this ex-
 14 tends, as it were, to the image: •and that means, the imaged per-
 15 son. •It is by their own force that imaged people perform their
 16 deeds, •and from repose that they beget their offspring.

(77)

Servants and free in the kingdom of heavens

- 17,18 IN THIS WORLD servants help those who are free. •In the
 kingdom of heavens the free will render service to the servants:
 20 •the bridegroom's attendants will render service to the wedding
 22 guests. •The bridegroom's attendants are in one and the same
 24 condition: repose. •Being assembled, they have no need of trans-
 26 formation, [since they are engaged in] contemplation •[. . .].
 They are [. . .] in [. . .].

(78)

Baptism and righteousness

- 29 [. . .] go down into the water [. . .] ransom him [. . .] those who
 33 [. . .] in his name. •For he said, "[It is thus] that we shall fulfill all Mt 3:15
 righteousness."

76 a. Or "true."

b. Or "manifestations of power."

(79)

One must acquire resurrection now through baptism

- 1 73 PEOPLE who say they will first die and then arise are mistaken. 19+
 3 •If they do not first receive resurrection while they are alive, once
 5 they have died they will receive nothing. •Just so it is said of bap-
 7 tism: “Great is baptism!” •For if one receives it, one will live.

(80)

Joseph and the wood of the cross

- 8 PHILIP THE APOSTLE said: “Joseph the carpenter planted a
 11 paradise,^a for he needed wood for his trade. •It is he who made
 14 the cross from the trees that he had planted, and its seed hung
 15 from what he had planted: •the seed was Jesus, and the plant
 17 was the cross. •But the tree of life is in the midst of paradise,^b
 17 •and from the olive tree comes chrism; and from the latter comes
 resurrection.”

(81)

Jesus the bringer of true food

- 19, 20 THIS WORLD devours corpses: •everything eaten within it also
 21, 22 dies. •The realm of truth devours life: •thus no one of those who
 23, 24 live on [truth] is dying. •From that realm did Jesus come, •and he
 25 brought food from there.^a •And he gave [life] to whoever wished
 it, so that they might not die.

(82)

The new paradise

- 27, 28, 29 [GOD . . .] a paradise.^a •Human beings [. . .] paradise. •[. . .] exist TtTr 106:25
 32, 33 with [. . .] god in [. . .]. •Those within [it . . .] wish. •That paradise
 [is where] it will be said to me, “[. . .eat] this, or not, [according
 1 as you] like.” •74 The place where I shall eat everything is where
 the tree of acquaintance is located.

80 a. Or “a garden full of trees.”
 b. Or “of that paradise.”

81 a. Cf. excerpt no. 11.

82 a. Or “garden.”

3,3 •The other one^b slew Adam. •But here the tree of acquaintance
 5,5 has brought human beings to life. •The law was the tree.^c •It is able
 7 to impart acquaintance of good and evil; •and it neither made
 him (that is, Adam) cease from evil nor allowed him to be in the
 9,10 good. •Rather, it made death for those who ate of it. •For while it^d
 was saying, “Eat this, do not eat this,” it became a source of death.

(83)

Chrism, baptism, bridal chamber

12,13 CHRISM has more authority than baptism. •For because of
 15 chrism we are called Christians, not because of baptism. •And
 16 the anointed (Christ) was named for chrism, •for the father
 17 anointed the son; •and the son anointed the apostles, and the PtF 33.7.9
 18 apostles anointed us. •Whoever has been anointed has every-
 21 thing: resurrection, light, cross, holy spirit; •the father has given
 it to that person in the bridal chamber, and the person has re- 24+
 22 ceived (it). •The father existed in the son, and the son existed in
 24 the father. •This [is the] kingdom of heavens.

(84)

Outward signs of the sacraments

24 WELL did the lord say, “Some have gone into the kingdom of
 26 heavens laughing. •And they came out [. . .] for a Christian [. . .].
 28 •And [. . . go] down into the water,^a [. . .] all [. . .] it is a trifle, but [. . .]
 despise [. . .] kingdom of [heavens . . .] if he despises [. . .] and he
 36 despises it as a trifle [. . .] forth laughing.” •Just so are the bread and
 the cup^b and the oil,^c even though there are ones higher than these.

(85)

The creation of the universe

2,4 75 THE WORLD came into being through transgression. •For
 the agent^a that made it wanted to make it incorruptible and im-

b. The other tree, i.e. the one in the original paradise.

c. The Coptic text may be corrupt here. More logical would be “The (other) tree was the law.”

d. Or “he.”

84 a. In baptism.

b. In the eucharist.

c. In the sacrament of chrism.

85 a. The craftsman (in classic gnostic myth, Ialdabaöth).

- 6 mortal.^b •That agent fell, and did not attain what was expected.
 7,8 •For the world's incorruptibility was not; •furthermore, the incorruptibility of the agent that made the world was not. •For there is no such thing as the incorruptibility of things—only of
 11 offspring (children). •And no thing can receive incorruptibility
 13 unless it is an offspring: • that which cannot receive (it) certainly 2+ cannot bestow (it).

(86)

Consecrated water in the eucharist and baptism

- 14, 16 THE CUP of prayer^a contains wine and contains water, •being established as a representation^b of the blood over which thanksgiving is offered. •And it is full of the holy spirit, •and belongs
 17, 18 entirely to the perfect human being. •Whenever we drink it we take unto ourselves the perfect human being.
 19
 21, 22 •The living water^c is a body. •It befits us to put on the living
 23 human being;^d •accordingly, when one is about to descend into the water,^e one strips naked in order to put that one on.

(87)^a

Like begets like

- 25 A HORSE begets horses, a human being begets human beings, 2+
 27 deity begets deity. •Just so in the case of [both] bridegrooms and
 30, 32 brides—they are from the [. . .]. •[. . .] Jew(s) [. . .] exist(s). •And [. . .] from the Jews [. . .] Christian(s) [. . .] this place is called [. . .] the chosen people of the [. . .] and the true human being and the child of the human being^b and the posterity of the child of the
 3 human being.^c 76 •This true people is renowned in the world: here is where the bridegroom's attendants are.

b. Cf. BJn 12:33f.

86 a. The eucharistic cup.

b. Or "symbol."

c. Many ancient Christians used running ("living") water, such as rivers or springs, in their baptismal ceremonies.

d. Traditional Christian baptismal liturgy spoke of "putting off" the old person and "putting

on" Christ, like a garment; cf. Ga 3:27, Ep 4:22, Col 3:9f.

e. I.e. to be baptized.

87 a. Cf. excerpt no. 96.

b. Or "son of man," a traditional Christian epithet of the heavenly savior.

c. "posterity . . .": i.e. the Valentinians.

(88)

There is neither power nor weakness in the eternal realm

6 IT IS in the world, where power and weakness exist, that the act
 8 of joining between males and females occurs; •but in the eter-
 9 nal realm there is a different sort of joining. •Although it is with
 9 these names^a that we refer to things, •yet other names also ex- 8+
 10 ist, •above every current name, indeed, above the most potent.
 12 •For where brute force exists there are those who are superior
 14 to power. •These are not two different things, rather one and
 16 the same. •It is this which is incomprehensible to hearts of flesh.

(89)

Self-acquaintance

17 SHOULD NOT all people who possess all things know them-
 19 selves^a utterly? •Now, if some do not know themselves, they
 21 will not have the use of what they possess; •but those who have
 learned about themselves will do so.

(90)^a

The garment of light

22 THE PERFECT human being not only cannot be restrained, TRs 45:36
 24, 24 •but also cannot be seen—•for if something is seen it will be
 25 restrained. •In other words, no one can obtain this grace with-
 out putting on the perfect light^b [and] becoming, as well, perfect TrTr 128:19
 29, 30 light. •Whoever has [put it] on will go [. . .]. •This one is the per-
 33 fect [. . .] that we be [. . .] before we have come [. . .]. •Whoever
 receives all things [. . .] hither, can [. . .] there, but will [. . . the]
 1 midpoint, as being imperfect. 77 •Only Jesus is acquainted with IrPt 1.7.1+
 that person's end!

88 a. Or "words."

89 a. The Delphic maxim, "know thyself," expressed a central theme of traditional Greek wisdom.

90 a. Cf. excerpt no. 69.

b. The image of a garment of light, which the Christian "puts on" (cf. note 86d), was traditional especially in Syrian Christianity.

(91)

The holy person's body

- 2 THE HOLY person is utterly holy, even including that person's
 3 body. •Such a person, if picking up bread, makes it holy—like-
 wise the cup^a or any of the other things which that person picks
 6 up and sanctifies. •And why would such a person not sanctify
 also the body?

(92)

Baptism and death

- 7 JUST AS Jesus perfected the water of baptism, so too he drew off^a
 9, 10 death. •For this reason we go down into the water •but not into
 death, so that we are not poured out into the wind^b of the world.
 12, 14 •Whenever the latter blows, winter comes: •whenever the holy ⁴⁺
 spirit^c blows, summer comes.

(93)

Acquaintance (*gnōsis*) brings freedom

- 15, 17 ONE who possesses acquaintance with the truth is free, •and the Jn 8:32
 17 freeperson does not sin: •for, “one who commits sin is the slave IrPt 1.6.2 +
 of sin.” •Truth is the mother, acquaintance the father. •Those Jn 8:34
 19, 20 who are not fated to sin the world calls free. •As for those who are
 22 not fated to sin, “acquaintance” with truth “puffs up”^a—that is, 1Co 8:1
 25 makes them free, •and it makes them “puffed up” as regards the
 25, 26 whole place—•“but love builds up.” •Now, whoever has become
 free through acquaintance is a slave on account of love toward
 those who have not yet taken up [the] freedom of acquaintance.
 29 •[And] acquaintance makes them capable of becoming free.
 31 •Love [never says] that anything [. . . belongs] to it [. . .] belongs
 33 to it. •It does not [say, “This is mine”] or “That is mine,” [but
 rather “All my] own are yours.”

91 a. “bread . . . cup”: the eucharistic elements.

c. Or “wind.”

92 a. Or “poured out.”

b. Or “spirit.”

93 a. Meant in a good sense, perhaps “fills (them)
up with spirit.”

(94)

The fragrance of spiritual perfume

- 35, 36 SPIRITUAL love is wine and perfume. •Those who anoint them- GTr 33:33
 selves with it all have the use of it, as do also those who are out-
 side their company so long as the anointed ones stand there. 78
 4 •When those anointed with ointment leave them and depart, the
 ones who are not anointed but are only outside their company
 7 still remain within their fragrance. •The Samaritan gave noth- Lk 10:33
 ing to the man who had been beaten except wine and oil, which
 10 means none other than ointment. •And it healed the wounds,
 11 •“since love covers a multitude of sins.” IP 4:8

(95)

Children are like what the parent loves

- 12 THE CHILDREN that a woman produces will resemble the man
 13 she loves. •If it is her husband, they resemble her husband; if
 15 it is an adulterer, they resemble the adulterer. •Many times if a
 woman is constrained to sleep with her husband but her heart
 is set on the adulterer with whom she has intercourse, the child
 20 she bears will resemble the adulterer. •You (plur.) then, who live
 22 with the son of god, do not love the world: •rather, love the lord,
 so that those whom you produce might come to resemble not the
 world but rather the lord.

(96)^a

Like mixes with like

- 25 HUMAN BEINGS mix^b with human beings, horses mix with
 27 horses, donkeys mix with donkeys: •members of a species mix
 28 [with] their fellow members. •Just so, it is with spirit that spirit
 29 mixes, •and rational faculty^c has intercourse with rational fac-
 31, 32 ulty, •[and] light has intercourse [with light.] •If [you (sing.)]
 33 become human, it is [human beings] that [will] love you; •if you
 34 become [spirit], spirit will join with you; •[if] you become ratio-
 1 nal faculty, rational faculty^d will mix with you; 79 •if [you] be-
 3 come light, light will have intercourse with you: •if you become
 5 the upper, the upper will repose on you. •If you become a horse

96 a. Cf. excerpt no. 87.

b. Or “breed.”

c. Or “Word” (as in Jn 1:1).

d. Or “Word.”

or donkey or calf or dog or sheep or any of the other animals, wild or domesticated, neither human being nor spirit nor rational faculty nor light will love you; •neither the upper nor the inner can repose in you,^e •and you have no share in them.

(97)

Only unwilling slaves can become free

13, 15 PEOPLE who are unwilling slaves can become free. •Those who have become free through the benefaction of their master, and then have sold themselves into slavery, cannot become free again. TrTr 132:23

(98)

A parable of agriculture

18, 19 THE AGRICULTURE of the world results from four things: •a 4+
22 successful harvest results from water, earth, air, and light. •And the agriculture of god likewise results from four things: faith, 25 hope, love, and acquaintance. •Our earth in which we take root is faith. •Water, by which [we are nourished], is hope. •Air, by 26, 28 which we grow, is love. •And light [is] acquaintance, by which 29 we [ripen to maturity]. •Grace is [. . .] earthly. •It is [. . .] above 31, 33 heaven [. . .].

(99)

We should not favor the rich nor cause grief

33, 1 [BLESSED] is he who has not [. . .]^a anyone. 80•That means Jesus Christ (the anointed); •he has encountered the whole place 1 and has not burdened anyone. •For this reason, blessed is such a 3 person: this person is a perfect human being.
4 •Now,^b the rational faculty^c tells us how difficult it is to accomplish this. •How can we be successful at this great virtue? •How 6, 7 can it give help to everyone? •Above all, one must not cause grief to any person— whether important, ordinary, unbeliever, or 8 believer—and then proceed to give help to those who repose in 12 luxury. •Some people profit by giving help to those who are rich.

e. Cf. excerpt no. 61.

b. The translation of this whole paragraph is uncertain.

99 a. Perhaps “[caused grief to]”

c. Or “the Word” (as in Jn 1:1).

- 13, 15 •The person who does good will not give help to the rich, •for
 <the good person>^d does not simply take up whatever project
 16 is most pleasing. •On the other hand the doer of good, by not
 causing the rich to be distressed, will not cause them any grief.
 17 •Of course, the newly rich will sometimes cause others distress.
 19, 19 •But the doer of good does not do this: •rather, it is others' im-
 20 perfection^e that causes them grief. •One who has the nature (of a
 22 perfect human being) bestows happiness upon the good. •Some
 people are badly distressed at this.

(100)

A parable of appropriate diets

- 23 THE OWNER of an estate acquired all sorts of things—children,
 slaves, cattle, dogs, hogs, wheat, barley, chaff, fodder, [. . .], meat,
 27 and acorns. •[Now], he was wise, and knew the food of each sort.
 29, 30 •He fed the children bread [. . .], •but he fed [the] slaves [. . . and]
 31, 33 grain. •[He fed] the cattle [barley], chaff, fodder; •he fed [the]
 dogs bones; he fed [the hogs] acorns and slops.
 1, 2 **81** •Just so are the disciples of god: •if they are wise they are
 3 perceptive about discipleship. •Bodily forms will not deceive
 5 them: •rather, what they consider is the condition of each per-
 7 son's soul, and they speak with that person accordingly. •In the
 8 world there are many animals that have a human form. •If the dis-
 ciples of god recognize that they are hogs, they feed them acorns;
 12 if cattle, barley, chaff, and fodder; if dogs, bones; •if slaves, a first
 13 course (that is, a single dish); •if children, a complete meal. 2+

(101)

Creators and begetters

- 14, 15 THE CHILD of the human being^a exists, •and the child of the 2+
 16 child of the human being exists. •The child of the human be-
 17 ing refers to the lord, •and the child of the child of the human
 being refers to the one who creates by the child of the human
 19 being. •The child of the human being received from god so that
 20, 21 he might create: •he possesses so that he might beget. •One who
 22 has received so as to create is a creature; •one who has received
 23 so as to beget is begotten. •A creator cannot beget, (but) a beget-

d. Inadvertently omitted in the MS.
 e. Or "evil"

101 a. Or "son of man," a traditional Christian epi-
 thet of the heavenly savior.

25 ter can create. •Of course, creators are said to “beget,” but what
 they “beget” are creatures. [. . .] their offspring are not begotten
 28 [. . .], but rather are [. . .]. •A creator works [openly], and is visible
 30 as well. •A begetter begets [secretly] and is hidden while [. . .] the
 32 image. •A creator then [creates] visibly, while one who begets
 [begets] offspring secretly.

(102)

Unpolluted marriage

34 NO [ONE can] know when [a male] and a female have inter-
 2 course with one another but they alone. 82 •For the marriage
 4 of this world is a mystery for those who have married. •If the
 marriage of pollution is hidden, how much more is unpolluted
 6 marriage a genuine mystery! •It is not concerned with flesh,
 7 but rather is sanctified. •It belongs not to desire but to will,
 8,10 •not to darkness or night but to daytime and light. •If a mar-
 11 riage is naked it has become fornication. •And the bride has
 committed fornication not only if she accepts the sperm of a
 different man, but even if she leaves her bedroom and is seen.
 14 •Let her appear only to her father and her mother and the best
 17 man and the bridegroom’s attendants: •these are permitted to
 19 enter the bridal chamber every day. •But let the others desire
 merely to hear her voice and enjoy her (perfumed) ointment,
 21 •and let them be nourished, like dogs, by the scraps beneath
 23 the table. •Bridegrooms and brides belong to the bridal cham-
 24 ber. •No one can see a bridegroom or a bride except by becom-
 ing such.

(103)

Abraham’s circumcision

26 WHEN Abraham [. . .] to behold what he was going to behold, Jn 8:56?
 28 [he] circumcised the flesh of the foreskin, •telling us that it is
 fitting to mortify the flesh.

(104)

Lack of acquaintance must be burrowed out from the heart

30 [MOST beings] of (this) world stand up and are alive in so far
 32 as their [innards] are hidden. •[If the innards] are exposed they

- 34 die, as in the[case] of the visible aspect of human beings: •[in
 so far as] the intestines of human beings are hidden, they are
 1 alive. 83 •If their intestines are uncovered and come out of them,
 3 human beings die. •Likewise, trees sprout and grow (?) while
 4 their root is hidden. •If their root is uncovered, the trees wither. GTr 28:16
 6 •So it is with all begotten things in this world, not only things
 8 that are visible but also those that are hidden. •For so long as
 9 the root of evil is hidden it is mighty. •But as soon as it has been
 10 recognized it has perished, •and as soon as it has appeared it has
 11 ceased to be. •For this reason scripture^a says that “even now the Mt 3:10
 13 axe is laid to the root of the trees.” •It will not (just) cut them Lk 3:9
 14 down, for what is cut down sprouts back up: •rather, the axe will
 16 burrow down until it extracts the root. •And Jesus has weeded^b
 the whole place, while others did so one part at a time.
 18 •Let each of us, too, burrow for the root of evil that is within, and
 21 root it up from his or her heart. •It will be rooted up when it is rec- VFrH
 22, 24 ognized. •But if we are ignorant of it, it sinks its root within us, •and
 25, 26 yields its crops within our hearts; •dominates us; •we are its Rm 7:14
 26 slaves; •it takes us captive, so that we do the things we do [not]
 28, 28 want, •and do [not] do the things that we want; •and [it] grows
 29 powerful because we have not recognized it. •So long as [it ex-
 ists] it is active.
 30, 32 • Lack of [acquaintance] is the mother of [all evils]. •Lack of
 32 acquainttance will lead to [death]: •[for], those who existed as a
 result of the [lack of acquaintance] neither (truly) existed nor [do
 35 exist] nor will exist. •[. . .] will become perfect when the whole
 2 truth appears. 84 •For like lack of acquaintance, truth reposes in
 4 itself while it is hidden. •But when it appears and is recognized,
 it is glorified insofar as it overpowers lack of acquaintance and
 7, 7 error. •It bestows freedom. •The Word^c said, “If you know the TrTr 117:23
 10 truth, the truth will make you free.” •Lack of acquaintance is a Jn 8:32
 11 slave: acquaintance is freedom. •If we become acquainted with
 13 the truth, we shall find the fruits of truth within us. •If we join
 with it, it will receive our fullness.

(105)^a

An allegory of the Temple: entry into bridal bedroom

- 14 AT PRESENT we have access to the visible aspects of creation.
 15, 16 •We say that they are what is mighty and glorious, •while hidden

104 a. Or “the Word” (as in Jn 1:1).
 b. Or “pulled out the root of.”
 c. Or “scripture.”

105 a. Cf. excerpt no. 68.

17 things are powerless and contemptible. •In this way the manifest aspects of truth are powerless and contemptible, while the hidden aspects are mighty and glorious.

20 •Now, the mysteries of truth are manifestly representations^b
 21, 22 and images. •Thus the bedroom is hidden away: •this stands
 23 for^c the holy within the holy. •For, originally the veil concealed
 25 how god controls creation; •but when the veil is torn^d and what
 is inside appears, then this building will be left desolate or,
 29, 30 rather, be destroyed. •And all deity will flee from here: •but it
 31 will not flee into the holy [of] holies, •for it cannot mix with
 33 unalloyed [light] and the fullness^e that has no [defect]. •Rather,
 it will dwell under the wings of the cross, [and under] its arms.
 34 •This ark will be [for people's] salvation when the watery flood
 1 rages over them. 85 •If others belong to the tribe of the priest-
 hood, they will be able to enter inside the veil along with the
 5 high priest. •For this reason, the veil was not torn only at the
 7 top—for then only the upper region would be opened. •Nor was
 it only at the bottom that it was torn—for then only the lower
 10 realm would be revealed. •Rather, it was torn from top to bot-
 10 tom. •The upper realm was opened for us in the lower realm, so
 13 that we might enter into the hidden realm of truth: •this is what
 14 is truly glorious and mighty. •And it is through contemptible
 16 representations^f and powerless things that we shall enter. •They
 17 are contemptible compared to perfect glory—•there is glory
 18 superior to glory, and power superior to power. •Thus perfect
 things were opened to us, along with the hidden aspects of truth.
 19, 20 •And the holies of holies was uncovered. •And the bedroom in-
 vites us in.

24+

(106)

Revelation of the spiritual seed

21 INsofar as the seed of the holy spirit is hidden, evil—though
 24 inert—has not been removed from its midst, •and members of it
 24 are enslaved to wickedness. •But when this seed is revealed, then
 27 perfect light will stream forth upon each person, •and all who
 28 belong to it will [be] anointed. •Then the slaves will be free [and]
 29 captives ransomed. •“Every plant that my father in the heavens
 31 has not planted [will be] rooted up.” •Those who are separated
 will join [. . .] will become full.

TRs 49:2

5+
Mt 15:13
4+
TrTr 132:23

b. Or “symbols.”

c. “stands for”: or “is.”

d. Cf. 70:1f.

e. Valentinian jargon for the metaphysical universe.

f. Or “symbols.”

(107)

Reception of the garment of light^a

- 32 EVERY PERSON who [enters] the bedroom will kindle the 24+
 33, 35 [light.] •For [...] like the marriages that are [...] be night. •The
 1 fire [...] night, is extinguished. 86 •However, the mysteries of
 3 that marriage are performed in day and light; •and that day, or
 4 rather its light, does not set. •If someone becomes a bridegroom's
 6 attendant, that person will receive the light. •If one does not re-
 ceive it while here, one cannot receive it elsewhere.
- 7 •Whoever receives that light will be invisible and cannot be TRs 45:36+
 9 restrained. •And nothing can harass such a person even while
 11 living in the world. •And, furthermore, when that person leaves
 this world, he or she has already received the truth in the form
 13 of images, •and the world has already become the eternal realm. TRs 49:15
 14, 15 •For, to this person the eternal realm is fullness •and, as such, is
 16 manifest to him or her alone—•hidden not in darkness and night
 but hidden in perfect day and holy light.^b

107 a. Cf. excerpts nos. 69 and 90.

b. In the manuscript, the title of this work is written after the text (at 86:18f).

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA'S EXCERPTS FROM THEODOTUS

(CIExc)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Excerpts from Theodotus is a collection of extracts from the writings of various Valentinian theologians, assembled and published by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215), who interspersed them with his own critical remarks. Clement was a non-gnostic theologian and philosopher who taught in Alexandria, Egypt. Clement may have compiled CIExc as material for a projected refutation of Valentinian teachings, but no such work has survived. The full title of the collection is *Excerpts from the Works of Theodotus and of the So-Called Eastern School at the Time of Valentinus*. Both the title and Clement's own words suggest that he collected passages from multiple sources. Five times Clement explicitly attributes quotations or summaries to Theodotus (22.7; 26.1; 30.1; 32.2; 35.1). Six more times he uses the phrase "he says" (1.1; 22.1; 25.2; 38.2; 41.1; 67.1), which probably but not certainly refers to Theodotus. Numerous other excerpts refer more vaguely to "the Valentinians" or simply read, "they say."

Despite the work's title, it is unlikely that all the excerpts come from representatives of the "Eastern" branch of Valentinianism, for a large section parallels the teachings that Irenaeus attributes to Ptolemy, a representative of the "Italic," or "Western," branch (see "Historical Introduction" to Part Three). The Eastern school taught that the body of the incarnate savior was composed of spiritual essence: this idea appears in at least two excerpts (1.1–2; 26.1–3), the latter of which Clement attributes explicitly to Theodotus. According to the former extract, the "flesh" that the savior put on consisted of the "spiritual seed" (1.1). In contrast, the Italic or Western school held that the savior's body was solely animate, as Irenaeus reports of Ptolemy: the savior "became enveloped in a body that had animate essence" (IrPt 1.6.1). This teaching appears in the section of CIExc that parallels Irenaeus (58–59). It is difficult to be more precise about the sources from which Clement drew.

Although Clement's comments and parenthetical remarks sometimes make clear where an excerpt begins and ends, in many cases the boundaries are uncertain. The modern numbering system is conventional, but has no authority. Furthermore, some passages may be direct quotations from Valentinian works, while others must be Clement's summaries of them.

As an anthology of excerpts from a variety of sources, ClExc may be compared to GPh. Like GPh, it does not present a single theological system. Scholars have discerned four blocks of materials (conventionally designated A, B, C, and D) that individually show relative coherence but differ from one another on certain theological points, including the composition of the savior's body. Despite these differences, certain themes recur throughout the entire anthology—above all, the origin, formation, and destiny of the spiritual seed present in the elect.

Sections A and B derive most clearly from Theodotus: ten times in these sections Clement mentions Theodotus by name or writes, "he says." The excerpts in Section A (1–28) focus on the savior of the seed: they describe his relationship to the father and to the other aeons as well as his actions to save the spiritual seed. Section B (29–43.1) provides a brief summary of the Valentinian myth, which culminates in the salvation of the seeds. It begins with the primal dyad of the deep and silence and then turns to the characteristics of wisdom and the other aeons; the origins of the anointed, the craftsman, and Jesus; and the emission and formation of seeds. B concludes with a discussion of how the cross symbolizes Jesus' saving of the seeds. Five times in A and B the seed is described collectively as *diapheron sperma*, literally, "the seed that differs," which can mean "the superior seed" or "the separated seed." Probably both meanings are in view: on the one hand, because it is spiritual in essence, the seed is superior to that which is animate or material; on the other hand, during its sojourn on earth it is separated from its source and requires formation and return. Another distinctive feature of A and B is wisdom's relationship with the anointed (Christ). According to Ptolemy's version of the myth, the fallen wisdom divides into two, and the perfect part of her returns to the fullness; the anointed is subsequently emitted within the fullness, and he temporarily leaves it to form lower wisdom, Achamōth (IrPt 1.2.3–5; 1.4.1). Here the anointed is wisdom's son: the fallen wisdom's thinking brings forth the anointed as her perfect part, and he leaves her and ascends to the fullness (23.2; 32.2–33.3). This teaching resembles that of Valentinus according to Irenaeus's report (IrV[f]).

Section D (66–86) may also originate in sources close to Theodotus: once Clement remarks, "he says" (67.1). The excerpts in D concern the present life of Christians, including the rituals of baptism and eucharist, the problem of fate, and the interactions of human beings with angels and evil spirits. Baptism delivers a person from the control of fate and the evil forces. The passages depict spiritual progress as formation, that is, as the conversion of formless female seed into formed male seed.

Like other Valentinian works, the excerpts in A, B, and D envision the spirits of Valentinian Christians, coded as female, eventually uniting with their angelic counterparts, coded as male. One excerpt in A applies the terms "election" to the angels and "calling" to the Valentinians (21.1); other sources identify spiritual, Valentinian Christians as the elect, and animate, non-Valentinian Christians as the called (cf. 1.1; 58.1; TrTr 122:11–26f).

Section C (43.2–65) stands apart from the other three sections. It appears to be a single long extract, continuously narrating a portion of the Valentinian myth. In it Clement never mentions Theodotus, nor does he use the phrase "he

says.” The account parallels a portion of the myth that Irenaeus attributes to Ptolemy, running from the origin of lower wisdom (IrPt 1.4.1) to the salvation of different groups of human beings (IrPt 1.7.5). The two accounts are so close that scholars agree that they must be taken from a single earlier narrative. Nevertheless, differences in vocabulary and detail suggest that Irenaeus and Clement did not use exactly the same document. For example, the version in CLExc more thoroughly integrates biblical citations and allusions into its mythic narrative than does the one in Irenaeus; it therefore provides important evidence for how a Valentinian interpreted scripture in support of the myth. Section C, like the other sections of CLExc, focuses on the origin and destiny of the three essences, especially the spiritual element that makes up the spiritual seed. It notably explains how the three kinds of human beings derived from a single Adam: Adam and his descendants reproduce only the material essence, while the animate and spiritual essences must have a divine origin. Therefore, material human beings outnumber the other two groups, and spiritual people are “few” (55.2–56.2). Section C shares with Ptolemy (IrPt 1.6.1) the Western Valentinian view that the savior wore a body of animate essence (59.2–3), but it may differ from Irenaeus’s account on the ultimate destiny of the animate people. Irenaeus reports that righteous animate people will not enter the fullness, but gain repose in the midpoint (IrPt 1.7.1), while Clement’s account may suggest that the animates become “equal” to the spiritual and share the same salvation (63.2). Modern interpreters differ on this point.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN SECTIONS A, B, AND D

I. The Fullness

A. The AEONS

The DEEP. The father.

SILENCE, its consort. Thought.

INTELLECT. The only-begotten, name, son, form of the aeons, spirit of acquaintance.

TRUTH, its consort.

WORD. Called anointed, savior.

LIFE, its consort.

Additional aeons in pairs.

WISDOM. The twelfth aeon, the mother. (Later outside the fullness.)

B. OTHER BEINGS WITHIN THE FULLNESS

The ANOINTED (Christ). An emanation from wisdom’s thinking. The image of the fullness, adopted son.

The SPIRIT OF THE FATHER’S THOUGHT.

JESUS. An angel of the fullness, the advocate (Paraclete). Called savior and lord.

The ANGELS of the superior seed. The males, the elect.

The BOUNDARY OF CROSS.

II. Non-Human Beings Outside the Fullness

The CRAFTSMAN (demiurge). The image of the only-begotten, the ruler of the plan, the place.

The DEVIL.

POWERS OF THE LEFT AND RIGHT. Evil powers and angels.

III. Humankind

ADAM and EVE.

THE SUPERIOR (OR SEPARATED) SEED. The females, the calling, the church. Valentinian Christians. Among them PAUL and the APOSTLES.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN SECTION C

I. The Fullness

The FATHER.

WISDOM (higher wisdom).

JESUS. Called the angel of counsel, savior, first and universal craftsman.

ANGELS.

II. Non-Human Beings Outside the Fullness

WISDOM (lower wisdom). Called the second craftsman after Jesus.

The CRAFTSMAN. The image of the father.

The animate ANOINTED (Christ). The image of the son.

ARCHANGELS. The images of the aeons.

ANGELS OF THE ARCHANGELS.

SPIRITS OF WICKEDNESS.

III. Humankind

ADAM, comprising three elements:

- (1) The MATERIAL HUMAN BEING, made according to the image of the craftsman.
- (2) The ANIMATE HUMAN BEING, made according to the likeness of the craftsman.
- (3) The SPIRITUAL HUMAN BEING, secretly sown in Adam by Wisdom.

SUBSEQUENT HUMAN BEINGS:

- (1) POSTERITY OF CAIN. Irrational, material.
- (2) POSTERITY OF ABEL. Rational and righteous, animate, the called.
- (3) POSTERITY OF SETH. Possessing the spiritual seed, the elect.

The CHURCH, consisting of the elect and the called.

TEXT

Clement's original Greek text is attested by two manuscripts of the eleventh and sixteenth centuries; the text in the later manuscript was copied from that of the earlier. The translation below is based on Sagnard's critical edition (see "Select Bibliography"), with some modifications. Passages that scholars agree are Clement's own comments have been omitted or set in italics.

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Excerpts from the Works of Theodotus and of the So-Called Eastern School at the Time of Valentinus

A. THE SAVIOR OF THE SPIRITUAL SEED

The emission of spiritual seed as the savior's flesh

1.1 “FATHER”—he (Jesus) says—“into your hands I commit my spirit.”
What wisdom (Sophia) emitted as “flesh” for the Word, namely, the
spiritual seed, is—he (Theodotus?) says—what the savior put on
when he descended. **1.2** Therefore, in his suffering he commits wis-
dom to the father, so that he might receive her back from the father,
and so that she might not be detained here by those able to rob her.
In this way, it is the entire spiritual seed, the elect, that he “commits”
through the statement cited above.^{a * * * *}

Lk 23:46

26.1
IrPt 1.6.1, 1.7.2
TrTr 114:4,
116:1

The spiritual seed in Adam

2.1 THE VALENTINIANS say that, when the animate body had been
modeled, a male seed was placed by the Word in the elect soul while
it was sleeping; this (seed) is an emanation of the angelic (element)
so that there might be no lack. **2.2** And this (seed) acted like leaven
by unifying things that appeared to be divided, the soul and the flesh,
which indeed had been brought forth separately by wisdom (Sophia).
“Sleep,” for Adam, was the forgetfulness of the soul, which . . . held
together so as not to disperse, just as the spiritual (seed?), which the
savior had placed in the soul.^a The seed was an emanation from the
male and angelic (element). This is why the savior says,

Gn 2:21
50, 53.2
VFrC
IrPt 1.5.6
TrTr 105:17

Bjn 22:21

Save yourself and your soul.

