

## The Paraphrase of Shem (NH VII, 1)

# Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies

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# The Paraphrase of Shem (NH VII, 1)

Introduction, Translation and Commentary

*By*  
Michel Roberge



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## FOREWORD

The *Paraphrase of Shem* is the first tractate of Codex VII in the papyrus collection that was discovered near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in December 1945. Despite its title, the tractate is in fact an apocalypse. Jean Doresse, one of the first scholars to obtain access to these manuscripts, described it as “the most extraordinary of the apocalypses in our whole library. It is also, perhaps, one of the most important of all the writings that were in use by the Gnostics” (*The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Texts*, Rochester, Vermont 2005, 116). It is also a text that has a reputation for being highly complex and largely incomprehensible: “It is the longest and most obscure of all the 52 writings...” (G. Quispel, review of the French edition, *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 [2000] 444); “de tous les textes gnostiques parvenus jusqu’à nous, il reste le plus difficile, le plus impénétrable, le moins étudié” (M. Tardieu, *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études*, V<sup>e</sup> section, 1983–84, 357).

Twenty years later, Tardieu’s remarks have lost none of their relevance. The editions of this text that have so far been published, whether in English (1996), German (2003) or other languages, offer only very brief introductions and minimal annotation. The French edition published by M. Roberge in 2000 in the series *Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi*, the result of more than twenty years of work, represents the first, and until now the only, interpretation of this important text. This was underlined by the reviewer R. McL. Wilson: “...his book, justly claimed as the first comprehensive interpretation of the document, is the fruit of many years of research; it also marks an advance on anything hitherto available...for the present this a very solid contribution” (*Journal of Theological Studies* 52 [2001] 872–875). Roberge’s extensive introduction analyses the manuscript, the language of the tractate, its literary genre and the narrative procedures employed by the author, and he reconstructs in detail the plan of the work. Above all, however, his in-depth study of the system shows that the tractate articulates a coherent vision of the world, whose elements have been drawn from the Bible, Stoicism and Middle Platonism, especially that of Numenius of Apamea and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Even though the author of the *Paraphrase* borrows a number of the elements of

his system from other known varieties of gnosticism, notably from Valentinianism and Hermetism, the final synthesis remains entirely original, anticipating Manichaeism on several points.

The English translation of Roberge's book which is presented here addresses a larger audience than that of the French version. For this reason, the part of the Introduction that deals with the details of the manuscript and the language have been omitted, as is also the case with the Coptic text and the Coptic and Greek indices. Besides, in order to facilitate the reading of the English translation of the Coptic text, the author has divided the text into sections and added notes that incorporate the results of his most recent research. In addition, the bibliography has been updated and adapted to an English readership.

The English translation of the Introduction has been made by Professor Kevin Coyle of the University of St. Paul in Ottawa. The translation of the Coptic text was made directly from Coptic into English by Michel Roberge and was revised by Kevin Coyle. The indices have been compiled by Mr David Joubert-LeClerc. This translation does not simply duplicate the English translations that have been published already, since, as R. McL. Wilson observes, "For the proper understanding of these texts we need to consider and compare the versions produced by several different translators, for each may yield some new insight into the meaning." And, after surveying various instances where Roberge's translation differs from the rest, he adds: "A whole series of such small translation variants will of course make a material difference to the final result" (*loc. cit.* 873, 975).

This volume will certainly be of interest to the specialists in the history of religions and in philosophy. As a point of special interest for the history of ancient philosophy, the links discovered by the author between the present text and the *Chaldaean Oracles* should be underlined. Besides, the detection of numerous features of the system that point in the direction of Manichaeism suggests that we are here in the presence of a particularly significant juncture on the road leading from the various gnostic systems to that of Mani. Overall, this study assuredly provides a solid groundwork that will be able to feed the discussion about a text whose importance scholars have only begun to gauge.

Louis Painchaud



ABBREVIATIONS TO PERIODICALS,  
REFERENCES WORKS, AND SERIALS

AH	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus Hæreses</i> (D. Unger, <i>St Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies: Volume I: Book I</i> , with further revisions by John J. Dillon, <i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> 55, New York: Paulist Press, 1992)
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter)
Aug	<i>Augustinianum</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAILLY	<i>Dictionnaire grec-français</i> , Paris, 1950
BASP	<i>The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
BCNH	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BSAC	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CH	<i>Corpus hermeticum</i> (Nock-Festugière)
CMC	Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis (Koenen-Römer)
CRUM	W.E. Crum, <i>A Coptic Dictionary</i> , Oxford, 1972
CUF	Collection des Universités de France
<i>De an. procr. in Tim.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De animae procreatione in Timaeo</i> (Thévenaz)
<i>Dogm. Plat.</i>	Apuleius, <i>De dogmate Platonis</i> (J. Beaujeu)
<i>Didask.</i>	Alcinous, <i>Didaskalikos</i> (J. Dillon, <i>Alcinous, The Handbook of Platonism</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)
<i>Gen. an.</i>	Aristotle, <i>De generatione animalium</i> (A.L. Peck, <i>Aristotle. Generation of Animal</i> , with an English translation. London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990)

EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
<i>Exc. Theod.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Excerpta ex Theodoto</i> (R.P. Casey)
<i>Gyn</i>	<i>Gynaikeia</i> (O. Temkin: <i>Soranus' Gynecology</i> . Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956)
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	Quintillian, <i>Institutio oratoria</i> (H.E. Butler, <i>The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian</i> , 1, with an English translation. London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920)
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library
Liddell and Scott	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , Oxford, 1968
<i>Mus</i>	<i>Le Muséon</i>
NH	Nag Hammadi
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia christiana Periodica</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i> (F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, <i>Philo</i> , with an English translation. London: Heineman; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956)
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
<i>Quaest. conv.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Quaestiones conviviales</i> (E.L. Minor, Jr et al., <i>Plutarch: Moralia ix</i> , with an English translation. London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961).
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des Études Augustiniennes</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RevSR	<i>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</i>
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SC	Sources chrétiennes

- SHR Studies in the History of Religions (Supplement to *Numen*)  
SR *Studies in Religion*  
SVF *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (H. von Arnim)  
VC *Vigiliae Christianae*  
ZÄS *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*



## INTRODUCTION

### A. THE MANUSCRIPT AND LANGUAGE OF THE TRACTATE

#### 1. *Codex VII*

The writing entitled *The Paraphrase of Shem* (*Paraph. Shem*) is the first of those contained in Codex VII, one of thirteen codices that made up the Coptic library discovered near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in December, 1945.<sup>1</sup> Codex VII was in a batch of eight complete codices (II, IV–IX, and XI) and parts of four others (I, X, XII, and XIII) (Robinson 1981: 53) acquired by the Cypriot antiquarian Phocion J. Tano in 1946. He later offered it for sale to the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo through the agency of Maria Dattari. In October 1948, and again in the spring of 1949, Jean Doresse was able to examine and prepare the first inventory of this collection of manuscripts with the aid of Togo Mina (Doresse and Mina 1949: 129–41). On June 9, 1952, the collection was transferred to the Coptic Museum, and finally declared a national property by a court decision in 1956.

At the Coptic Museum, Codex VII was given the classification number 10546. It is numbered III in the classification by Doresse and Mina (1949: 132, 134), V in that by H.-Ch. Puech (1950; 1957), and VII in Doresse's second list (Doresse 1970: 143–44). VII was the number finally retained for the photographic edition in the collection

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<sup>1</sup> On the discovery, see J.M. Robinson, "From the Cliff to Cairo: The Story of the Discoverers and the Middlemen of the Nag Hammadi Codices." In Barc 1981: 21–58; idem, "The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *BA* 42 (1979): 206–24; idem, Preface to *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 3–14.

published through the good offices of UNESCO,<sup>2</sup> based on the inventory prepared by Martin Krause in 1962.<sup>3</sup>

Codices I, VII, and XI contain related handwriting. The scribe who copied the first tractate of Codex I also copied the first and second tractates of Codex XI, and whoever copied the third and fourth tractates of Codex XI also copied Codex VII. This invites the conclusion that the codices could have been copied in the same scriptorium.<sup>4</sup> The scribe's uncial is easy to read, "cursive, supple and unpretentious" (Doresse 1970: 141). According to Puech (1950: 105), it would pre-date the mid-fourth century, but examination of the fragments found in the bindings requires that the dating be adjusted slightly forward.

Indeed, the examination of the various Greek and Coptic papyrus fragments discovered in 1970 in the boards covering Codices I, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, and XI has enabled closer precision as to the place and date of their production (Barns et al. 1981). On the basis of the place-names mentioned in the covers of Codices I, V, VII, and XI, we may conclude that they were bound in the area where they were discovered.<sup>5</sup> As well, the covers of Codex VII have yielded two receipts for wheat deliveries, dated respectively on November 20, 341

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<sup>2</sup> *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Codex VII, Published under the Auspices of the Department of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Conjunction with the UNESCO* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972). The *editio princeps* of the *Paraph. Shem*, with a German translation, was the work of Krause: 1973. F. Wisse published an English translation, preceded by a short introduction but without notes, in "The Paraphrase of Shem (VII,1)." In J.M. Robinson, gen. ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 308–28. This translation was revised for the volume's third edition (New York and San Francisco: Harper, 1988, 341–61), and was preceded by an introduction by M. Roberge (339–41). The same translation was reproduced in the revised fourth edition (Wisse 1996a). Wisse (1996b) has provided a new edition of the text, with a brief introduction, new translation and some footnotes.