Gn 19:17

The role of the savior

3.1 WHEN the savior came, therefore, he awakened the soul but kin-
dled the spark. For the words of the lord are power. This is why he said,

1.2 a. At his crucifixion Jesus leaves in the father's care the spiritual seed (now the church), which he had assumed at his incarnation. The following passage (not translated here) is a comment by Clement.

2.2 a. The sentence is corrupt in the MSS, making the translation uncertain.

Let your light shine before human beings. Mt 5:16

3.2 And after the resurrection, when he breathed the Spirit into the apostles, he blew away “the dust” like ash and separated it, but he kindled the spark and made it alive.^{a * * *} Gn 2:7

Exegesis of the prologue of John

6.1 THE PASSAGE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with god, and the Word was god Jn 1:1
IrPt 1.8.5

the Valentinians accept in this way: 6.2 They say that “beginning” is the only-begotten, whom they also call god, just as he (John) plainly calls him god in what soon follows:

The only-begotten god, who is in the bosom of the father, he has made him known. Jn 1:18

6.3 “The Word” that is “in the beginning”—that is, in the only-begotten, in intellect and truth—he (John) makes known as the anointed (Christ), as the Word and life. Therefore, suitably he says that he is god who is in the god intellect. 6.4 “What came into being in him”—the Word—“was life”—his consort. Therefore, the lord also says Jn 1:3f

It is I who am the life. Jn 11:25, 14:6

The son as the father’s thought of himself

7.1 SO, because the father was unknown, he wanted to become known to the aeons. And through his own thought, as one who is acquainted with himself, he emitted the only-begotten, the spirit of acquaintance, which is in acquaintance. Therefore, even he who comes forth from acquaintance, that is, from the father’s thought, is acquaintance, that is, the son, for it is through the son that the father is known. 7.2 But the spirit of love has been mixed with that of acquaintance, as the father (is mixed) with the son and thought with truth, because it (the spirit of love) proceeds from truth as acquaintance (proceeds) from thought. 7.3 On the one hand, he who remained “only-begotten son in the bosom of the Father” explicated the thought to the aeons through acquaintance, because he had indeed been emitted from his bosom. On the other hand, he who appeared here is no longer called by the apostle “only-begotten,” but rather “as an only-begotten”: GTr 18:34
TrTr 87:15
TrTr 56:3
TrTr 73:1
Jn 1:18
Jn 1:18

3.2 a. The following passages (not translated here) are comments by Clement.

glory as of an only-begotten.^{a * * *}

Jn 1:14

The craftsman and images

7.5 THEY (the Valentinians) call the craftsman an image of the only-begotten, and thus likewise are the image's works themselves.^a Therefore, the lord as well made an image of the spiritual resurrection, and he did not raise the dead people whom he raised incorruptible in the flesh, but so that they would die again.^{b * * *}

IrPt 1.5.1

Lk 8:15
Jn 11:44

The dove or the spirit

16 AND the dove too—which some call the holy spirit, but the followers of Basilides (call) the minister, and the Valentinians (call) the spirit of the father's thought—appeared as a body that made its descent upon the Word's flesh.

Mt 3:16 par.
IrPt 1.7.2

Jesus, church, and wisdom (Sophia)

17.1 ACCORDING TO the Valentinians, Jesus, church, and wisdom (Sophia) are a complete and powerful mixture of the bodies.^{a * * *}

26.1

Male and female elements

21.1 THE VALENTINIANS say that the passage

In the image of god he created them; male and female he made them

Gn 1:27

refers to the noblest emission of wisdom (Sophia), of which the males are the election and the female the calling. And they call the males angelic and the female themselves, the superior seed.^a 21.2 Likewise, in the case of Adam, the male remained in him, but the entire female seed was removed from him and became Eve,^a from whom (derive) the female beings, just as the males (derive) from him. 21.3 Therefore, the males were united with the Word, but the females, when they have been made male, unite with the angels and enter the fullness. This is why it is said that the woman is changed into a man and the church that is here into angels.

1.1

2.1f
GPh 63

GTh 114
68, 79
IrPt 1.7.1
GPh 70

7.3 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a remark by Clement.

7.5 a. That is, the works of the craftsman are images of higher realities, just as the craftsman is an image of the only-begotten.

b. The following passages (not translated here) are comments by Clement.

17.1 a. The following passages (not translated here) are comments by Clement.

21.1 a. Or "the separated seed." The MSS mistakenly read "the superior spirit." Here the male angels are referred to as the "election" and the female spiritual ones (Valentinians) as the "calling." Other Valentinian sources refer to the spiritual ones (the Valentinians) as the "elect" or "election" and the animate ones (other Christians) as the "called" or "calling"; cf. 58.1; TrTr 122:12–24f.

21.2 a. The MSS mistakenly read "the entire female seed immediately became Eve from him."

The angels, baptism, and ransom

22.1 AND WHEN the apostle says

Otherwise, what will they do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? 1Co 15:29

he (Theodotus?) says that it is in fact on our behalf that the angels of whom we are parts are baptized.^a 22.2 We are dead, we who have been made dead in this existence; but the males are alive, they who have not shared in this existence.

22.3 If the dead are not raised, why then are we baptized? 1Co 15:29

So we are the ones who are raised, “equal to angels,” restored to the males, the members with the members, into unity. 22.4 The ones “who receive baptism on behalf of us, the dead,”^a are—they (the Valentinians) say—the angels who are baptized on our behalf, so that we too, because we have the name, might not be restrained and prevented from entering the fullness by the boundary and the cross. Lk 20:36
26.1, 31.3f
GPh 51
42.1

22.5 For this reason too, during the laying on of hands,^a they (the Valentinians) say at the end, “into angelic ransom”; this is (the ransom) that the angels have, so that the one who has obtained ransom might be baptized in the same name^b in which also his angel was baptized before him. 22.6 In the beginning the angels were baptized into the ransom of the name that descended upon Jesus in the dove and redeemed him. 22.7 Even Jesus required ransom, so that he would not be held back by the thinking of the lack in which he had been placed, advancing through wisdom (Sophia), as Theodotus says. TrTr 124:25
Mt 3:16 par.
TrTr 124:32
Lk 2:52

Jesus the advocate (Paraclete) and Paul

23.1 THE VALENTINIANS say that the advocate (Paraclete) is Jesus, for he came full of the aeons because he proceeded from the entirety. 23.2 For the anointed (Christ), when he had abandoned the wisdom (Sophia) who had emitted him, entered the fullness and requested help for the wisdom who had been abandoned outside,^a and from the good pleasure of the aeons Jesus was emitted as an advocate for the aeon that had transgressed. Jn 15:26 etc.
32.3
TrTr 87:6
IrV (I-g)
IrPt 1.4.1
IrPt 1.2.6
TrTr 86:23

22.1 a. The first-person plural in this excerpt (“we”) refers to spiritual ones.

22.4 a. The word “us” has been added to the quotation.

22.5 a. The practice of laying on hands before or after baptism is attested by many early Christian

sources dating back to the New Testament; cf. Ac 8:18, 9:17, 19:6.

b. The MSS mistakenly read “in his name.”

23.2 a. Here wisdom herself does not divide; rather, it is the anointed who is wisdom’s perfect part and who, as such, returns to the fullness; cf. 33.2–33.1.

In a pattern of the advocate, Paul became an apostle of the resurrection. **23.3** Immediately after the lord's suffering he too was sent out to preach. Therefore, he proclaimed the savior in different ways: as begotten and capable of suffering for the sake of those on the left,^a because they were afraid, being able to be acquainted with him (merely) according to his place; and according to the spiritual (understanding), as coming from the holy spirit and the virgin, as the angels on the right are acquainted with him.^b * * *

1Co 15:12

Rm 1:3f

The spirit in the church

24.1 THE VALENTINIANS say that the spirit that each of the prophets received specially for his ministry—this has been poured out on all who are of the church. Therefore, even the signs of the spirit, healings and prophecies, are accomplished through the church.^a * * *

TrTr 117:8

The Word and words

25.1 THE VALENTINIANS have defined the angel as a word that has a message from the one who is. They call the aeons too by the same name as the Word: words.

TrTr 75:22

The apostles and the Zodiac

25.2 THE APOSTLES—he (Theodotus?) says—have been substituted for the twelve signs of the Zodiac. For just as birth is regulated by them (the signs of the Zodiac), so too rebirth is directed by the apostles.

71.1, 75.1f

Jesus and the superior seed

26.1 LOOK, the visible part of Jesus was wisdom (Sophia) and the church of the superior^a seeds, which he put on through the flesh, as Theodotus says. But the invisible part is <the>^b name, which is the only-begotten son. **26.2** Therefore, when he says

1.1+

It is I who am the door,

Jn 10:7

he is saying, “Up to the boundary, where I am, you will come, you who belong to the superior seed.” **26.3** But when he himself enters, the seed as well will enter with him into the fullness, “gathered” and brought in through “the door.”^a * * *

Mt 3:12

23.3 a. The MSS mistakenly read “for the sake of the noblest ones.”

b. The following passage (not translated here) is a remark by Clement.

24.1 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a comment by Clement.

26.1 a. Or “separated,” here and in 26.2.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.

26.3 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a comment by Clement.

The third and fourth generations

28 THE PASSAGE

god who punishes the disobedient to the third and fourth generation Dt 5:9

the followers of Basilides apply to reincarnations. But the Valentini-ans say that the three places designate those on the left and that “the fourth generation” designates their own seeds. BasFrF

Showing mercy to thousands Dt 5:10

applies to those on the right.

B. THE ORIGIN AND DESTINY OF THE SEEDS

The deep and silence

29 SILENCE—they (the Valentinians) say—who is mother of all the emissions from the deep, with respect to what she could not say, kept silent concerning the ineffable, but with respect to what she comprehended, she called this incomprehensible. VHr IrPt 1.1.1, 1.2.1 TrTr 60:16

Suffering or passion of wisdom, the savior, and the aeons

30.1 *NEXT, forgetting God's glory, they impiously say that he himself suffered.*^a For the fact that the Father shared in suffering—although, Theodotus says, he is by nature solid and unyielding—by showing himself to be yielding, so that silence could comprehend it: *such is a suffering.* TrTr 65:11

30.2 *For co-suffering is a suffering of one person through the suffering of another.* Yes, indeed.^a When the suffering took place, the entirety as well co-suffered, for the rectification of the one who suffered. 31.1 But IrPt 1.2.3 TrTr 85:33f

if in fact the one who descended was the entirety's good pleasure—for “in him was the entire fullness in bodily form”—and he himself suffered, *then clearly the seeds that were in him co-suffered, and from this it follows that the entirety and the all suffered.* 31.2 Rather, even through Col 2:9

the passion of the twelfth aeon the entireties were educated—as they (the Valentinians) say—and co-suffered. 31.3 For at that time they recognized that what they are they are by the Father's grace: unnamable IrPt 1.2.2 TrTr 75:17

30.1 a. In this excerpt the italicized words are Clement's own. Throughout this excerpt “suffering” (*pathē*) may also be translated as “passion,”

“suffer” as “experience passion,” and “co-suffer” as “have compassion.”

30.2 a. This may also be Clement's own remark.

what is beyond acquaintance came into lack of acquaintance and lack of form. 31.4 Hence, it created emptiness of acquaintance, which is a shadow of the name, which is the son, the form of the aeons. Thus, the partial name of the aeons doubtless belongs to the name.^a

GTr 38:6
GPh 8

Fullnesses and images

32.1 THEREFORE, in the fullness, although there is unity, each of the aeons has its own fullness, the pair. For as many as proceed from a pair are—they (the Valentinians) say—fullnesses; but as many as proceed from one are images. 32.2 This is why Theodotus called the anointed (Christ), who proceeded from wisdom’s (Sophia’s) thinking, an image of the fullness. 32.3 But when he had abandoned the mother and entered the fullness, he was mixed, as it were, with the entirety, and thus with the advocate (Paraclete) as well. 33.1 The anointed therefore become an adopted son because he became “elect” in relation to the fullnesses and “first-born” of the things there.^{a * * *}

IrPt 1.1.1

23.1+

Col 1:15
TrTr 86:34

The mother and the craftsman

33.3 WHEN—they (the Valentinians) say—the anointed (Christ) had fled what was foreign to him and had been drawn into the fullness, because he came from the mother’s thinking, the mother again brought forth the ruler of the plan^a as a pattern of the one who had fled from her, according to her desire for him, because he was better who was a pattern of the father of the entirety. 33.4 Therefore, he (the craftsman) became lesser because he was a product of the passion of desire. She was disgusted when she saw his coarseness, as they (the Valentinians) say.

23.2+

34.1 But <the>^a powers on the left, although they were emitted by her before those on the right, are not formed by the light’s advent, but the ones on the left remained to be formed by the place.^b 34.2 Thus, when the mother has entered the fullness with the son and the seeds, then the place will receive the authority of the mother and the rank that the mother now has.

TrTr 89:20

Jesus, the angels, and the saved

35.1 JESUS our light, as the apostle says, “emptied himself”: this means, according to Theodotus, that he went outside the boundary. And because he was an angel of the fullness, he gathered to himself

Jn 1:4
Ph 2:7

31.4 a. The sentence may be corrupt. Possibly, “the partial name of the aeons is loss of the name.”

Greek *oikonomia*, god’s providential arrangement of events; cf. 58.1.

33.1 a. The following passage (not translated here) is a comment by Clement.

34.1 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

b. “the place”: i.e. the craftsman.

33.3 a. “ruler of the plan”: i.e. the craftsman; “plan”:

the angels of the superior^a seed. **35.2** And he himself had the ransom because he came forth from the fullness, but he brought the angels for the rectification of the seed. **35.3** For, because they pray and intercede for parts (of themselves), and because they are restrained on our account—although they are eager to enter (the fullness)—they ask forgiveness for us, so that we might enter with them.^a **35.4** For they all but need us to enter, because without us it is not permitted to them—for this reason, they (the Valentinians) say, not even the mother has entered without us—and so for good reason they pray on our behalf.

21, 22
IrPt 1.2.6,
1.4.5
TrTr 87:22f

The unity of those divided

36.1 OUR ANGELS were, of course, emitted in unity—they (the Valentinians) say—because they are one as coming forth from one.^a **36.2** But inasmuch as we were the divided ones, Jesus was baptized, so that the undivided might be divided until he unites us with them in the fullness, in order that we, although many, might become one, and all of us might be united with the one who was divided for our sake.

TrTr 132:16

Two peoples and the fiery place

37 AMONG those who came forth from Adam, the righteous ones,^a as they made their way through the created things, were detained by the place,^b according to the Valentinians; but the others (remain) in the creation of darkness among those of the left and have experience of the fire. **38.1** “A river of fire comes forth from under the throne” of the place, and it flows into the void of the creation, which is Gehenna and is not filled by the creation of the flowing fire. And the place itself is fiery. **38.2** For this reason—he (Theodotus?) says—it has a curtain: so that the spirits will not be consumed by the sight. The archangel alone enters toward it, according to whose image also the high priest enters the holy of holies once a year. **38.3** Jesus too, when he was summoned there, sat down at the place, so that the spirits^a might remain and not ascend before him, and so that he might subdue the place and provide the seed with a passageway into the fullness.

Dn 7:10

TrTr 111:1

Heb 9:7

Emission of the seeds

39 WHEN the mother had emitted the anointed (Christ) as complete and had been abandoned by him, she no longer emitted anything as complete; rather, she retained near her what she could, so that, when

35.1 a. Or “separated.”

35.3 a. The first-person plural in these sentences (“we,” “us”) refers to spiritual ones.

36.1 a. The first-person plural in this excerpt (“our,” “we,” “us”) refers to spiritual ones.

37 a. I.e. the righteous persons of the Old Testament.

b. In this excerpt, “the place” seems to refer both to the craftsman and to his location in the upper cosmos, in the area that in IrPt 1.7.1 is called the midpoint.

38.3 a. The MSS mistakenly read “the things.”

she herself had emitted the angelic (elements) of the place and of the called,^a she retained them near her, while the angelic (elements) of the elect had been emitted still earlier by the male.^b

40 The (elements) on the right were brought forth by the mother before her request for the light, but the seeds of the church after her request for the light, when the angelic (elements) of the seeds were emitted by the male.

Nature and formation of the seeds

41.1 THE SUPERIOR^a SEEDS—he (Theodotus?) says—were not produced as passions—because when they (the passions) were dissolved, the seeds as well would have been destroyed—nor as creation—41.2 for when the creation was completed, the seeds as well would have been completed—but as children. Therefore, they have a kinship with the light, that is, with Jesus, whom the anointed (Christ) brought forth first after he entreated the aeons. In him (the anointed) the seeds were filtered as much as possible when they came with him into the fullness. Therefore, the church is rightly said to have been chosen before the foundation of the world.

Ep 1:4f
Rm 8:28
IrPt 1.5.6
TrTr 94:20

Thus, in the beginning—they (the Valentinians) say—we were reckoned with (him) and made manifest.^a 41.3 This is why the savior says,

Let your light shine,

Mt 5:16

referring to the light that appeared and gave form, about which the apostle says

the one who illumines every human being was coming into the world,

Jn 1:9

that is, (illumines) the (human being) of the superior^a seed. 41.4 For when the “human being” was “illumined,” then he “came into the world”: that is, he put himself in order, separating from himself the passions that were blinding him and mixed with him.^a

And the craftsman, who had Adam in his thinking beforehand, brought him forth at the end of his crafting.

39 a. The MSS mistakenly read “of the allotments.”

b. “the male”: i.e. the savior. The text is uncertain: possibly one or more words have been inadvertently omitted, obscuring the identities of these two “angelic elements.”

41.1 a. Or “separated.”

41.2 a. In this sentence the first-person plural (“we”) refers to spiritual ones.

41.3 a. Or “separated.”

41.4 a. This interpretation depends on a pun: the noun *kosmos* (“world”) and its verb *kosmein* (“put in order”).

The symbolism of the cross

42.1 THE CROSS is a symbol of the boundary in the fullness, for it separates the unfaithful from the faithful,^a just as the latter separates the world from the fullness. **42.2** Therefore, Jesus as well, through the symbol (of the cross), carries the seeds on his shoulders and leads them into the fullness. For Jesus is called “the shoulders” of the seed, while the anointed (Christ) is “the head.” **42.3** Thus it is said,

IrPt 1.2.4,
1.3.1, 1.3.5
TrTr 75:13

Ep 1:22, 4:15

Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not my sibling.

Lk 14:27 par.

Therefore, he (the anointed) took up the body of Jesus, which was of the same essence^a as the church. **43.1** Therefore, they (the Valentini-ans) say that those on the right knew the names of Jesus and of the anointed even before the advent, but they did not know the power of the symbol (of the cross).^a

TrTr 122:12

C. THE ORIGINS AND DESTINIES OF THE THREE ESSENCES

The sending of the savior to wisdom

43.2 AND WHEN the spirit has given all authority, and the fullness as well has consented, “the angel of the counsel”^a is sent forth.^b And he becomes head of all things after the father.

Mt 28:18

Is 9:5
IrPt 1.4.5

43.3 For in him all things were created, the visible and the invisible, thrones, lordships, dominions, divinities, administrations.

Col 1:16

43.4 Therefore, God has exalted him and given him the name that is above every name, so that every knee should bend and every tongue confess that Jesus the anointed (Christ) is lord of glory, Savior, who himself ascended and descended.

Ph 2:9
Jn 3:13

43.5 What does “ascended” mean except that he also descended? The same one who descended into the lowest parts of the earth also ascended above the heavens.

Ep 4:9f

42.1 a. The MSS mistakenly read “from the unfaithful.”

42.3 a. Greek *homoousios*.

43.1 a. The sentence is corrupt in the MSS, and the translation is uncertain.

43.2 a. “the angel of the counsel”: i.e. the savior.

b. Sections 43.2–65 closely parallel St. Irenaeus’s account of Ptolemy’s version of the gnostic myth (IrPt). We join Irenaeus at IrPt 1.4.5.

Wisdom's shame and formation

44.1 WHEN wisdom (Sophia) saw him (the savior), she recognized that he was similar to the light that had left her, and she ran to him, rejoiced, and worshiped him. But when she saw the male angels that had been sent forth with him, she was ashamed, and she put on a veil. IrPt 1.4.5

44.2 It is through this mystery that Paul commands the women “to wear authority on the head, because of the angels.” **45.1** Immediately, therefore, the savior bestows on her form that is in accordance with acquaintance and healing of the passions, showing to her the things in the fullness from the unbegotten father up to herself. ICo 11:10
TrTr 88:8

Transformation of the passions into essences

45.2 WHEN he (the savior) had separated the passions from her who had suffered them, he fashioned her without passions, but the passions he set apart and conserved. And they were not dispersed as in the case of <those>^a within (the fullness),^b but he brought both them and <those>^c of the second disposition into essence.^d **45.3** In this way, through the manifestation of the savior, wisdom (Sophia) becomes <without passions>,^a and the things outside (the fullness) are created. IrPt 1.4.5
TrTr 90:18

For all things came into being through him, and without him nothing came into being. Jn 1:3

46.1 Therefore, first, out of incorporeal and contingent passion, he transferred and transformed them into still incorporeal material, and then likewise into compounds and bodies—**46.2** for it was not possible to make the passions an essence all at once—and he created in the bodies properties according to their nature.

The craftsman of animate essence

47.1 THEREFORE, the savior is the first and universal craftsman, and wisdom (Sophia), as the second, IrPt 1.4.5

built a house for herself and supported it with seven pillars. Pr 9:1

47.2 And first of all things she emitted an image of the father, a god, through whom she “created the heaven and the earth,” that is, the Gn 1:1
IrPt 1.5.1

45.2 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.

b. This clause refers to an episode found in IrPt 1.2.2–4, in which the passion that wisdom experiences within the fullness is separated from the fullness by the outer boundary. Irenaeus also refers to the earlier passions as having “disappeared” (IrPt 1.4.5).

c. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.

d. That is, the savior brings into essence the passions both from wisdom's negative emotions (material essence) and from her repentance or “second disposition” (animate essence).

45.3 a. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

heavenly and the earthly, the things on the right and the things on the left. 47.3 This (god), because he is an image of the father, becomes a father and emits first the animate anointed (Christ), an image of the son; then the archangels, images of the aeons; then angels of the archangels,^a from the animate and luminous essence, about which the prophetic word says,

And the spirit of God was borne above the waters.

Gn 1:2

Because of the mixture of the two essences of the things that were made by him,^b it says concerning the pure that it “was borne above,” but concerning the heavy, material, thick, and dense that it was borne underneath. 47.4 It hints that this (mixture) was originally incorporeal by saying “invisible,” for it was not invisible to humanity, which did not yet exist, nor to god, for he crafted it. Rather, in this way it somehow expresses the mixture’s unformed, unshaped, and undesignated character.

Gn 1:2

Creation from material essence generated from the passions

48.1 THE CRAFTSMAN separated the pure (elements) from the heavy, because he perceived the nature of each, and he made light: that is, he illumined (the pure elements) and brought them to light and form, because the light of the sun and of the heaven was produced much later.

Gn 1:3
IrPt 1.5.2

Gn 1:14

48.2 And from the material (elements) he makes that which comes from grief by creating essentially

spirits of wickedness, against whom is our struggle.

Ep 6:12

This is why the apostle also says,

And do not grieve the holy spirit of god, in which you were sealed.

Ep 4:30

48.3 And (he makes) from fear the beastly (elements), and (he makes) that which is from terror and uncertainty, that is, “the elements of the universe.” 48.4 Among these three elements fire floats about, is implanted and hidden, is kindled by them, and perishes with them because it has no place^a set apart for it, as do also the other elements from which the compounds are crafted.

Col 2:8, 20
IrPt 1.2.3
TrTr 80:11
s.48.4
IrPt 1.5.4
TrTr 103:13

47.3 a. The MSS mistakenly read “angels of the angels.”

b. The MSS mistakenly read “the two essences that were obedient to him.”

48.4 a. The MSS mistakenly read “pattern.”

Ignorance and subjection of the craftsman

49.1 HE was not acquainted with her who was acting through him, and he supposed that he was crafting by his own power, because he was industrious by nature. This is why the apostle said, IrPt 1.5.3
TrTr 101:3

He was subjected to the futility of the universe, not of his own will, but on account of the one who subjected him, in hope that he too would be liberated, Rm 8:20

when the seeds of God will be gathered. **49.2** A particular proof of the involuntary (nature of his subjection) is that “he blessed the seventh day” and especially welcomed repose from labors. Gn 2:3

Material and animate Adam

50.1 “TAKING DUST from the earth”—a portion not of the dry land, but of the complex and diverse matter—he fashioned an earthly and material soul, one irrational and of the same essence^a as the wild beasts. This is <the>^b human being “according to the image.” **50.2** But the one “according to the likeness” of the craftsman himself is the one that he “breathed” and sowed into the former, placing in him through the angels something of the same essence as himself. **50.3** Because the latter (human being) is invisible and incorporeal, he called his essence “breath of life,” and when it had been formed, it became “living soul.” That this is so the craftsman himself confesses in the prophetic scriptures. Gn 2:7
IrPt 1.5.5
TrTr 104:30
Gn 1:26
Gn 2:7
TrTr 105:35
Gn 2:7

51.1 Therefore, there is a human being within a human being, an animate one within one consisting of dust, coexisting not as a part within a part, but as a whole within a whole, by the ineffable power of god. Hence, he was crafted in paradise, the fourth heaven. **51.2** For flesh consisting of dust does not ascend there, but to the divine soul^a the material (soul) is like flesh. The passage IrPt 1.5.2

Now this is bone of my bone Gn 2:23

signifies this: it hints at the divine soul, which is hidden in the flesh, solid, susceptible to passion, and somewhat strong.

And flesh of my flesh

(indicates) the material soul, which is the divine soul’s body. **51.3** Concerning these two (souls), the savior as well says,

50.1 a. Greek *homoousios*, here and in 50.2.

51.2 a. “divine soul”: i.e. animate soul.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.

It is necessary to fear him who can destroy this soul and this body—the animate one—in Gehenna. Mt 10:28 par.

52.1 It is this fleshly (body) that the savior called “adversary” and Paul,

the law that makes war with the law of my mind. Rm 7:23

It is this that the savior exhorts

to bind and to plunder the goods of the strong man, Mt 12:29

that is, the one who makes war against the heavenly soul, and he exhorts

to settle with him on the way so that we do not fall into prison and punishment. Lk 12:58

52.2 Likewise, (he exhorts) “to come to terms” with it (the fleshly element), not by nourishing and strengthening it through the ability to commit sins, but by putting it to death here and now and by showing it to be depleted through abstention from wickedness, so that, at the time of its dissolution, it may be secretly dispersed and evaporated, not receive for itself any reality, and not have any enduring power during its passage through fire. **53.1** This (fleshly element) is named a “weed,” which “grows up with” the soul, “the good seed.” It is (called) also “the devil’s seed,” because it is of the same essence^a as he, and “serpent,” “bruiser of the heel,” and “robber” attacking the king’s head. Mt 5:25
Col 3:5
Mt 13:25
Jn 8:44?
Gn 3:1, 15

Spiritual seed in Adam

53.2 BUT ADAM had the spiritual seed, which had been sown into his soul without his knowledge by wisdom (Sophia), which was 2.1
IrPt 1.5.6
TrTr 105:17

appointed—he (Paul) says—through angels, by the hand of a mediator. But the mediator is not one, while God is one. Ga 3:19f

53.3 Therefore, “through” male “angels” the seeds are assisted, those that were emitted into birth by wisdom, insofar as it is possible for them to exist. **53.4** For just as the craftsman, although he is moved without his knowledge by wisdom, supposes that he is self-moved, likewise human beings as well. **53.5** Therefore, wisdom first emitted a spiritual seed in Adam, so that the “bone,” that is, the rational and heavenly soul, might not be empty, but rather filled with spiritual marrow. Gn 2:23

53.1 a. Greek *homoousios*.

The three natures of human beings

54.1 FROM ADAM three natures are engendered: first, the irrational, to which Cain belongs; second, the rational and righteous, to which Abel belongs; third, the spiritual, to which Seth belongs. **54.2** And the one consisting of dust is “according to the image”; the animate is “according to the likeness” of god; and the spiritual is according to its own (nature). In reference to these three, apart from Adam’s other children, it is said,

IrPt 1.7.5
TrTr 118:14

Gn 1:26

This is the book of the genesis of human beings.

Gn 5:1

54.3 Because Seth is spiritual, he neither tends flocks nor cultivates; rather, he bears children as fruit, as spiritual (children). And as for the one who “hoped to call upon the name of the lord,” who looks “upwards,” whose “citizenship is in heaven”—the world has no room for this one.

Gn 4:2

Gn 4:26
Ph 3:20

55.1 Upon Adam, in addition to these three incorporeal (elements), the one consisting of dust wears a fourth, the “garments of skin.”

Gn 3:21
IrPt 1.5.5

55.2 Therefore it is neither from the spirit nor from what was breathed in that Adam sows. For both are divine, and both are emitted through him, but not by him. **55.3** His material (element) operates for seed and generation because it is mixed with the seed and cannot withdraw from this linkage during (this) life. **56.1** It is in this sense that our father, Adam, is

the first human being from earth, one consisting of dust.

1Co 15:47

56.2 But if he had sown from the animate (element) and from the spiritual (element), just as from the material (element), then all would have become equal and righteous, and the instruction would have been in everyone. This is why the material ones are numerous, the animate ones not numerous, and the spiritual ones few.

56.3 Therefore, the spiritual (element) is saved by nature; the animate (element), because it is under its own power, has an inclination toward faith and incorruptibility and toward lack of faith and corruption, according to its own choice; but the material (element) is destroyed by nature. **56.4** Therefore, when the animate (elements) are “grafted onto the cultivated olive tree,” that is, into faith and incorruptibility, and share in “the fatness of the olive tree,” and when “the Gentiles enter,” then “all Israel (shall be saved) in this way.” **56.5** “Israel” is interpreted allegorically as the spiritual human being, the one who will see god,^a the legitimate son of the faithful Abraham, the one

IrPt 1.6.1, 1.7.5
TrTr 119:16f

Rm 11:17–26

56.5 a. The author refers to an ancient but incorrect view that the name “Israel” etymologically

meant “a man who sees god.” This interpretation is found frequently in Philo of Alexandria.

“from the free woman,” not the one “according to flesh” who is from the Egyptian slave woman. 57 Thus there arise, from the three races, the formation of the spiritual, on the one hand, and the transfer of the animate from slavery into freedom, on the other. Ga 4:22f

Jesus and the church

58.1 AND SO, after the reign of death, which had made a great and seductive promise, but which became nothing less than a ministry of death, the great contender Jesus the anointed (Christ), although every ruler and divinity refused, assumed by his own power the church, the elect and the called (elements)—the spiritual from her who gave birth to it, and the animate from the plan.^a He rescued and carried up those that he had assumed, and through them also those of the same essence^b as theirs.

58.2 For if the first-fruits are holy, so is the lump as well; if the root is holy, so are the branches as well. Rm 11:16

Incarnation of the savior

59.1 THEREFORE, he first put on the seed that is from her who bore it; he was not contained^a by it; rather, he contained it by his power, and it gradually becomes formed through acquaintance. 1:1+

59.2 When he arrived at the place,^a Jesus found the anointed (Christ) to be put on,^b the one who was proclaimed beforehand, whom the prophets and the law announced, and who is the image of the savior. **59.3** But even this animate anointed that he put on was invisible. It was necessary that he who was entering the universe wear also a perceptible body, so that he might be seen and grasped, and he might participate in civic life. Therefore, a body was woven for him from the invisible animate essence, and, by the power of divine preparation, it came into the perceptible universe. **60** The passage 1Jn 1:1

The holy spirit <will come>^a upon you Lk 1:35

refers to the <origin>^b of the lord's body;

the power of the most high will overshadow you

58.1 a. Greek *oikonomia*: god's providential arrangement of events.

b. Greek *homoousios*.

59.1 a. The MSS mistakenly read “divided.”

59.2 a. “the place”: i.e. the craftsman.

b. The MSS mistakenly read “he found Jesus the anointed to be put on.”

60 a. These words are inadvertently missing in the MSS.

b. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.

indicates the formation by god,^c which he imprinted on the body in the virgin.

GPh 14

Passion and death of the savior

61.1 THAT HE HIMSELF is something other than what he assumed is clear from what he confesses:

It is I who am life. It is I who am truth. I and the father are one.

Jn 11:25, 14:6,
10:30

61.2 But he indicates the spiritual (element) that he assumed and the animate (element) in this way:

The child grew and advanced in wisdom (Sophia).^a

Lk 2:52

For the spiritual (element) requires^b wisdom, and the animate, growth.

61.3 By means of the things that flow from his side, he makes it clear that, by the flow of the passions from those who experience passion, the essences are saved, because they have become without passions.