<sup>3</sup> M. Krause, "Der koptische Handschriftenfund bei Nag Hammadi. Umfang und Inhalt," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 19 (1962): 121–32. See also Robinson 1967–68; idem, "The Coptic Gnostic Library," *NT* 12 (1970): 81–85. A synoptic table of these various classifications can be found in D.M. Scholer, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography*. NHS, 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 109–11, and in *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction*, 31. A short presentation of Codex VII is given in Krause and Labib 1971: 2–4.

<sup>4</sup> See J.M. Robinson, "On the Codicology of the Nag Hammadi Codices" in Ménard 1975: 17.

<sup>5</sup> One of the fragments (no. 1) of Codex I mentions "Diospolis near Chenoboskia," meaning near present-day al-Qasr, the village of the peasants who discovered the manuscripts. These had been buried near a large rock at the foot of the cliffs of Jebel el-Tarif, eleven kilometres north of Nag Hammadi and one kilometre west of the hamlet of Hamra Dum, which is about nine kilometres from Al-Qasr. See Barns et al. 1981: 15, with Shelton's introduction, 11.

and November 21, 346, as well as a contract approved by a municipal council, dated October 348. If one supposes that these documents would not have been kept around for very long, we can estimate Codex VII's production as taking place shortly after 348.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. *The Paraphrase of Shem*

Besides the *Paraph. Shem* (1.1–49.9), Codex VII contains four other tractates: *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (*Treat. Seth*, 49.10–70.12), *Apocalypse of Peter* (*Apoc. Pet.*, 70.13–84.14), *The Teachings of Silvanus* (*Teach. Silv.*, 84.15–118.7), followed by the scribe's notice (118.8–9), and *Three Steles of Seth* (*Steles Seth*, 118.10–127.27). The codex ends with a colophon (127.28–32).

The nearly fifty pages containing the *Paraph. Shem* are in an excellent state of preservation;<sup>7</sup> only the top and bottom of a few pages have deteriorated: 18.1–3; 35.34–35; 36.35; 37.34–35; 38.33; 39.33; 40.34; 42.33.

The language of our tractate is related to Sahidic Coptic, but a Sahidic influenced by the Lycopolitan dialect,<sup>8</sup> L5 in particular, a dialect attested by a codex of John (4th century).<sup>9</sup> However, the Coptic translation contains traces of the Greek original, of which the more obvious are the forgotten Greek genitive *physeōs* in 5.1, the two plural

<sup>6</sup> See Barns et al. 1981: 53–58, with Shelton's introduction, 4–5, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Along with Codex VI, Codex VII is the best preserved of the Nag Hammadi Coptic library. See Robinson, "Preface," xi; S. Emmel, "The Nag Hammadi Codices Editing Project: A Final Report," *Newsletter of the American Research Center in Egypt* 104 (1978): 29; idem, "Unique Photographic Evidence for Nag Hammadi Texts: CG V–VIII," *BASP* 16 (1979): 179–91 (esp. 189).

<sup>8</sup> This dialect is also termed "Subakhmimic." We adopt the new nomenclature proposed by R. Kasser, "Prolégomènes à un essai de classification systématique des dialectes et subdialectes coptes selon les critères de la phonétique," *Mus* 93 (1980): 53–112, 237–297; 94 (1981): 91–152; idem, "Sigles des dialectes coptes. Propositions pour une convention permettant d'unifier les divers usages systématiques actuellement en vigueur." In J.-M. Rosenstiehl, ed., *Études coptes III. Troisième journée d'études. Musée du Louvre 23 mai 1986. Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte*, 4 (Louvain and Paris: Peeters, 1989), 1–10; idem, "Le copte vraiment vivant, ses idiomes écrits (langues, dialectes, subdialectes) au cours de leur millénaire (III<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles environ)," *BSAC* 28 (1989): 11–50. See also W.-P. Funk, "How Closely Related are the Subakhmimic Dialects?," *ZÄS* 112 (1985): 124–39; idem, "Dialects Wanting Homes: A Numerical Approach to the Early Varieties of Coptic." In J. Fisiak, ed., *Historical Dialectology, Regional and Social: Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs*, 37 (Berlin – New York – Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988), 149–92.

<sup>9</sup> See H. Thompson, *The Gospel of St. John According to the Earliest Coptic Manuscript* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1924), esp. xviii–xxi.

neuters *steira* in 23.34,35, and the accusative of the proper name *Soldan* in 39.31.

## B. THE LITERARY GENRE

Authors interested in some aspect or other of the *Paraph. Shem*<sup>10</sup> have been careful to highlight the difficulties raised by the study of this work.<sup>11</sup> The diversity of literary genres, the doublets, glosses, repetitions, inconsistencies, floating terminology, and especially the confusion of speakers in the final pages, give the impression of a text in which, through the actions of one or more redactors insensitive to unity and logical order,<sup>12</sup> bits and pieces from various sources and times have been brought together.<sup>13</sup> In this view, it would therefore be futile to look for a logical sequence of episodes in this confused and disordered compilation. The writing could offer no more than a series of images useful in symbolically describing the Gnostic experience of existence (Fischer 1975: 263), and could constitute nothing more—in keeping with its title and a specific definition—than a great “paraphrase,” that is, a reworking under various images of a fundamental idea: deliverance of Spirit’s light fallen into Darkness (see Aland 1978: 78–81). Wisse even asserts that the tractate was badly conceived, that the effort at composition is amateurish, and that whoever tries to reconstruct a coherent narrative plot runs the risk of imposing on the

<sup>10</sup> In chronological order, the principal studies on the *Paraph. Shem* are: Wisse 1970; Colpe 1973; Krause 1973; Bertrand 1975; Fischer 1975; Schenke 1975; Sevrin 1975; Tardieu 1975; Krause 1977; Tardieu 1977; Aland 1978; Roberge 1981; Tardieu 1982–1983, 1983–84, 1984–85; Dubois 1986; Roberge 1986; Tardieu 1987, 1988; Mahé 1989; Dietzfelbinger 1990; Roberge 1990, 1992; Havelaar 1995; Roberge 1995, 1996 (2); Wisse 1996 (2); Hill 1997; Lüdemann and Janssen 1997; Albrile 2000; Casadio 2000; Iwersen 2000; Onuki 2000; Roberge 2000 (2); Stahl 2000; Schenke 2003; Roberge 2006; García Bazán 2007; Roberge 2007 (3).

<sup>11</sup> “De tous les textes gnostiques parvenus jusqu’à nous, il reste le plus difficile, le plus impénétrable, le moins étudié” (Tardieu 1983–84: 357); “certainement le chef-d’œuvre de l’obscurité gnostique” (Tardieu 1987: 411).

<sup>12</sup> “Logische Folge ist in diesem Bildgestammel nicht zu finden und wahrscheinlich auch nicht zu suchen” (Fischer 1975: 264); “La Parafraasi di Sēm... pur nella sua ampiezza e ricchezza di dati, sembra complicare, fino ai limiti della illogicità, le linee portanti del sistema triadico... Il trattato è oscuro, ripetitivo, probabilmente mal tradotto, privo sovente di una logica e pone dei complessi problemi interpretative, a tutt’oggi irrisolti” (Filoramo 1980: 129–30).

<sup>13</sup> “We may be dealing with a patchwork of redaction and sources” (Wisse 1970: 133, n. 3). See also Sevrin 1975: 69–71.



work more order than it can bear or the author himself would have wished.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the author's colourful imagery sheds very little light on the subject he treats, and perhaps was never applied with this goal in mind.<sup>15</sup> According to Schenke, the present text is the result of a compilation. The compiler has put together many distinct revelations and abridged them by suppressing the dialogues. One element of this compilation could have been the paraphrase on a text entitled "The unbegotten Spirit" (see 32.27).<sup>16</sup>

It is certain that the *Paraph. Shem* shows traces of glosses and redactional adjustments; nor can the possibility be dismissed that certain components enjoyed an independent literary existence before being integrated into the current text. As a result, the task of unravelling the skein of episodes that form its narrative texture promises to be difficult. To carry out the task, as a first step we will concentrate on the defects in composition affecting the last part of the *Paraph. Shem*; this will enable a determination of its original limits and provide an approach to the question of its literary genre. We shall see that as an apocalypse the *Paraph. Shem* includes a narrative introduction and conclusion typical of that genre. With this narrative framework for a basis, it will be possible to disengage the writing's general structure in its current state and to give some precision about the great articulations of the message the revealer has transmitted on a temporal and a spatial axis at one and the same time.

### 1. *Compositional defects: the confusion of interlocutors*

The *Paraph. Shem* introduces two interlocutors: Derdekeas, the heavenly being who communicates the revelation, and Shem, who receives it. While undergoing an ecstatic experience, Shem is carried by his thought to the summit of creation, close to the light (1.5b–16a). There he hears a voice, that of Derdekeas (see 8.24), which communicates to him a teaching about the origin of the universe and of humankind, as

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<sup>14</sup> "...a far more likely explanation is that the tractate was not carefully planned and was executed in a haphazard fashion. Other evidence also points at an amateurish effort at composition... This means that a reconstruction of the events is hazardous; there is a great danger of trying to make more sense and provide more order than the author intended or the tractate can support" (Wisse 1996b: 19–20).

<sup>15</sup> "The colorful imagery used by the author does little to elucidate the topic at hand, but perhaps it was never intended to elucidate" (Wisse 1996b: 19).

<sup>16</sup> Schenke 2003: 546.

well as about the meaning of history. Several times in the course of the revelation *Derdekeas* directly addresses *Shem*,<sup>17</sup> who speaks only after awakening (41.21b–42.11a).

Nevertheless, *Shem*'s reflections at the close of his ecstasy are immediately followed, without transition, by new revelations concerning the role of faith, and by an eschatology both individual (42.11b–43.28a) and cosmic (43.28b–45.31a). These last teachings can only have been communicated by *Derdekeas*, since the revealer addresses the recipient in the second person (“Your Faith...”, 42.11b–12a), speaks of his garments in the clouds (43.11b–12a; compare 8.33–34; 12.18–29a; 18.3–9a), and recalls the “testimony of Faith” he has revealed (see 31.19b–22a). Finally, he promises that all he has said will come to pass (43.27b–28a).

Once more, again without transition, *Shem* speaks, relating how, at the close of his life (see 45.34b–46.1a), he recounted the memorial and the testimony (45.31b–47.7a) and made his ascent across the spheres (47.7b–32a). A second eschatological discourse follows, in which the revealer recalls to *Shem* what he has been saying to him from the outset with regard to Mind (47.32b–48.30a).

The revelation ends with a last address to *Shem* regarding his mission on earth (48.30b–49.9). In this conclusion, the revealer mentions the end of *Shem*'s sojourn on earth (49.4), although the latter has already given an account of his death and his ascent into the spheres (see 45.31b–47.32a).

So an overview of the tractate looks like this:

<i>Title and incipit</i>	1.1–5a
<i>Shem</i> describes his ecstatic experience: “My thought which was in my body...”	1.5b–16a
<i>Derdekeas</i> communicates his revelation: “ <i>Shem</i> ..., listen to and understand what I am about to tell you...”	1.16b–41.21a
<i>Shem</i> resumes speaking when he awakens: “And I, <i>Shem</i> ...”	41.21b–42.11a

#### NO TRANSITION

*Derdekeas* begins an eschatological discourse: Faith's cosmic function:

<sup>17</sup> See 1.18; 4.12; 9.34 (comp. 10.19–20); 11.35; 24.17; 26.1, 11, 25, 30; 28.20, 35 (comp. 29.12); 31.4; 32.19; 34.17, 24, 32; 37.6, 19; 40.32.

“Your Faith...”	42.11b–23
individual eschatology: “But those...”	42.24–43.28a
cosmic eschatology: “After I cease to be upon the earth...”	43.28b–45.31a

## NO TRANSITION

<i>Shem</i> resumes speaking: he recites the memorial: “I, Shem,...” and describes his ascent into the spheres at the close of his life: “It is I, Shem...”	45.31b–47.7a  47.7b–47.32a
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## NO TRANSITION

<i>Derdekeas</i> pronounces a final eschatological discourse: “And when the Righteous One...”	47.32b–48.30a
<i>Conclusion</i> , with an address to Shem: “From now on, O Shem,...”	48.30b–49.9

This confusion of speakers from 42.11b on suggests an unskilled labour of redaction and leads to the question of the work’s original limits. Might it have ended originally with the narrative of Shem’s return from his ecstatic experience (41.21b–42.11a)? The study of the writing’s literary genre will provide the answer.

## 2. *The literary genre*

If we discount authors who have done no more than point out the connection between the *Paraph. Shem* and the apocalypse genre,<sup>18</sup> only M. Krause and F.T. Fallon have broached the question in a more elaborate way. In a paper given at the Uppsala Conference on apocalypticism, Krause listed the Nag Hammadi texts that might belong to this literary genre (Krause 1983). Following P. Vielhauer,<sup>19</sup> he retains

<sup>18</sup> See Doresse 1970: 146; Wisse 1970: 130; 1996b: 17; Bertrand 1975: 149; Filoramo 1980: 130; Y. Janssens, “Apocalypses de Nag Hammadi.” In J. Lambrecht, ed., *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*. BETL, 53 (Gembloux: J. Duculot / Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980), 74; Lupieri 1984, 185–86; B.A. Pearson, “Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature.” In M.E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, 2,2 (Assen – Maastricht – Philadelphia: Van Gorcum and Fortress Press 1984), 443–81; Casadio 1989: 123–46; G. Filoramo, “Diventare Dio: Visione e rigenerazione nello gnosticismo,” *Aug* 29 (1989): 117–18.

<sup>19</sup> See P. Vielhauer, “Apocalypses and Related Subjects.” In W. Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* 2 (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. / Louisville:

three stylistic elements that characterize an apocalypse: 1) *pseudonymity*: to enhance its authority, a writing is placed under the aegis of a great personage from the past. Also, the work is often placed under seal and kept secret to await a further revelation; 2) the use of *vision*: the revelation is communicated in the form of a vision during an ecstasy or in a dream, rarely as something audible, and the visionary is often taken up to heaven. If the revelation occurs at the moment of death, it takes the form of a farewell speech. The content of the visions is expressed in the form of symbols or allegories whose interpretation requires a mediator (*angelus interpres*), who sometimes can be God himself. Noticeable, too, is the use of numerical diagrams in order to arrange history's events; 3) the presence within the apocalypse of *lesser literary forms*: historical overviews in the form of predictions, descriptions of the beyond, pareneses (exhortations), and prayers (Krause 1983: 622).

According to Krause, all three elements are present in the *Paraph. Shem*: 1) the revealer is named Derdekeas, Son of the perfect light (1.4), and Shem, "the first being upon the earth" (1.18–20), is the one who receives the revelation; 2) in the course of an ecstatic experience during which his thought separates him from his body and elevates him to the summit of creation (1.6–9), Shem hears a voice that, not in images but in coded discourse, communicates to him secrets about nature and the events of history, such as those reported in the Old and New Testaments; 3) the *Paraph. Shem* also contains minor literary forms, namely, pareneses (32.19–26), prayers (8.17; 13.25, 35), utterances of blessing (40.8–15a; 47.16b–19), and recounting of events to come, some of them apocalyptic (e.g., 29.19b–30.4; 43.31–45.31) (Krause 1983: 634). But Krause (1983: 633) hesitates to link the *Paraph. Shem* to the apocalyptic genre.

F.T. Fallon's study (1979) takes in the Gnostic texts as a whole and is part of the research carried out by J.J. Collins and his team on the apocalypse genre.<sup>20</sup> Intent on finding a more exact definition for "apocalypse," this author begins with a phenomenological examination

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Westminster – John Knox Press, 1992<sup>2</sup>), 542–68; trans. of "Apokalypsen und Verwandtes." In W. Schneemelcher, ed., *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, 6. Auflage, vol. 2 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990), pp. 408–427; idem, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1975), 485–94.

<sup>20</sup> Research collected in *Semeia* 14 (1979: J.J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*).

of Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Greek, Latin, and Iranian texts covering the period between 250 B.C.E. and 250 C.E. and traditionally identified as apocalypses. In principle, these texts share an array of significant traits that distinguish them from others. After a systematic inventory of characteristics consistently present in each of these texts, Collins proceeds to a definition of the genre that combines elements touching on form and content. According to him, the paradigm proper to the genre actually implies the joining of a certain mode of revelation to a specific content, a juncture that takes place within a narrative framework. An apocalypse, therefore, can be defined in the following terms: “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”<sup>21</sup>

The texts that conform to this definition can be divided into two major sub-groups: (I) those that do not include a voyage to heaven, and (II) those that do. Within these two sub-groups, three categories are distinguishable, according to the variations in their eschatological content, that is, according to the presence or absence of a) a review of history, usually in the form of *ex eventu* prophecy, b) a cosmic eschatology, and c) an individual eschatology.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> J.J. Collins, “Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9. See idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Matrix of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998<sup>2</sup>), 1–42; idem, *Daniel, with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984), 2–24. Collins’ research was followed up during annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, in the context of a seminar directed by A. Yarbro Collins from 1983 to 1987. The results of these efforts were published in *Semeia* 36 (1986), with the title *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*. The group kept the definition of the genre J.J. Collins had already proposed. However, in the wake of remarks made by D. Hellholm and D. Aune, Yarbro Collins suggests adding the following elements to this definition: such writings “have for their purpose to interpret the present and earthly circumstances in the light of the supernatural and future world, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the addressees by means of the divine authority” (Introduction, *Semeia* 36, 7). See also J.J. Collins, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism.” In Collins and Charlesworth 1991: 11–32.

<sup>22</sup> Collins, “Towards the Morphology,” 12–15. Thus the texts of type Ia and IIa include a review of history, and a cosmic and an individual eschatology; those of type Ib and IIb have no review of history, but contain a cosmic and an individual eschatology; finally, those of type Ic and IIc deal only with individual eschatology. See A. Yarbro Collins, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature.” In W. Haase, ed., *ANRW*, 2, 25/6 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988), 4465–4711.