Jn 19:34

61.4 And when he says,

The son of man must be rejected, insulted, crucified,

Mk 8:31 etc.

he appears to be speaking of another person, clearly the one who experiences passion.^a

61.5 And he says,

I will go before you on the third day into Galilee,

Mt 26:32

for he himself goes before all things, and he intimates that he will raise up the soul that is invisibly saved and will restore it in the place where he goes before.

61.6 He died when the spirit that had descended upon him at the Jordan departed, not by existing on its own, but by withdrawing, so that death might operate. For how could the body have died with life present in him? For in that case death would have had control over even the savior himself, which is absurd. Instead, death was outwitted through guile. **61.7** For when the body died and death had control over it,^a the savior sent forth the ray of power that had come upon him, and he destroyed death, and he raised the mortal body when he had dispersed the passions. **61.8** Thus, the animate (elements) will

22.6
IrPt 1.7.2

c. "god": i.e. the craftsman.

61.4 a. "the one who experiences passion": i.e. the animate anointed (Christ).

61.2 a. The MSS mistakenly read "The child grew and advanced greatly."

61.7 a. The MSS mistakenly read "him."

b. The MSS mistakenly read "shows."

be raised and saved in this way, but the spiritual (elements) that have faith are saved in a manner surpassing the former, receiving the souls as “wedding garments.”

Mt 22:12

The animate anointed (Christ)

62.1 THEREFORE, the animate anointed (Christ) sits at the right hand of the craftsman, just as even David says, “Sit at my right hand,” and so on. **62.2** He sits there until the final consummation, “so that they might see him whom they pierced.” They pierced that which is visible, which was the animate one’s flesh. “For his bone will not be broken,” he says, just as in the case of Adam the prophecy uses “bone” to refer allegorically to the soul. **62.3** For when the body suffered, the anointed one’s soul “committed” itself “into the hands” of the father.^a But the spiritual element in the bone he does not yet commit; rather, it is he (the savior) who saves it.

Ps 110:1

Rv 1:7

Jn 19:36

Gn 2:23

Lk 23:46

Joy of the bridal chamber

63.1 THEREFORE, the repose of the spiritual ones is on the lord’s day, that is, in the octet, which is called the lord’s day, with the mother, while they have the souls as garments until the final consummation. But the other faithful souls are with the craftsman, but at the final consummation they too withdraw into the octet. **63.2** Next comes the wedding banquet, which is shared by all the saved, until all become equal and recognize one another.

IrPt 1.7.5

64 Then the spiritual (elements) lay aside the souls, and, at the same time as the mother escorts the bridegroom, they too escort the bridegrooms, their angels; they enter the bridal chamber within the boundary; and they come to the vision of the father, becoming intellectual aeons, (coming) into the intellectual and eternal marriages of the pair.

65.1 The “steward” of the banquet,^a the best man of the nuptials,

Jn 2:9
TrTr 122:19

the friend of the bridegroom, standing outside the bridal chamber, hearing the voice of the bridegroom, rejoices greatly.

Jn 3:29
IrPt 1.7.4

65.2 This is his “fullness of joy” and of repose.

Jn 3:29

62.3 a. “the father”: i.e. the craftsman. This interpretation of Lk 23:46 differs from that in 1.1f.

65.1 a. “the ‘steward’ of the banquet”: i.e. the craftsman.

D. THE FORMATION OF THE SEED: FATE, RITUAL, AND THE SPIRITS

Threefold instruction of the savior

66 THE SAVIOR instructed the apostles at first figuratively and mystically, later in parables and enigmatically, thirdly clearly and openly when they were alone. Mt 13:10 par.
Jn 16:25

Allegorical references to higher wisdom (Sophia)

67.1 THE APOSTLE says

when we were in the flesh

Rm 7:5

as though he were already speaking apart from the body. Therefore, he (Theodotus?) says that by “flesh” he (the apostle) means the weakness that is the emission of the higher woman. **67.2** And when the savior says to Salome,

There is death as long as women give birth,^a

he did not say this to disparage birth because it is necessary for the salvation of those who have faith, **67.3** for this birth is necessary until the seed, which has been reckoned beforehand, has been brought forth. **67.4** Rather, he is hinting about the higher female, whose passions became creation and who emitted also the unformed essences, on account of whom even the lord descended to separate us from the passions and to make us one with him.^a

Children of the bridal chamber

68 FOR as long as we were children of the female only, as though of a shameful coupling, we were incomplete, infantile, unwise, weak, and formless, brought forth like abortions; we were children of the woman. But when we have been given form by the savior, we have become children of the male and of the bridal chamber. 79
ICo 15:8

Fate: Stars and powers

69.1 FATE is a conjunction of numerous and opposed powers. These (powers) are invisible and not manifest, regulating the course of the

67.2 a. This is a quotation from the lost *Gospel According to the Egyptians*, which is now known only in fragmentary quotations by Clement. It is not to be confused with *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* or *The Egyptian Gospel* (EgG). For discussion, text, and translation, see B. D. Ehrman

and Z. Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 223–29.

67.4 a. The MSS mistakenly read “to make himself one.”

stars, through which they govern. **69.2** For just when each of them (the stars) has reached the primary position, exalted by the movement of the universe, it achieves control of those who are generated at that precise moment, as if they are its children.

70.1 So then, through the fixed stars and the planets, the invisible powers that are carried by them control and oversee the births. **70.2** As for the stars, they themselves do nothing, but they indicate the working of the presiding powers, just as also the flight of birds signifies something, but does not perform it.

71.1 So then, the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the seven stars that move around these, sometimes in conjunction, sometimes in opposition, ascending, [descending, . . .] **71.2** these (stars), when they are moved by the powers, indicate the movement of essence into the birth of living things and the evolution of their circumstances. **71.3** Both the stars and the powers are diverse—working good or working evil, on the right or on the left, the combination of which is what is produced. And each of them comes into being at its proper time, as the dominant one performs what is natural, partly at the beginning and partly at the end.

The angels vs. the powers

72.1 IT IS from this rebellion and combat with the powers that the lord saves us, and he brings peace to the battle between the powers and the angels, in which the latter are arrayed for us and the former against us. **72.2** Some are like soldiers, fighting along with us, as servants of god, but others are bandits. For the evil one prepared for battle not by taking up the sword in behalf of the king, but by seizing it for himself out of madness. Heb 1:14
Jn 10:1

73.1 It is on account of the adversaries that they (the angels), by means of the body and exterior things, entered into the soul and took for themselves slavery. But these of the right that accompany us are not sufficient to save and preserve us. **73.2** For they are not perfectly vigilant as is the good shepherd. Rather, each is like a mercenary who, when he sees the wolf approaching, flees and does not want to lay down his life for his own sheep. **73.3** Moreover, the human being as well, on whose behalf this battle is waged, is a weak animal and easily inclined to the worse and to cooperation with those who hate him. Hence, for him the evil circumstances grow even greater. Jn 10:11f

The descent of the savior and the star of the magi

74.1 IT IS for this reason that the lord descended: in order to bring the peace from heaven to those on earth, **74.2** as the apostle says, “peace on earth and glory on high.” This is why a strange and new star arose, bringing to an end the old astral order and shining with a new, not Lk 2:14
Mt 2:2
Gjd 55:19

worldly light, tracing new and salvific courses, <just like>^a the lord himself, the guide of humanity, the one who descended to earth in order to transfer those who have faith in the anointed (Christ) from fate into his forethought.

Fate still controls others

75.1 AND THEY (the Valentinians) say that the horoscopes that turn out to be true demonstrate that fate still is effective for the other people, and the science of the calculations is also an effective proof. 75.2 For example, the magi not only “saw the star” of the lord, but also recognized the truth, that “a king has been born,” indeed their own king, for they were pious men. At that time the Jews alone were known for their piety. 75.3 For it is on this account that the savior, who descended to pious people, came first to those who were renowned for their piety. Mt 2:2

Baptism and the powers

76.1 THEREFORE, just as the birth of the savior removed us from origin and fate, so too his baptism has taken us out of the fire, and his passion out of passion, so that we might follow him in all circumstances. 76.2 For whoever has been baptized into god has moved into god and has received “authority to tread on scorpions and snakes,” that is, the evil powers. 76.3 And he commands the apostles, Lk 10:19

Go about and preach, and baptize those who believe in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit, Mk 16:15
Mt 28:19

76.4 into whom we are regenerated and become superior to all the remaining powers.

Baptism: death and life

77.1 IT IS in this sense that baptism is said to be “death” and “the end of the old life,” because we renounce the evil rulers, but “life according to the anointed (Christ),” because he alone rules. 77.2 But the power of the transformation of the baptized person is not exercised on the body—for it is the same person who comes up (from the baptismal water)—but on the soul. 77.3 As soon as he comes up from baptism he is called “slave of God” even by the unclean spirits, which now “shudder” at the one against whom a little earlier they had been effective. Rm 6:1f
Col 2:12, 3:3
Jm 1:1
Jm 2:19

74.2 a. These words are inadvertently missing in the MSS.

Baptism and fate

78.1 THEREFORE, until baptism, fate is real—they (the Valentinians) say—but after it the astrologers no longer speak the truth.

Baptism and acquaintance

78.2 IT IS not the bath alone that liberates, but also the acquaintance:

Who were we? What have we become?

Where were we? Into what place have we been cast? Where are we hastening to?

From what are we ransomed?

What is generation? What is regeneration?

Becoming male

79 AS LONG AS the seed is still without form—they (the Valentinians) say—it is a child of the female. But when it is given form, it is changed into a male and becomes a son of the bridegroom. It is no longer weak and subject to the cosmic beings, whether visible or invisible; rather, having been made male, it becomes a male fruit. 68

Regeneration

80.1 THE ONE whom the mother generates is being led into death and into the universe, but the one whom the anointed (Christ) regenerates is transferred into life and into the octet. **80.2** And they die to the universe, but live to god, so that death might be destroyed by death and corruption by resurrection. **80.3** For when one has been sealed by the father, son, and holy spirit, one is no longer responsible to any other power, and through the three names comes release from the triad in corruption:

Rm 6:3f
Col 2:12, 3:3
VFrF

TyTr 127:28
GPh 59

Having borne the image of the one consisting of dust, then he will bear the image of the heavenly one.

1Co 15:49

Baptism and the fire

81.1 THE CORPOREAL (ELEMENT) of the fire attacks all bodies, but the pure and incorporeal (element)—they (the Valentinians) say—attacks incorporeal beings, such as demons, angels of evil, and the devil himself. Likewise, the heavenly fire is double by nature: on the one hand, intelligible (perceptible by the mind); on the other hand, perceptible (by the senses). **81.2** Therefore, by analogy, baptism too is double: on the one hand, perceptible through water, able to quench the perceptible fire; on the other hand, intelligible through spirit, protective against the intelligible fire. **81.3** And the corporeal spirit, because it is small, becomes food and fuel for the perceptible

GPh 22, 58

fire, but as it becomes greater, it becomes able to quench (the fire). But the spirit that is given to us from above, because it is incorporeal, has mastery not only over the elements, but also over the wicked powers and rulers.

Power of the sacraments

82.1 BOTH the bread and the oil are made holy by the power of the name, not being the same as they appeared to be when they were received, but by the power they are changed into spiritual power. **82.2** Likewise the water as well, when it is exorcized and becomes baptism, not only separates^a what is worse, but also receives sanctification.

Baptism and unclean spirits

83 IT IS APPROPRIATE to come to baptism rejoicing. But because it often happens that unclean spirits also descend (into the water) with someone, accompany the person, receive the seal with the person, and so become incurable, fear is mixed with the joy, so that only a clean person should descend. **84** This is why there are fasts, supplications, prayers, <impositions>^a of hands, kneelings: because a soul is rescued “out of the world” and “out of lions’ mouths.” Thus, immediately too there are temptations from those (spirits) that are vexed and from which it (the soul) has been taken away. Even if a person anticipates (these temptations), they (the spirits) shake up the exterior.

Jn 17:14
Ps 22:21

Example of the savior

85.1 THIS IS WHY the lord is shaken after his baptism, as a pattern for us, and he is first “with beasts” in the desert. Then, when he has gained mastery over them and their ruler, because he is already the true king, “he is ministered to by angels.” **85.2** For it is reasonable that the one who has gained mastery over angels in the flesh is ministered to by angels. **85.3** Thus, we must be armed with the lordly weapons, keeping the body and soul invulnerable with “the weapons able to quench the darts of the devil,” as the apostle says.

Mt 4:1

Mk 1:13

Ep 6:11

Ep 6:16

Seal of baptism

86.1 CONSIDERING what was brought to him, the lord did not say, “Whose possession is this?” but rather, “Whose image and inscription is this? Caesar’s,” so that it would be given to the one whose it was. **86.2** Likewise also the faithful person: he has, through the anointed (Christ), an inscription, the name of god, and (he has) the spirit as an image. The irrational animals as well indicate by a seal to whom each

Mt 22:20

82.2 a. The MSS mistakenly read “contains.”

84 a. This word is inadvertently missing in the MSS.

of them belongs, and from the seal they are avenged.^a Likewise also the faithful soul, because it has received the seal of truth, carries about “the marks of the anointed.” **86.3** These are “the children who are already reposing in bed” and the wise virgins, with whom those who arrived late did not enter into the “good things prepared,” into “those things into which angels desire to look.”

Ga 6:17

Lk 11:7

Mt 25:1

1Co 2:9

1P 1:12

86.2 a. The owners of killed or stolen animals can seek recompense for their loss thanks to identifying marks placed on the animals.

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RELATED
WRITINGS

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Part Four

THE SCHOOL OF
ST. THOMAS

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

THE APOSTLE THOMAS

Among the most intriguing works of ancient Christian literature are those associated with St. Didymus Jude Thomas, apostle of the East. According to ancient tradition Thomas deserves credit for the conversion of northern Mesopotamia and India to Christianity, and had the signal honor of being Jesus' "double," that is, identical twin. He is the same apostle to whom the New Testament Epistle of Jude is attributed (there he is called "brother of James"—thus, since James was Jesus' brother, the brother of the brother of Jesus). Two of the works included in Part Four—*The Gospel According to Thomas* (GTh) and *The Book of Thomas* (BTh)—have Thomas as their central human character. A third, *The Hymn of the Pearl* (HPrl), is found incorporated in a longer work called *The Acts of Thomas*; in one episode of the *Acts* this hymn is chanted by St. Thomas while languishing in an Indian prison.

THE MODEL OF DIVINE TWINSHIP

Although ancient literature often refers to him simply as Thomas, the central component of the apostle's name is Jude (or Judas, for the two names are different English translations of the same Greek form). "Didymus" and "Thomas," though eventually used as proper names, also had the ordinary meaning of "twin," the one in Greek, the other in Syriac (Aramaic). In the Thomas tradition, Thomas is explicitly called Jesus' "brother" and "double" (BTh 138:7f, 138:19f).

The twin motif was important in the ancient literary genre called the "romance." But in the Thomas tradition, far from being only a romantic exaggeration, this relationship provided a profound theological model for the reciprocal relationship of the individual Christian and the inner divine light or "living Jesus": to know oneself was to know one's divine double and thence to know god; to follow the living Jesus was to know and integrate one's self (BTh 138:7–19f). Thus the twinship and companionship of Jesus and Thomas metaphorically expressed a general model of salvation through acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with god, emphasizing both practical discipleship and self-awareness. Belief in the identity of these three—the individual self, the inner source of divine inspiration (Jesus), and god in the most universal sense (the father)—links the Thomas

literature with other bodies of scripture in this book, especially the writings of Valentinus (GTr) and his school (TRs). *The Gospel According to Thomas* also emphasizes that the divine light or kingdom of light is not only a distinct realm and power with which the individual Christian must reunite, but also a reality around and within every person and thing (GTh 3, 70, 77). If, as many scholars maintain, GTh is older than the time of Valentinus, then this doctrine anticipates Valentinus's concept of a heavenly father who contains all believers and, through his son, is within all believers.

THE MYTH OF ORIGINS

Despite these parallels the Thomas literature shows no unmistakable signs of being Valentinian or classically gnostic. Instead, it presupposes only an uncomplicated Hellenistic myth of the divine origins of the self; conceives of god as unitary; does not discuss the alleged error of wisdom; puts no stress on revisionistic retelling of the myth of Genesis; and does not teach about an ignorant maker of the world. Also unlike gnostic and Valentinian myth, it does not speak of a future time in history when the forces of evil will be destroyed and the just rewarded; rather, god's kingdom comes now and is already present. This mythic understanding is most integrally expressed in *The Hymn of the Pearl*, but it is also clear in BTh and GTh (cf. the introduction to HPrl, Table 4).

According to this myth, the individual true self (spirit, soul, living element) "has come from" or "has been sent from" the "kingdom of light" in the East, that is, belongs to the spiritual world. It now resides within a realm, that is, a state, of "sleep, drunkenness, darkness, and death," whose rulers are malevolent authorities ("Pharisees, Scribes, Babylonian children, tyrannical demons of the Labyrinth"). By the will of the "king" or "father" a savior (Jesus), or a personified message, is sent to awaken, sober up, illuminate, and vivify the self, which learns to recognize itself and to distinguish between light and darkness. The savior's message causes the self to return to its proper home (the kingdom), that is, to its proper state; this home is described as being partly elsewhere, that is, distinct from the realm of darkness etc., and partly within the individual person. The practical consequences of the myth are seen to be ascetic disengagement from the realm of darkness and from legalistic adherence to the religious law of the authorities.

The myth of the soul is to some extent compatible with more complex systems like the gnostic or Valentinian myth, just as *The Gospel of Truth* was able to be read together with Valentinus's system of aeons. However, it does not necessarily presuppose such a system.

THE CULTURAL MILIEU

Although works of the school of St. Thomas circulated also in Egypt—where they could have been known to Valentinus in his formative years—scholars usu-

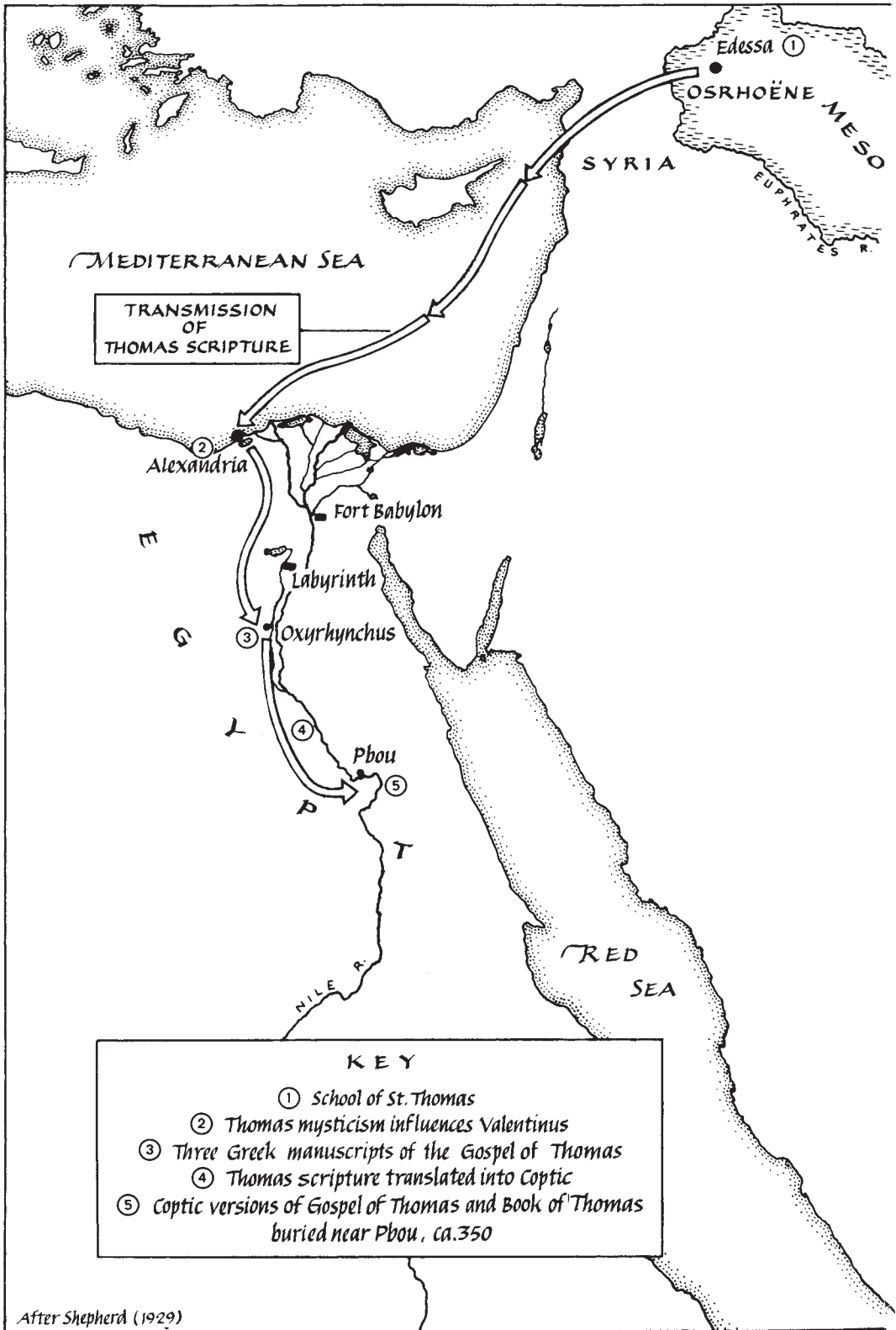
ally consider that they were written in Syria or Mesopotamia, possibly in Edessa, a city of northern Mesopotamia (see Map 6).

Several arguments have been suggested in favor of this localization of the school of St. Thomas.

1. Mesopotamia is part of the geographical area traditionally associated with the wanderings of the saint, especially according to *The Acts of Thomas*. The young prince who is protagonist in HPrl sets out from this general region.
2. *The Acts of Thomas* (including HPrl, which forms a part of it) was transmitted in the Syriac language as well as Greek; for technical reasons most specialists hold that Syriac must have been the original language of its composition.
3. At least by the end of the fourth century, the church of Edessa possessed as a relic the bones of St. Thomas; they were seen there by Egeria, a Christian lady from France or Spain, on April 19, 384, and mentioned in her travel diary, which survives to this day.
4. The ethos of the texts suggests a region where a Syrian form of Christianity was present, and certain details such as references to wandering ascetics anticipate the character of monastic life that was peculiarly Syrian and Mesopotamian in following centuries.
5. The model of twinship between a divine being and a wandering missionary, which is found in Thomas scripture, profoundly influenced the founder of the Manichaean world religion, who lived in Mesopotamia in the third century A.D. From external sources, Manichaeans are known to have read GTh as part of their scripture.

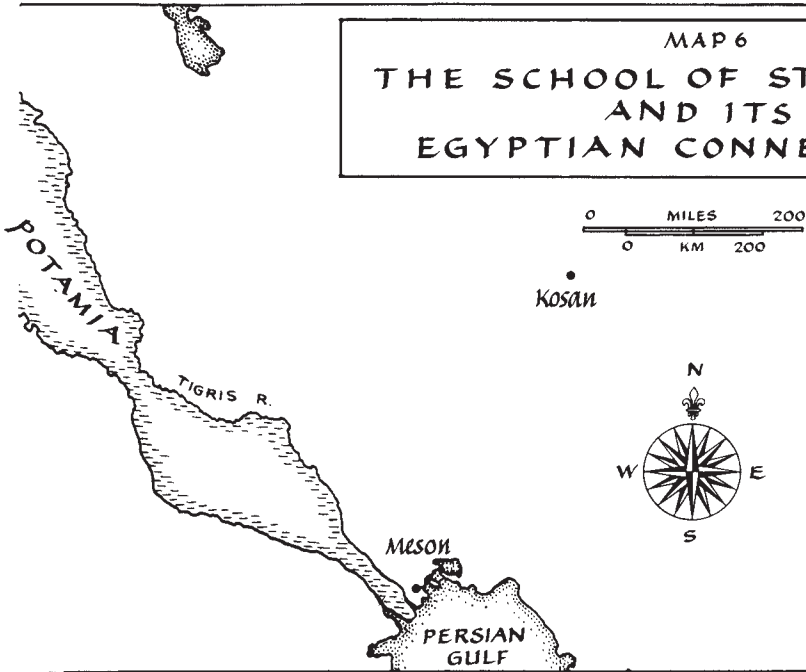
These considerations, though somewhat unequal in value, suggest that the Thomas works were composed and transmitted in one or more Christian communities of the Mesopotamian region. Edessa was one of the main centers for the diffusion of Christian literature composed in the region; this fact, together with its claim to possess the bones of St. Thomas, makes it the most obvious home for a "school" of writers who honored St. Thomas as their patron saint. Since there is nothing especially sectarian about the Thomas scripture, it must have been a part of the normal canon of scripture read by Mesopotamian Christians in the second and early third centuries. It would have been read along with works such as the *Odes of Solomon* and Tatian's *Harmony (Diatessaron)*; compare also the General Introduction, "Gnostic Scripture and the Christian Bible." However, after the middle of the third century, Thomas scripture (at least GTh) was taken up by the Manichaean religion and so became seriously compromised.

Edessa (Orhay), where the Thomas literature was perhaps composed, is now a little-known town in eastern Turkey (modern Urfa, east of Gaziantep). But in antiquity it was a major oriental city on the Armenia-Syria caravan route and a point of exchange between Hellenistic-Roman and Iranian-Arab culture. After Alexander the Great conquered Mesopotamia (331 B.C.) his Macedonian successor Seleucus I reorganized the oriental city, which was rooted in local Syrian

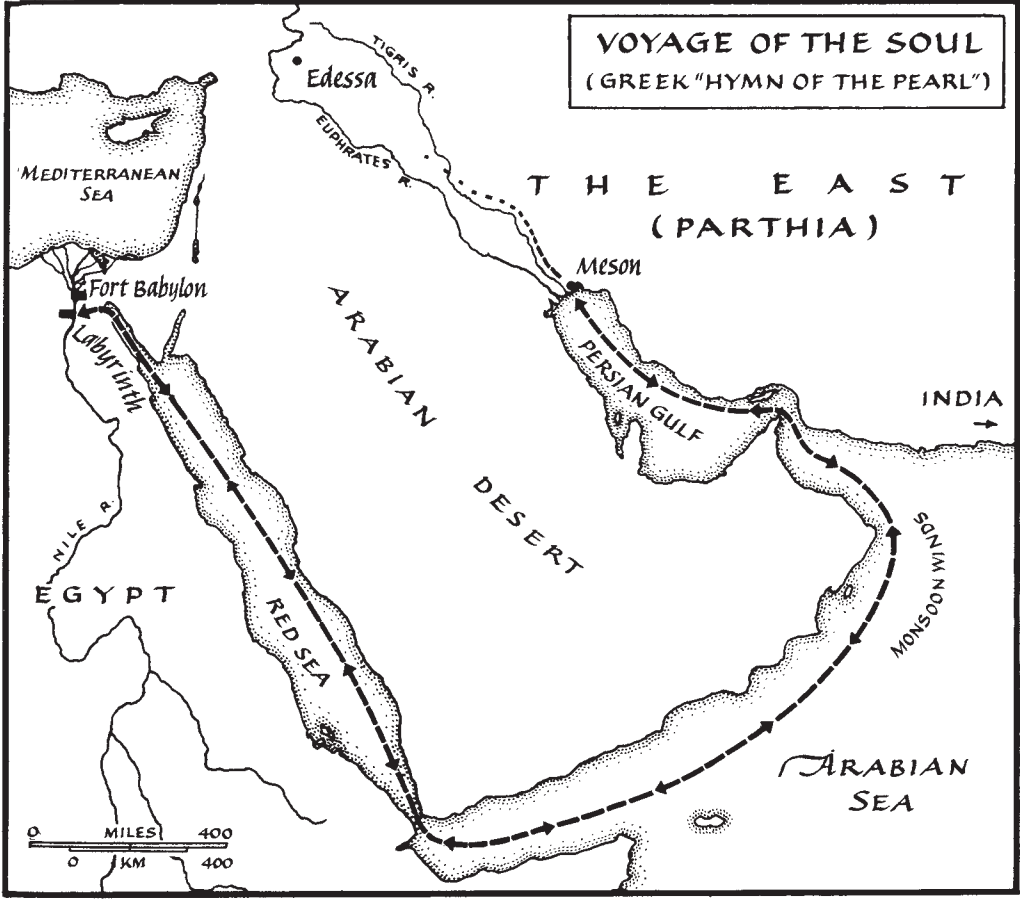


After Shepherd (1929)

MAP 6
 THE SCHOOL OF ST. THOMAS
 AND ITS
 EGYPTIAN CONNECTIONS



VOYAGE OF THE SOUL
 (GREEK "HYMN OF THE PEARL")



culture, so that it was superficially like a Greek city state, at least in law and civic organization, and installed there a small Greek-speaking contingent of Macedonian colonists. This rough fusion of local Syrian and imported Greek-like cultures continued to stamp the civilization of Edessa at least until A.D. 638, when the city fell to Islamic invaders. Local pagans worshiped typical Syrian planetary and solar deities; Judaism was a component of Edessene culture, perhaps an ancient one; Christianity seems to have arrived within a century of Jesus' death.

About 132 B.C. the Macedonian army was driven out of Mesopotamia, and from then until A.D. 165, Edessa was under Parthian political influence, though it was the capital of a nominally distinct kingdom called Osrhoëne, which stretched from the Euphrates to the Tigris across northern Mesopotamia. The Iranian kingdom of Parthia was strongly influenced by Greek culture, especially in the first half of this period. It was presumably under the Parthians that HPrI was composed (HPrI verse 38). Osrhoëne was ruled by a wily dynasty of Arab-Nabataean (later Armenian) stock, who guided it in the ambiguous role of buffer state between the hostile empires of Rome and its eastern neighbor Parthia. In A.D. 165, Osrhoëne became a dependency of Rome; in A.D. 198, its ruler Abgar VIII was honored by the Roman emperor with the traditional Parthian title of "king of kings" (cf. HPrI verse 41). In A.D. 214 the autonomy of Osrhoëne was finally annulled by the Romans, who absorbed it into the empire as a colony.

The early Christian literature written or used in Osrhoëne and the Mesopotamian region seems usually to have been transmitted in two languages—Greek and an early form of Syriac (the regional Aramaic dialect)—reflecting the two cultural strains within the kingdom and more generally within greater Syria; bilingual publication was not unusual in the Roman world. Thus probably not only *The Acts of Thomas* and HPrI, but also other important works of scripture, including Tatian's *Harmony* (*Diatessaron*, A.D. ca. 170), works of the Edessene Christian philosopher Bardaisan (born A.D. 154), and *The Odes of Solomon* (early second century A.D.?) were brought out in both Syriac and Greek; no matter which version was translated from the other, it was of course the Greek that was read in the rest of the Mediterranean world; here the Greek version was even translated into Latin, Coptic, and other languages (see Map 6). Old Syriac versions of the "separate gospels" (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn) also circulated in Osrhoëne along with the Greek. The later literary history of Edessa is noteworthy mainly for works in Syriac (especially those of the "School of the Persians," which flourished in the city after A.D. 361), whose bulk and importance subsequently eclipsed the brilliance of the earlier period.

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Scripture of the School of St. Thomas Not in This Volume

The Acts of Thomas (complete). Translated with notes by H. Attridge (cf. above, his *Acts of Thomas*).

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THE HYMN OF THE PEARL
OR
THE HYMN OF JUDE THOMAS
THE APOSTLE IN THE
COUNTRY OF THE INDIANS

IN THE GREEK VERSION

(HPrI)

CONTENTS

The Hymn of the Pearl (“The Hymn of the Soul”)¹ or *The Hymn of Jude Thomas the Apostle in the Country of the Indians* presents a Hellenistic myth of the human soul’s entry into bodily incarnation and its eventual disengagement from the body. The mythic tale of salvation is recounted by the protagonist (the soul) in the form of an autobiographical reminiscence. The myth does not directly demand a religious response from the reader, for it is a general description of salvation. Nevertheless, quoted within the story (verses 41–48) is a classic homiletic appeal for conversion, phrased in the traditional language of sleep and awakening. This has been identified as a special type of material (often loosely termed the “gnostic call”), which in fact transcends narrow sectarian and philosophical boundaries (cf. BJn 31:10f, Zs 130:14f, Poim 27f, CH7 1f).

For the most part, the myth of salvation is not expressed literally in HPrI but, rather, is hidden behind a figurative fairy tale or folktale. To perceive the myth, an ancient reader would have needed to reinterpret the tale allegorically (for the technique, see the “Historical Introduction” to Part Three, “Allegorical interpretation of scripture”). The process of reinterpretation begins within the text of HPrI itself (verses 76–78, 88, 98); the prince’s garment, given to him in reward for conquering the dragon of Egypt, is equated with self-acquaintance (*gnōsis* of the self); by putting on the garment the prince knows himself and “arises” into the realm of peace. Starting from this clue, an ancient reader could work back through the story at another level, retelling it as an account or model

1. The titles *The Hymn of the Pearl* and *The Hymn of the Soul*, by which the present work is generally known, are the creation of modern scholarship. Neither one is found in any ancient manuscript of the work.

of the quest for self-knowledge and salvation. It must be emphasized that, except for the one explicit clue, the text itself provided ancient readers no more than a figurative representation of this hidden message. Readers had to supply or construct the rest of the deeper interpretation.