In his account of gnostic apocalypses, Fallon first notes that these can be classified in the different sub-genres established by Collins, except that, in his view, none of them offers a review of history. Nonetheless, these apocalypses are set apart from others by specific traits, the principal ones being: 1) the predominance of the verbal message and the consequent reduction of the visual element; 2) the accent on present salvation by knowledge, and on personal survival, sometimes resulting in accounts of the ascent of the soul or divine element to the celestial kingdom. There is no interest in transforming the cosmos: at the end of time it returns to primitive chaos; 3) the importance given to the different heavens and their archons who make up the evil world; only the divine *pleroma* is good, and it is located above the celestial spheres.<sup>23</sup>

Fallon places the *Paraph. Shem* among the apocalypses that include a celestial voyage (type II) and whose contents are presented entirely in the form of discourse. In agreement with Wisse (1970: 135), he notes that the text contains no Christian allusions, and he points out its affinity with Hippolytus' notice on the Sethians, which would be its christianized version. He briefly describes the tractate's narrative framework—the seizing of Shem (1.2–11), followed by his return to earth (41.21–22)—, and he presents the chief characteristics of the revelation's content.<sup>24</sup>

Whether one holds to the stylistic criteria enumerated by Vielhauer, or adopts the definition of Collins, in our opinion the *Paraph. Shem* fulfills the conditions for a true apocalypse. However, we prefer to use Collins' definition because it underscores the importance of the narrative framework for the formal arrangement. In addition, the study of the content's revelation according to both the temporal and spatial axes will show its essentially eschatological orientation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Fallon, "The Gnostic Apocalypses," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 125–26. The short article by G. Filoramo, "Apocrifi gnostici: il genere letterario delle apocalissi," *Aug* 23 (1983): 123–30, is confined to generalities and brings nothing new to the discussion. The author identifies (126–27) as characteristic elements of these apocalypses: esoterism, presence of an extraordinary intermediary, recourse to the *topos* of the celestial voyage, and access to the mysteries of the divine world relating to either the *pleroma* or sacred history.

<sup>24</sup> Fallon, "The Gnostic Apocalypses": 137.

<sup>25</sup> According to J.H. Charlesworth, *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Guide to Publications, with Excurses on Apocalypses*. ATLA Bibliography Series, no. 17 (Chicago: American Theological Library Association / London: Scarecrow Press, 1987), what is fundamental to an apocalypse is its tone: "any included elements

a. *The narrative framework of the Paraph. Shem*

According to Collins, the narrative framework of an apocalypse invariably includes some recitation of the mode of receiving the revelation. He calls this the immediate narrative framework,<sup>26</sup> consisting of an *introduction* and a *conclusion*. In addition, the latter can contain instructions from the revealer to the recipient.

In virtue of its immediate narrative framework, the *Paraph. Shem* belongs in the category of apocalypses that include a celestial voyage.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the *introduction* (1.5b–16a) describes Shem's ascent to the summit of creation:

According to the will of Majesty, my thought which was in my body snatched me away from my race. It took me up to the summit of creation, close to the light that shone upon the whole inhabited region. There I saw no earthly likeness, but there was light. Thus my thought separated from the body of Darkness as though in sleep. I heard a voice saying to me, "Shem,..."

This literary fiction of the heavenly voyage introduces Shem, son of Noah, and the moment of the revelation occurs after the flood, since in the revealer's discourse the shift from past to future takes place when he explains to Shem why, in contrast to the members of his

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are apocalyptic because of the tone, not the tone because of the elements. This tone, granted, is to a certain extent impossible to define, but it is not elusive or amorphous. It derives from the author's certainty of having received a *new revelation* that contains a perspective in discontinuity with *Heilsgeschichte*" (23, author's emphasis). Since it is still vague to speak of eschatological "tone," Charlesworth strives to describe certain elements suitable for conferring this tone or apocalyptic mood on a writing. Among the elements he considers important, he mentions the invitation to rise to heaven and the "power of transferring the reader from the world below to the world above, and from the present age to the future age" (28, author's emphasis). He adds that this "is one of the most significant and essential features of apocalypticism" (28). But these are precisely the elements Collins recognized as essential in his assertion that an apocalypse implied the joining of a specific form, the narrative framework, to a certain content characterized according to the temporal axis by tension toward eschatological salvation and, on the spatial axis, by access to a transcendent world.

<sup>26</sup> Several apocalypses also possess an *extended* narrative framework, "consisting of stories about the recipient (as in Daniel and *Apocalypse of Abraham*) or providing a larger context for the revelation (e.g., the *Book of the Watchers*, 2 *Baruch*, *Testament of Abraham*). This extended framework may be loosely structured and incorporate material that was originally independent (as in Daniel). It is not an essential part of the genre but it is by no means exceptional" (Collins, *Daniel*, 5).

<sup>27</sup> Some examples: 1 *En.* 1–36 (*Book of the Watchers*) and 37–71 (*Parables*); 2 *En.*; *T. Levi* 2–5; 3 *Bar.*; *Ascen. Isa.* 6–11; *Apoc. Paul* (NH V,2); *Zost.* (NH VIII,1). On this type of apocalypse see M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

race who disappeared in the cataclysm, he has remained within a body (26.11–25a), and when he announces Sodom’s destruction to him (28.22b–29.3a).

As in the majority of Gnostic apocalypses, the accent is placed on the verbal message (Fallon 1979: 125; Perkins 1978: 16). Shem receives no vision of the revealer; he sees the light and hears a voice, that of Derdekeas, son of the infinite Light, calling to him (see 8.24–25).

It is especially important to note that the narrator, though he uses the apocalyptic framework to describe Shem’s experience, does not do so artificially. Into this framework he introduces the vocabulary proper to his anthropology, which he grounds in the distinction between the luminous elements, *thought* (*meeue*) and *mind* (*nous*) on the one hand and, on the other, *soul* (*psychē*) and *body* (*sōma*), elements proceeding from Darkness.<sup>28</sup> By employing here the terms *thought* and *body*, characteristics of his anthropology, the author demonstrates that he is using the apocalyptic model in a conscious way. Thus, at an existential level, the account of Shem’s heavenly voyage confirms the teaching to be detailed in the rest of the work.<sup>29</sup>

The narrative’s *conclusion* (41.21b–42.11a) describes Shem’s return from ecstasy and his transformation,<sup>30</sup> by returning to the same anthropological vocabulary:

And I, Shem, awoke as from a long sleep. I was astonished when I received the power of Light and all his thought...  
... Then I rejoiced in the thought of Light. (41.21b–26a; 42.5b–6)

<sup>28</sup> In the *Paraph. Shem* Obscurity or Darkness (*pkake*) is represented as a male element. We therefore prefer to translate it in male terms (“he, Darkness”) so as to preserve the sexual analogy. We will return to the tractate’s anthropology when we present its system. Let it suffice here to sketch its essentials. According to the *Paraph. Shem*, the human being is composed of 1) a *body* (*sōma*) with 2) a material *soul* (*psychē*), both generated by the impurity of the winds and demons; and 3) a *particle* (*meris*, *šlme*) of mind (*nous*) which has been liberated by Spirit and to which the Saviour has given the gift of a part of *logos* 4) a *thought* (*meeue*) produced by the power Astonishment (*thauma*), itself produced from Spirit. The combination of these elements culminates in a division of humanity into three classes of humans: 1) the *psychics* (1+2), whose root is Darkness; 2) the *noetics* (1+2+3), whose root is Faith, that is, the luminous Mind; and 3) the *pneumatics* (1+2+3+4), whose root is the unbegotten Spirit. The pneumatics and the noetics form the two classes of the saved.

<sup>29</sup> See also the account of Shem’s ascent at the end of his life (45.31b–46.3a; 47.8–20a).

<sup>30</sup> On the theme of the visionary’s transformation, see especially J.H. Charlesworth, “The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel.” In J.J. Collins and G.W. Nickelsburg, eds., *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*. SBLSCS, 12 (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1980), 135–51; M. Himmelfarb, “Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses.” In Collins and Charlesworth 1991: 79–90; Roberge 2000b.



In conformity with the genre, this conclusion most likely marks the formal limit of the *Paraph. Shem* as an apocalypse. This is all the more probable in that the account is preceded by the revealer's exhortation about Shem's earthly mission (40.31b–41.21a), that will consist essentially in handing on the received teaching (41.4–5, 14–15a), and in walking with Faith (41.18b–21a). Now, the same type of exhortation, with the same essential elements, can be found at the very end of the tractate (48.30b–49.9). The final redactor therefore felt the need to repeat this exhortation whose specific function in the original text was to bring the revelation to a close.<sup>31</sup>

In its present state, therefore, the general structure of the *Paraph. Shem* comes across as follows:

I. TITLE AND INCIPT .....	1.1–5a
II. APOCALYPSE .....	1.5b–42.11a
A. INTRODUCTION: Shem's ecstatic seizure .....	1.5b–16a
B. REVELATION BY DERDEKEAS.....	1.16b–41.21a
C. CONCLUSION: return from ecstasy and transformation.....	41.21b–42.11a
III. FIRST ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE OF DERDEKEAS .....	42.11b–45.31a
a. Faith's cosmic function .....	42.11b–23
b. Individual eschatology .....	42.24–43.28a
c. Cosmic eschatology.....	43.28b–45.31a
IV. SHEM'S ASCENT .....	45.31b–47.32a
a. Recitation of the memorial and testimony.....	45.31b–47.7a
b. Vision of the spheres .....	47.7b–32a
V. SECOND ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE OF DERDEKEAS .....	47.32b–48.30a
VI. CONCLUSION: Address to Shem .....	48.30b–49.9

The original structure of the work is that of an apocalypse;<sup>32</sup> this will be confirmed by the study of the contents viewed from the work's temporal and spatial axes.