Both popular belief and certain kinds of academic philosophy (especially Platonism and Pythagoreanism) accepted that the soul had its “origin” in a nonphysical “realm” from which it “had come”; that its incarnation in a material body hindered it from contemplating the good or god, and was generally harmful; that it might be saved from this unfortunate fate, for example, by acquiring the self-knowledge taught by wisdom or philosophy; and that the result might be an existence free of the body’s influence. The problem of why in the first place the soul had ever “fallen” into existence in a body was a topic of philosophical discussion.

The outlines of this commonplace myth of the soul are parallel to the story line of HPrI. They also agree with the mythic elements in GTh and BTh (the latter two works are overtly Christian while HPrI, as a figurative text, has no place to mention the Christian savior as such). The parallelism can be expressed as follows.

Story line (see Map 6). The (1) king of (2) the East (Parthia) sends (3) a royal prince by way of (4) the satrapy of Mesene (“Meson”) to (5) Egypt, in order to (6) get a precious pearl. The prince (7) is poisoned and made intoxicated by (8) Egyptians. But he (9) is awakened by (10) a message from the king. He (11) takes the pearl and (12) returns to the East, where he puts on (13) a robe of *gnōsis* and (14) ascends to the king’s palace, (15) entering the realm of peace.

Allegorical meaning (myth). The (1) first principle of (2) the spiritual realm providentially causes (3) the individual soul to descend past (4) the heavenly bodies (?) into (5) incarnate life in a material body, in order to (6) be educated (get salvation). The soul (7) becomes unconscious and inert because of (8) matter. But it (9) disengages itself in response to (10) the savior or message of philosophy (wisdom). It (11) becomes acquainted with itself and its career and (12) is metaphysically reunited with (13) itself (that is, becomes integral) and with (14) the first principle, (15) gaining true repose.

Deduction of this myth from the story line of HPrI is confirmed by comparison of HPrI with other works of Thomas scripture; compare Table 4. The results of such a comparison (column 2 of Table 4, “Implied Philosophical Myth”) describe a specifically Edessene interpretation of HPrI within the school of St. Thomas. But it remains possible that HPrI was originally composed elsewhere and that this interpretation was historically secondary; compare below “Literary background.” The total lack of any specifically Christian or Jewish details or characters also raises the possibility that HPrI was first written for a non-Christian readership. Only specific historical information about the circumstances of its composition could clarify these questions. In the absence of such information it is not surprising that modern scholars have substantially disagreed on the interpretation of HPrI.

Given the importance of the myth for one’s life and conduct, why is the philosophical sense of the text not stated more explicitly? No definite answer to such a question is possible, but three factors are worth noting. First, HPrI is formally

a work of art, not philosophy; a fairy tale and not a philosophical myth. Second, as a piece of religious art it may have had the secondary function of religious propaganda, that is, to attract interested external readers into a particular school of religious thought by its artistry (for this function, see also TRs, PtF, and even GTr). Third, by incorporating within the text a clue to a parallel allegorical reading, HPrI engages the reader in a lesson in interpretation; this would not be possible if the philosophical meaning were stated explicitly and completely. The other two works included in Part Four also insist on the importance of textual interpretation in the acquisition of salvation (GTh I, BTh I38:1–37f); an act of textual interpretation on the part of the believer seems to be an integral part of the idea of salvation in the school of St. Thomas.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author of HPrI is unknown.² Since the text is only attested as a part of *The Acts of Thomas* (probably written in Edessa, A.D. ca. 200–225) any deductions about the date and place of composition of HPrI must rest upon two prior questions: (a) whether HPrI was composed by the author of *The Acts of Thomas*; (b) whether HPrI presupposes a model of divine twinship based on the name Didymus Jude Thomas (see the “Historical Introduction” to Part Four). To the first of these questions (a) most scholars have answered no; both its style (mainly in the Syriac) and its content suggest that HPrI was composed independent of *The Acts of Thomas* and was either incorporated into the *Acts* by its author or interpolated in it by a subsequent editor.

The second question (b) is harder to answer. If HPrI was composed in Edessa (see Map 6), comparison of its structure with the mythic background of GTh and BTh should indicate the *original* sense of HPrI. In such a case, HPrI could have provided the model, even if it were a non-Christian one, on which the Christian Thomas tradition was based; alternatively, HPrI might have presupposed the Thomas tradition and might represent an apologetic popularization of that tradition in the form of a folktale. The crucial factor here is the order in which the three works—HPrI, GTh, and BTh—were composed.

But if HPrI was not composed in Edessa, its original meaning might have been something quite different from the theology of divine twinship; the allegorical obscurity of the text would completely hide any such meaning unless further information could be obtained about the religious context in which the text originally was read. In such a case HPrI would have been imported to Edessa and secondarily adopted by the school of St. Thomas for its own purposes. The date of composition is presumably sometime during the Parthian dynasty of Persia (247 B.C.–A.D. 224), since Parthia is mentioned by name and favorably (HPrI 38). If the work was composed in Edessa, it would have been composed during the Parthian control of that city, which ended in A.D. 165. The original language of

2. Some scholars have attributed the work to Bardaisan (born A.D. 154), the bilingual Christian poet and theologian of Edessa, but this attribution is not generally accepted.

TABLE 4 The Myth of the Soul in Thomas Literature

<i>Structural Elements</i>	<i>Implied Philosophical Myth</i>	<i>The Hymn of the Pearl</i>	<i>The Gospel According to Thomas</i>	<i>The Book of Thomas</i>
Starting point	Spiritual realm	A palace in the East (Parthia)	The kingdom of light	The kingdom (essence) of light
Protagonist	Individual souls	A royal prince	Jude; individual spirits	Jude; individual sparks of light
Companion	(?)	His Brother/Cousin	The living Jesus	The savior Jesus
First event	Descent	Divestiture, travel
• Cause	First principle	The King of Kings	The living father	The king
• Purpose	Education	To get a precious pearl	To gain acquaintance (<i>gnōsis</i>)
Second event	Incarnation	Entry into Egypt	Entry into poverty, the world, the flesh. the garment	The burning of desire within the body; alienation
• Result	Unconsciousness	Sleep, servitude	Intoxication, blindness	Intoxication, blindness, bondage
• Opponents	Demons	Egyptians, demons of the Labyrinth	Brigands, Pharisees and Scribes	Demons, spirits, fire
Third event	Disengagement from matter	Disrobing	Abstinence from the world; disrobing	Travel with the savior, self-examination
• Result	Self-acquaintance	Awakening; the pearl	Self-acquaintance, treasure, the kingdom, a pearl	Self-acquaintance
• Cause	Wisdom	A letter from the king; a female guide	Interpretation of Jesus' obscure sayings	The female being who is truly wise; appearance of Jesus the light
Fourth Event	Reunion with the self and with god	Investiture with a robe of acquaintance	Self-integration, return to one's source	Departure, withdrawal
• Result	Repose	Peace	Reign, rest, repose, light	Repose, reign

composition is a matter of debate—Greek, Syriac, or a simultaneous publication in both languages. The Greek version, which is translated here, is in an unclassical and often obscure prose style, reflecting perhaps the taste of the late-Hellenistic period with some regional peculiarity due to the bilingualism of Edessa.

HPrI is, in the words of the Greek *Acts of Thomas* (108), a “hymn” (*psalmos*), implying that it is designed to be sung, perhaps with instrumental accompaniment. It has the strophic form typical of Semitic poetry (neither the Greek version nor the Syriac is written in strictly controlled meter or with a fixed number of syllables per unit, nor is either version rhymed). In narrative structure HPrI resembles a classic folktale or fairy tale; in this sense, its genre is characteristic of oral, popular literature.

The allegorical motif of the pearl (cf. Mt 13:45–46, GTh 76) was widely used not only by Mesopotamian Christian authors, but also in ancient world literature in general.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Inhabitants of the East

The KING OF KINGS, the Great King, the prince’s father

His wife

Other KINGS (satraps) and royal officials of the Parthian empire

The PRINCE, son of the King of Kings

A noble boy of high rank, who accompanies him in Egypt. Called

BROTHER and COUSIN.

Two GUIDES along the road to Egypt

Two TREASURERS who bring the garment to the prince

A FEMALE BEING who guides the prince back from Egypt to the East

II. Intermediates

The MOSANI, inhabitants of Meson (Maišān)

III. Inhabitants of Egypt

The EGYPTIANS, also called BABYLONIANS

The TYRANNICAL DEMONS of the Egyptian Labyrinth

A ravenous DRAGON that guards the pearl

The KING OF EGYPT, perhaps identical with the dragon

TEXT

In its known form, HPrI is part of a much larger work, *The Acts of Thomas*, which recounts the wanderings and adventures of an ascetic preacher Didymus Jude Thomas and the miracles he performed with the aid of his twin brother Jesus. *The Acts of Thomas* (including HPrI) exists in both Greek and Syriac. The *Acts* consists of a series of narrative episodes with which poetry and prayers

have been amalgamated; but the manuscripts of the *Acts* (six Syriac, seventy-five Greek) substantially differ as to which episodes, poems, and prayers they include, for throughout its history the text was constantly being reshaped by successive ancient editors. Thus it happens that only one Greek manuscript (of the eleventh century A.D.) and only one Syriac (A.D. 936) contain HPrl: these two manuscripts are the only surviving evidence for the text, except for an eleventh-century epitome of the Greek version made by Nicephoras, Archbishop of Thessalonica.

Scholarship is not agreed on whether HPrl was an original part of the *Acts* or a secondary addition. Nor is there agreement on whether the Syriac was translated from the Greek or vice versa. Furthermore, the wording of the two versions differs enough to show that they are witnesses of two distinct ancient editions of the text. The Greek is translated here, since it was specifically the Greek edition that was known in the Mediterranean world. Since the single surviving Greek manuscript contains substantial errors of copying and has many obscure turns of phrase, the wording of the Syriac edition sometimes had to be consulted. Line numbers given below correspond to the customary Syriac numbering; HPrl also counts as paragraphs 108–13 of the Greek *Acts of Thomas* and these numbers are given in boldface type. The translation below is based on Bonnet's critical edition of the Greek (in which the Syriac manuscript and Nicetas's epitome are also collated), but with alterations: M. Bonnet, *Acta Philippi et Acta Thomae Accedunt Acta Barnabae (Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha)*, eds. R. Lipsius, M. Bonnet, II/2; Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1903; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959), 219–24.

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The Hymn of Jude Thomas the Apostle in the Country of the Indians^a

The journey down to Egypt

- 1 108 When I was an infant too young to talk, in my father's
palace,
2 Reposing in the wealth and luxury of those who nour-
ished me,
3 My parents equipped me with supplies and sent me out
from the East, our country, on a mission.
4 From the wealth of their treasuries^a they gave me a great
cargo,^b Mt 11:30
5 Which was light,^c so that I could carry it by myself—
6 The cargo was gold from the high country,^d silver plate of
the great treasuries,
7 Emerald jewels^e of India, and agates of Kosan;^f
8 And they armed me with steel.^g
9 They took away from me^h the jewel-studded garment shot
with gold
That they had made out of love for me
10 And the robeⁱ of yellow color (tailored) to my size.^j
11 But they made an agreement with me,

Title a. This title may never have been a feature of the Greek version of *The Acts of Thomas*. It is found only in the Syriac version of the work. “In the Country of the Indians” refers to the setting of the episode in the *Acts*. In the following annotations the Syriac version is quoted from Wright, *Apocryphal Acts* (see “Select Bibliography”), Vol. 2, 238–45, sometimes with comparison of Poirier’s French.

108 a. Or “treasures.”

b. Or “burden” as in Mt 11:30, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

c. I.e. not heavy.

d. Or “the above.”

e. Lit. “Chalcedony jewels.” The exact ancient meaning of this term is uncertain. The Syriac version has “rubies.”

f. The Syriac version has “Beth-Kāšān,” which Wright hesitantly identifies with Kashan in Persia, north of Ispahan.

g. Greek *adamas*.

h. The Greek MS erroneously has “They put upon me”; the reading translated here is found in the Syriac version.

i. “the . . . garment . . . And the robe”: i.e. “the garment, which was a robe.” This equational use of “And” is one of the figures of speech in ancient rhetoric.

j. Or “age.”

- Impressed it on^k my mind, <so that> I might <not>^l forget it, and said,
 12 “If you go down to Egypt and bring from there the one
 pearl,
 13 “Which resides there near the ravenous^m dragon,ⁿ
 14 “You shall put (back) on that jewel-studded garment and
 the robe,^o which you like;
 15 “And you shall be a herald for our kingdom, along with
 your well-remembered Brother.”^p
 16 **109** So I started out from the East, on a hard and frightening
 road, accompanied by two guides;
 17 For I was unused to traveling on it.
 18 I passed the borders of the Mosani,^a where there is the inn
 of the Eastern traveling merchants;
 19 And reached the land of the Babylonians.^b

Mt 13:46
GTh 76

The bondage in Egypt

- 20 Since I had entered Egypt the guides departed who had
 traveled with me,
 21 And I rushed directly to the dragon and camped near its
 den,
 22 Lying in wait for it to grow drowsy and fall asleep, so that
 I might make away with the pearl.
 23 Being on my own, I put on a disguise^c and (would have)
 seemed alien even to my own people.
 24 But there I saw a Cousin^d of mine from the East—a free
 person,
 25 Gracious, handsome, and young, a child of members of
 court:
 26 Who came and kept me company,
 27 And whom I made my friend and partner in my travels;
 had as a constant companion;

k. Lit. “wrote it in.”

l. “<so that>, <not>”: these words are inadvertently omitted in the MS; the Syriac version has “that it might not be forgotten.”

m. Lit. “swallowing.”

n. Lit. “serpent”: Greek *drakōn*.

o. “that . . . garment and the robe”; cf. note 108i.

p. The term “Brother” was sometimes used by Eastern kings of Hellenistic and Roman times as a title of honor; the Syriac here has “second (in command).”

109 a. The Syriac version here has “the borders of Maišān,” which Wright identifies with “the district between al-Basra and Wāsiṭ, with a chief town of

the same name”; i.e. Mesene or Characene at the head of the Persian Gulf.

b. “land of the Babylonians”: i.e. Egypt. In HPrl “Babylon” is not the Mesopotamian city on the Euphrates, as the author makes clear by the geographical order of place names (verses 18–19, 69–70). Rather, it refers to the Egyptian “Babylon,” a fortified garrison city in the vicinity of the great pyramids (at modern “Old Cairo” by Fostāt). Babylon of Egypt was the site of an important Roman fortress; under the emperor Augustus, one of the three Roman legions in Egypt was stationed there.

c. Lit. “I became foreign in (my) appearance.”

d. Probably not an indication of close blood relationship, but rather an Eastern title bestowed at royal court as a mark of honor.

- 28 And exhorted to guard against the Egyptians and against
intercourse with their impurities.
- 29 So I put on their style of dress,^e so that I might not look
like one who was foreign
- 30 And <had come>^f from abroad to get the pearl,
Lest the Egyptians arouse the dragon against me.
- 31 But somehow they learned that I was not from their land.^g
- 32 They gave me a mixture of cunning and treachery, and I
tasted their food.
- 33 I did not (any longer) recognize that I was a child of the
(Great) King,^h but rather acted as servant to their
king.
- 34 And I even came to the pearl for which my parents had
sent me on the mission
- 35 But sank into deep sleep under the heaviness of their
food.ⁱ

The exodus

- 36 **110** Now, my parents also noticed me suffering these
things, and they suffered over me.
- 37 So a proclamation was heralded in our kingdom,^a that all
should present themselves at our court.^b
- 38 And next the kings of Parthia,^c those in office, and the
leaders of the East
- 39 Decided that in my case I should not be left in Egypt.
- 40 So, too, the members of court wrote to me declaring as
follows:
- 41 “From your father the King of Kings,^d your mother who
rules the East,
- 42 “And their Brothers,^e who are second^f after them:^g
“To our child in Egypt. Peace!
- 43 “Arise, and become sober out of (your) sleep.
- 44 “Listen to the words written in this letter.
“Remember that you are a child of kings.
“You have fallen under a servile yoke.

e. Cf. verse 23.

f. These words are inadvertently omitted in the Greek MS; the Syriac version has “because I was come from abroad.”

g. Or “region.”

h “of the (Great) King”: lit. “of King,” a traditional way of referring to the Persian monarch in Greek.

i. I.e. the Egyptians’ food.

110 a. I.e. in the East.

b. Lit. “doors.”

c. For the Parthian empire, see “The cultural milieu” in the “Historical Introduction” to Part Four. It was subdivided into smaller kingdoms, each with its local “king.”

d. This title was used both by the kings of the Arsacid dynasty of Parthia from about ca. 250 B.C. to A.D. 224 and by the succeeding Sassanid dynasty (A.D. 224–636).

e. Cf. note 108p.

f. Second in rank; very high court dignitaries.

g. Lit. “after us.”

- 45 “Call to mind your garment shot with gold.
 46 “Call to mind the pearl for which you were sent on the
 mission to Egypt.
 47 “Your name has been called <to>^h the book of life,
 48 “Along with that of your Brotherⁱ whom you have taken
 to yourself, in our kingdom.”^j
 49 **III** So the king confirmed^a it, as an ambassador,^b
 50 Because of (the threat of) the Babylonian children^c and
 the tyrannical demons of the Labyrinth.^d
 53 But for my part I gave a start when I perceived its voice.^e
 54 And I took it up and kissed it, and I read.
 55 But what was written there concerned that which was
 engraved in my heart.^f
 56 And on the spot I remembered that I was a child of kings
 and that my people demanded my freedom (?).^g
 57 I also remembered the pearl for which I had been sent on
 the mission to Egypt,
 58 And the fact that I had been coming against the fearsome
 dragon for booty.^h
 59 And I subdued itⁱ by calling out my father’s name.^j
 61 And I snatched the pearl, and turned to carry it away to
 my parents.
 62 And I took off the dirty clothing^k and left it behind in
 their land.
 63 Immediately, I went straight (?) <to> the road leading^l to
 the light of our Eastern home.

h. This word is, perhaps, inadvertently omitted in the MS; the Syriac version has “. . . thy name hath been read out in the list of the valiant.”

i. Cf. note 108p; the Syriac here has “viceroi.”

j. The text of the Greek MS may be slightly corrupt here. The Syriac version has “and with thy Brother, our viceroi (?), thou shalt be with him in our kingdom.”

III a. Or “sealed.”

b. The saving letter is personified as a savior. It is to pass through hostile territory with the diplomatic immunity of an ambassador.

c. The Egyptians; cf. note 109b.

d. “the Labyrinth”: the Egyptian Labyrinth, a famous and extremely intricate temple complex southwest of modern Cairo. It is located beside the pyramid of Amenemhat (Ammenemes) III at Hawāra in the vicinity of Crocodilopolis (Medīnet el-Faiyūm, capital of the Faiyūm Oasis). For readers of the ancient Greco-Roman world the Labyrinth was the best known architectural monument

of Egypt after the great pyramids. The cult of Sobk, the crocodile god, was popular in the Faiyūm. The Greek version of HPrl seems to imply that the pearl and its guardian “dragon” are in the Labyrinth. Verses 51–52 are a feature only of the Syriac version.

e. Lit. “I gave a start at its voice and perception.”

f. Cf. verse 11.

g. The Greek MS here erroneously has “and that my freedom demanded my people.” The Syriac version has “I remembered that I was a son of royal parents, and my noble birth asserted its nature.”

h. Or “to snatch something,” lit. “for snatching” (Greek *harpasis*); cf. verse 61.

i. The dragon.

j. Verse 60 is a feature only of the Syriac version.

k. Cf. verse 29.

l. Translation uncertain. The Greek MS appears to say “I straightened it (the clothing) and the road,” which is illogical. The Syriac version has “And I took my way straight to come.”

- 64 And while on the road I found a female being,^m who lifted
me up.
- 65 So sheⁿ got me up from sleep, giving as it were an oracle
by (her) voice, with which she guided me to the
light;
- 66 Indeed, at times I had the royal garment of silk before my
eyes;^o
- 68 And with familial love leading me and drawing me on,
69 I passed by the Labyrinth.^p
And leaving Babylon behind, on the left,^q
- 70 I reached Meson,^r which is a great coast,^s
- 75 **112** But I could not recall my splendor;
For, it was while I was still a boy and quite young that I
had left it behind in my father's palace.
- 76 But when suddenly I saw my garment reflected as in a
mirror,
- 77 I perceived in it my whole self as well,
And through it I recognized^a and saw myself.
- 78 For, though we derived from one and the same we were
partially divided; and then again we were one, with
a single form.
- 79 Nay, also the treasurers who had brought the garment
80 I saw as two beings, but there existed a single form in
both,
One single royal token consisting of two halves.^b
- 81 And they had my money and wealth in their hands, and
gave me my reward:
- 82 The fine garment of bright colors,
83 Which was embroidered with gold, precious stones, and
pearls to give a suitable impression.^c
- 84 It was clasped at the collar,^d
- 86 And the image of the King of Kings was (woven) all
through it;
- 87 Stones of lapis lazuli had been agreeably fixed to the
collar.

m. Possibly corrupt. Here the Syriac explicitly refers to the royal message personified (the word "letter" is grammatically feminine in Greek): "And my letter, my awakener, I found before me on the road."

n. Or "it" (see the preceding note).

o. Verse 67 is a feature only of the Syriac version.

p. Cf. note 111d.

q. The narration here follows the style of Hellenistic voyage stories.

r. A place name (the Syriac version has "to

the great Maišān, to the haven of merchants"; cf. note 109a). In Greek the word *meson* also means "intermediate."

s. Verses 71–74 are a feature only of the Syriac version.

112 a. Or "gained acquaintance."

b. Lit. "one single royal *symbolon* in both."

c. Translation uncertain.

d. Translation uncertain. Verse 85 is a feature only of the Syriac version.

- 88 113 And I saw, in turn, that impulses^a of acquaintance
 (gnōsis) were rippling throughout it,
 89 And that it was ready to utter discourse.
 90 Then I heard it speaking:
 91 “It is I who belong to the one who is stronger than all
 human beings and for whose sake I was designed^b
 by the father himself.”
 92 And for my part, I took note of my mature age.^c
 93 And all the royal impulses^d reposed on me, as its energy
 increased:
 94 Thrust out by that being’s^e hand, it^f hastened to the one
 who was receiving it;^g
 95 And a longing aroused me to rush and meet that being
 and to receive it.^h
 96 Spread out . . . of colors . . . I was brought back,ⁱ
 97 And I completely clothed myself in my superior royal
 robe.^j

Return to the royal realm

- 98 Once I had put it on, I arose into the realm^k of peace
 belonging to reverential awe.
 99 And I bowed my head and prostrated myself before the
 splendor of the father who had sent it to me.
 100 For, it was I who had done his commands,
 And likewise it was he who had kept the promise.^l
 101 And I mingled at the doors of his archaic royal building.
 102 He took delight in me, and received me with him in the
 palace.
 103 And all his subjects were singing hymns with reverent
 voices.
 104 He suffered me also to be ushered in to the King’s Court^m
 in his company:
 105 So that with my gifts and the pearl I might make an ap-
 pearance before the king himself.

113 a. Lit. “motions” (Greek *kinēseis*).

b. Lit. “written.”

c. Or “stature.”

d. Lit. “motions.”

e. “that being’s”: cf. verse 80. The original reading of the text is possibly “their.”

f. The garment.

g. I.e. hastened to me as I went to receive it.

h. The garment.

i. The text of this verse in the Greek MS is corrupt. The Syriac version has “And I stretched forth and took it. With the beauty of its colors I adorned myself.”

j. The “robe” is the “garment” spoken of earlier in the hymn; cf. verses 9–10.

k. Or “land.”

l. Cf. verses 12–13.

m. “Court”: lit. “doors.”

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS

(GTh)

CONTENTS

The Gospel According to Thomas (“The Gospel of Thomas”) is an anthology of 114 “obscure sayings” of Jesus, which, according to its prologue, were collected and transmitted by St. Didymus Jude Thomas. The sayings do not appear within a biographical narrative about Jesus, although some of them individually contain elements of dialogue or an abbreviated setting. Instead, Jesus’ sayings in GTh are unconnected and in no particular order. They claim to be timelessly true, like sayings of ancient sages or proverbs spoken by heavenly Wisdom; accordingly, their speaker is called “the living Jesus,” that is, the Jesus of eternity. Historical framework is irrelevant to the message of GTh, for the salvation that it proclaims is not the future reign of god on earth, to be ushered in by a messiah, but rather the recognition of one’s true nature and acquaintance with oneself, leading to immediate repose and rendering “death” (that is, the realm of human affairs) trivial. “The kingdom is inside of you . . . When you become acquainted with yourselves . . . you will understand that it is you who are children of the living father.” Except for a reference to taking up one’s cross in saying 55, Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection are not discussed in GTh; his role here is purely that of a teacher of wisdom. GTh is thus a Christian gospel in which the crucifixion of Jesus has no importance.

The opening paragraph of GTh directs the reader’s attention to the need of interpreting Jesus’ sayings in order for them to be effective: “Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not taste death.” Without recognition of their hidden meaning, Jesus’ sayings are merely “obscure.” The interpretive clue to this hidden meaning was provided by references (especially in GTh 18, 29, 50) to a Hellenistic myth of the heavenly origin, fall, incarnation, awakening, and return of the soul. The structure of the myth was known in more coherent form in another work of Thomas scripture, HPr1. Once the myth had been recognized or reconstructed by the ancient reader it would have provided a framework within which the other, more traditional sayings could be interpreted (cf. Table 4).

Sayings attributed to Jesus, whether single or grouped in collections, written or transmitted orally, were one of the most authoritative types of literature for early Christians, especially in the eastern Mediterranean. Collected sayings of Jesus were an important source of material incorporated in written gospels of

the biographical type, above all Mt and Lk. Distinct sayings collections continued to be used even after those more complex gospels came into circulation.

If one examines all the surviving sayings attributed to Jesus, no matter where, a wide range of religious perspectives can be found: wisdom sayings and proverbs reminiscent of Old Testament wisdom books; prophetic sayings pronouncing god's judgment; eschatological sayings; legal sayings regulating community life; Christological sayings, in which Jesus describes or predicts his role and position.

Against this background it is obvious that GTh is by no means a well-distributed sample of these usual saying types, but rather concentrates on particular types that are appropriate to its message of salvation—especially wisdom sayings or general truths, and prophetic sayings that emphasize the presence of god's reign ("kingdom") within Jesus and each believer. Eschatological sayings are conspicuously absent, and sayings in which Jesus describes himself stress not the future but the present.

The author of GTh has written it so as to stress the authority and authenticity of Jesus'sayings in several ways.

1. The literary genre of GTh—disconnected sayings of the wise—is traditionally reserved for authoritative wisdom attributed to eminent sages of the past or even to heavenly wisdom (Dame Wisdom). The use of this genre constitutes a claim of authority.
2. The speaker in GTh is explicitly said to be Jesus, who is "the light (that presides) over all" and the source from which the entirety comes and to which it goes. These epithets and the lack of any historical framework reinforce the implication that Jesus is heavenly Wisdom herself.
3. The attribution of the GTh sayings to Jesus is said to be authenticated by Jude (St. Thomas), Jesus' twin, as recorder of the sayings. Jude's personal authority was especially high in the regional church that used GTh.
4. As patron saint of the collection, Jude is meant to be credited not only with recording and authenticating the sayings, but also with including allusions to the myth of the soul and adding certain interpretive phrases here and there to older sayings. In this way he is made out to be the teacher of the hidden meaning (GTh 1) of Jesus' sayings, so as to make traditional sayings of Jesus effective for his community in a particular way.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The compiler of GTh is unknown. Its date of composition must be before A.D. ca. 200, the date of the earliest manuscript (a Greek papyrus fragment); and after the foundation of Christianity. Attempts to date GTh more precisely depend on a delicate hypothetical evaluation of how the earliest Christian lit-

erature (including oral literature) evolved, especially sayings collections. One qualified expert has recently estimated that GTh was probably composed in the first century A.D.; many other scholars assign it roughly to the middle of the second. At any rate, its literary genre and some of the individual sayings are extremely ancient. The place of composition may be Edessa in northern Mesopotamia (see Map 6), or another city of the same region (see the “Historical Introduction” to Part Four). The language of composition is Greek; if a Syriac version was also published—as one might expect in Edessa—it apparently does not survive, though the use of GTh by the author of the Syriac *Acts of Thomas* and by Mani, the Babylonian founder of the Manichaean world religion, may be evidence of a sort for its onetime existence in Syriac.

Some of the sayings in GTh are closely parallel to ones in the gospels of the canonical New Testament, especially Mt and Lk. But GTh is not based on those gospels. Rather, its sources are ultimately related to the lost sayings collections from which Matthew and Luke drew the sayings of Jesus quoted in their biographical gospels, especially the so-called synoptic sayings source (“Q”). New Testament scholars have especially been interested in the sayings of GTh that have close parallels in the New Testament gospels; through the technique of form criticism, they have ascertained that in some instances GTh preserves earlier, more original forms of certain sayings than Mt or Lk do.

The claim (GTh prologue) that Jude, the twin brother of Jesus, edited the collection makes GTh an example of pseudepigraphy.

The genre of GTh is the wisdom book, that is, anthology of wise sayings (cf. above, “Contents”). Such sayings collections were widely used both in Greek culture and among various other peoples of the ancient Middle East. The best-known parallels are the Old Testament wisdom books of Proverbs, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and parts of Job.

The use of the term “gospel” to characterize an anthology is distinctly Christian and within Christian literature is highly unusual (although GTh is entitled “gospel” it bears no relation to the biographical genre called by this name, e.g. the Gospel of Mark). Another instance of a Christian anthology called “gospel” is the Valentinian *Gospel According to Philip*, which either was composed somewhere in Syria or Mesopotamia or, at least, used Syrian or Mesopotamian materials.

GTh is not to be confused with *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, a biography in which the boy Jesus performs miracles to demonstrate his divinity.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Inhabitants of the Kingdom of Light

The LIVING FATHER

The HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus' TRUE MOTHER

The ENTIRETY

The LIVING JESUS

II. Humankind

ADAM

Twenty-four PROPHETS of Israel

A SAMARITAN

JEWS

JOHN THE BAPTIST

PHARISEES AND SCRIBES

Jesus' disciples, including:

DIDYMUS JUDE THOMAS

JAMES the Just

SIMON PETER

MATTHEW

JESUS' MOTHER MARY

Another MARY (?)

SALOME

MESSENGERS and PROPHETS of the kingdom, who will come

Others, both good and bad

TEXT

Three papyrus manuscripts of the original Greek text survive. All three were discovered at Oxyrhynchus (Bahnsa) in Egypt (see Map 6); they are extremely fragmentary. The editors of these manuscripts estimate their dates of copying at various decades within the third century A.D.

- (a) Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1, fragments of a codex, now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford
- (b) Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 654, an excerpt written on the back of a discarded document, now in the British Library in London
- (c) Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 655, fragments of a scroll, now in the Harvard Houghton Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts

The full text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi:

- (d) MS NHC II (pp. 32–51)

The Coptic manuscript (d) was copied just before A.D. 350, and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The wording of the Greek manuscripts differs slightly from the Coptic, suggesting that there was more than one ancient edition of the work in Greek that circulated in Egypt.

In the Coptic manuscript the sayings (*logia*, plural of Greek *logion*) are not divided from one another, probably through an inadvertence, nor are they numbered. One of the fragmentary Greek manuscripts (P. Oxy. 654) has division

marks in the margin and text, dividing the sayings. But this Greek manuscript contains only a very small portion of the text; most of the modern divisions and all the numbering are thus purely hypothetical, being based on the contents of the text, especially the occurrence of the phrase “Jesus said.” Scholars have agreed on a standard system of division and numbering; it is given in parentheses in the translation below. In modern reference to GTh the text is almost always cited according to these standard saying or logion numbers. Readers are advised to follow this practice.

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic version and H. Attridge’s critical edition of the three fragmentary Greek manuscripts: Koester et al., “The Gospel According to Thomas” (see “Select Bibliography”).

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The Gospel According to Thomas^a

(PROLOGUE, 1)

Importance of interpreting the obscure sayings

- 10 32 THESE are the obscure^b sayings that the living Jesus uttered GJd 33:1
12 and which Didymus Jude Thomas^c wrote down. •And he said, Jn 8:52
“Whoever finds the meaning^d of these sayings will not taste death.”

(2)

Seek until you find

- 14 JESUS said, “Let one who seeks not stop seeking until that per- 92
16, 17 son finds; •and upon finding, the person will be disturbed; •and Mt 7:7?
18 being disturbed,^e will be astounded; •and will reign over the Lk 11:20?
entirety.”^f

(3)

The kingdom is within us

- 19 JESUS said, “If those who lead^g you (plur.) say to you, ‘See, 113
the kingdom is in heaven,’ then the birds of heaven will pre- Lk 17:20?
23 cede you. •If they say to you, ‘It is in the sea,’^h then the fishⁱ

Title 32 a In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 51:27f).

b. Or “hidden.”

c. “Didymus” and “Thomas” mean “twin” (in Greek and Syriac or Aramaic, *didymos* and *tā'mā* etc.). The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 654) instead has “and which Jude, who is called Thoma.”

d. Or “interpretation.”

e. “will be disturbed; and being disturbed”: not present in the Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 654).

f. “and will reign over the entirety”: the Greek fragment instead has “[and] being astounded, will reign; and [reigning], will [gain repose].” The last two words are partly preserved in the Greek.

g. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 654) instead has “attract.”

h. “in the sea”: the Greek fragment instead has “under the earth.”

i. The Greek fragment instead has “the fish of the sea.”

- 25 will precede you. •But the kingdomⁱ is inside of you. And it is outside of you.
- 26 •“When you become acquainted with yourselves,^k then you
1 will be recognized. 33 •And you will understand that^a it is you
2 who are children of the living father. •But if you do not become acquainted with yourselves, then you are in poverty, and it is you who are the poverty.”

(4)

The first will be last

- 5 JESUS said, “A person advanced in days will not hesitate to ques-
8 tion a little child seven days old about the place of life. •And that
9 person will live. •For many that are first will be last,^b and they will become one.”

Mt 11:25?
Lk 10:21?Mt 19:30
Mt 20:16
Mk 10:31
Lk 13:30

(5)

The obscure will become disclosed

- 10 JESUS said, “Recognize what is before your (sing.) face and what
13 is obscure^c to you (sing.) will become disclosed unto you. •For there is nothing obscure that will not become shown forth.”^d

6
Mt 10:26
Mk 4:22
Lk 8:17
Lk 12:2

(6)

True fasting, prayer, and charity

- 14, 15 HIS DISCIPLES questioned him and said to him, •“Do you want^e us to fast? And how shall we pray? Shall we^f give alms?
18 And what kind of diet shall we follow?” •Jesus said, “Do not lie, and do not do what you hate. For all things are disclosed before
19 heaven.^g •For there is nothing obscure^h that will not be shown 5+

Mt 6:1
Mt 6:16
v.15
14

j. The Greek fragment instead has “And the kingdom [of god].”

k. Or “know yourselves.”

33 a. “When you . . . understand that”: the Greek fragment instead has “[Those who] become acquainted with [themselves] will find it; [and when you] become acquainted with yourselves, [you will understand that].”

b. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 654) next has “and the last, first.”

c. Or “hidden.”

d. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 654) next has “and nothing buried that [will not be raised].”

e. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 654) instead has “How do you want?”

f. The Greek fragment instead has “And how [shall we].”

g. “before heaven”: the Greek fragment instead has “before truth.”

h. Or “hidden.”

- 22 forth, •and there is nothing covered that will remain without
being disclosed.”ⁱ

(7)

The lion and the human being

- 23 JESUS said, “Blessed is the lion that the human being will de-
26 vour so that the lion becomes human. •And cursed is the human
being that the lion devours; and the lion will become human.”

(8)

A parable of an intelligent fisherman

- 28 AND HE said, “What human beings^j resemble is an intelligent Mt 13:47
fisherman who, having cast his net into the sea, pulled the net up
32 out of the sea full of little fish. •The intelligent fisherman, upon
finding among them a fine large fish, threw all the little fish back
2 into the sea, choosing without any effort the big fish. 34 •Who-
ever has ears to hear should listen!”

(9)

A parable of a sower

- 3 JESUS said, “Listen, a sower came forth, took a handful, and cast. Mt 13:3
5 •Now, some fell upon the path, and the birds came and picked Mk 4:3
6 them out. •Others fell upon rock, and they did not take root in the Lk 8:5
9 soil, and did not send up ears. •And others fell upon the thorns, GJd 43:25
11 and they choked the seed; and the grubs devoured them. •And
others fell upon good soil, and it sent up good crops and yielded
sixty per measure and a hundred and twenty per measure.”

(10)

Jesus has cast fire

- 14 JESUS said, “I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am watch- Lk 12:49
ing over it until it blazes.”

i. “and there is nothing . . . disclosed”: not present in the Greek fragment.

j. “human beings”: lit. “the man.”

(11)

The living will not die

- 16 JESUS said, “This heaven will pass away, and the one above it
 18 will pass away. •And the dead (elements) are not alive, and the
 19 living (elements) will not die. •In the days when you (plur.) used
 21 to ingest dead (elements), you made them alive. •When you are
 in the light what will you do?
 22, 23 •“On the day that you were one, you made two. •And when
 you are two, what will you do?”

Mt 24:35?
 Mk 13:31?
 Lk 21:33?

(12)

The disciples will come to James

- 25 THE DISCIPLES said to Jesus, “We are aware that you will de-
 26, 27 part from us. •Who will be our leader?” •Jesus said to them, “No
 matter where you come^a it is to James the Just^b that you shall go,
 for whose sake heaven and earth have come to exist.”

Mt 18:1?
 Mk 9:34?
 Lk 9:46?

(13)

The disciples tell Jesus what he resembles

- 30 JESUS said to his disciples, “Compare me to something and tell
 me what I resemble.”
 32 •Simon Peter said to him, “A just angel is what you resemble.”
 34 •Matthew said to him, “An intelligent philosopher is what you
 resemble.”
 2 35 •Thomas said to him, “Teacher, my mouth utterly will not
 let me say what you resemble.”
 4 •Jesus said, “I am not your (sing.) teacher, for you have drunk
 and become intoxicated from the bubbling wellspring that I have
 7 personally measured out.” •And he took him, withdrew, and said
 three sayings to him.
 8 •Now, when Thomas came to his companions they asked him,
 “What did Jesus say to you?”
 10 •Thomas said to them, “If I say to you (plur.) one of the say-
 ings that he said to me, you will take stones and stone me, and
 fire will come out of the stones and burn you up.”

Mt 16:13
 Mk 8:27
 Lk 9:18

Gjd 44:23

34 a. Or “come from.”

b. According to early Christian tradition, a brother of Jesus (and so of Thomas) who was leader of the first Christian community of Jeru-

salem; died A.D. 62. His name was venerated by an Aramaic-speaking branch of Christianity that flourished east of the Jordan River.

(14)

True fasting, prayer, and charity

- 14 JESUS said to them, “If you (plur.) fast, you will acquire a sin, 6+
 19 and if you pray you will be condemned, and if you give alms, it
 is evil that you will do unto your spirits. •And when you go into
 any land and travel in the country places,^a when they receive you
 23 eat whatever they serve to you. •Heal those among them who are Mt 10:8?
 24 sick. •For, nothing that enters your mouth will defile you (plur.), Lk 10:8
 25 •Rather, it is precisely what comes out of your mouth that will Mt 15:11
 defile you.” Mk 7:15

(15)

One not born of woman

- 27 JESUS said, “When you (plur.) see one who has not been born of
 woman, fall upon your faces and prostrate yourselves before that
 30 one: •it is that one who is your father.”

(16)

Jesus has come to impose divisions

- 31 JESUS said, “People probably think that it is peace that I have Mt 10:34
 33 come to impose^b upon the world. •And they do not recognize that Lk 12:51
 it is divisions^c that I have come to impose upon the earth—fire,
 36,1 sword, battle. •Indeed, there will be five in a house. 36 •There
 will be three over two and two over three, parent over child and
 4 child over parent. •And they will stand at rest by being solitaries.”

(17)

Jesus will bestow what has not been perceived

- 5 JESUS said, “I shall give you (plur.) what eyes have not seen, 1Co 2:9
 what ears have not heard, what hands have not touched, what GJd 47:8
 has not come upon the human heart.”

35 a. Or “travel in the places.”
 b. Or “cast.”

c. Or “distinctions.”

(18)

The end is where the beginning is

- 9 THE DISCIPLES said to Jesus, “Tell us how our end will come
 11 to pass.” •Jesus said, “Then have you laid bare the beginning,^a
 13 so that you are seeking the end? •For the end will be where the
 14 beginning is. •Blessed is the person who stands at rest in the be-
 15 ginning. •And that person will be acquainted with the end and
 will not taste death.”

(19)

The preexistent is blessed

- 17 JESUS said, “Blessed is that which^b existed before coming into
 19 being. •If you exist as my disciples and listen to my sayings, these
 stones will minister unto you.

Five trees in paradise

- 21 “Indeed, you have five trees in paradise, which do not move
 24 in summer or winter, and whose leaves do not fall. •Whoever is
 acquainted with them will not taste death.”

(20)

A parable of a mustard seed

- 26 THE DISCIPLES said to Jesus, “Tell us what^c the kingdom of
 28 heavens resembles.” •He said to them, “What it resembles is a
 29 grain of mustard seed. •It is smaller than all other seeds, but if it
 falls upon plowed terrain it puts forth an enormous foliage and
 is a shade for birds of heaven.”

Mt 13:31
 Mk 4:30
 Lk 13:18

(21)

A parable of children living in a plot of land

- 33 MARY said to Jesus, “What do your disciples resemble?”
 35 •He said, “What they resemble is children living in a plot of land

36 a. Or “the first principle.”

b. “that which”: or “the person who.”

c. Lit. “who.”

2 that is not theirs. 37 •When the owners of the land come they will
 4 say, ‘Surrender our land to us.’ •They, for their part, strip naked Tr Tr 128:19
 in their presence in order to give it back to them, and they give
 them their land.

A story of a landowner and a bandit

6 “Thus I say that the owner of an estate, knowing that a bandit 103
 is coming, will keep watch before the bandit comes and not let Mt 24:43
 the bandit break into the house of the estate^a and steal the pos- Lk 12:39
 sessions.^b •You (plur.), then, be on your guard against the world.
 10 •Arm yourselves with great power lest the brigands find a way
 11 to get to you; for the trouble that you expect will come. •Let an Lk 12:35
 12 experienced person dwell in your midst!

From a parable of a harvest^c

17 “< . . . > When the crop had matured, that person came in Mk 4:29
 18 haste, sickle in hand, and harvested it. •Whoever has ears to hear Mt 13:9
 should listen!” Mk 4:9
Lk 8:8

(22)

Those who enter the kingdom resemble little ones

20, 20 JESUS saw some little ones nursing. •He said to his disciples, Mt 18:1
 “What these little ones who are nursing resemble is those who Mk 10:13
 23 enter the kingdom.” •They said to him, “So shall we enter the Lk 18:15
 24 kingdom by being little ones?” •Jesus said to them, “When you
 (plur.) make the two one and make the inside like the outside
 and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, and
 that you might make the male and the female be one and the
 same, so that the male might not be male nor the female be fe-
 male, when you make eyes in place of an eye and a hand in place
 of a hand and a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an
 image—then you will enter [the kingdom].”

(23)

Few are chosen

1 38 JESUS said, “I shall choose you (plur.)—one out of a thou-
 2 sand and two out of ten thousand. •And they will stand at rest by
 being one and the same.”

37 a. “estate”; lit. “kingdom, dominion.”

b. “the house . . . the estate . . . the possessions”:
 lit. “his house . . . his estate . . . his possessions.”

c. A fragment of a parable. Some words are
 missing before “When the crop . . .”

(24)

A person of light enlightens the whole world

- 3 HIS DISCIPLES said, "Show us the place where you are, for
6 we must seek it." •He said to them, "Whoever has ears should
7,9 listen! •There is light existing within a person of light. •And it
enlightens the whole world: if it^a does not enlighten, that person^b
is darkness." Mt 6:22
Lk 11:34

(25)

Love your sibling

- 10,11 JESUS said, "Love your (sing.) sibling like your own soul;^c •look
out for that person like the apple of your eye." Mt 22:39
Mk 12:31
Lk 10:27

(26)

The speck and the beam

- 12 JESUS said, "You (sing.) see the speck in your sibling's eye, but
14 you do not see the beam in your own eye. •When you expel the
beam from your own eye then you will be able to see to expel the
speck from the eye of your sibling." Mt 7:3
Lk 6:41

(27)

Abstinence from the world

- 17 <JESUS said>,^d "If you (plur.) do not abstain from^e the world
19 you will not find the kingdom.^f •If you do not make the sabbath
a sabbath you will not behold the father."

38 a. "And it . . . if it": or "And he . . . if he?"

b. Or "it."

c. Or "your own self."

d. These words are inadvertently omitted in

the Coptic MS, but present in the Greek fragment
(P. Oxy. 655).

e. "abstain from": lit. "fast unto."

f. The Greek fragment instead has "the kingdom of God."

(28)

The world is intoxicated

- 20, 22 JESUS said, "I stood at rest in the midst of the world. •And unto them I was shown forth incarnate; I found them all intoxicated.
 23, 24 •And I found none of them thirsty. •And my soul was pained for
 25 the children of humankind, •for they are blind in their hearts
 27 and cannot see. •For, empty did they enter the world, and again
 29 empty they seek to leave the world. •But now they are intox-
 29 icated. •When they shake off their wine then they will have a
 change of heart."^g

(29)

Independence of spirit and body

- 31 JESUS said, "It is amazing if it was for the spirit that flesh came
 32 into existence. •And it is amazing indeed if spirit (came into ex-
 34 istence) for the sake of the body. •But as for me, I am amazed at
 how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty."

(30)

Jesus dwells where there are two or more

- 2 39 JESUS said, "Where there are three divine beings they are
 4 divine. •Where there are two or one, I myself dwell with that
 person."^a

Mt 18:20

(31)

Prophets and physicians are not accepted at home

- 5 JESUS said, "A prophet is not acceptable in that prophet's own
 6 native town. •A physician does not heal people who are ac-
 quainted with that physician."

Mt 13:57
Mk 6:4
Lk 4:24

g. Or "will repent."

39 a. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 1) appears to have had (39:4f) "Where there are [three, they are] godless. And where there is [one] alone, I say

that I myself am with that one. Lift a stone and you (sing.) will find me there. Split a piece of wood, and I am there." For the last two sentences, see also no. 77.

(32)

A city on a hill cannot be hidden

- 7 JESUS said, "A city built upon a high hill and fortified cannot fall. Nor can it become hidden." Mt 5:14

(33)

No one hides a lamp

- 10 JESUS said, "Whatever you (sing.) hear with your ear, proclaim
 13 upon your (plur.) rooftops into the other ear.^b •Indeed, no one
 lights a lamp and puts it under a vessel, nor puts it in a hidden
 15 place. •Rather it is put on a lamp stand so that each who enters
 and leaves might see its light." Mt 10:27
 Lk 12:3
 v.13
 Mt 5:15
 Mk 4:21
 Lk 8:16
 Lk 11:33

(34)

The blind cannot lead the blind

- 18 JESUS said, "If a blind person leads a blind person both will fall into a hole." Mt 15:14
 Lk 6:39

(35)

No one robs the strong without subduing them

- 20 JESUS said, "No one can enter the house of the strong and wreck
 23 it without first tying that person's hands. •Thereafter, one can
 ransack^c the person's house." Mt 12:29
 Mk 3:27
 Lk 11:21

(36)

What we wear is unimportant

- 24 JESUS said, "Do not worry from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn about what you (plur.) will wear."^d Mt 6:25
 Lk 12:22

b. I.e. into someone else's ear.

c. Or "overturn."

d. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 655) instead has "[what food] you (plur.) [will] eat, [or] what [clothing] you will wear. [You are much] better

than the [lilies], which [neither] card nor spin. And for your part, what [will you wear] when you have no clothing? Who would add to your stature? It is he who will give you your clothing."

(37)

The disciples must strip off their garments

- 27 HIS DISCIPLES said,^e “When will you be shown forth to us and
 29 when shall we behold you?”^f •Jesus said,^g “When you strip naked
 without being ashamed, and take your garments and put them
 under your feet like little children and tread upon them, then
 1 [you] will see the child of the living. 40 •And you will not be Mt 16:16?
 afraid.”

(38)

Jesus’ sayings have long been awaited

- 2 JESUS said, “On many occasions you (plur.) have wanted to hear Mt 13:16?
 4 these sayings that I am saying unto you. •And you have no one Lk 10:23?
 5 else to hear them from. •Days will come when you will seek me,
 and you will not find me.”

(39)

Pharisees and Scribes impede acquaintance

- 7 JESUS said, “The Pharisees and the Scribes have taken the keys 102
 9 to acquaintance and hidden them. •They have neither entered Mt 23:13
 11 nor let those who want to enter enter. •You (plur.), then, be as Lk 11:52
 shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” Mt 10:16

(40)

A parable of a grapevine

- 13 JESUS said, “A grapevine has been planted outside the father. Mt 15:13
 14 •And because it is not sound, it will be plucked out by the root
 and will perish.”

e. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 655) instead has “said to him.”

f. The Greek fragment instead has “When will you be visible to us, and when shall we behold you?”

g. The Greek fragment instead has “He said.”

(41)

The person who has will receive

- 16 JESUS said, "The person who possesses^a will be given more. Mt 13:12
Mk 4:25
Lk 8:18
v.17
- 17 •And the person who does not have will be deprived of even the little that that person has." Mt 25:29
Lk 19:26

(42)

We should be passersby

- 19 JESUS said, "Be passersby."^b

(43)

Disciples should recognize Jesus in his sayings

- 20 HIS DISCIPLES said to him, "Who are you, since you say these
21 things to us?" •<Jesus said to them>,^c "Do you (plur.) not under-
22 stand who I am from the things I am saying to you? •Rather, you
23 have come to be like Jews. •For they love the tree, and hate its
24 fruit. •And they love the fruit, and hate the tree." Mt 7:16?
Mt 12:33?
Lk 6:43?

(44)

On blasphemy

- 26 JESUS said, "Whoever utters blasphemy against the father will Mt 12:31
Mk 3:28
Lk 12:10
- 27 be forgiven. •And whoever utters blasphemy against the son will
- 29 be forgiven. •But whoever utters blasphemy against the holy spirit will not be forgiven—neither on earth nor in heaven."

40 a. Lit. "who has in his hand."

b. "passersby": participle of the Greek verb *paragein*, "to go past (something or someone)." Epitaphs on Greek tombstones of the period often salute the "stranger" or "passerby" (usually called *ksenos* or *paroditēs*), as though in the words

of the corpse buried in the tomb. Cf. no. 56. The saying may also be a recommendation of the life of a wandering ascetic, like St. Thomas in *The Acts of Thomas*.

c. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

(45)

Grapes do not come from thorns

- 31 JESUS said, "Grapes are not harvested from thorn trees,^d nor are figs gathered from thorn bushes,^e for these do not bear fruit. Mt 7:16
Lk 6:44
- 34,1 •Good people produce good from their store. **41** •Evil people produce wicked things from their evil store within their hearts, Mt 12:34
Lk 6:45
- 4 and say wicked things. •For out of the heart's abundance they produce wicked things."

(46)

Little ones are more exalted than John the Baptist

- 6 JESUS said, "From Adam unto John the Baptist there has been none among the offspring of women who has been more exalted than John the Baptist, so that such a person's eyes might be broken.^a •But I have said that whoever among you (plur.) becomes a little one will become acquainted with the kingdom, and will become more exalted than John." Mt 11:11
Lk 7:28
- 10 Mt 18:3
Mk 10:15
Lk 18:17

(47)

Opposites cannot coexist

- 12 JESUS said, "A person cannot (at the same time) mount two horses or draw two bows. •And a slave cannot serve two owners, Mt 6:24
Lk 16:13
v.17
Lk 5:39
- 17 but truly will honor the one and scoff at the other. •No person drinks vintage wine and immediately desires to drink new wine.
- 19,20 •And new wine is not put into old wineskins lest they burst. •And Mt 9:16
Mk 2:21
Lk 5:36
- 22 vintage wine is not put into new wineskins lest it go bad. •And old patches are not sewed to new garments, for a rip will develop."

(48)

The power of unity

- 24 JESUS said, "If two make peace with one another within a single house they will say to a mountain 'go elsewhere' and it will go elsewhere." 106
Mt 17:20
Mt 21:21
Mk 11:22
Lk 17:6?

d. The Coptic word denotes the *acacia nilotica*.
e. The Coptic word denotes the *leucacanthus*.

41 a. The exact meaning of this expression is unknown.

(49)

Solitaries have come from the kingdom

- 27 JESUS said, “Blessed are those who are solitary and superior,^b
 29 for you (plur.) will find the kingdom; •for since you come from
 it you shall return to it.”

(50)

We have come from the light

- 30 JESUS said, “If they say to you (plur.), ‘Where are you from?’ say
 to them, ‘It is from the light that we have come—from the place
 where light, of its own accord alone, came into existence and
 1 [stood at rest]. 42 •And it has been shown forth in their image.^a
 1 •If they say to you, ‘Is it you?’^b say, ‘We are its offspring, and we
 4 are the chosen of the living father.’ •If they ask you, ‘What is the
 sign of your father within you?’ say to them, ‘It is movement and
 repose.’”

(51)

Arrival of repose and a new world

- 7 HIS DISCIPLES said to him, “When will the repose of the dead
 10 come to pass, and when will the new world come?” •He said to
 them, “That (repose) which you (plur.) are waiting for has come,
 but for your part you do not recognize it.”

(52)

The twenty-four prophets of Israel

- 12 HIS DISCIPLES said to him, “Twenty-four prophets spoke in
 15 Israel, and they all spoke by you.”^c •He said to them, “You (plur.)
 have abandoned the one who is living in your presence, and you
 have spoken of those who are dead.”

b. Or “Blessed are the solitaries and the elect persons.”

b. Possibly the original reading of the text is “Who are you?”

c. Or “in you.”

42 a. Or “in their images.”

(53)

True circumcision

- 18 HIS DISCIPLES said to him, “Does circumcision help or does
 19 it not?” •He said to them, “If it helped, people’s fathers would
 22 beget them from their mothers already circumcised. •But true
 circumcision in spirit has become very profitable.”

(54)

The poor

- 23 JESUS said, “Blessed are the poor,^d for yours (plur.) is the king-
 dom of heavens.” Mt 5:3
Lk 6:20

(55)

We should hate our family

- 25 JESUS said, “Those who do not hate^e their fathers and their
 27 mothers cannot be disciples of me, •and those who do not hate
 their brothers and their sisters and take up their cross like me
 will not become worthy of^f me.” 16:3, 101
Mt 10:37
Lk 14:26
Mt 16:24
Mk 8:34
Lk 9:23

(56)

The world is a corpse

- 29 JESUS said, “Whoever has become acquainted with the world
 has found a corpse, and the world is not worthy of the one who
 has found the corpse.”

(57)

A parable of wheat and tares

- 32 JESUS said, “What the kingdom of the father resembles is a man Mt 13:24
 35 who had a [good] (kind of) seed. •His enemy came at night and

d. Apart from its literal meaning, “the poor” was early Christian jargon used as a self-designation by an Aramaic-speaking branch of Christianity. Cf. note 34b.

e. Lit. “He who does not hate.”
 f. Or “become equal to.”

- 2 scattered grass seed in with the good seed. 43 •The man did not
 let them pluck out the grass, saying to them, ‘Do not, lest you
 (plur.) go to pluck out the grass and then pluck out the wheat
 5 along with it. •For, on the day of the harvest the grass will be
 obvious, and it will be plucked out and burned.’”

(58)

The laborer

- 7 JESUS said, “Blessed is the person who has labored and found
 life.”

(59)

We should meditate on the one who is alive

- 9 JESUS said, “Consider the one who is alive^a while you (plur.) are
 alive, lest you die and then seek to behold that one—and you will
 not be able to behold.”

(60)

A parable of a Samaritan and a lamb

- 12 <THEY SAW>^b a Samaritan man carrying a lamb as he went into
 13,15 Judaea. •He said to his disciples, “This <...> ... the lamb.”^c •They
 16 said to him, “So that he might slaughter it and have it to eat.” •He
 said to them, “He will not eat it while it (or he) is alive, but rather
 18 when he has slaughtered it so it becomes a carcass.”^d •They said,
 19 “Otherwise, he cannot do it?” •He said to them, “You (plur.), too,
 seek for yourselves a place^e for repose, lest you become a carcass
 and be devoured.”

43 a. Or “that which is alive.”

b. These words are inadvertently omitted in the Coptic MS.

c. The Coptic MS here erroneously has “This one is in the neighborhood of the lamb.” One or

more words have inadvertently been omitted, and the original reading of the text is uncertain here.

d. Or “corpse.”

e. Or “an occasion.”

(61)

Jesus on Salome's couch

- 23 JESUS said, "Two will repose on a couch:^f one will die, one will live." Lk 17:34
Mt 24:40?
- 25, 26 •Salome said, "Who are you, O man? •Like a stranger (?)^g you have gotten upon my couch and you have eaten from my table." •Jesus said to her, "It is I who come from that which is integrated. •I was given (some) of the things of my father." Mt 11:27
Lk 10:22
- 30 •< . . . >^h "I am your female disciple." < . . . >ⁱ
- 31 •"Therefore I say that such a person, once integrated,^j will become full of light; •but such a person, once divided, will become full of darkness."

(62)

Jesus tells his secrets to the worthy

- 34 JESUS said, "It is to those [worthy] of [my] secrets that I am telling my secrets. 44 •Do not let your (sing.) left hand understand what your right hand is doing." Mt 13:11
Mk 4:11
Lk 8:10
v1
Mt 6:3

(63)

A parable of a rich man who died

- 2 JESUS said, "There was a rich man who had considerable wealth. Lk 12:16
- 4 •He said, 'I shall invest my wealth so as to sow, reap, plant, and fill my barns with crops, lest I run short of something.' •These things are what he was thinking in his heart, and that very night
- 9 the man died. •Whoever has ears should listen!"

(64)

A parable of a dinner for out-of-town guests

- 10, 11 JESUS said, "A man was receiving^a out-of-town visitors. •And having prepared the dinner, he sent a slave to invite the visitors." Mt 22:1
Lk 14:16

f. Ancient Mediterranean peoples often dined in a reclining position upon a couch or bench.

g. The MS here erroneously has "As for one." The original reading of the text is uncertain.

h. One or more words inadvertently omitted.

i. One or more words inadvertently omitted.

j. The Coptic MS here erroneously has "once having become devastated."

44 a. Or "had the habit of receiving"

13 •The slave went to the first and said to that one, ‘My master in-
 15 vites you.’ •That person said, ‘Some wholesale merchants owe
 me money; they are coming to me this evening, and I shall go
 and give them instructions. I must decline the dinner invitation.’
 18 •The slave went to another and said to that one, ‘My master in-
 20 vites you.’ •That person said to the slave, ‘I have bought a build-
 22 ing, and I am needed for a time. I am not free.’ •The slave went to
 23 another and said to that one, ‘My master invites you.’ •That per-
 son said to the slave, ‘My friend is about to get married, and it is
 I who am going to give the dinner. I cannot come; I must decline
 25 the dinner invitation.’ •The slave went to another and said to
 27 that one, ‘My master invites you.’ •That person said to the slave,
 I have bought a village; I am going to collect the rents. I cannot
 29 come, I must decline.’ •The slave came and said to its master,
 31 ‘The people you have invited to the dinner have declined.’ •The
 master said to his slave, ‘Go outside into the streets; bring in
 34 whomever you find, to have dinner.’ •Buyers and traders [will]
 not enter the places of my father.”

(65)

A parable of the murder of a vineyard owner’s son

1 45 HE said, “A kind man owned a vineyard, and put it in the
 hands of cultivators for them to cultivate, so that he might get its
 4 produce from them. •He sent his slave so the cultivators might
 6 give the produce of the vineyard to the slave. •They seized, beat,
 and all but killed his slave, and the slave went and spoke to its
 8 owner. •Its owner said, ‘Perhaps they did not recognize it (the
 10 slave),’^a •and he sent another slave. The cultivators beat the other
 11 slave. •Next the owner sent his son and said, ‘Perhaps they will
 13 show respect for my son.’ •Those cultivators, since they recog-
 nized that it was he who was heir to the vineyard, seized him and
 16 killed him. •Whoever has ears should listen!”

Mt 21:33
 Mk 12:1
 Lk 20:9

(66)

The rejected building stone

16 JESUS said, “Show me the stone that the builders rejected: that
 is the building stone.”^b

Mt 21:24
 Mk 12:10
 Lk 20:17

45 a. The Coptic MS here erroneously has “Per-
 haps it (the slave) did not recognize them.”

b. “building stone”; or perhaps “foundation
 stone, cornerstone, keystone.”

(67)

Any deficiency is utter deficiency

- 19 JESUS said, “If anyone should become acquainted with the entirety and should fall short at all (?), that person falls short utterly.”^c Mt 16:26
Mk 8:36
Lk 9:25

(68)

The persecuted are blessed

- 21 JESUS said, “Blessed are you (plur.) whenever they hate you and
23 persecute you. •And wherever they have persecuted you, they will find no place.”

(69)

The internally persecuted and the compassionate are blessed

- 24 JESUS said, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted in
26 their hearts. •It is they who have truly come to be acquainted
27 with the father. •Blessed are they who hunger for the belly of the
needy to be satisfied.” Mt 5:10
Lk 6:22
Mt 5:6
Lk 6:21

(70)

Our salvation is within us

- 29 JESUS said, “If you (plur.) produce what is in you, what you have
31 will save you. •If you do not have what is in you, what you do not have [will] kill you.”

(71)

Destruction of “this building”

- 34 JESUS said, “I shall throw down [this] building, and no one will
be able to build it [. . .]” Mt 26:61
Mk 14:58

c. Or “falls short of the whole place.”

(72)

Jesus is not an arbitrator of possessions

- 1 46 SOME PERSON [said] to him, “Tell my siblings to share my Lk 12:13
 3 father’s possessions with me.” •He said to that person, “My good
 4 fellow, who has made me into an arbitrator?” •He turned to his
 disciples and said to them, “So am I an arbitrator?”

(73)

Workers for the harvest

- 6,7 JESUS said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. •So Mt 9:37
 plead with the lord^a to dispatch workers for the harvest.” Lk 10:2

(74)

The cistern is empty

- 9 HE said, “O lord, there are many around the drinking trough but
 nothing in the cistern.”^b

(75)

Solitaries will enter the bridal chamber

- 11 JESUS said, “There are many standing at the door, but it is the
 solitaries who will enter the bridal chamber.”^c

(76)

A parable of a merchant and a pearl

- 13 JESUS said, “What the kingdom of the father resembles is a mer- Mt 13:45
 chant who owned some merchandise, and then learned about HPr 12
 16 the existence of a certain pearl. •That merchant was shrewd, sold
 19 the merchandise, and bought the single pearl. •You (plur.), too, Mt 6:20
 seek the ceaseless and enduring treasure, where moth does not Lk 12:33
 approach to eat nor worm to destroy.”

46 a. Or “the owner.”

b. Or “well.”

c. Or “wedding hall.” For Valentinian imagery of the “bridal chamber,” see especially GPh.

(77)

Jesus is the entirety and is everywhere

- 22, 24 JESUS said, "It is I who am the light (that presides) over all. •It is
 I who am the entirety: it is from me that the entirety has come,
 26 and to me that the entirety goes. •Split a piece of wood: I am
 27 there. •Lift a stone, and you (plur.) will find me there."^d

(78)

The goal of coming out to the countryside

- 28 JESUS said, "Why have you (plur.) come out into the country-
 29 side? •To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a person
 dressed in fine apparel [like your] governors^e and your members
 of court, who wear fine apparel and cannot recognize truth?"

Mt 11:7
 Lk 7:24

(79)

Those who have kept the father's utterance are blessed

- 3 47 A WOMAN in the crowd said to him, "Blessed are the womb
 6 that bore you and the breasts that nourished you!" •He said to
 [her], "Blessed are those who have heard the father's utterance
 9 (or Word) and truly kept it! •For days are coming when you
 (plur.) will say, 'Blessed are the womb that has not conceived
 and the breasts that have not given milk!'"

Lk 11:27

Lk 23:28
 Mt 24:19?
 Mk 13:17?
 Lk 21:23?

(80)

The world is like the body

- 12 JESUS said, "Whoever has become acquainted with the world
 has found the body, and the world is not worthy of the one who
 has found the body."^a

d. The Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 1) gives these
 last two sentences as parts of no. 30.

e. Or "kings, emperors."

47 a. This saying is nearly identical with no. 56,
 which likens the world to a "corpse" (Greek
ptōma) rather than the body (Greek *to sōma*).

(81)**The rich should reign and renounce**

- 15, 16 JESUS said, "The one who has become rich should reign. •And the one who has power should renounce."^b

(82)**Fire and the kingdom are with Jesus**

- 17 JESUS said, "Whoever is near me is near fire, and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom." Mk 12:34?

(83)**Light is hidden by image and image by light**

- 19, 21 JESUS said, "Images are visible to human beings. •And the light within these (images) is hidden by the image of the father's light: 23 it^c will be disclosed. •And his image is hidden by his light."

(84)**Our encounter with our preexistent images**

- 24 JESUS said, "When you (plur.) see your resemblance you are 26 happy. •But when you see your images that came into existence before you and are neither mortal nor visible, how much you will have to bear!"

(85)**Adam was not worthy of us**

- 29 JESUS said, "It was from a great power and a great wealth that Adam came into being: and he did not become worthy of you 33 (plur.). •For, had he been worthy [he would] not [have tasted] death."

b. Or "deny?"

c. Or "he."

(86)

The son of man has nowhere to lay his head

- 34 JESUS said, “[Foxes have] their dens and birds have their nests. Mt 8:20
Lk 9:58
2 48 •But the son of man^a has nowhere to lay his head and gain repose.”

(87)

Soul should be independent of body

- 4 JESUS said, “Wretched is the body that depends upon a body.
6 •And wretched is the soul that depends upon^b these two.”

(88)

We should give to messengers and prophets

- 7 JESUS said, “The messengers^c and the prophets are coming to you(plur.), and they will give you the things that you possess.
9 •And you, too—give them the things that you have, and say among yourselves, ‘When are they coming to take their own?’”

(89)

We should wash not only the outside

- 13 JESUS said, “Why are you (plur.) washing the outside of the cup? Mt 23:25
Lk 11:39
14 •Don’t you think that the one who made the inside is the very same one who made the outside?”

(90)

Jesus’ yoke is easy

- 16 JESUS said, “Come (plur.) to me, for my yoke is easy (to use) and Mt 11:28
19 my lordship^d is mild, •and you will find repose for yourselves.”