<sup>31</sup> On this point see Collins, "Towards the Morphology," 8; also P. Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York – Ramsey – Toronto: Paulist Press, 1980), 57–58.

<sup>32</sup> According to Wisse (1970: 131), the apocalyptic framework would be secondary. For Schenke (1975: 124), the original writing would have consisted of a dialogue between Derdekeas and Shem. Later, Shem's requests for explanations would have been dropped, in effect rendering the text unintelligible.

b. *The contents of the Paraph. Shem viewed from its temporal axis*

Within its formal limits, as indicated by the narrative framework, it is relatively easy to grasp the chief declarations of the revelation communicated by Derdekeas. This revelation opens with a long cosmogonic and anthropogonic recitation (1.16b–24.29a), followed by a recitation of the history of salvation centred on the flood (24.29b–28.8a), the destruction of Sodom (28.8b–30.4a), and the Saviour’s baptism (30.4b–38.28a) and re-ascent through crucifixion (38.28b–40.31a). An address to Shem regarding his mission on earth brings this teaching to a close (40.31b–41.21a).

Even without stating the content of this revelation in detail, it is important to underline its eschatological orientation. We certainly do not find in it any scenario of the end of time: the eschatological teaching dispensed by the Saviour only concerns individuals (34.16b–36.1). Still, some indications in the text show that the author is conscious of writing a history that has a beginning (1.23–25; 36.2–4) and an end (39.17b–21). In accordance with Gnostic dualism, the latter includes the destruction of Nature (22.33b–23.3a). Indeed, according to the *Paraph. Shem* the formation of natural beings is achieved through an embryological process initiated during coitus between the dark principle, Darkness, and Nature, who comes from this principle and is represented as a womb. All corporal beings are therefore the product of impurity, and the end of time will occur when Nature has been emptied of all her impurity (8.26b–31a; see 23.30).

In order to read in detail the account of the end of time, it is necessary to consult the revealer’s two discourses that were added to the primitive text. The first discourse (42.11b–45.31a) gives a teaching on the cosmic function of Faith (42.11b–23), as well as on individual eschatology (42.24–43.28a), ending with a description of the consummation in two moments (43.28b–45.8a; 45.8b–31a): first, a series of catastrophes and the coming of an antichrist inaugurate the time “approaching destruction” (44.2b–4a); then comes “Nature’s final moment”: “And in the last day the forms of Nature will be eliminated with the winds and all their demons. They will become a dark lump (*bōlos*), just as they were in the beginning” (45.9–10a, 14b–20a). The second discourse (47.32b–48.30a) has to do with the cosmic eschatology. The Saviour announces a period of persecution (48.17–21a), but this will be of short duration (48.12–15a, 22b–24a). Soon there

will come the consummation and destruction of Nature (48.5b–7a, 19b–21a).<sup>33</sup>

In this cosmic framework, the *Paraph. Shem* recounts a history of salvation marked by three major crises: the flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the Saviour's crucifixion.<sup>34</sup> A common trait links these three events and brings out their apocalyptic character: they result from an intensification of evil. This is emphasized by the revealer when he introduces the account of the flood with these words: "But, in order that the sin of Nature might be filled" (24.29b–31a); interprets the destruction of Sodom by the fact that "evil will not cease" (29.27–31a); and, finally, affirms that his crucifixion will happen "in order that the wickedness of Nature might be brought to completion" (39.26b–28a).<sup>35</sup>

In an inverted reading of the biblical account, the flood is interpreted as the result of a plot of Nature's sin with Water and Darkness so as "to seize the Light and to take (it) away from faith" (25.13b–15a). Nature therefore decides to annihilate the race of the pneumatics, in order to keep for herself the light particles and establish her ascendancy over a

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<sup>33</sup> On the question of Gnostic eschatology and the new insights brought by the Nag Hammadi texts, see M.L. Peel, "Gnostic Eschatology and the New Testament," *NT* 12 (1970): 141–65; J.-É. Ménard, "Littérature apocalyptique juive et littérature gnostique," *RevSR* 47 (1973): 300–17; idem, "Apocalyptique et gnose: leur eschatologie respective." In F. Raphael et al., eds., *L'Apocalyptique: Communications présentées en 1974 au Centre de recherches d'histoire des religions de l'Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg*. Études d'histoire des religions, 3 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1977), 159–77; MacRae 1983.

<sup>34</sup> The same tripartite layout is found in Luke 17:26–30, *Apoc. Adam*, and *Gos. Eg.* See P. Perkins, "Apocalyptic Schematization in the Apocalypse of Adam and the Gospel of the Egyptians." In *SBLSP* 1972, 2 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1972), 591–99; eadem, "Apocalypse of Adam: the Genre and Function of a Gnostic Apocalypse," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 382–95; eadem, "The Rebellion Myth in Gnostic Apocalypses." In P.J. Achtemeier (ed.), *SBLSP* 1978 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 15–30; C.H. Hedrick, *The Apocalypse of Adam: A Literary and Source Analysis*. SBLDS, 46 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1980), 66–79. However, the *Paraph. Shem* also seems to apply a division of history into twelve periods (see 47.32b–48.8a). On the division of history in Jewish apocalyptic see D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 200 B.C.–A.D. 100* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 224–29; J. Licht, "Time and Eschatology in Apocalyptic Literature and Qumran," *JJS* 16 (1965): 177–82; and L. Hartman, "The Functions of Some So-called Apocalyptic Timetables," *NTS* 22 (1975): 1–14.

<sup>35</sup> One thinks of Jesus' saying in Matt 23:32: "Very well then, finish off the work that your fathers began." See also 1 Thess 2:14–16.

human race from which the thought of the Astonishment's light would be excluded, that is, a human race furnished only with the particle of Mind and at her beck and call. But Nature's intention has backfired, because the Saviour has decreed the construction of a tower<sup>36</sup> (25.15b–20a): whereas through the Saviour's teaching the members of his race have been able to return to their root, the unbegotten Spirit (26.1–10), Shem has escaped the cataclysm by entering the tower with Noah. The Saviour explains to him that he has "remained in a body outside the cloud of light"<sup>37</sup> so that he may "abide with true Faith" (26.11–14a; see 41.17b–19; 48.30b–32a). In fact, by accepting an alliance with the evil demiurge (see Gen 8:20–22; 9:8–17), Noah has tied himself to Nature's observances and has thus inaugurated the rule by the economy of faith (see Heb. 11:7). From then on, from the flood to the baptism, through the agency of the archon of creation,<sup>38</sup> Nature will exert herself to keep the race of the noetics under her power by imposing on it her teaching and commands, that is, *her* faith (see 40.2–3), in the form of circumcision, the Law and, finally, baptism (see 28.14b–22a; 30.4b–27a). Shem and his followers therefore have the mission of living in the company of the noetics, whose particle of Mind is subject to the obligations Nature has imposed. That is why the Saviour adds, for Shem's benefit, that Faith's thought "will be taken" and will be "given to you in a luminous consciousness" (26.15b–17a). This means that he possesses within himself the light of true Faith, a particle of Mind formed by the Word of Spirit, with an eye to teaching the noetics. Until the consummation or, in apocalyptic terms, during the whole time from the "appointed term (*prothesmia*) of Faith" (43.15), the pneumatics will have to coexist patiently with the noetics. To gain salvation, the latter, after the example of their root, the luminous Mind, will have to

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<sup>36</sup> Reinterpreting the Gen account, which recalls *Ap. John* (NH II, 29.6–15), where the ark is replaced by a luminous cloud. This may be an adaptation to local colour. The *Chronicle of Edessa* relates how on the occasion of a catastrophic flood of the city in 201, King Abgar VIII (177–212) sought refuge in the great tower called "(the tower) of the Persians." See J.B. Segal, *Edessa: "The Blessed City"* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970, trans. of the *Chronicle* passage on pp. 24–25). It may also be recalled that in *Herm. Vis.* 3,3,5 the tower symbolizes the Church. Shem's presence in the tower thus symbolizes the situation of the pneumatics within the Great Church.

<sup>37</sup> That is, the cloud of Hymen, the highest sphere in the cosmos, the temporary abode of the blessed pneumatics while they await the consummation.

<sup>38</sup> Yahweh, the Old Testament God, is the evil Demiurge. See 27.1b–21.

“loathe the impurity of Nature” (22.33b–23.6a) and so receive “a share of guileless word” (22.27b–28a).

When Nature undertakes “the unjust burning of Sodom,” Shem, for his part, will have to proclaim to the Sodomites his “universal teaching.” The Sodomites will then accomplish the universal testimony and will rest, their consciences clear, in the place of their repose, the unbegotten Spirit (28.34b–29.33a).

Finally, when the archon of creation attempts to impose Nature’s faith in its “last likeness,” meaning, under the form of baptism (30.4b–27a), the Saviour will again manifest himself in order to bring the archon’s vain efforts to an end, and to free “the members of the thought of Faith” (30.27b–29a). Nature will seek to lay hold of the Saviour, but will only succeed in crucifying Soldas, the earthly Jesus (39.28b–40.1). Derdekeas, the heavenly Christ, will re-ascend to the celestial spheres (38.29b–39.17a), accompanied by the members of Faith (32.11b–12a) and those of Spirit (30.33b–34a), whom he will have put on through his descending into the water of baptism (30.31b–31.4a; 32.9b–18).