48 a. Or “a child of humankind.”

b. “depends upon . . . depends upon”: lit. “hangs from.”

c. Or “angels.”

d. Or “ownership,” the relation of owner to slave.

(91)

Recognition of Jesus' presence

- 20 •THEY said to him, "Tell us who you are, so that we might be-
 21 lieve in you." •He said to them, "You (plur.) are testing the face
 of heaven and earth, and you have not recognized the one who
 24 is in your presence! •And you do not recognize how to test the
 present time."^e

Mt 16:1
Lk 12:54

(92)

We do not seek what Jesus wishes to tell us

- 25, 26 JESUS said, "Seek and you (plur.) will find. •Yet, now I am will-
 ing to say the things which you used to ask me about and which
 I did not say to you; and you are not seeking them."

2
Mt 7:7
Lk 11:9

(93)

Do not give the holy to dogs

- 30 <JESUS said>,^f "Do not give holy things to dogs, lest they throw
 31 them upon the dunghill. •Do not throw pearls to swine lest
 they [. . .]."^g

Mt 7:6

(94)

Seekers will enter

- 33, 34 JESUS [said], "One who seeks will find. •The door will be opened
 to one [who knocks]."

Mt 7:8

(95)

We should not lend at interest

- 35 [JESUS said], "If you (plur.) have money, do not lend it out at
 1 interest. 49 •Rather, give [it] to one from whom you will not get
 it back."

Lk 6:34
Mt 5:42

e. "the present time": or "this time of crisis,"
 Greek *kairos*.

f. These words are inadvertently omitted in the
 Coptic MS.

g. Perhaps "[grind them to bits]"; the Coptic
 MS is imperfect here.

(96)

A parable of a woman baking bread

- 2 JESUS [said], “What the kingdom of the father resembles is [a] Mt 13:33
Lk 13:20
 woman who took a small amount of leaven, [hid] it in some
 5 dough, and produced huge loaves of bread. •“Whoever has ears
 should listen!”

(97)

A parable of a woman with a jar of meal

- 7 JESUS said, “[What] the kingdom of the [father] resembles [is]
 9 a woman who was conveying a [jar] full of meal. •When she
 had traveled far [along] the road, the handle of the jar broke
 12 and the meal spilled out after her [along] the road. •She was not
 13 aware of^a the fact; she had not understood how to toil. •When
 she reached home she put down the jar and found it empty.”

(98)

A parable of an assassination

- 15 JESUS said, “What the kingdom of the father resembles is a man
 17 who wanted to assassinate a member of court. •At home, he drew
 the dagger and stabbed it into the wall in order to know whether
 20 his hand would be firm. •Next, he murdered the member of
 court.”

(99)

Jesus’ true family

- 21 THE DISCIPLES said to him, “Your brothers and your mother Mt 12:47
Mk 3:32
Lk 8:20
 23 are standing outside.” •He said to them, “It is those who are here
 and who do the will of my father that are my siblings and my
 25 mother. •It is they who will enter the kingdom of my father.”

49 a. Lit. “She did not have acquaintance of.”

(100)

Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's

- 27 THEY showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him, "Caesar's agents
 29 are exacting^b taxes from us." •He said to them, "Give unto Caesar
 the things that are Caesar's, give unto god the things that are
 god's, and give unto me that which is mine." Mt 22:16
Mk 12:14
Lk 20:21

(101)

We should hate our family and love our true family

- 32 <JESUS said>,^c "Those who do not hate their [father] and their 55+
 34 mother as I do cannot be [disciples] of me. •And those who [do
 not] love their [father and] their mother as I do cannot be [dis-
 36,1 ciples of] me. •For my mother [. . .]. 50 •But my true [mother]
 gave me life."

(102)

Pharisees impede nourishment

- 2,2 JESUS said, "Woe unto the Pharisees. •For what they resemble 39+
 is a dog sleeping in the manger of some cattle, for it neither eats
 nor [lets] the cattle feed."

(103)

A parable of a landowner and brigands

- 5 JESUS said, "Blessed is the man who recognizes [which] district 21+
(37:6)
 the brigands are going to enter, so as to arise, gather (the forces
 of) his domain, and arm himself before they enter."

(104)

Do not pray or fast while the bridegroom is present

- 10 THEY said [to Jesus], "Come, let us pray today, and let us fast." Mt 9:14
Mk 2:18
Lk 5:33
 12 •Jesus said, "What is the sin that I have committed? Or how

b. Or "extorting."

c. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MS.

- 14 have I been overcome? •Rather, when the bridegroom leaves the
bridal chamber then let people fast and pray.”

(105)

Acquaintance with the father and the mother

- 16 JESUS said, “Whoever is acquainted with the father and the
mother will be called the offspring of a prostitute.”

(106)

The power of wholeness

- 18 JESUS said, “When you (plur.) make the two into one you will ⁴⁸⁺
20 become sons of man,^a •and when you say, ‘O mountain, go else-
where!’ it will go elsewhere.”

(107)

A parable of a lost sheep

- 22 JESUS said, “What the kingdom resembles is a shepherd who ^{Mt 18:12}
24 had a hundred sheep. •One of them, the largest, strayed away. ^{Lk 15:4}
25 •He left the ninety-nine and sought the one until he found it.
26 •After having toiled, he said to the sheep, “I love you (sing.) more
than the ninety-nine.”

(108)

Assimilation to Jesus

- 28 JESUS said, “Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like
29 me; •I, too, will become that person, and to that person the ob-
scure^b things will be shown forth.”

50 a. Perhaps extending to all Christians of either sex. “Son of man” or “child of the human being” was a traditional eschatological title applied to Jesus in some early Christian circles; the arrival of

the heavenly “son of man” would signal the arrival of god’s kingdom.

b. Or “hidden.”

(109)**A parable of a hidden treasure**

- 31 JESUS said, “What the kingdom resembles is a man who pos- Mt 13:4
 33 sessed a hidden treasure in his field without knowing it. •And
 35 [upon] dying he left it to his [son]. •The son [was] not aware
 35 of the fact.^c •He assumed(ownership of) the field and sold it.
 1 51 •And the person who bought it came plowing, [found] the
 treasure, and began to lend out money at interest to whomever
 he wished.”

(110)**The rich should renounce**

- 4 JESUS said, “The one who has found the world and become rich
 should renounce the world.”

(111)**The living will not die**

- 6 JESUS said, “The heavens and the earth will roll up in your
 7 (plur.) presence. •And the living from the living^a will not see
 death.”—Doesn’t Jesus mean that the world is not worthy of a
 person who has found the self?^b

(112)**Soul should be independent of flesh**

- 10, 11 JESUS said, “Woe to the flesh that depends upon^c a soul. •Woe
 to the soul that depends upon flesh.”

c. Or “did not have acquaintance of the fact.”

51 a. Lit. “the one who is alive out of the one who
 is alive.”

b. “Doesn’t Jesus . . . the self”: probably a com-
 ment added to the text by an ancient reader and
 later erroneously incorporated in the text.

c. Lit. “hangs from.”

(113)

The kingdom is already spread over the earth

- 12 HIS DISCIPLES said to him, “When is the kingdom going to
 14 come?” •<Jesus said>,^d “It is not by being waited for that it is go-³
 15 ing to come. •They are not going to say, ‘Here it is’ or ‘There it is.’^{Lk17:20}
 16 •Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out over the earth,
 and people do not see it.”

(114)

The female element must make itself male

- 18 SIMON PETER said to them, “Mary should leave us, for females
 20 are not worthy of life.” •Jesus said, “See, I am going to attract her
 to make her male so that she too might become a living spirit that
 24 resembles you males. •For every female (element) that makes
 itself^e male^f will enter the kingdom of heavens.”^g

d. These words are inadvertently omitted in the Coptic MS.

e. Or “every woman who makes herself.”

f. “female (element) . . . male”: it was a philosophical cliché that the material constituent of an

entity was “female,” while its form (or ideal form) was “male.”

g. In the Coptic manuscript, the title of this work is written after the text (at 51:27f).

THE BOOK OF THOMAS: THE CONTENDER WRITING TO THE PERFECT

(BTh)

CONTENTS

Like HP1 and GTh, *The Book of Thomas: The Contender Writing to the Perfect*¹ (“The Book of Thomas the Athlete,” “The Book of Thomas the Contender”) is composed of materials associated with the traditional teaching of wisdom. In it, Jesus (“the savior”) appears as an extraordinarily wise and authoritative teacher; his message is an uncompromising proclamation of the distinction between the wise (“perfect”) and the foolish, and a prediction of the punishment that awaits the fool. Jesus is not mentioned by name in BTh; he is only called “savior.” The myth of the soul that is represented in HP1 and hinted at in GTh provides a framework for the savior’s teaching in BTh but does not form an important part of his message. Especially noteworthy is an explicit elaboration of the model of divine twinship (138:4f) between the savior and Jude Thomas.

The conception of the human being found in BTh seems to make a threefold distinction between the flesh or body, the perceptive faculties or soul, and the intellect or faculty capable of self-acquaintance, though this distinction is never clearly stated. The first half of the work concerns acquaintance or self-knowledge (*gnōsis*) and the valuelessness of the flesh. The second half (142:21f) is harshly ascetical and sermonlike, describing in detail the punishment that awaits the foolish person in hell and condemning the fool, who is subject to the influence of flesh. Generally speaking, the first half emphasizes the nature of the saved, while the second half describes the damned. A unifying pair of themes—light (*gnōsis*, the savior) and fire (desire, lust)—runs throughout the two sections.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The date of composition of BTh is unknown; in any case, it must be before A.D. 350, the approximate date of the manuscript, and later than that of GTh, to which (GTh prologue, 1) allusion is made in BTh 138:1f. The mythic content

1. Or *The Book of Thomas the Contender, Writing to the Perfect*.

of the work resembles HPrl and GTh (see introduction to HPrl, “Contents”). In the opening paragraph of BTh, the author states that he is a certain Mathaiias, and claims to have compiled it by editing eyewitness records of conversations between the apostle Jude Thomas and “the savior” (Jesus); the work is thus probably an example of pseudepigraphy. It is unclear whether “Mathaiias” here means the apostle Matthew or someone else. The language of composition was Greek.

BTh has a complex mixture of genres in which various traditional materials are subordinated to others.

- I. Anthology of wise sayings
 - A. Revelation dialogue
 1. Treatises
 - a. The nature of acquaintance (*gnōsis*)
 - b. The fate of souls and bodies
 - c. The wise and the fool
 - B. Eschatological sermon
 1. Description of the underworld
 2. Woes and blessings
 3. Call to wakefulness

In its opening the work characterizes itself as a wisdom book or *anthology of wise* (“obscure”) *sayings*, alluding to the prologue of GTh, and in effect claiming to parallel the latter’s contents. However, the term “sayings” is apt only in the second half (142:21 to the end), since the body of the work opens with a *revelatory dialogue* between Jesus and his disciple Jude Thomas; for this genre, see the introduction to BJn in Part One. The incongruity of the dialogic genre with the opening characterization has led some modern critics to conclude that in its present form BTh is merely a compilation of two earlier works: one a revelation dialogue, the other a collection of sayings. The wording of the title (which can be understood as two titles conjoined) has been cited in support of this view. The opening sentence alluding to a sayings collection would then have been an original part of the sayings material now found in 142:21f.

The savior’s revelation in this dialogue takes the form of a philosophical *treatise* broken up into a series of lengthy replies given by the savior. These include an explicit discussion of the mystical theology implied by the model of divine twinship; and apocalyptic descriptions of the fate of souls and bodies and of the character of the wise and the fool.

The second half, or sayings section, continues the topic of the wise and the fool, now in the form of an eschatological monologue or *sermon*. Here the savior describes the punishments of hell that await the fool in the *underworld*, comparable to traditional Greek underworld (*nekylia*) literature. The sermon concludes with traditional *woes and blessings* and an eschatological *call to wakefulness*.

The style of BTh is often obscure, perhaps in keeping with the author’s characterization of the work as “obscure sayings” (138:1f).

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. Inhabitants of the Kingdom or Essence of Light

The KING, who is good (God the father)
 The FEMALE BEING WHO IS TRULY WISE (Wisdom)
 The SAVIOR. JESUS.

II. Inhabitants of the Heavens

The (chief) RULER
 The AUTHORITIES

III. Inhabitants of Earth and Hell

Humankind:
 The IGNORANT
 The PERFECT, including Jude Thomas, Mathaias, and others
 Wicked DEMONS
 The ANGEL who rules Tartarus

TEXT

The original Greek apparently does not survive. The text is known only in Coptic translation, attested by a single manuscript from Nag Hammadi, MS NHC II (pp. 138–45), which was copied just before A.D. 350 and is now in the Cairo Coptic Museum.

The translation below is based on my own critical edition of the Coptic: Turner and Layton, “The Book of Thomas the Contender Writing to the Perfect” (see “Select Bibliography”).

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The Book of Thomas: The Contender Writing to the Perfect^a

I. CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION

- 1 138 The obscure^b sayings that the savior uttered to Jude Thomas, GTh prol.
GTh 1
GJd 33:1
2,3 •and which I, Mathaias, also wrote down. •I used to travel and
listen to them as they were talking to one another.

II. THE NATURE OF ACQUAINTANCE (*GNŌSIS*)

Acquaintance with the savior is acquaintance with the self

- 4 The savior said, “Thomas, brother, while you have time in the
world, listen to me and I shall make a disclosure to you concern-
ing what you have thought about in your heart.
7 •“Now, since it is said that you are my double^c and my true
companion,^d examine yourself and understand who you are, how
10 you exist, and how you will be. •Inasmuch as you are going to be
called my sibling,^e it is not fitting for you to be unacquainted with
12 your self. •And I recognize that you have understood. For, you
have already understood that it is I who am acquaintance with
14 truth. •Thus, supposing that you go about with me, even if you
are without acquaintance you have already gotten acquaintance,
15 •and you will be called the man who knows himself.

Acquaintance with the self is acquaintance with the entirety

- 16 “For, those who have not known themselves have not been
17 acquainted with anything. •But those who have only known
themselves have also received acquaintance with the depth of

138 a. In the manuscript, the title is found after the text (at 145:17f).

b. Or “hidden.”

c. Or perhaps “twin,” the meaning of the name “Thomas” (in Aramaic and Syriac).

d. “my true companion”: some scholars conjec-

ture that the original reading here was “my fellow contender”; cf. the title of the work.

e. According to early Christian tradition in Syria, Mesopotamia, and India, Jude Thomas was Jesus’ twin brother.

- 19 the entirety.^f •So for this reason, Thomas (my) brother, you have personally seen what is obscure to^g humankind and what people are impeded by when they lack acquaintance.”

III. INTERPRETATION OF THE SAVIOR'S SAYINGS

- 21 Then Thomas said to the lord, “So I beg you, then, before
your ascension to tell me [about the] things I am asking you Ac 1:3?
24 about. •[And] once I have heard from you about the obscure^h
26 things, then I can speak of them. •And it seems clear to me that
it is difficult to do the truth before humankind.”
- 27, 28 •The savior answered, saying, •“If things that are visibleⁱ unto
you (plur.) are obscure^j to you, how can you hear about those that
30 are not visible? •If the deeds^k of truth that are visible in the world
are difficult for you (plur.) to do, how then will you do those of
34 exalted majesty and of the fullness, which are not visible? •How
35 then will you (plur.) be called laborers? •For this reason you are
learners, and have not yet received the majesty of perfection.”
- 36, 37 •But Thomas answered and said to the savior, •“Tell us about
the things you are saying, for they are not obvious to us, [but,
rather,] obscure.”

The body will perish

- 39 The savior said, “[Each] body [. . .] domestic animals, when
they are born [. . .] obvious,^l in the manner of [. . .] this, too, the
43 things above [. . .] those which are obvious; •but it is from the
1 root of them alone that [they] are obvious. 139 •And it is their
2 fruits that nourish them. •These visible bodies themselves eat
4 of the creatures that resemble them. •So for this reason bodies
4 are mutable. •But what is mutable will perish and cease to be,
5, 6 •and from that moment on it has no hope of living. •For the body
6 is a domestic animal. •Indeed, just as the bodies of domestic an-
8 imals perish, so too these modeled forms^a will perish. •Does it
(the body) not result from sexual intercourse like that of the do-
9 mestic animals? •If it, too, is from that (intercourse), how can it
11 produce anything different than they do? •For this reason, then,
you (plur.) are children until you become mature.”^b

f. In classic gnosticism the “entirety” is the sum total of spiritual reality deriving from the first principle, by way of the Barbêlô aeon.

g. Or “hidden from.”

h. Or “hidden.”

i. Or “obvious.”

j. Or “hidden.”

k. Or “things.”

l. Or “visible.”

139 a. “modeled form”: Jewish and Christian jargon for the human body, based on the fact that the creator modeled Adam out of earth.

b. Or “perfect.”

Difficulty of explaining the invisible

- 12, 12 And Thomas answered, •“For this reason I declare to you, lord, that those who speak of things that are not visible^c and are difficult to explain resemble people who shoot their arrows at a target in the night. •Of course, they shoot their arrows as people do, for it is at the target that they shoot; •yet it is not visible. 16
17
18 •But when the daylight comes and hides the darkness, then the accomplishment of each will be shown forth. •And you, O lord 20
our light, are giving enlightenment.”

The light is here for only a short time

- 21 Jesus said, “Where the light dwells is in the light.”^d
22 •Thomas spoke, saying, “Lord, why is the visible light, which gives light for the sake of humankind, radiant and (then) it goes out?”^e
24, 25 •The savior said, “Blessed Thomas! •Now, the visible light has shone for your sakes—not so that you (plur.) might remain 28
here, but so that you might depart hence. •And when all the chosen (plur.) lay down bestiality, then the light will withdraw up to 30
its essence,^f •and its essence will receive it unto itself, for it (the light) is a good assistant.”

IV. THE WISE AND THE FOOL

The wise person flees from desire

- 31, 32 Next, the savior continued, saying, •“Oh, the unsearchable 33
love of the light! •Oh, the bitterness of the fire blazing in the 35
bodies of humankind, and in their marrows—•blazing within 36
them night and [day]! Burning people’s limbs! •[Making] their hearts intoxicated! And making their souls dumbfounded [. . . ! . . .] them among males and females [. . .] and which moves 40
them [. . .] secretly and publicly [. . .]. •For the males [. . .] and the females [. . . it is (?)] said (?) that all who seek truth from that female being who is truly wise^g will construct for themselves 3
wings so as to fly, **140** •fleeing the desire that burns the spirits 4, 4
of humankind; •and will construct for themselves wings, •when they flee any visible^a spirit.”

c. Or “obvious.”

d. I.e. the essential home of a luminous element is within the realm of light.

e. The temporary manifestation of the savior within the material realm is compared to the shining of the sun from dawn to dusk.

f. The realm of light.

g. Wisdom (Sophia), personified.

140 a. Here and in the following passage, “visible” means “belonging to the material realm.”

- 5 •Thomas answered, saying, “Lord, it is precisely this that I am asking you about, inasmuch as I have understood that it is you who benefit us by what you say.”
- 8, 9 •In turn, the savior answered and said, •“This is why we must speak to you. •For this is the teaching of those who are perfect.
- 11 •So if you (plur.) want to become perfect you will keep these GTh 1
- 12, 13 (sayings); •if not, the term for you is ignorant:^b •inasmuch as
- 14 an intelligent person cannot live with a fool. •For the intelligent person is perfect in every (kind of) wisdom.

The fool is deceived by the visible realm

- 15, 16 “But to the fool good and evil are exactly the same. •For the wise person will be nourished by truth, and will be like a tree Ps 1:3
- 18 planted by streams of water. •Indeed, there are some people who have wings when they flee to the visible realm^c that is far from truth: •for, that which leads them, namely fire, will present to them a truthlike apparition. •[And] it will shine upon them with [corrupting]^d beauty, will take them captive with dark sweetness, and will catch them up with fragrant pleasure. •And it will make them blind with insatiable desire, •roast their souls, and [be] like an irremovable stake piercing their hearts. •And like a bit in the mouth it leads them toward its own intention.
- 30, 31 •“And it has fastened them with its chains. •And it has bound all their limbs with the bitterness of the bondage of desire for this corruptible, mutable, changeable visible realm. •By attraction they have been drawn downward at all times. •As they are slain, they are drawn into (the realm of) all the domestic animals of defilement.”^e
- 37 •Thomas answered and said, “It is obvious—indeed, it has been said—that [many . . .] those who are not acquainted [. . .] soul(s).”

The wise person relies upon truth

- 40, 41 [Then the savior] answered, saying, •“[Blessed (?) is] the wise GTh 2 person who has [sought truth]; once having found it, has relied^f upon it forever; and has not feared those who wish to cause a disturbance.”

We should associate with our own kind

- 2, 3 141 Thomas answered and said, •“Lord, is it best for us to rest among^a our own?”

b. Lit. “your name is ignorance.”

c. Translation uncertain. The text appears to say, “Inasmuch as some people have wings, they flee to the visible realm.”

d. Or “[perishable].”

e. I.e. are drawn into utter materiality.

f. Or “reposed.”

141 a. “rest among”: or “rely upon, repose within.”

- 4, 4 •The savior said, •“Indeed, it is useful and good for you (plur.).

Fate of the others: the body

- 5, 6 “For, the visible parts^b of humankind^c will perish, •since the
7 instrument^d of their flesh is going to perish. •And when it is dis-
9 persed it will come to reside among visible things, among things
11 •They will be regathered to the visible realm.

Fate of the others: the soul

- 12 “On the other hand, among parts not visible, those which
14 possess the faculty of sight^f will, in the absence of prior love, be-
15, 16 come corrupted by concern for the present life and by the burn-
ing of the fire. •There will only be a little while until the visible^g
will perish: •then misshapen^h phantoms will come to exist, •and
they will dwell forever in the midst of the tombs over the corpses,
in torment and corruption of soul.”

We should ignore the fool

- 18 And Thomas answered and said, “What can we say in the
20 presence of these (people)? •What shall we say to blind persons?
21 •Which teaching shall we utter to wretched mortals, who say,
‘We have come for [doing] good, not for reviling,’ or moreover
will [say], ‘If we had not been born in the flesh we would not
have become acquainted with the iniquitous?’”
25 •The savior said, “Truly, do not consider those people to be
27 human beings; rather, count them [as] domestic animals—•for
just as animals devour one another, so also human beings of this
kind devour one another.

Punishment of the fool

- 29 “But they are excluded from the [kingdom], inasmuch as they
30 love the sweetness of fire, •are servants of death, and pursue
32 deeds of defilement. •They perfect the desire of their ancestors.
32 •They will be cast down into the abyss and will be punished by
35 the fate belonging to the bitterness of their evil nature. •Indeed,
they will be flogged until they rush (?) whither they know not.

b. I.e. the body.

c. “humankind”: presumably meaning others, the ignorant. In his next intervention (141:18f), Thomas refers to them as “these (people) . . . blind persons . . .” The text of the present passage may be corrupt or incomplete; more logical would be e.g. “the visible parts of foolish humankind.”

d. Or “vessel”: a cliché for the material body.

e. In hell.

f. The animate faculties or soul.

g. The body.

h. Or “formless.”

36 •And they [will recede] from their limbs not patiently but [in]
 38 despair. •And they rejoice at [. . .] madness and dumbfounded-
 39 ness. •Being [. . . , they] rush [toward] dumbfoundedness without
 understanding [their madness, thinking] that they are wise. [. . .]
 their body [. . .], with their hearts set upon their own selves and
 2 their thoughts upon their actions. 142 •But it is flame that will
 consume them.”

2 •And Thomas answered and said, “Lord, what will that which
 4 has been cast down into them do?^a •For I am very anxious about
 5 them, •since many oppose them.”

5 •The savior answered and said, “What do you yourself think?”

7 •Jude, who is called Thomas, said, “It is you, lord, who should
 speak and I, who should listen to you.”

9 •The savior answered, “Listen to what I shall tell you and be-
 11 lieve in the truth. •The sower and the sown will perish in their
 fire, by fire and water, and will hide in the tombs of the darkness.
 14 •And after a long time they will be shown forth as the fruits of
 the evil trees, being severely pruned^b and killed in mouths of
 domestic animals and human beings— through the resources
 of rain, wind, air, and the light shining above.”

Punishment of those who scoff at us

18 •And Thomas answered, “Truly, you have persuaded us, lord;
 20, 21 •we have thought with our hearts, and it is obviously thus. •And
 21 your utterance is free of envy.^c •Yet, unto the world the sayings
 that you say to us are laughable and ridiculous, inasmuch as they
 24 are not recognized. •How then can we go and proclaim them,
 inasmuch as we are [not] esteemed [in] the world?”

26 •The savior answered and said, “Truly, I say unto you (plur.),
 whoever hears [your] words and turns away or ridicules (them)
 29 or grimaces at them—truly, I say to you, such a person will be
 delivered unto the ruler above, who rules all the authorities as
 32 their king; and the ruler will turn that person away,^d casting the
 person downward from on high into the abyss, to be shut up in a
 35 dark, narrow place •and so be unable to turn or move because of
 the great depth of Tartarus and the burdensome [bitterness] of
 39 Hades, which prevails [. . .] them against that person [. . .]. •They
 will not release^e [. . .] pursue you (plur.), [they will] hand [. . .]
 over [. . .] angel who controls Tartarus [. . .] flame(s), pursue them
 [. . .] fiery whips showering sparks in the face of the pursued. 143
 2, 3 •That person, if fleeing to the west, finds fire; •if turning south,

142 a. Or “Lord, how will the person fare who has
 been cast down into them?”

b. Or “chastized.”

c. Or “your utterance is generous.”

d. The chief of the demonic heavenly rulers

(“authorities”) will impede the soul if it tries to
 progress through the heavens and escape from the
 material realm. The idea was commonplace; cf.,
 for example, EpG 26.13.2.

e. Or “forgive.”

4 finds it there as well; •if turning north, is met again by the threat
 5 of seething fire; •but will not find the way to the east so as to flee
 6 that way and be saved: •for, that person did not discover it while
 incarnate so as to find it on the day of judgment.”

V. EXHORTATION

Woe to those who live for the flesh

8 Next, the savior continued, saying, “Woe unto you, O godless
 people without hope, who are set upon things that will not come
 to pass.
 10 •“Woe unto you (plur.), who put your hope in the flesh and
 11 the prison that will perish. •How long will you forget and sup-
 13 pose that the incorruptibles will perish? •Your hope is set upon
 14, 15 the world. •And your god is the present life. •What you destroy
 is your own souls.
 15 •“Woe unto you (plur.) in the fire that burns within you, for
 it is insatiable.
 17 •“Woe unto you (plur.) because of the wheel turning in your
 thoughts.
 18 •“Woe unto you (plur.) who are gripped by the burning that is
 [in] you, for it will plainly consume your flesh, and will secretly
 break your souls and prepare you < . . . > in one another.
 21 •“Woe unto you who are captives, for you are bound in caves.
 23, 24 • You (plur.) laugh, rejoicing in mad laughter. •You do not think
 24 about your destruction. •You neither think about where you are,
 27 nor know that you dwell in darkness and [death]. •Rather, you are
 27, 28 intoxicated with fire, •and you are [full] of bitterness. •Your hearts
 29 are dumbfounded because of the burning within you. •And the
 30 poison and the blows of your enemies are pleasant unto you. •And
 31 the darkness has risen upon you as the light. •For, you have deliv-
 32 ered your freedom into servitude. •You have made your hearts into
 hearts of darkness, and have delivered your thoughts into foolish-
 34 ness. •And you have filled your thoughts with the smoke of the fire
 35 that is in you. •And your light [has become hidden] by the cloud [of
 38 . . .], and you have [. . .] the garment^a that you wear [. . .]. •And you
 39 have been restrained [by] groundless hope. •In whom [have you]
 40 believed? •Do you [not recognize that you] all [reside] in those
 1 which [. . .] you as though [. . .]. 144 •You have baptized your souls
 in the water of darkness, and have progressed in your own desires.
 2 •“Woe unto you (plur.) who dwell in error without gazing at
 the light of the sun that judges the entirety and gazes upon the

143 a. A Platonist cliché for the material body.

entirety; for it will turn unto all deeds to make those that are
6 hostile into slaves. •And furthermore, do you not think about
how the moon gazes down by night and by day beholding the
corpses of your slaughters?

8 •“Woe unto you (plur.) who love the sexual intercourse that
belongs to femininity and its foul cohabitation.

10 •“And woe unto you (plur.) who are gripped by the authorities
of your bodies; for they will afflict you.

12 •“Woe unto you (plur.) who are gripped by the agencies of
wicked demons.

14 •“Woe unto you (plur.) who beguile your limbs with fire.

15 •Who will cause dew of rest to descend upon you, so as to extin-
guish the many fires from within you, along with your burning?

17 •Who will give you the sun to radiate upon you so as to dispel the
darkness within you and hide the darkness and the foul water?

19 •Will the sun and the moon bestow good fragrance upon you
(plur.), along with air, spirit, earth, and water?

A parable of a grapevine and weeds

21 “Indeed, if the sun does not radiate upon bodies, they will rot
23 and perish, like a weed or a grass: •if the sun radiates upon such,
25 it grows strong and chokes the grapevine; •while if the grapevine
grows strong, shades the weeds [and] also all the underbrush
sprouting beside it, [spreads], and broadens out, it alone will in-
30 herit the land that it is growing in, •and it will have dominated ev-
31 ery place that it has shaded. •Next, then, if it increases it will dom-
32 inate the whole plot of land. •And it will flourish for its lord and
33 please him greatly, •for he would have had to take great pains to
34 pluck out the weeds: •but the grapevine alone has removed them
36 and choked them; •and they have died and become like soil.”

Mt 13:24?

Woe to disbelievers

36 Then Jesus continued and said to them, “Woe unto [you
38 (plur.)], for you have not accepted the teaching. •And those who
40 are [. . .] will labor, proclaiming [. . .]. •And you are fleeing into
[. . .] will fetch [them] down [. . .] kill them daily, so that they
might arise from death.

Blessings to those who persevere

1 •145 “Blessed are you (plur.) who have already understood temp-
tations and have fled from alien things.

3 •“Blessed are you (plur.) who are mocked and are not es-
teemed, because of the love that your lord has for you.

5 •“Blessed are you (plur.) who weep and who are caused dis-
7 tress by those who have no hope: •for you will be freed from
every kind of bondage.

Mt 5:11
Lk 6:22

Mt 5:4
Lk 6:21

Salvation from the flesh

8 “Be wakeful and pray with entreaties that you (plur.) might
 10 not dwell in the flesh but might leave the bondage of bitterness
 11 belonging to this life. •And if you pray with entreaties you will
 12 find repose: •for you will have left behind labor and mockery.
 14 •Indeed, if you leave the labors and passions of the body, you will
 15 receive repose from him who is good. •And you will reign with
 the king, being in harmony with him as he is in harmony with
 you, •from now unto eternity of eternities. Amen!^{2a}

Mt 26:41
 Mk 14:38
 Lk 22:46 ?

Mt 11:28

145 a. In the manuscript, the title of this work is written after the text (at 145:17f).

Part Five

OTHER EARLY
CURRENTS

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Throughout this book, the term “gnostic” has been limited to its original historical sense: the name of a particular sect that considered itself to be the children of Seth (Part One). By extension, this term also applies to the reformed branch of gnostics that we know as Valentinianism (Parts Two and Three). When historians reconstruct the education that led Valentinus to undertake his brilliant reformation of gnostic Christianity, they must take into account many religious forces other than the gnostics (see Table 1). One of these was the school of St. Thomas (Part Four), which first came to power in northern Mesopotamia. The scriptures written by this school were soon transmitted to the region of Egypt, where they (or something like them) must have illuminated Valentinus along the way toward an inner, self-centered mysticism such as classic gnostic spirituality had been unable to attain (see Map 4). The mysticism of the Thomas scripture was thus a major intellectual force in Valentinus’s reformation of gnostic thought.

But in gnostic Alexandria, that swelling tidal pool of esoteric religions, philosophies, and sects, other strong currents also flowed in Valentinus’s direction. They are harder to trace all the way to their destination, because we have no precise record of Valentinus’s intellectual development, either by himself or by an observer. Two of these currents are so tantalizingly similar to Valentinianism that they can hardly be omitted from the appendix to a collection of gnostic scripture. The writings of *Basilides* are works of a skilled, independent, and outrageously original philosopher within Christianity, who must have been Valentinus’s colleague in his early days of teaching. The *Hermetic Corpus* comes from a school of pagan theosophists in Egypt, ostensibly irrelevant to gnostic thought but in fact very close in tone and rhetoric to the writings of Valentinus and his school. Hermetic treatises were popular with theologians of the ancient church; it would therefore be no surprise if Valentinus had taken note of them. The two included here must date to the second or third century A.D., but there is no means to be more definite. If Valentinus did not read precisely these Hermetic treatises, he probably knew of others like them.

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THE
WRITINGS
OF
BASILIDES

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF BASILIDES

Basilides the Christian philosopher¹ was active in Alexandria A.D. circa 132–35, and also before those years. He must have been a convincing teacher and a successful organizer, for the Christian movement that he founded was still active in Egypt in the fourth century A.D. One of the early leaders of the Basilidean school was Basilides' son Isidore. Nothing specific is known about Basilides' own life or career, and none of his works survives extensively. His followers in Alexandria later reported that he had claimed a kind of apostolic sanction for his teaching by maintaining that he had received lessons in Christian religion from a certain Glaucias, who—they said—had been an interpreter of St. Peter. If there is any truth in this claim, his contact with Glaucias may well have occurred in Alexandria; Fragment G (BasFrG), from Basilides' *Commentaries*, Book 23, appears to be a commentary on part of 1 Peter 4:12–19. A similar claim of apostolic sanction was being made about the same time by followers of Valentinus (see Part Two, "The Writings of Valentinus").