But Nature will bring her own destruction through the Saviour’s crucifixion. Those who are tempted to let themselves be dragged into baptism’s impure rite will have to know how to discern the “ultimate” time (37.10b–14a),<sup>39</sup> for the period of the “appointed term of Faith” (43.14b–21a) will be terminated,<sup>40</sup> and Nature will be close to her destruction (see 43.29–31a; 44.2b–4a; 45.8b–10a). Neither the Law nor a rite involving water will save them, but conversion and knowledge of the testimony that the Saviour has revealed (31.4b–32.4a; 34.16b–36.1).

It may be concluded, then, that the *Paraph. Shem* recounts a history of salvation headed toward its eschatological completion, both individual and cosmic. Certainly, within the limits of the apocalypse properly so-called, the accent is placed on individual eschatology (see 34.16b–36.1), but cosmic eschatology still remains within the narrator’s horizon (see 22.33b–23.3a). More, this history is dominated by three themes characteristic of the apocalyptic genre: evil reaching maturity (see 24.29b–31a; 29.27–31a; 39.26b–28a), the appointed time (see

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<sup>39</sup> In Coptic, literally, “the time that is lifted up.” The Greek adjective underlying the Coptic word is probably *akros*, “extreme,” the culminating point when speaking of time. See Liddell and Scott 1968: 57.

<sup>40</sup> On the notion of “appointed time” see Rev 10:6.

43.14b–21a), and the imminence of the end of time (see 37.10b–14a; 43.29–44.4a).

c. *The contents of the Paraph. Shem viewed from its spatial axis*

Since Gnosticism puts the emphasis on knowing one's origins and how to return to them, the centre of interest in Gnostic apocalypses shifts from the temporal to the spatial axis (Perkins 1978: 15). However, the *Paraph. Shem* contains very little on the divine world as such: the supreme deity, the "Majesty" (*megethos*), remains unapproachable. The pneumatic finds rest in the place of Spirit (35.22b–24; 43.13–14a); the noetic, in the Hymen, the place of Faith (22.33b–23.6a; 35.24b–32a). So the teaching of Derdekeas is centred, according to the spatial axis, on knowledge of the celestial spheres and on the revelation of the memorial and testimony.

Initial information on the celestial spheres is located at the beginning of the cosmogonic account. Through the Saviour's action, the water of primitive chaos is transformed into a womb, subsequently subdivided into four clouds or spheres called, beginning with the highest: Hymen, Chorion (= Placenta; also called Silence), Power (or Middle), and Water (5.25b–30a). This simple enumeration is repeated later, with a commentary in the form of a "paraphrase," in 7.11b–30, a passage that admittedly breaks the thread of the recitation, but also manifests the importance the narrator attaches to the description of the spheres of the cosmos.

Later, when giving an account of his baptism, Derdekeas communicates to Shem his memorial (31.4b–13a), followed by what he calls the "testimony of Faith" (31.13b–32.5a), two lists containing the names of cosmic entities that have played a role in the cosmogonic narrative, and the knowledge of which will allow the Gnostic to pass through the celestial spheres without hindrance, as far as the place of repose. These two lists are commented upon afterwards by the revealer in a passage introduced by the formula, "This is the paraphrase..." (32.27b–34.16a). The two lists appear for a third time in the mouth of Shem when, at the close of his life, he gets ready to carry out his ascent into the spheres (45.31b–47.7a). This last passage, which does not belong to the primitive apocalypse, is completed by a vision of the spheres (47.7b–32a), compared by Shem to precious stones.

Wisse, Perkins, and Lupieri thought that the text of the *Paraph. Shem* originally ended at 32.26. At 32.27 a paraphrase would have begun, ending at 34.16 according to Wisse (1970: 130; 1996b: 16–17),

at the end of the treatise according to Lupieri (1984: 185–89)<sup>41</sup> and at 41.30 according to Perkins (1978: 24). For Aland (1978: 81, n. 18) the expression, “This is the paraphrase” (32.27) instead forms the conclusion to all that has been said to that point, whence the title given to the work.<sup>42</sup>

The synopsis of the three passages containing the three lists<sup>43</sup> demonstrates the decidedly paraphrastic character of pages 32.27b to 34.16a. On the literary level, they have exactly the same function as the explanation of the clouds (7.11b–30) mentioned earlier. The term *paraphrase* must therefore be understood here in its classic sense<sup>44</sup> and does not describe the writing’s literary genre, as Aland (1978) thinks.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, as the text interprets it, salvation history ends with *the Saviour’s re-ascent* through his crucifixion (38.28b–40.31a). The latter is described immediately after the anti-baptism polemic (36.25–38.28a) that closes the baptism episode. After this narration, the revealer addresses his last recommendations to Shem (40.31b–41.21a); then the seer comes out of his ecstasy (41.21b–42.11a).

It can be concluded that the current title given to the entire work is probably late and could have been assigned by a redactor or compiler based on the expression in 32.27. By its narrative framework (1.5b–16a;

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<sup>41</sup> The original writing would then have been an *apocalypse* ending at 32.26, and the author of the *Paraph. Shem*, who introduces his text at 32.27, would also have added the introduction.

<sup>42</sup> Basing himself on the writing’s opening lines, Sevrin (1975: 70) gives the term “paraphrase” the sense of “revelation” and prefers to see in the expression the conclusion of a recitation: “Nous pouvons donc supposer une paraphrase ou révélation primitive s’étendant, au plus, sur les trente-deux premières pages, et reprise ensuite, sans doute retravaillée, dans une composition plus large à laquelle elle aurait laissé son titre.”

<sup>43</sup> See below, pp. 78–80.

<sup>44</sup> The paraphrase was part of the elementary exercises (*progymnasmata, primordia*) of literary composition that the grammarian or rhetor required from his pupil. See H.-I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 172–75; trans. of *Histoire de l’éducation dans l’antiquité* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1948), 238–42. The exercise is described by Quintilian (*Inst.*, 1,9,2) and Hermogenes (*Progymnasmata*, 3). Quintilian applies it to (Aesop’s) fables: “the pupils should begin by analyzing each verse, then give its meaning in different language, and finally proceed to a freer paraphrase in which they will be permitted now to abridge and now to embellish so far as this may be done without losing the poet’s meaning”; trans. H.E. Butler, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, 1. LCL 124 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920), 157. In Hermogenes the paraphrase is one of the exercises to be done on the topic of the *chrie* or moral anecdote.

<sup>45</sup> The real paraphrase (32.27b–34.16) has been inserted into an *apocalypse* already well characterized at the level of form (against Wisse 1970: 131; Schenke 1975: 126).

41.21b–42.11a) and its content, the *Paraph. Shem* provides us with an especially interesting model of Gnostic apocalyptic.

### C. THE NARRATIVE PROCEDURES

Analyzing the *Paraph. Shem*'s literary genre has allowed us to grasp its principal utterances and to identify certain characteristic themes. However, it is still sometimes difficult to work out the writing's narrative thread, especially in its cosmogonic account. That is why, before setting out its detailed plan, we present some of the narrative procedures used by the author that have helped us delimit the literary units and determine how they band together the different episodes that make up the account.

#### 1. *Introductory formulae*

Everything in the *Paraph. Shem* is programmed by the superior Light and happens against the will of Nature, who in her ignorance (see 24.33; 27.1–2b) still believes that she is controlling the events. This principle of paradoxical finality is a key to interpreting the text, and from the standpoint of narratology it displays the narrator's omniscience as well as his deliberate use of irony. At the literary level, this principle is expressed in the frequent use of final propositions and formulae: "according to the will of Majesty," "by the will of the great Light," "according to my (Derdekeas') will," etc., formulae which habitually *introduce* an episode. See 1.5b–6; 2.28b–29; 3.33; 4.15; 6.2; 6.30b–31a; 8.15b–16a; 9.3b–4a; 10.16; 11.7; 12.15b–16a; 13.4b–5; 13.33b–34a; 16.3; 17.2,25; 18.1b–2.8; 18.27b–28a; 20.2; 20.10; 21.12b–13a; 21.20b–21a; 24.29b–25.1; 25.15b–18a; 25.24; 26.26,33; and 41.1b–2a.

#### 2. *Inclusions*

The author often frames a literary unit by repeating at the close one or several of the literary elements, terms, or expressions present at the beginning.<sup>46</sup> This procedure of inclusions supplies a first objective

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<sup>46</sup> For a good description of this procedure see M. Girard, *Les Psaumes: Analyse structurelle et interpretation*, 1 (Ps 1–50). Recherches, n.s., 2 (Montreal and Paris: Belarmin, 1984), 42–43.



criterion that allows some certainty in determining where a literary unit begins and ends. Some examples:

narrative introduction: 1.7–8 // 1.14–15  
 Spirit's fall: 2.36b–3.1 // 3.28b–29  
 generation of an Intellect resembling Spirit: 5.8 // 5.18b–19a  
*analēpsis* of Mind-seed: 6.1–3 // 6.11b–13a  
 manifestation of Spirit's image: 24.2b–4a // 24.13b–15a  
 construction of the tower: 25.17b–18a // 25.25b–26a  
 rejection of the fiery power after the flood: 27.2b–4 // 27.17b–19a  
 appearance of Shem to the Sodomites: 29.7b–8a // 29.31b–33a  
 Shem's cosmic function: 41.25b–26a // 42.7b–8a  
 elimination of Nature's forms on the last day: 45.8b–10a // 45.30b–31a  
 recitation of Derdekeas's memorial: 46.1b–3a // 46.11b–12  
 recitation of the testimony: 46.23 // 47.6–7a

### 3. *Interruptions and resumptions of the account*

The narrator does not always follow a strictly linear plan. He sometimes doubles back, introduces reflections or parentheses, and resumes the interrupted thread of an episode by using the Coptic word *auō* or the Greek *de* with a resumptive meaning frequently translated into English by “thus” or “then.”<sup>47</sup> Examples:

1.14–15a (*auō*), referring to 1.6b–8a (inclusion)  
 6.23–24a (*de*), referring to 6.15b–17a  
 13.33b–34a (*auō*), referring to 13.23b–25a  
 15.34b–36a (*auō*), referring to 15.24b–27a  
 16.15b–17a (*auō*), referring to 16.9b–10  
 20.2 (*auō*), referring to 19.27b–29a  
 44.30–32a (*auō*), referring to 44.6b–11a

### 4. *Explanatory parentheses and narrator's reflections*

The narrator sprinkles his account with explanatory parentheses to help the reader make the connection between the different episodes. In the majority of cases, these parentheses are introduced by a demonstrative with an analeptic value followed by a verb accompanied by

<sup>47</sup> On this meaning of *auō* see A. Shisha-Halevy, *Coptic Grammatical Categories: Structural Studies in the Syntax of Shenoutean Sahidic. Or.*, 53 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1986), 51.

a form of the imperfect or by a relative form.<sup>48</sup> Several of these have been marked with an *en dash* in the translation.

Sometimes the narrator's reflections are much more developed, to the point of constituting, in certain cases, real interruptions in the narrative thread. They are presented in the form of return to or anticipation of the events, in order to render the meaning more exact (6.1–6a; 8.26b–31a; 9.13b–23; 15.28b–34a; 19.31b–35; 21.7b–12a; 25.23–25a; 30.8–21a; 39.17b–24a), of dogmatic expositions where the essence of the Gnostic doctrine can be found (11.34–12.15a; 24.2b–29a; 25.35b–26.25a; 34.16b–36.1; 36.25–38.28a), of paraphrases (7.11b–30; 32.27b–34.16a), and of exhortation (32.19–27a).

### 5. *The principle of exemplarity*

An event can be repeated at different levels in the narrative development, be it a question of light-powers or of the forces of chaos. In this case the narrator uses identical expressions or refers explicitly to the earlier event, for example:

Shem's ecstasy (1.5b–16a) and ascent (45.31b–34; 47.7b–11a).

The expulsion of Mind from Darkness (3.30–5.19a), from the fetal waters (18.27–19.13a), and from the demons (21.36b–22.16).

The coupling of Darkness with the womb (4.23b–37a), and of the demons with the winds (21.36b–22.9a; 23.9–18a).

The salvation of Light outside the cloud of Water (9.3b–23), inside the cloud of Hymen (13.33b–14.25a), and Shem's investiture (41.23b–25a).

The salvation of Light in the Hymen (14.16b–25a) and the salvation of the pneumatic (42.30–43.14a).

The Saviour's fiery garment rises up and illumines creation (20.20b–26a); his light-garment rises in the cloud of Power (22.17b–21a).

The comparative study of these parallel episodes allows for a better understanding of the meaning or for a more precise definition of their function within the recitation as a whole; it also reveals the author's use of consistent terminology.

The literary study just completed now permits us to outline the tractate. We will first provide a general outline, then a more detailed one of the apocalyptic section, consultation of which may be useful when reading the cosmogonic narrative.

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<sup>48</sup> In certain cases the masculine demonstrative refers to a feminine antecedent.

D. OUTLINE OF THE *PARAPHRASE OF SHEM*

I. TITLE AND INCIPIT .....	1.1–5a
II. THE APOCALYPSE .....	1.5b–42.11a
A. INTRODUCTION: Shem swept up in ecstasy .....	1.5b–16a
B. DERDEKEAS' REVELATION .....	1.16b–41.21a
a. Cosmogony and anthropogony .....	1.16b–24.29a
b. Flood .....	24.29b–28.8a
c. Destruction of Sodom .....	28.8b–30.4a
d. Baptism of the Saviour .....	30.4b–38.28a
e. Re-ascent of the Saviour through his crucifixion .....	38.28b–40.31a
f. Address to Shem: his mission on earth .....	40.31b–41.21a
C. CONCLUSION: return from ecstasy and transformation .....	41.21b–42.11a
III. DERDEKEAS' ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE .....	42.11b–45.31a
a. Faith's cosmic function .....	42.11b–23
b. Individual eschatology .....	42.24–43.28a
c. Cosmic eschatology .....	43.28b–45.31a
IV. SHEM'S ASCENT .....	45.31b–47.32a
a. Recitation of the memorial and testimony .....	45.31b–47.7a
b. Vision of the spheres .....	47.7b–32a
V. DERDEKEAS' LAST ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE .....	47.32b–48.30a
VI. CONCLUSION: Address to Shem .....	48.30b–49.9

## DETAILED OUTLINE OF THE APOCALYPSE

II. THE APOCALYPSE .....	1.5b–42.11a
A. INTRODUCTION: Shem swept up in ecstasy .....	1.5b–16a
B. DERDEKEAS' REVELATION .....	1.16b–41.21a
a. Cosmogony and anthropogony .....	1.16b–24.29a
I. <i>Original harmony</i> .....	1.16b–2.19a
1. Speech to the addressee .....	1.16b–23a
2. Pre-existence and nature of the great powers or roots: Light, Spirit, Darkness ...	1.23b–2.7a
3. Description of the original harmony and hierarchy of the powers .....	2.7b–19a
II. <i>Fall of Spirit</i> .....	2.19b–3.29
1. Sudden agitation of Darkness and Spirit's ascent to the top of his place. Spirit sees dark water and is disgusted by it; his thought realizes that the bad root is unconcerned about (his) infinite Light .....	2.19b–28a
2. Division of water and ascent of Darkness ...	2.28b–33a

3.	Spirit reveals himself to Darkness, who becomes aware of his dark nature and, in his sorrow, pushes his mind up toward the summit of his members in a vain effort at becoming Spirit's equal. However, in revealing himself Spirit scatters a portion of his light to the benefit of Mind .....	2.33b-3.29
III.	<i>Re-ascent of Spirit's light and separation of Mind from Darkness, through the intervention of Derdekeas, the Saviour</i> .....	3.30-24.29a
	<i>First intervention by the Saviour, under the guise of Spirit. Begetting of a second, demiurgic Mind</i> .....	3.30-6.30a
1.	The higher Light reveals himself to Spirit through his Son, who shows himself under the guise of Spirit .....	3.30-4:12a
2.	Formation of the mist, then of the womb through Mind's agency. The restless fire goes to the womb .....	4.12b-27a
3.	Intercourse of Darkness with the womb and ejaculation of Mind, who mixes with the Power of the bitterness of Darkness, that is, with fire. Apparition of all the forms of beings in the womb .....	4.27b-5.6a
4.	The Mind of Darkness begets a second Mind in the womb, one that takes on the likeness of Spirit. Unable to push Mind to the bottom of herself in order to retain him, Nature has conceived him in the cloud. He shows himself in the guise of a terrifying fire and clashes with Spirit through his resemblance to him .....	5.6b-19a
5.	Formation of the four clouds called Hymen, Chorion, Power, and Water. Hymen, Chorion and Power, who are the fiery clouds, draw Mind from Water, so that the noxious waters will not adhere to it .....	5.19b-36
6.	Due to Nature's division into four clouds, Mind will be able to go into the midst of his Power, in the middle of Nature .....	6.1-13a

7. However, heavy from the weight of the embryonic Mind (see 5.16b–19a), Spirit, who finds himself in the water (see 9.24), has produced the power Astonishment, which has turned Mind toward his heat. Mind has clothed himself with Spirit's light, and, through the action of this active principle, has put Nature in motion, then has turned toward his Power, the fiery forms. Astonishment continues to rise and fastens onto the cloud of Hymen ..... 6.13b–30a
- Second* intervention by the Saviour, as light-waves and a gust from Spirit.  
Formation of the World Soul ..... 6.30b–7.30
1. From Hades Spirit looks toward the infinite Light so that there may be compassion for his own light ..... 6.30b–35a
2. Derdekeas, the son of Majesty, shows himself as light-waves and a gust from the immortal Spirit. The clouds divide to allow Spirit's return. The embryonic Mind takes form, bringing about the formation of the World Soul ..... 6.35b–7.11a
3. Paraphrase on the clouds ..... 7.11b–30
- Third* intervention by the Saviour, clothed in his universal garment of light, in order to free Spirit's light from the depths of Darkness ..... 7.31–12.15a
1. Prayer of Derdekeas on behalf of Spirit's light ..... 7.31–8.15a
2. Reception of the prayer ..... 8.15b–31a
3. Derdekeas again puts on his universal light-garment and comes under the guise of Spirit ..... 8.31b–9.3a
4. Spirit's light is lifted by its power away from the heaviness of Darkness and water ..... 9.3b–26a
5. This light pays homage to the higher Light ..... 9.26b–33a
6. Spirit conceives a Thought, a great power come forth from Spirit's Astonishment in the cloud of Hymen; this is the Primal Man, root of the pneumatic race ..... 9.33b–10.15