A brief and somewhat ambiguous idea of Basilides' philosophy is conveyed by the surviving fragments and reports of his teaching. He taught a *cosmogonic myth* whose general type, to judge from St. Irenaeus's account (IrBas), was similar to that of classic gnostic scripture. The fragments of Basilides' *ethical philosophy* deal with Christian problems and use traditional Christian language and scripture. The solutions he proposes partly depend on application of categories from the ethics of Stoic philosophy (see below). To elaborate a Christian *doctrine of salvation*, Basilides depends on Platonist or Pythagorean ideas; see Fragments E–H. An eclecticism made up of just such components continues to play an important role in Alexandrian Christian philosophy up to the end of the second century, when it can still be seen in the system of Clement of Alexandria.

1. Not identical with Basilides the Preacher, who was active in Persia at roughly the same time and whose description of Persian dualist theology is quoted by Hegemonius in *Acta Archelaei* 67.4–12 Beeson. In contrast, the Basilides mentioned in the appendix to the *Acta* (68 appendix, 3) is Basilides the philosopher; this fact is of little significance, since the appendix is not by Hegemonius.

Since Valentinus began his career as a teacher within the Christian circles of Alexandria at some time between A.D. 117 and 138, he almost surely must have learned about Basilides' teaching. St. Irenaeus asserts (IrV) that Valentinus "adapted the fundamental principles of the so-called gnostic school of thought to his own kind of system"; in other words, that Valentinian mythic speculation is based upon the classic gnostic myth. But it should be noted that Basilides' mythic philosophy is also close to both the gnostics and Valentinus, and so Basilides may somehow have exerted a major influence upon the development of Valentinus's system. Indeed, St. Irenaeus himself (*Against Heresies* 1.24.1) noted the similarity of Basilides' philosophy to the teaching of Saturninos, who may have been a gnostic (cf. IrSat).

THE STOIC BACKGROUND OF BASILIDES' ETHICS

In his ethical system Basilides seems to have adapted Christian problems, terminology, and scripture to categories of Stoic ethics, though the evidence for Basilides' system is so scant that only scattered resemblances can be seen; these are noted in the discussion of the individual Fragments. In his overall philosophical system, Basilides is not a Stoic but an eclectic.

Stoicism, founded circa 300 B.C. by Zeno of Citium, continued to flourish as a philosophical school and sect in the time of Basilides. Stoics held a strongly deterministic view of fate or providence, that is, the operation of divine reason minutely controlling all events in the universe. The operation of reason, they held, is the "will of god"; it is always good. Two consequences result from this in the Stoic view. First, anything that might seem like evil within the universe, such as human suffering, must really have a rational cause, and so ultimately be good. Suffering, for example, may actually have educational value for the soul. Furthermore, suffering may be seen as falling within a category of things that are ethically "indifferent" (*ta adiaphora*), that is, neither good nor bad in themselves but only good or bad in the way they are put to use (for example, life and death, pleasure and pain, beauty and ugliness, strength and weakness).

Second, the virtuous life, for Stoics, is a life led in agreement with reason, in agreement with "nature"—whether one's own rational nature or the rational nature of the whole universe as a system. Because of the control of providence the individual soul does not generally possess free will. But it has the choice of either assenting willingly to its fate—in which case it will be happy; or chafing at the bit—in which case it will be unhappy (but still have exactly the same fate). Virtue, in Stoic analysis, is not a kind of action but rather a kind of state of the rational soul, in which one is in perfect rational agreement with nature and is unperturbed. The virtuous or wise person is one who has attained that state; such people are rare. Once the soul's state of virtue has been achieved, the person will as a result perform virtuous deeds, make virtuous choices, and be happy. Such a person is unaffected by emotions, desires, hatred, etc., and has no need of external laws or commandments in choosing the right course of action.

THE LITERARY EVIDENCE FOR BASILIDES' TEACHING

Of Basilides own writings, only scattered fragments and reports now survive, and what survives does not form an entirely coherent picture. He is one of the two earliest known authors of commentaries on Christian (New Testament) scripture; compare BasFrG. He also wrote poetry or songs (*ōdai*), and produced his own edition of a gospel; these are now lost.

Most trustworthy of all the reports about Basilides are those by Clement of Alexandria, who wrote in A.D. circa 200, within Basilides' own city. Clement is not entirely hostile to Basilides, and in general his conciliatory attitude toward thinkers he disagrees with adds to his trustworthiness as a reporter. But one must take care to distinguish Clement's reports about Basilides from those concerning Basilides' successors. Clement preserves seven fragments and reports of Basilides; an eighth is recorded by the Christian philosopher Origen of Alexandria (A.D. ca. 185–ca. 254).

In addition, a very early report of Basilides' teachings, probably by St. Justin Martyr (writing in Rome A.D. ca. 150), is adapted by St. Irenaeus of Lyon for inclusion in his monumental refutation of heresies (Justin's original work is now lost). This report fits more or less coherently with the fragments found in Clement and Origen; it is translated below (IrBas).²

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2. A second, utterly different report of Basilides' teaching is found in the *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.20–27, which was written shortly after A.D. 222 and is sometimes, but probably wrongly, attributed to St. Hippolytus of Rome. The *Refutation's* report agrees less obviously with the fragments and reports given by Clement of Alexandria, and has little parallel connection with Valentinus or other Christian theologians in the gnostic tradition. It is possibly by a later follower of Basilides. Acceptance of the *Refutation's* report as a genuine account of Basilides' own teaching would necessarily exclude Justin's report found in Irenaeus. For an English translation, see *Refutation of All Heresies* (M. D. Litwa, trans.; Writings from the Greco Roman World, no. 40; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 505–37.

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BASILIDES' MYTH

ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON,
AGAINST HERESIES 1.24.3–7

(IrBas)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

This incomplete summary by St. Irenaeus of Lyon, written in Greek about A.D. 180, may be based upon a lost work of St. Justin Martyr (A.D. ca. 150). Although Basilides was not a gnostic in the limited, classic sense of the term, in a sketchy way this summary parallels almost the full extent of the gnostic myth, including a description of the first principle (an “unengendered parent”); the first principle’s expansion into a complex spiritual universe; creation of a material universe consisting of 365 heavens at the center of which is our world; creation of the nations of humanity and of the Jewish nation in particular; and the coming of Jesus Christ. Related problems are also mentioned, including the components of the human being, the authority of the Jewish bible, Christology, and ethics. A “true history” of the crucifixion is given, according to which Simon of Cyrene was crucified in place of Jesus, who for his part ascended directly to his parent without experiencing crucifixion and resurrection.

A very important feature shared with gnostic myth is Basilides’ denigration of the god of Israel, and his report of that god’s self-serving preference for the Jewish nation (1.24.4). Since no details are reported about the creation of the first human being, it is difficult to assess more precisely the relationship of Basilides’ myth to that of the gnostics. Basilides agrees with the school of St. Thomas (especially GTh) in a Christology that entirely does without a crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. His “true history” about Jesus and Simon of Cyrene merely serves to contradict non-Basilidean gospel accounts of Jesus’ passion (as found, for example, in the gospel of Mark), and incidentally confirms that such accounts were known and used at Alexandria in Basilides’ time. Basilides published his own edition of the gospel (now lost), which must have omitted mention of a crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Only the first half of the summary reports Basilides’ own teachings. The second half (“Esotericism of Basilides’ Successors”) refers to certain ones of Basilides’ successors—unidentified—and should not necessarily be used in reconstructing Basilides’ own original teaching.

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Highest Beings¹

THE UNENGENDERED PARENT

INTELLECT, the parent's first-born; Christ, Jesus (Kaulakaua)²

THE VERBAL EXPRESSION (Word)

PRUDENCE

WISDOM (Sophia)

POWER

II. The Rulers

AUTHORITIES }
 RULERS } in 365 sets, one set per heaven
 ANGELS }

among them being

(ABRASAKS, chief of all the heavens)³

The GOD of the Jews, chief of the 365th heaven (under which we live)

III. Humankind

PEOPLE on earth, including

JESUS, an earthly manifestation of INTELLECT

SIMON OF CYRENE

TEXT

St. Irenaeus wrote in Greek, but the present passage is known only in an ancient Latin version of his work, attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. A summary in Greek of Irenaeus's original Greek text is given by the fifth-century Christian historian Theodoret of Cyrrihus (*Compendium*, 4), and another summary is included in a description of Basilides by the fourth-century church father St. Epiphanius of Salamis (*Against Heresies* 24.1.1–24.10.8); they shed light upon the Greek vocabulary, wording, and text of the lost original. The translation below is based on the critical edition of the Latin text by Rousseau and Doutreleau, altered by comparison with the Greek summaries: A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon, Contres les hérésies: Livre I* [Book 1] (Sources chrétiennes, no. 264; Paris: Le Cerf, 1979), vol. 2, 324–33.

1. Cf. BasFrA.

2. According to Basilides' successors.

3. According to Basilides' successors.

I. BASILIDES' TEACHINGS

Production of a quintet out of the parent

1.24.3 First,^a by the unengendered parent there was engendered
intellect.

And from it was engendered
verbal expression (Word).

From the verbal expression,
prudence.

From prudence,
wisdom (Sophia) and
power.

BasFrA

Production of the rulers and 365 heavens

And out of power together with wisdom (there were engendered)

authorities;^b
rulers;^c
angels.

These (authorities, rulers, and angels) he calls “first” ones. And by them the first heaven^d was crafted.

1.24.3 a. In the preceding sentence, St. Irenaeus attributes the teaching reported here to Basilides himself, not to his successors.

b. The original reading of the text is uncertain here; possibly “powers” is correct.

c. Or “realms.”

d. The summary in St. Epiphanius instead has “the highest, or first, heaven.”

By an act of emission on their part, other angels came into being, and they made another heaven closely resembling the first one. Then, in turn, by an act of emission on the part of these, there were produced other angels, corresponding to those that were above them, and they stamped a corresponding third heaven. And from the third level of descendants (was produced) a fourth, and thereafter in like manner were made—they say—still other rulers^e and angels, (up to a total of) 365 heavens. And it is because of them that the year has that quantity of days, corresponding to the number of heavens. Gjd 50:2

Our world and the god of Israel

1.24.4 Moreover, the angels who occupy the last heaven, the one that is visible to us,^a crafted all the things that are within the world; and among themselves they divided up the earth and the nations that are upon it. BasFrB

Now, their chief^b is the one who is known as the god of the Jews. And since the latter wanted to subject all nations to its own, the Jews, all the rest of the rulers resisted and opposed it; and so all the other nations, too, resisted (the Jewish) god's nation.

The savior and the crucifixion

Then the unengendered unnameable parent saw their ruin,^c and sent its first-born, the intellect, called Christ, to save people who believed in it, from the authority of the beings that had crafted the world. And unto the nations belonging to them it (intellect) appeared on earth as a man, and he performed deeds of power. Hence he did not suffer. Rather, a certain Simon of Cyrene was forced to bear his cross for him,^d and it was he who was ignorantly and erroneously crucified, being transformed by the other, so that he was taken for Jesus; while Jesus, for his part, assumed the form of Simon and stood by, laughing at them. For because he was an incorporeal power and was the intellect of the unengendered parent, he was transformed however he willed. And thus he ascended to the one who had sent him, mocking them.^e For he could not be held back and was invisible to all.

Confession of Jesus but not of Jesus crucified

Therefore people who know these things have been set free from the rulers that crafted the world. One should not acknowledge the man who was crucified,^f but rather the one who came in the form of BasFrE

e. Or "realms."

1.24.4 a. "who occupy . . . to us," following the text of Theodoret's summary; the Latin version of St. Irenaeus instead has "who keep the last heaven and who are visible to us."

b. Or "their ruler."

c. I.e. the ruin of all nations because of their struggles, instigated by the god of the Jews.

d. Cf. Mt 27:32.

e. "them": the rulers of the 365 heavens.

f. I.e. Simon of Cyrene.

a man, was thought to have been crucified, was named Jesus, and was sent by the parent so that by this providential arrangement of events he might destroy the works of the craftsmen of the world. Thus, he says, anyone who confesses the man who was crucified^g is still a slave and is still under the authority of the beings that created bodies; while anyone who denies him^h both is freed from them and has acquaintance with the unengendered parent's providential arrangement of events. BasFrC

Salvation only of soul

1.24.5 Salvation^a belongs only to the soul; the body is by nature corruptible.

Source of the law and the prophets

Moreover, he says, the prophets^b came into being through the craftsmen of the world, while the law^c came specifically through their chief, who led the people^d out of the land of Egypt. BasFrC

Meat sacrificed to idols

He^e enjoined^f (his followers) not to worry about meat sacrificed to idols,^g to consider that it is nothing, and to use it without concern.

“Indifferent” things

Furthermore, one should consider use of the remaining kinds^h of behavior and all kinds of pleasure as matters of indifference.ⁱ BasFrD

g. I.e. Simon of Cyrene.

h. “who denies him”: generally, whoever denies that the crucified man was the Christ; but perhaps also specifically, whoever when challenged by persecutors denies allegiance to the crucified Simon (cf. note 1.24.6b).

1.24.5 a. Or “survival.”

b. I.e. the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

c. The law of Moses as found in the first five books of the Old Testament.

d. “the people”: in the terminology of Jewish religion, a usual way to speak of the Jewish nation.

e. I.e. Basilides.

f. “enjoined,” following the text of Theodoret's summary; the Latin version of St. Irenaeus here omits any verb.

g. When an animal had been sacrificially offered to a pagan deity, certain cuts of the carcass

would be ritually burned on the altar, others consumed in a sacred meal, and the remainder sold commercially through public butchers. Some Christians took great care to avoid such meat; see, for example, 1 Co 8, Rv 2:14 and 20.

h. “the remaining kinds”: a non sequitur. Obviously St. Irenaeus or his source has lifted this sentence unfairly out of a context in which were listed: (a) examples of virtuous behavior; (b) examples of vicious behavior; (c) examples of remaining kinds of behavior. Such lists are typical in summaries of Stoic ethical teaching.

i. “matters of indifference”: Basilides here uses ethical vocabulary from Stoic philosophy, which taught that certain possible goals, such as riches or poverty, pleasure or pain, were “matters of indifference.” See above, “The Stoic background of Basilides' ethics” in the introduction to “The Writings of Basilides.”

II. ESOTERICISM OF BASILIDES' SUCCESSORS

Sorcery

And these people^j make use of sorcery, spells, invocations, and all the remaining kinds of superstitious practice.

Esoteric divine names

And they also concoct certain names, as it were, of angels. They report that some reside in the first heaven, others in the second, and thus they strain to relate in full the names, sources,^k angels, and authorities of the 365 heavens that they have fabricated. And thus, they say, the name under which^l the savior descended and ascended was Kaulakaua.^m

Those with acquaintance are invisible and cannot suffer

1.24.6 So whoever learns these things and becomes acquainted with all the angels and the causes of their existence—such a person becomes invisible and incomprehensible to all angels and authorities, just as Kaulakaua was. And just as the child^a was unrecognized by all, so too, those people shall not be recognized by any; but rather, whereas they know all and pass through all, they themselves are invisible and unrecognized by all. For, they say,

Recognize them all,
But let none recognize you!

For this reason, such people are prepared to deny;^b or, rather, they are not even susceptible to suffering on behalf of the name,^c for they are like all.^d

And few people can know these things—only one in a thousand, and two in ten thousand.^e

j. Basilides' successors.

k. Or "realms."

l. The original reading of the text is uncertain here.

m. Or "Kaulakau." Pseudo-Hippolytus, writing in Rome A.D. ca. 222–35, reports in *Against Heresies* 5.8.4, that a gnostic-like sect named the Naasenes spoke of Adamas, the prototypical human being (cf. BJa 8:28f), as "Kaulakau"; of earthly Adam as "Saulasau"; and of the river that flows from earth back to the spiritual realm as "Zeësar." These three esoteric names ultimately correspond to Hebrew phrases occurring in Is 28:10: "Therefore the word of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept (*tsau la-tsau*), precept upon precept, line upon line (*kau la-lau*), line upon line, here a little (*z^{ar}ir šam*), there a little." It is not known whether

Basilides' successors took over the esoteric name Kaulakaua from the Naasenes; but if so, they perhaps identified the savior (Christ) with heavenly Adamas of classic gnostic myth.

1.24.6. a. I.e. the intellect or first born child of the unengendered parent.

b. To deny that they are Christians, if they are challenged in a time of anti-Christian persecution.

c. "suffer on behalf of the name": a Christian cliché for voluntary suffering or death in time of persecution so as not to deny one's membership in the Christian religion.

d. "all": cf. "all angels and authorities" mentioned above.

e. GTh 23.

Jewish and Christian identity

On the one hand, they say, they are no longer Jews; on the other hand, they have come to be no longer Christians.^f

Secrecy

One is wholly forbidden to reveal their mysteries; rather, one must keep them secret in silence.

Relation to astrology

1.24.7 They locate the positions of the 365 heavens just as astrologers do; for they accept the astrologers' principles, adapting them to their own kind of system.^a

And the ruler of them^b is named Abrasaks, and that is why this (ruler) has the number 365 within it.^c

f. "on the other hand . . . no longer Christians," following the text of St. Epiphanius's summary; the Latin version of St. Irenaeus here erroneously has "on the other hand, (they are) not yet Christians."

1.24.7 a. Lit. "to their own character of classroom."
b. I.e. the heavens.

c. In Greek, the numerals are expressed by letters of the alphabet (A = 1, B = 2, etc.), decimally. According to this system the numerical value of the letters A-B-R-A-S-A-X (with X = Greek Xi) is 1 + 2 + 100 + 1 + 200 + 1 + 60 = 365. The name Abrasaks, along with its variant Abraksas, was widely used in Greek magic and astrology.

FRAGMENTS OF LOST WORKS

(BasFrA–H)

- A. The Octet of Subsistent Entities (Hypostases)
- B. The Uniqueness of the World
- C. Election Naturally Entails Faith and Virtue
- D. The State of Virtue (Frag. 4 Vö.)
- E. The Elect Transcend the World
- F. Reincarnation (Frag. 3 Vö.)
- G. Human Suffering and the Goodness of Providence (*Commentaries*, 23) (Frag. 2 Vö.)
- H. Forgivable Sins

Only three of the Fragments appear in Völker's standard collection (W. Völker, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* [Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften, new ser., no. 5; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1932], 38–44). Völker's other fragments are not by Basilides himself and so have been excluded.

The Cosmological Fragments

FRAGMENT A

THE OCTET OF SUBSISTENT ENTITIES (HYPOSTASES)

(BasFrA)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Fragment A is an important supplement to St. Irenaeus's summary of Basilides' theology. Here one learns that Basilides conceived of a primary octet of constituents within the godhead; Valentinus used the same structure (IrV 1.11.1). Six constituents are mentioned by St. Irenaeus (IrBas 1.24.3); the other two are listed here. To judge from this fragment, Basilides called the constituents "subsistent entities" (*hypostases*). Valentinus may have used this technical term, though in a different application (VFrB).

Nothing is known about the work to which this fragment refers. It was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria. The translation below is based on Stählin's text: O. Stählin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 2: *Stromata Buch I–VI* (3d ed.; Griechische christliche Schriftsteller, vol. 15; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1960) 4.162.1 (vol. 2, p. 320,2–4 St.-Fr.).

Fragment A

BASILIDES believes that “justice” and its offspring “peace” substantially exist, being arranged inside an octet,^a where they remain. IrBas 1.24.3

a. For the other six members of the octet (parent, intellect, verbal expression, prudence, wisdom, power) cf. IrBas 1.24.3.

FRAGMENT B

THE UNIQUENESS
OF THE WORLD

(BasFrB)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Although in Basilides' model of the universe (IrBas 1.24.3) there are 365 heavens, there is but a single world, suggesting that the heavens are concentrically arranged about the earth. The doctrine that the world is unique was a philosophical commonplace, accepted by Stoics as well as other schools of thought.

The assertion, made in this report, that Basilides denied the uniqueness of god can be understood in the light of his doctrine of a primal octet (BasFrA).

Nothing is known about the work from which this fragment comes. It was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria. The translation below is based on Stählin's text: *Stromata* (cf. BasFrA) 5.74.3 (vol. 2, p. 376,2–5 St.-Fr.).

Fragment B

MOSES^a did not permit altars and sacred precincts to be constructed in many places, but therefore set up one single temple of god, and he proclaimed that

the world is only-begotten

IrBas 1.24.4

as Basilides says, and that god is unique, at which point Basilides no longer agrees.

a. The italicized words are by Clement.

The Ethical Fragments¹

FRAGMENT C

ELECTION NATURALLY ENTAILS FAITH AND VIRTUE

(BasFrC)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

A soul's virtue—its “salvation”—is its “nature” or rational state, according to Stoic ethics. This fate is dictated by providence (god) and makes the virtuous person “elect” in traditional Christian terms. Virtue does not result from the exercise of a totally free will, for the soul possesses no such thing. Though a rational soul will assent to its fated destiny, this is “*not* the rational assent of a soul possessing free will.” Basilides describes the soul's assent by the Christian term “faith,” and its rational state by “kingdom” (cf. GTh 3). By means of its rational nature, the soul “understands god,” in a kind of superior “intellection.” Because of its perfectly rational state, the wise soul unhesitatingly proceeds to correct, good actions; it has no need of external “commandments.”

Nothing is known about the work from which this fragment comes. It was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria. The translation below is based on Stählin's text, but with alterations: *Stromata* (cf. BasFrA) 5.3.2–3 (vol. 2, p. 327,19–28 St.-Fr.).

1. Cf. above, “The Stoic background of Basilides' ethics” in the introduction to “The Writings of Basilides.”

Fragment C

5.3.2 FOR BASILIDES thinks that it is by nature that a person understands god, explaining that the choicest kind of intellection is faith and “kingdom,” and an acquisition^a of good things, and that it is a thing worthy of riches, near to the creator. And if so, then—he says—faith is riches but not authority; it is nature and source;^b it is an undefined beauty of an unsurpassed creation; but it is *not* the rational assent of a soul possessing free will. IrBas 1.24.4

5.3.3 Therefore the commandments of both the old and the new covenants^c are superfluous if one is “saved by nature,” as Valentinus has it, or if one is “by nature faithful and elect,” as Basilides thinks. IrBas 1.24.5

5.3 a. The MSS here erroneously have “a creation.”

b. Or “substance” or “a subsistent entity.”

c. “commandments of both the old and the new

covenants”: the law of god as given to Israel in the Old Testament, and the ethical teaching of Jesus given to his followers.

FRAGMENT D

THE STATE OF VIRTUE

(BasFrD)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The “will of god” is providence (fate), which according to Stoic ethics controls all events in the universe. A virtuous person assents to all (“loves all”) that is and that comes to pass. Such a person is motivated not by “desire” or its opposite, but only by agreement with reason or nature and by assent to god’s will.

Nothing is known about the work from which this fragment comes. It was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clements) of Alexandria. It counts as Frag. 4 in W. Völcker’s enumeration. The translation below is based on Stählin’s text: *Stromata* (cf. BasFrA) 4.86.1 (vol. 2, p. 286,3–6 St.-Fr.).

Fragment D

AS^a *BASILIDES himself says*, We assume that one part of the so-called *IrBas 1.24.5*
“will” of god^b is to love all—and^c *they^d reserve the word “all” to refer*
to the entirety;^e a second, is to desire nothing; and a third, is to hate
nothing.

a. The italicized remark is by Clement.

b. I.e. what god “wants” human beings to do.

c. The italicized remark is by Clement.

d. I.e. the followers of Basilides; apparently Clement found Basilides’ statement quoted and interpreted in a work by one of his followers.

e. “the entirety”: the universe as a whole. In

accordance with the strong Stoic element in Basilides’ ethical theory, to “love all” must mean to live in complete harmony with the rational order of the universe, accepting all of one’s fate without regret or protest; accordingly there is no place for desire or revulsion, since all is dictated by providence.

FRAGMENT E

THE ELECT TRANSCEND
THE WORLD

(BasFrE)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Basilides accepts the Platonist and Pythagorean doctrine of reincarnation of souls (BasFrF) and believes that each soul retains its identity from one incarnation to the next, at least to the extent that in a subsequent life it will pay for its sins of a previous one (BasFrG). Souls therefore survive (IrBas 1.24.5) the series of bodies that they inhabit and “transcend” them, being permanent and therefore “alien” to the corruptible (IrBas 1.24.5) realm of bodies and matter.

Nothing is known about the work to which this fragment refers. It was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition is Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria. The translation below is based on Stählin’s text: *Stromata* (cf. BasFrA) 4.165.3 (vol. 2, p. 321,27–30 St.-Fr.).

Fragment E

“I AM A stranger in the land,” it says, “and a sojourner among you.”

Gn 23:4
Ps 39:12

And thence Basilides understood^a (the passage) to say that the elect are alien to the world, as if they were transcendent by nature.

IrBas 1.24.4

a. Translation slightly uncertain.

FRAGMENT F

REINCARNATION

(BasFrF)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

This fragment, preserved by Origen, may come from Basilides' *Commentaries*, like Fragment G.

Of particular interest is Origen's objection to Basilides' "tales" or "myths" (Greek *mythoi*), and his statement that Basilides used them to explicate the passage from Rm 7:7. Since Origen himself accepted a doctrine of reincarnation, it cannot be reincarnation that he here calls "irrelevant and blasphemous." Rather, it must be Basilides' cosmogony that he finds so distasteful, presumably the same cosmogony that is summarized in IrBas. Origen's remark lets us know that the full statement of Basilides' cosmogonic myth included an account of the origin of souls and the cause and mechanism of their reincarnation.

The work from which this fragment comes was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition was Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the early-third-century Christian philosopher Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Origen wrote this commentary in Greek about A.D. 244, but the present passage of text survives only in a translation in Latin by Rufinus of Aquileia, made in the fourth century. It counts as Frag. 3 in W. Völker's enumeration. The translation below is based on Lommatzsch's text as reprinted by Migne: J. P. Migne, genl. ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 14 (Origenes, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 4), col. 1015.

Fragment F

PG 1015A “^a*I DIED,*” it says,^b For (Paul means) *sin now began to be imputed to me. But Basilides, missing the fact that this passage must be understood to refer to natural law, has related the apostle’s statement to irrelevant, blasphemous tales; on the basis of this saying of the apostle’s, he tries to defend^c the doctrine of reincarnation, namely the idea that souls get transferred from one body to another.* He says: ClExc 28

1015B Indeed, the apostle has said, “I was once alive apart from the law,”^a at some time or other. That is (Paul means), before I came into this body, I lived in the kind of body that is not subject to the law: the body of a domestic animal or a bird. Rm 7:9

1015A a. The italicized remark is by Origen.

b. Cf. Rm 7:7b-10: “If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ (8) But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. (9) I was once alive apart from the law, but

when the commandment came, sin revived and *I died*; (10) the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me” (Revised Standard Version).

c. The original reading of the text is uncertain here.

1015B a. Cf. note 1015A b.

FRAGMENT G

HUMAN SUFFERING
AND THE GOODNESS
OF PROVIDENCE

COMMENTARIES, BOOK 23

(BasFrG)

CONTENTS AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

It has been suggested that this passage comes from an exegetical comment on part of 1 Peter 4:12–19: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. (13) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (14) If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; (16) yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. (17) For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (18) And ‘If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?’ (Pr 11:31) (19) Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful creator” (Revised Standard Version).

In this famous fragment, Basilides defends the assumption that providence (fate, the will of god) is both all-powerful and good. From this assumption he is led to conclude that all human suffering must be just punishment for sinfulness, hence suffering is not an evil but simply an aspect of god’s justice and goodness, and in the long run can even have educational value (4.82.1).

As special limit cases Basilides considers: (a) the suffering of the Christian martyrs; (b) the suffering of a newborn baby; (c) the suffering of the exceptional person who has never committed sinful acts; (d) the suffering of “certain (famous) figures” meaning, so Clement informs us, the suffering of Jesus (4.83.1).

For these special cases, two explanations are proposed by Basilides. First, someone who did not commit sin in the present life may nevertheless have sinned in a previous one; thus justice is exercised over the long range of history. Second, suffering may be requital for what Basilides vaguely terms “sinfulness”

(Greek *to harmartētikon*)—not sinful deeds, but merely sinful desires, sinful inclinations, the capacity for sin, or just sheer humanness. The suffering of Jesus' soul, which presumably became incarnate only once, must have been a requital for its "sinfulness"—in this case not sinful acts, but simply Jesus' full humanity. Since Basilides assumes that Jesus was never crucified (IrBas 1.24.4), the "suffering" in question does not refer to his passion, but to less severe kinds of suffering.

The souls that were recently incarnate as Christian martyrs, Basilides holds, had attained an especially excellent (though still imperfect) state in their former life (4.83.2); and so by the kindness of providence, in this next cycle of reincarnation they were allowed to receive their suffering in an honorable way, a way that even appears to them to be painless (4.81.2).

Basilides was sometimes criticized by later Christian writers for disparaging the martyrs or opposing martyrdom, but nothing in this Fragment supports such an interpretation, given his philosophical assumptions.

The *Commentaries*, an exposition of 1 Peter and (presumably) other books, was written in Alexandria. The language of composition was Greek.

TEXT

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria. It counts as Frag. 2 in W. Völker's enumeration. The translation below is based on Stählin's text but with alterations: *Stromata* (cf. BasFrA) 4.81.2–4.83.2 (vol. 2, pp. 284,5–285,6 St.-Fr.).

Fragment G

4.81.1 *BASILIDES*,^a in Book 23 of his “Commentaries,” speaks of those who suffer punishment as martyrs, with the following words.

4.81.2 I believe that all who experience^a the so-called “tribulations” must have committed sins other than what they realize, and so have been brought to this good end.^b Through the kindness of that which leads each one of them about,^c they are actually accused of an extraneous set of charges so they might not have to suffer as confessed criminals convicted of crimes, nor be reviled as adulterers or murderers, but rather might suffer because they are disposed by nature^d to be Christian. And this^e encourages them to think that they are not suffering.

4.81.3 But even if a person should happen to suffer without having sinned at all—which is rare—still, that person’s suffering is not caused by the plotting of some power. Rather, it is analogous to the suffering of a newborn baby, who seems not to have sinned.

4.82.1 *Then*^a farther along, he adds:

A newborn baby, then, has never sinned before; or more precisely, it has not actually committed any sins, but within itself it has the activity of sinning.^b Whenever it experiences suffering, it receives benefit, profiting by many unpleasant experiences. Just so, if by chance a grown man has not sinned by deed and yet suffers, he suffered the suffering for the same reason as the newborn baby: he has within himself sinfulness^c and the only reason he has not sinned (in deed) is because

4.81.1 a. The italicized remark is by Clement.

this passage, Basilides dissociates himself from the eschatological presuppositions of the term.

4.81.2 a. Or “are subjected to.”

c. Providence.

b. “‘tribulations’ . . . good end”: persecution at the hands of non-Christian governmental powers. In the traditional language of eschatological Christianity, “tribulations” are sufferings associated with the persecution of the righteous, which will usher in the messianic age, and thus are “good.” In

d. Fated.

e. I.e. their Christian nature.

4.82.1 a. The italicized remark is by Clement.

b. I.e. the potential or inclination for sin.

c. I.e. the potential or inclination for sin.

he has not had the occasion to do so. Thus not sinning cannot be imputed to him.

4.82.2 Indeed, someone who intends to commit adultery is an adulterer even without succeeding in the act^a and someone who intends to commit murder is a murderer even without being able to commit the act. Just so, if I see the aforementioned sinless person suffering despite having done no wrong, I must call that person evil by intent to sin. For I will say anything rather than call providence evil.

4.83.1 *Then,^a farther along, he speaks of the lord outright as of a human being:*

Nevertheless, let us suppose that you^b (sing.) leave aside all these matters^c and set out to embarrass me by referring to certain (famous) figures,^d saying perhaps, “And consequently so-and-so must have sinned, since he suffered!” If you permit, I shall say that he did not sin, but was like the newborn baby that suffers. But if you press the argument, I shall say that any human being that you can name is human; god is righteous. For no one is “pure of uncleanness,” as someone once said.^e

4.83.2 *Actually,^a Basilides’ presupposition is that the soul previously sinned in another life and undergoes its punishment in the present one. Excellent souls are punished honorably, by martyrdom; other kinds are purified by some other appropriate punishment.*

4.82.2 a. Mt 5:27f.

4.83.1 a. The italicized remark is by Clement.

b. Basilides here addresses the reader or dedicatee of his treatise, or an imaginary interlocutor.

c. Or “arguments.”

d. According to the remark (italicized above) by Clement, who probably knew the whole treatise

from which this extract comes, Basilides is here discussing Jesus’ suffering.

e. The prophet Job (Jb 14:4).

4.83.2 a. In this italicized passage Clement summarizes Basilides’ ethical teachings in relation to his doctrine of reincarnation.

FRAGMENT H

FORGIVABLE SINS

(BasFrH)

LITERARY BACKGROUND AND TEXT

Nothing is known about the work from which this fragment comes. It was composed in Alexandria. The language of composition is Greek.

The source of this fragment is the late-second-century Christian intellectual Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) of Alexandria. The translation below is based on Stählin's text: *Stromata* (cf. BasFrA) 4.153.3 (vol. 2, p. 316,14–15 St.-Fr.).

Fragment H

NOT ALL sins, says Basilides, are forgiven,^a but only those committed involuntarily and out of ignorance.

a. In the preceding sentence Clement discussed the lord's forgiveness of human sins.

THE
HERMETIC
CORPUS

TRACTATES 1 AND 7

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS AND THE “HERMETIC CORPUS”

In native Egyptian religion the divine patron of literature and learning was Thoth, god of the moon and calendar and scribe of the gods. In Greece, Thoth was identified with Hermes; Greeks living in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt called him Hermes *trismegistos*, “thrice great” Hermes, using one of Thoth’s native Egyptian epithets.

Around the figure of Hermes Trismegistus grew up a substantial body of Greek pseudepigraphic literature composed in Egypt, some of it attributed to Hermes and some attributed to his alleged disciples—Asclepius (Imhotep), Agathodaimon (Chnoum), Ammon, Isis, Horus, Tat; while others of these “Hermetica”—that is, works associated with Hermes Trismegistus—now bear no attribution at all (cf. CH7 below).

Manetho of Sebennytyos, a Hellenistic Egyptian historian who flourished in the third century B.C., reports¹ a tradition, possibly associated with the Hermetica, that there had been a chain of authority through which Thoth-Hermes had transmitted his teachings to a succession of family members. The original Egyptian text of these teachings was said to have been engraved on tablets and left in “the land of Seiris” before “the flood,” then translated into Greek by a subsequent generation, and eventually kept in Egyptian temples. In a suggestive parallel, Hellenistic Jewish tradition made a similar assertion about tablets left in Seiris, but claimed that it was Seth and his descendants who had left and transmitted the record. Classic gnostic scripture continued in the line of this Hermetic-Jewish claim: 3Tb 118:10f, RAD 85:3f, cf. RR 92:10f (with note 92b), Zs 130:1f.

The earliest Hermetica concerned astrology and the powers of gemstones and plants; these pseudo-technical works go back at least to the early second century B.C. However, the pseudo-*philosophical* Hermetica (such as Poim and CH7, below)—which include both cosmological and moral treatises—come from a later period: the earliest such works may have been written at the end of the first century B.C., and those which now survive are usually held to be from the second and third centuries A.D. The “philosophical” Hermetica are of course not real philosophy, any more than astrology is the same as astronomy, for both kinds of

1. *Manetho*, ed. W. G. Waddell (see “Select Bibliography”), 208–11 (Appendix I). The attribution of this passage to Manetho is in doubt, and the wording of the text is uncertain.

Hermetica claim to be based not on observation and reason but on revelation. Typically, they stress the importance of personal acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with god. The “philosophical” content of these works, such as it is, shows contact with eclectic Middle Platonism of the times, and no contact with traditional Egyptian religion or Christianity. In a few rare cases allusions to Jewish scripture or style are found, notably in Poim; it is distinctly possible that Platonizing Jewish philosophers like Philo of Alexandria had been read by some of the authors of the Hermetica. There are also similarities between Hermetic “philosophy” and classic gnostic scripture or Valentinian gnostic writings; these have sometimes led scholars to postulate gnostic influence upon the Hermetica—though indeed nothing prevents one from assuming exactly the contrary.

Anthologies of philosophical Hermetica were gathered and published both in Late Antiquity and in the later Byzantine period. One of these anthologies survives today; it is known as the “Hermetic Corpus,” *Corpus Hermeticum*, or simply “Hermes Trismegistus.” The individual tractates in this collection are usually thought to have been composed between A.D. 100–300, but the anthology itself was not collected until perhaps the eleventh century A.D., at which time a Byzantine editor subjected the tractates to stylistic revision. Two tractates of the Hermetic Corpus are translated below (Poim, CH7).

Nothing specific is known about the authors or original readers of the Hermetic Corpus. But it should be noted that the Hermetic tractates do not hold together in a unified mythic cycle or symbolic system, not even a loose one like that of classic gnostic scripture (see the introduction to Part One). Although they share in a limited range of style, tone, and diction, they do not use an exclusive in-group language (jargon), and they show no other obvious signs of group solidarity or sectarian separatism. The original social context of the Hermetic Corpus therefore remains a mystery.²

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TRACTATE 1

POIMANDRĒS

(Poim)

CONTENTS

Ever since the Italian Renaissance, *Poimandrēs* (“Pimander”) has been one of the most famous works of Hermes Trismegistus. In large part it tells of the world’s creation and the origins of humankind. By a terrible misunderstanding in chronology, Renaissance Humanists of the fifteenth century thought that Plato had based his own mythic account of creation (*Timaeus*) upon this very work. In actual fact, something like the opposite is true. The cosmogony of Poim is indebted both to Plato’s *Timaeus* and to Genesis, and unmistakably evokes both texts. In all likelihood the author also knew the work of Alexandrian Jewish Platonists like Philo Judaeus, whose cosmological treatise *On the Creation of the World* had already set a striking precedent for the accommodation of Platonic and Mosaic cosmogony. Other Jewish connections can be traced in the author’s rhetoric and use of liturgical phraseology (Poim 31).

Readers familiar with the classic gnostic myth of origins (as in BJn) or the Valentinian myth (IrPt) have often been struck by their similarities to Hermetic cosmogony. There are four main areas in which Poim resembles these gnostic parallels:

- (a) The plot and the structure of the myth
- (b) Dependence on Jewish cosmogony and presence of Jewish literary characteristics in the style
- (c) A tone of piety and a stress upon the believer’s duty to be an apostle of *gnōsis*
- (d) A strict dualist distinction between the true self (intellect) on the one hand, and body and soul on the other

In the case of the first three points of resemblance (a) (b) (c), there are also significant differences that separate Poim from its gnostic parallels, leaving it mostly closer to Philo or Plato than to classic gnostic scripture.

- (a) The craftsman in Poim is neither ignorant nor malicious, unlike Ialdabaōth in gnostic myth (see, for example, BJn).

- (b) Poim uses, paraphrases, and adapts the Jewish cosmogony of Genesis, but does not set out to show that Genesis is wrong, as gnostic myth often does; Poim is not revisionistic, it does not try to tell a “true history.”
- (c) The duty of the gnostic teacher in Poim is not related to a predestined distinction between the saved and the not-to-be-saved; there is no clear delineation of a sect in view, no grand division of humankind, no church of Hermes.

Differences such as these suggest that gnostic scripture and Poim are not directly related but rather that they are products of a Platonizing milieu in which the cosmogonies of both Genesis and Plato’s *Timaeus* were taken very seriously.

On the other hand, the fourth point (*d*) was held in common by secular Platonism, Hellenistic Jewish Platonism, gnostic and Valentinian scripture, the Hermetica, Christians at large, and many ordinary educated people; it is thus a cliché.

Of special interest is the language used to describe the seer’s state of mystical suspension, found in the opening of the work.

The name “Poimandrēs” is found only in this work and is thus unique. Its etymology has not been discovered, and ancient readers probably would have been as baffled by the name as moderns are. “Poimandrēs” superficially resembles three words: Greek *poimēn* “shepherd”; the Greek stem *andr-* “man”; and Coptic *p-eime nte-* “the knowledge of.”

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author of Poim is unknown; some scholars suspect that Poim and CH7 are by the same author because of their similarity in style and content. The ancient title of Poim attributes the work to the Greco-Egyptian deity Hermes Trismegistus; it is thus an example of pseudepigraphy. Accordingly, Poim may have been composed in Egypt; however, nothing in its contents is distinctively Egyptian in character. The date of composition must be before the end of the third century A.D., since the concluding prayer is excerpted in a papyrus MS from Egypt copied at that time (see “Text,” below). The language of composition is Greek.

Poim has a complex mixture of genres in which various traditional materials are subordinated to others:

- I. Autobiography of a seer
 - A. Angelic revelation and revelation dialogue
 - 1. Treatise on the soul
 - a. Cosmogony and uranography
 - b. Anthropogony (creation of human beings)
 - c. Fate of the soul

2. Sermon
3. Prayer

Like Zs and Fr, Poim is presented as the spiritual autobiography of a religious seer, recounting Hermes' conversion to a career of philosophical preaching after an *angelic revelation* and *angelic revelation dialogue* (for this genre see the introduction to BJn). Although the revelation opens with a *cosmogony* and *uranography* (description of the structure of the universe), explaining creation and the composition of the heavens, it should also be compared to ancient *treatises on the soul* in which the origin of the soul and body, the relation of the two, and *the soul's ultimate fate* are discussed. The *sermon*, which follows the author's reported conversion, shares some traits with the animated classroom lecture or "diatribe" (for which see the introduction to TRs); its style is comparable to that of CH7, TRs, and the conclusion of Zs. In the final *prayer* the author directly addresses the highest god in a hymn of praise.

Not only the contents of Poim but also its overall structure are thus roughly parallel to BJn: an autobiographical frame story, in which the circumstances and contents of a vision are recorded; a dialogue between the revealer and the reporter; a concluding poem (in parallel strophes).

MYTHIC CHARACTERS

I. The Realm of Absolute Power

GOD, the parent of the entirety
 The divine INTELLECT or Poimandrēs, possibly identical with god
 FORETHOUGHT, god's design
 Countless POWERS or existents
 Luminous, holy REASON (the Word), a child of god
 The SECOND INTELLECT, the craftsman
 Seven CONTROLLERS, its crafted products
 The archetypal HUMAN BEING

II. Humankind

SEVEN original HUMAN BEINGS
 Their POSTERITY, including the author

III. Lower Spiritual Beings

Guardian DEMONS of individual human beings
 An AVENGING DEMON

TEXT

The original Greek text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts now in European libraries, all of them late (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries). In

addition an excerpt of Poim (the concluding hymn, 31–32) is found in a papyrus from Egypt, which was copied probably at the end of the third century A.D. and is now in the papyrus collection of the Berlin State Museum (P. Berol. 9794). The wording of the excerpt differs somewhat from the original, as a result of its adaptation as a self-contained prayer. The translation below is based on Nock's critical edition: *Corpus Hermeticum*, vol. 1 (see "Select Bibliography," above), 7–19.

Poimandrēs

by

Thrice-Greatest Hermes

I. THE APPEARANCE OF THE POIMANDRĒS

1 Once upon a time, when I was occupied with thought about the existents and my mental faculty was very much uplifted, and my corporeal perceptions had been held in check, like those of people weighed down by sleep after a surfeit of food or physical labor, some immensely great being of unlimited size seemed to call my name and say to me, “What is it you want to hear and behold? And to think of, learn about, and become acquainted with?”

2 I said, “But who are you?”

“I,” it said, “am the Poimandrēs, the intellect of the realm of absolute power. I know what you want. And I am with you everywhere.”

3 I said, “I want to learn about the existents, to think of their nature, and to become acquainted with god. Oh,” said I, “how I want to hear!”

It then said to me, “Keep in mind all that you want to learn about, and I shall teach you.”

II. THE REVELATION OF THE POIMANDRĒS

4 Having said this, it changed in appearance. Immediately, all became disclosed^a to me in a moment, and I saw an indeterminate vision.

A. The Creation of the Universe

Division of light and darkness

All turned into calm and gracious light; and seeing it, I felt a burning desire. And after a little while there was a downward-tending darkness, which had come into being in one place; it was frightful and gloomy, and was coiled like a serpent, so far as I could make out.^b

4 a. Lit. “opened.”

b. “like . . . make out”: or “so that I thought it was a serpent.”

The four elements

Then the darkness changed into a kind of moist nature, which was unspeakably jumbled and gave off smoke, as from a fire. And it produced a kind of nonverbal mournful sound. Then a cry was inarticulately emitted from it,^c so as to seem like a voice of < . . . >. 5 And from the light < . . . >.^a

Holy reason^b descended upon the natural order.^c And unmixed fire leaped up out of the moist nature upward into the heights. It was buoyant and bright, and at the same time, active. And air, being light in weight, followed spirit,^d as it ascended from earth and water to the fire, so that it seemed to hang from it. And earth and water were left by themselves, mixed together so that <earth>^e could not be contemplated apart from water. And they were in motion because of the spiritual reason^f that “moved” in obedience.^g Gn 1:2

The relation of reason and intellect

6 The Poimandrēs said to me, “Have you thought about what this vision means?”

“I shall become acquainted with it,” said I.

“That light,” it said, “is myself, intellect, your god,^a who is prior to the moist nature that appeared out of darkness. And the luminous reason that derives from intellect is a child of god.”

“What does that mean?” I said.

“Look at it this way. The element within you that sees and hears is reason, belonging to the lord; and your intellect is its parent, i.e. god.^b Indeed, they are not separate from one another, for their union constitutes life.”

“Thank you,” said I.

A vision of the prior source

“Then think about the light and (you will) find out about this matter.”

7 After it said this, it looked me in the face for a long time, and I trembled because of its appearance. Then it looked up, and with my intellect I contemplated the light: it consisted of countless powers, and had become an unlimited world, and the fire had been encompassed

c. “it”: the “moist nature.”

5 a. “< . . . > . . . < . . . >”: in each of these places one or more words are in advertently omitted in the MSS.

b. Or “verbal expression” or “Word.”

c. Or “nature,” i.e. the moist nature.

d. “spirit”: i.e. the upper atmosphere (ether), virtually identical with fire according to one commonly accepted view of the elements of the universe.

e. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

f. “reason”: or “verbal expression” or “Word.”

g. I.e. in obedience to god’s directive activity in the creation of the world as recorded in Gn 1:1f.

6 a. I.e. the divine principle present within you and every intellect-endowed person.

b. Or “your intellect is god the parent.”

by a very great power and had become static, being held fast. These are the things I myself saw mentally, thanks to the reason belonging to the Poimandrēs. 8 And as I was in a state of terror, it then said to me, “With your intellect you have seen the archetypal intelligible form, the prior source of the infinite beginning.” That is what the Poimandrēs said to me.

Source of the physical elements

“So,” I said, “where have the elements of the natural order come from?”

Then it continued: “(They have come) from god’s purpose,^a which received reason, saw the beautiful world,^b and imitated it, creating^c a world with its own elements and its own generated products, namely souls. Gn 1:4

The craftsman (second intellect), the controllers, and destiny

9 “Now, the divine intellect, being androgynous since it existed as life and light, engendered rationally^a a second intellect as craftsman; and the latter, being god of fire and spirit, crafted seven controllers,^b which encompass the perceptible world in orbits. And their control is called destiny.

Heavenly bodies and irrational animals

10 “Immediately, the reason of god leaped up out of the downward-tending elements, toward the pure crafted product, the natural order, and it united with the intellect that is a craftsman,^a for it was of the same substance. And thus the downward-tending elements of the natural order were left behind as mere irrational matter.

11 “And the intellect that is a craftsman,^a together with reason, which encompasses the orbits and spins them with a rush, started its crafted products^b rotating and let them rotate from indeterminate beginning to infinite end—for they begin where they leave off. And, just as the intellect^c willed, their revolution brought forth living animals out of the downward-tending elements—irrational ones, for they had not retained reason. And air brought forth flying things, while water brought forth swimming things. Then land and water separated from one another, just as the intellect willed. And <the earth>^d produced Gn 1:7, Gn 1:9
Gn 1:24

8 a. I.e. forethought (cf. 19), here treated as a distinct personage.

b. I.e. the archetypal world.

c. Translation uncertain.

9 a. Or “by means of reason (or verbal expression or the Word).”

b. I.e. the planets, the “governors” in astrology.

10 a. I.e. the second intellect.

11 a. I.e. the second intellect.

b. I.e. the seven “controllers.”

c. I.e. the second intellect.

d. These words are inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

out of itself the quadruped living animals <and>^e creeping things that it possessed, animals wild and tame.

B. The Creation of Human Beings

The archetypal human being

12 “Then the intellect that is parent of all,^a by being life and light, engendered a human being equal to itself; and it (intellect) had a burning desire for it, since it was its own offspring. For it (the offspring) was very beautiful, having its parent’s image. For truly, even god had a burning desire for its own form. And it handed over (to its offspring) all its own crafted products.

The archetypal human being descends into the natural order

13 “But when it (the human being) saw the craftsman’s creation in the fire,^a it too wanted to act as a craftsman; and permission was granted by the parent. Situating itself in the craftsman’s sphere, with access to complete authority, it looked at the crafted products^b of its sibling.^c They had a burning desire for it,^d and each one shared (with it) some of its own rank. Perceiving their essence and receiving a share of their nature, it^e wanted to break through the spherical walls of their orbits and see the might of the being that was in charge of the fire.

14 “And having complete authority over the world of mortals and of irrational living animals, it broke through the container,^a bent down through the composite framework,^b and showed god’s beautiful form to the downward-tending natural order. Seeing that it (the human being) possessed unsatiating beauty, all the activity of the controllers, and the form of god, it (the natural order) smiled with burning desire, for it saw something like the intelligible form of the very beautiful appearance of the human being in the water, and its shadow on the ground. For its own part, it saw within it,^c in the water, the form like unto itself, and it loved it and wanted to reside there. This purpose was achieved the instant that it was made, and it (the human being) occupied the irrational form. Then the natural order received its be-

e. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

12 a. I.e. the first intellect, the divine intellect or Poimandrēs.

13 a. “fire”: the original reading of the text is uncertain here.

b. I.e. the seven controllers.

c. I.e. the first craftsman.

d. “it”: i.e. the human being.

e. I.e. the human being.

14 a. The idea that the heavenly spheres are contained by a heavenly “container” or envelope is found in Greek astrology of the second century A.D.

b. “composite framework”: or “armature” or “framework,” i.e. the structure of nested heavenly spheres surrounding earth and contained by the “container.”

c. I.e. the human being saw within the natural order.

loved and wholly twined around it; and they had intercourse. For they were lovers.^d

The duality of humankind

15 “And for this reason, unlike all other living animals on earth human beings have a twofold character—on the one hand mortal because of their body, and on the other hand immortal because of the essential^a human being. For although they are immortal and have authority over all, they experience mortality because they are subordinate to destiny. Thus although they are superior to the composite framework, they have become slaves of the composite framework. And although androgynous^b and springing from an androgynous parent, and sleepless because of a sleepless <...> are overcome <...>.”^c

The birth of seven earthly human beings

16 And thereafter, <... said, “...>,^a O intellect of mine. For on my part I have a burning desire for this subject.”

So the Poimandrēs said, “It is precisely this that has been a hidden mystery down to the present day. Indeed, once the natural order had united with the human being in intercourse, it wrought a very amazing miracle. For since the human being possessed the nature of the composite framework of the seven,^b which as I told you consisted of fire and spirit, the natural order did not delay,^c but immediately engendered seven human beings corresponding to the natures of the seven controllers; they were androgynous and upright.”

And thereafter, I said, “O Poimandrēs, I am really filled with desire and longing to hear this. Don’t digress!” And the Poimandrēs said, “Please be quiet, I have not yet developed my first subject.” “I shall be quiet,” said I.

17 “So, in line with what I said, the origination of these seven beings was as follows. Now, <earth>^a was feminine and water was the impregnator. Maturity came from fire. And the natural order got spirit from upper atmosphere (ether). And it brought forth the bodies according to the ideal form of the human being.^b Now, from being life and light, the human being became soul and intellect: soul from life, and intellect from light. And all things of the perceptible world remained thus until the end of a cycle and the beginnings of species. Gn 2:7

d. The Greek word for “natural order” is grammatically feminine; that for “human being” is grammatically masculine.

15 a. I.e. archetypal.

b. Cf. 16, where the seven controllers are said to be androgynous.

c. “<...>...<...>” in each of these places one or more words are inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

16 a. “<... said, ...>”: through an inadvertence, the MSS omit a few words here. In the omitted passage, the narrator now begins to speak.

b. I.e. the seven controllers.

c. There was no gestation period.

17 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

b. I.e. the archetypal human being.

The distinction of male and female

18 “Finally, listen to the subject you are longing to hear about. When the cycle had been completed, by god’s purpose the bonding of all (creatures) was undone. For all living animals, which had been androgynous, were parted in two at the same time as human beings. And one set became in turn males, and the other accordingly females. Then immediately god said, in a holy saying,^a ‘All you creatures and crafted products, be fruitful with fruitfulness and multiply with multiplication! And let those who have intellect recognize themselves as being immortal, and recognize that the cause of death is burning desire. Let them recognize all the existents.’” Gn 1:22

19 “After god had said this, forethought, acting through destiny and the composite framework, created sexual intercourse and established origination; and all things multiplied according to their kinds.” Gn 1:11 etc.

Two kinds of people

“Furthermore, people who have recognized themselves have reached the choicest good. But those who love the body, which derives from the error of burning desire, remain wandering aimlessly in the darkness, perceptibly experiencing the realm of death.”

The origins of death and life

20 “Those who lack acquaintance—” said I, “what enormous sin can they be committing to merit being deprived of immortality?”

“Fellow, it seems that you have not reflected upon the things you have heard. Didn’t I tell you to think?”

“I am thinking and remembering, and of course I am grateful.”

“If you have thought about it, then tell me, why are those in death worthy of death?”

“Because the prior source of each individual body is the gloomy darkness,^a out of which came the moist nature, out of which within the perceptible world has been put together the body, by which is fostered death.”

21 “Fellow, you have thought correctly. But why is it that ‘those who think about themselves advance into themselves,’ as the saying^a of god has it?”

“Because,” said I, “it is of light and life that the parent of the entirety is composed, and the human being comes from that parent.”

“You speak well! God the parent, from whom comes the human being, is light and life. Now, if you learn that god is of life and light,

18 a. The “holy saying” seems to be Gn 1:22, but here paraphrased.

20 a. Described in 4.

21 a. Or “oracle.”

and that you are too, then you will advance again into life.” That is what the Poimandrēs said.

The role of intellect in the pious and the impious

“But also tell me, O intellect of mine,” I said, “how it is that I shall advance into life. For god says,^b ‘Let those who have intellect recognize themselves.’ 22 So do not all people have an intellect?”

“Hush! Be quiet! I myself, the intellect, am present with those who are pious, good, pure, and merciful, and who are devout. My advent becomes a help, and immediately they find out about all things; they lovingly propitiate the parent; and they give thanks, blessing and affectionately lifting up praise to the parent as ordained. And before handing over the body to its proper death they loathe the perceptions, knowing about their activities. But, what is more, I, the intellect, personally prevent the offensive activities of the body from being accomplished. As the guardian of the gates, I shall prevent the entrance of evil and shameful activities, cutting off any thoughts about them.

23 “But I am distant from those who are foolish, evil, wicked, envious, greedy, murderers, and impious. I give them over to the avenging demon,^a who with its point of fire attacks and perceptibly pricks them: it gets them all the more ready to do their lawless deeds, so that they may receive even worse retribution. And they never stop focusing their desire on boundless yearnings, insatiably struggling in the dark; and that is what tortures them, and it increases even more the fire directed against them.”

C. The Fate of the Soul

The rising of the soul

24 “You have taught me everything very well, O intellect, just as I wanted. But tell me also <about>^a the process of rising.”

In reply the Poimandrēs said, “First of all, at the moment of the material body’s unloosening, you hand over this body for alteration; the intelligible form that you possessed^b disappears; and you hand over your habits of life, henceforth inactive, to your demon.^c And the body’s perceptions return to their sources,^d becoming distinct components and together rising back into the agencies;^e strong emotion and

b. In 18.

23 a. A traditional Greek theme associated with postmortal judgment in the underworld.

24 a. This word is inadvertently omitted in the MSS.

b. I.e. the shape visibly displayed by the material body.

c. “demon”: i.e. the personal guardian angel of the individual person.

d. Lit. “wellsprings.”

e. “agencies” (or “powers”): as a technical term in astrology, the “agencies” are controlling forces exerted upon our world by celestial bodies.

desire proceed (back) into irrational nature. 25 And thus one finally starts upward through the composite framework, handing over

in the first heavenly sphere^a the agencies of growth and waning
away;
in the second, the means of evil action—a craft henceforth
inactive;
in the third, the deception of desire—henceforth inactive;
in the fourth, eminence associated with rule—henceforth free
from avarice;
in the fifth, impious arrogance and the rashness of
recklessness;
in the sixth, evil pretexts for wealth;
in the seventh heavenly sphere, plotting falsehood.

Becoming divine

26 “And next, stripped of the composite framework’s effects and having only one’s very own power,^a one comes to the nature^b of the eighth heaven and along with the existents lifts up praise unto the parent. And those who are present rejoice together at one’s advent. So having assimilated to those who are also there, one hears also certain powers that exist superior to the nature of the eighth heaven lifting up praise unto god with a kind of sweet voice. And next, in an orderly manner they ascend to the parent and personally hand themselves over to become powers, and by becoming powers they come to be within god. Such is the good end of those who possess acquaintance: to become god.

III. THE APOSTOLIC MISSION OF THE AUTHOR

“So why wait? Since you have received all (these teachings), will you not become a guide for those who are worthy, in order that the race of humanity might be saved by god through you?”

27 Once the Poimandrēs had said this, it mingled with the powers before my very eyes.^a

And for my part, when I had given thanks and blessed the parent of the entirety, I was released by the Poimandrēs, now endowed with

25 a. Lit. “the first belt (or zone).”

b. Or possibly “natural order.”

26 a. At this point the faculties and passions of the soul have already been handed back to their various sources in or below the seven heavenly spheres. Only the intellect or true self remains.

27 a. Or “had said this to me, it mingled with the powers.”

power and educated in the nature of the all and the supreme vision. I began to proclaim to people the beauty of devotion and acquaintance.

The author begins to preach

“O people, inhabitants of earth! You who have given yourselves up CH71
to drunkenness and sleep and to unacquaintance with god! Get sober!
Stop carousing, all enchanted by irrational sleep.”

28 And they, when they heard me, came to me with one accord. Then I said, “Why, O inhabitants of earth, have you given yourselves up to death even though you have the ability to share in immortality? Repent, O you who have traveled with error and participated in lack of acquaintance! Depart from the darksome light,^a share in immortality, give up corruption!”

29 And some of them went on chattering and kept aloof, for they had given themselves up to the way of death. But others earnestly asked to be taught, casting themselves at my feet. For my part, I made them stand up, and I became the guide of the people, teaching the sayings^a about how and in what way they would be saved. I sowed in them the sayings of wisdom, which got nourished by immortal water.^b Then when it became evening and the sun’s light began to totally fade, I bade the people give thanks to god. And when they had completed the act of thanksgiving all turned, one by one, to their own beds.

30 I, then, engraved the benefaction of the Poimandrēs upon my memory,^a and being full of what I wanted I became very happy. Indeed, the sleep of the body became soberness of soul; the closing of the eyes became true sight;^b my silence became pregnant with the good; and the created products that my discourse brought forth were good people. This happened to me because I received discourse^c about the realm of absolute power from my intellect, that is, from the Poimandrēs. Divinely inspired with truth, I came to my mission. Therefore I am offering a blessing from all my soul and strength unto god the parent.

IV. THE AUTHOR’S PRAYER OF BLESSING

31 Holy is the god and parent of the entirety.

Holy is the god whose purpose has been accomplished by its
own powers.

Holy is the god that wills to be known, and is known, by
its own.

28 a. I.e. daylight and the material world on which it shines.

29 a. Or “oracles” or “discourses.”

b. Lit. “ambrosial water.”

30 a. Lit. “upon myself.”

b. Platonist clichés expressing the advantages of the soul’s disengagement from the material body.

c. Or “reasoning.”

Holy are you, who have rationally^a composed the existents.
Holy are you, of whom all the natural order is naturally an
image.

Holy are you, whose form the natural order has not been able
to represent.

Holy are you, who are mightier than all power.

Holy are you, who are greater than all preeminence.

Holy are you, who are better than praises.

Accept the hallowed, rational sacrifices of a soul and a heart
stretched out to you,

O you who are beyond verbal expression, ineffable, and in-
voked in silence.

32 I ask that I may not fall short of acquaintance with our
essence:

Grant me your approval and strengthen me,

And with this grace I shall enlighten those of the people who
lack acquaintance

And who are my siblings, your children.

Thus I believe, thus I bear witness.

I am advancing into life and light.

Blessed are you, O parent.

Your human being wishes to express hymns of sanctification in
your company:

To whom you have handed down complete authority.

31 a. Or "by reason" or "by the Word."

TRACTATE 7

THAT THE GREATEST HUMAN EVIL IS UNACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD

(CH7)

CONTENTS

That the Greatest Human Evil Is Unacquaintance with God (“Corpus Hermeticum VII,” “Hermetic Tractate 7”) is a short philosophical sermon on the human body as a hindrance to acquaintance (*gnōsis*) with god. The work is noteworthy for its strong negativity: if lack of acquaintance is “the greatest human evil,” then its immediate cause, the body, might be considered the most evil thing in the world. A similar attitude had long before gained philosophical respectability, for example in the dialogues of Plato (e.g., *Phaedo*, written ca. 384–370 B.C.); but in CH7 pessimism about the body is especially striking because it is not substantially balanced by any other kind of material.

Like TRs, CH7 opens with a polemic against ordinary learning, here called “reasoning unaccompanied by acquaintance (with god).” Thus the speaker explicitly presupposes some intellectual training on the part of the audience, and exhorts them to rise yet higher by attempting a suprasensual (“mental”) ascent toward deity (cf. Zs, Fr); deity, for its part, is accessible to those who seek it (it “wills to be seen”). Though ostensibly addressing a large and diverse audience, the speaker assumes that only some listeners will be able to respond (“you who can”).

Because CH7 is so brief, there is room for only one image to be developed. In the imagery of the text, our material world is inundated by a “flood” of ignorance; the human intellect is a mariner borne away toward destruction by a strong current. The mariner must make for a countercurrent that will carry the boat into a safe harbor, to be met by a “leader” and personally conducted to a temple of acquaintance, filled with sober contemplatives whose minds are fixed on god. The text gives no hint of whether the “leader” to *gnōsis* is a teacher (as in Poim), a savior, or philosophy itself. The other images of the text are clichés, well known from popular philosophy, especially in the Platonizing tradition.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

The author of CH7 and its place of composition are uncertain. Some scholars suspect that CH7 and Poim are by the same author because of their similarity in style and content. Since it was transmitted as a part of the “Hermetic Corpus,” CH7 may be from Egypt (the text does not actually mention Hermes-Thoth, the syncretized Egyptian god of wisdom). The date of composition must be before A.D. ca. 313, since the opening sentences are paraphrased by Eusebius of Caesarea in a work finished probably in that year (*Contra Hieroclem* 42). Eusebius calls the author of the sermon “the herald (or preacher) of truth.” The language of composition is Greek.

The extreme brevity of CH7 and some of its stylistic features (questions and patronizing moral exhortation addressed to the audience, shift from second person plural to second person singular) are typical of the philosophical sermon or animated classroom lecture, a style sometimes called “diatribe,” though its long sentences built up from balanced antitheses are closer to public artistic oratory. Useful comparative material can be found in TRs, the concluding sermon of Zs, and most immediately in the conclusion of Poim.

TEXT

The original Greek text is attested by a number of manuscripts now in European libraries, all of them late (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries); and by a short paraphrase in a fourth-century author (see above, “Literary background”). The translation below is based on Nock’s critical edition: *Corpus Hermeticum*, vol. 1 (see above, “Select Bibliography”), on 81–82.

That the Greatest Human Evil Is Unacquaintance^a with God

1 People, where are you rushing, so intoxicated and having so fully drunk the strong wine of reasoning unaccompanied by acquaintance?^b You cannot hold it; already you are about to throw it up. Stop, get sober! Look up with the eyes of the mind^c—and if you cannot all do so, at least those of you who can! For the imperfection that comes from unacquaintance^d is flooding the entire earth, corrupting the soul along with the body that encloses it and preventing it from putting in at the havens of safety.^e 2 So do not be swept away by the main current! Rather, you who can must avail yourselves of a countercurrent, take to the haven of safety,^a put in there, and look for a leader to show you the way to the doors^b of acquaintance, where there is bright light, pure from darkness; where no one is intoxicated, but all are sober, fixing their eyes on that being who wills to be seen—but mentally,^c for that being cannot be heard or told of or seen by eyes, only by intellect and mind.

But first, you (sing.)^d must tear off the tunic^e that you are wearing, the robe of unacquaintance,^f the foundation of imperfection, the bond of corruption, the dark enclosure, the living death, the perceptible corpse, the portable grave, the resident brigand, who acts in hatred through what he loves and with his instruments of hatred causes corruption.^g 3 Such is the tunic, the enemy, that you have put on, which strangles you and pulls you down toward itself, lest by looking up and beholding the beauty of truth and the good that lies in it you should

Title 1 a. Or “Lack of Acquaintance.”

b. Lit. “drunk the unmixed reasoning of unacquaintance.” The ancient Greeks mixed water with their wine; “unmixed” wine was unusually strong and intoxicating. Reasoning unaccompanied by acquaintance with god is here compared to strong wine.

c. Lit. “heart.”

d. Or “lack of acquaintance.”

e. Or “salvation.”

2 a. Or “salvation.”

b. Or “doorway.”

c. Lit. “with their heart.”

d. From here on only the singular form of “you” is used in the Greek original.

e. I.e. the body, which the soul “wears” like a “tunic.” This and the following metaphors for the body were Platonist clichés.

f. Or “lack of acquaintance.”

g. Translation uncertain.

come to hate its^a imperfection, once you know about its plot that it has plotted against you in rendering insensible the reputed^b sensory organs by stopping them up with a mass of matter and filling them with loathsome pleasure: to keep you from hearing what you ought to hear, to keep you from seeing what you ought to see.

3 a. I.e. the enemy's, the body's.

b. The original reading of the text is uncertain here.

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