7. Shem receives the revelation of his true nature: he is this great power .....	10.16–11.6
8. Song of jubilation of Astonishment's light in the cloud of Hymen .....	11.7–33
9. Address to Shem: teaching about the Saviour .....	11.34–12.15a
<i>Fourth</i> intervention by the Saviour, who descends into the Hymen and puts on a trimorphic garment, that is, the Word of Spirit in triple form. Second fall of a light-being .....	12.15b–13.23a
1. Derdekeas goes down into the cloud of Hymen and puts on a threefold garment, that is, the Word of Spirit in a triple form .....	12.15b–25a
2. Troubled by the threefold unity of the Saviour's garment and, unable to withstand the excess of light which incites the Saviour's coming, the cloud sheds the power of Astonishment. Part of the light breaks off and falls into the Middle .....	12.25b–13.4a
3. However, by Majesty's will, the light that is in the Silence has become mixed with the part of light broken off from Astonishment. The light in the Silence pushes the womb down, so as not to reveal to her the existence of another race (spora), that of the light-seeds generated within the womb by the part of light broken away from Astonishment. Silence's light holds the seeds in their positions, in the midst of Nature (see 6.13), out of Darkness .....	13.46b–23a
<i>Fifth</i> intervention by the Saviour, in the Hymen. The Light of Spirit sets about freeing itself from Water and the fiery clouds. The light in the Hymen is brought to perfection. Nature conceives the fiery power, the archon of creation .....	13.23b–15.16a
1. Derdekeas petitions the infinite Light to allow Spirit's power free movement in the spheres of the cosmos, then again descends into the Hymen so that Spirit's members may be filled with their power.....	13.23b–14.3a

2. When the Saviour appears in the Hymen, Spirit's light begins to free itself from Water and the fiery clouds ..... 14.3b-16a
  3. In the cloud of Hymen, Spirit's light is filled with universal Thought and with Word; it turns toward its rest and takes form in its root ..... 14.16b-25a
  4. The light which had come forth the from the Silence goes out from the Middle and back to its place ..... 14.25b-31
  5. As for the light separated from Astonishment, it had been tricked by the fire of Darkness and clothed itself in forgetfulness. Thanks to the Saviour's presence in the Hymen, it is troubled and casts off the weight of the Middle ..... 14.32-15.2a
  6. But fire becomes mixed with the waters, making them noxious. Nature, which had been repulsed (see 13.13b-15a), again climbs out of the waters and conceives the fiery power. That one becomes strong through the light of Spirit that is in Nature ..... 15.2b-16a
- Sixth* intervention by the Saviour. Through the Saviour's will and the Spirit's gaze, the womb receives the revelation of the light-seeds within her, but her root is rendered inert ..... 15.16b-16.23a
1. A light descends into chaos with the purpose of harming Nature, countering fire's action, and making Nature once again inert (*argos*) ..... 15.16b-28a
  2. Through Spirit's gaze, the light which is in Nature's depths ascends again, and, with it, the womb ..... 15.28b-16.2
  3. By the Saviour's will, the light of the Middle illumines the womb who, through her eye (see 15.16b-19a; 18.18b-23a), sees the spiritual seeds within her (see 13.3b-15a) ..... 16.3-17a
  4. Then the womb is dragged into water. She believes she possesses the power of light, unaware that her root has become inert through the effect of the ray of light that has reached her ..... 16.17b-23a

<i>Seventh</i> intervention by the Saviour, meant to perfect the light in the cloud of Silence and in the cloud of Middle .....	16.23b–18.1a
1. Prayer of the light led astray into the Middle .....	16.23b–34a
2. In Hymen Derdekeas takes off his trimorphic garment and goes down into the Silence. There he puts on the light, whose two parts then reveal themselves in a unique form .....	16.34b–17.16a
3. The Saviour finally penetrates the cloud of Middle and there clothes himself with the light he finds there. From Spirit this light receives the knowledge of the immortal realities .....	17.16b–18.1a
<i>Eighth</i> intervention by the Saviour, with his fiery garment, intended to separate Mind from the womb and so liberate all of Spirit's light .....	18.1b–19.26a
1. Derdekeas goes down into chaos and there puts on a fiery garment proceeding from Mind .....	18.1b–16a
2. Once within Nature, the Saviour reposes on her eye, that is, on a light come forth from Spirit (see 15.16b–19a) and prepared for him as a garment. This light temporarily surrenders its voice to Nature .....	18.16b–26
3. By means of his fiery garment the Saviour prostitutes himself with the womb; in her orgasm, she dries Mind up and expels him from her like an abortion, in the form of a fish. In her pain she also expels Spirit's power, the light with which Mind was clothed (see 6.18b–22a). The Saviour clothes himself with this light and rests .....	18.27–19.13a
4. Animal forms, meaning astrological forms, come forth from Nature, according to the number of the winds .....	19.13b–26a
<i>Ninth</i> intervention by the Saviour, who clothes himself with the Beast. Creation of heaven and earth .....	19.26b–21.1
1. Derdekeas clothes himself with the Beast (see 15.10b–16a) and requests the creation of heaven and earth, in order to free all of Spirit's power which is in Nature .....	19.26b–20.1



2. Creation of heaven and earth .....	20.2–10a
3. The earth produces food, dew, and seed .....	20.10b–20a
4. Derdekeas' fiery garment is lifted up and shines on creation; the Middle is purified of Darknes .....	20.20b–29a
5. Womb's sadness .....	20.29b–21.1
<i>Tenth</i> intervention by the Saviour, through his benign visage. Begetting of a third Mind that is to become perfect and rule over creation .....	21.2–23.8
1. Nature's forms still possess a power of fire and light, that is, a noetic power, which is also to become perfect .....	21.2–12a
2. Derdekeas requests that a seed and a power, meaning a mind, come into existence on earth .....	21.12b–20a
3. The forms of animals of Nature unite and produce winds and demons with the power come out of fire, Darkness, and Spirit .....	21.20b–28a
4. The form that has been left to itself rejects the Beast and masturbates, producing a wind in possession of a power come out of fire, Darkness, and Spirit .....	21.28b–36a
5. The winds and demons are fitted with sexual organs .....	21.36b–22.9a
6. Interrupting their coupling, Nature's forms expel the power, that is, Mind, the principle of noetic humanity. Derdekeas re-ascends with his fiery garment and renders Nature desolate .....	22.9b–21a
7. Through Derdekeas' will, Mind rules over the winds and demons; he receives a light, hearing, and a part of Word (this light will be termed Faith in salvation history) .....	22.21b–23.8
<i>Formation of antediluvian humanity</i> .....	23.9–24.29a
1. The winds and demons unite and produce all kinds of impurities, beings provided with a body and material soul and endowed with a particle of Mind .....	23.9–30
2. From the wind alone are born sterile women and men, meaning that they possess no element of light, but only a material body and soul: these are the psychics .....	23.31–24.2a

3. Appearance of humanity endowed with body, soul, a particle of Mind, and a thought come forth from Spirit: these are the pneumatics .....	24.2b-15a
4. Teaching about the soul .....	24.15b-29a
b. The flood .....	24:29b-28:8a
1. Conspiracy by sin, Nature, Water, and Darkness to annihilate the race of the pneumatics .....	24.29b-25.15a
2. The Saviour thwarts this intent by ordering the construction of a tower .....	25.15b-26a
3. The flood .....	25.26b-35a
4. Meaning of the flood for Shem's race which, through the testimony of holy things, reposes in the unbegotten Spirit ...	25.35b-26.10
5. As for Shem, he is to remain in a body, have patience with Faith, and transmit his revelation .....	26.11-25a
6. Through the flood's effect, all of Nature's forms have been swallowed up at the bottom of the waters and Darkness has been struck dumb .....	26.25b-36
7. Nature rejects the fiery power that was within her from the beginning. As the material sun, it shines on creation in place of the Righteous One .....	27.1-21
8. Repopulation of the earth: establishment of the Heimarmênē (destiny); generation of animals .....	27.22-34a
9. Humanity after the flood .....	27.34b-28.8a
c. The destruction of Sodom .....	28:8b-30:4a
1. With the aim of keeping the postdiluvian generations under her domination, Nature plans to destroy the pneumatic race. First, she establishes her faith, the Jewish religion, through circumcision .....	28.8b-22a
2. Derdekeas reveals to Shem the appearance of the Righteous One at the time of Sodom's destruction .....	28.22b-29.7a
3. It is through Shem himself that the Righteous One will be revealed in order to teach the universal doctrine to the Sodomites. The demon (Abraham) will leave Sodom. The Sodomites will accomplish the universal testimony and rest in Spirit .....	29.7b-33a

4. Abraham and his race will show themselves with faith in the four regions of creation .....	29.33b–30.4a
d. The baptism of the Saviour .....	30.4b–38.28a
1. Introduction: the archon of creation will show Nature's faith in its last appearance ....	30.4b–21a
2. Disguised as John the Baptist, the demon will also show himself at the river in order to baptize. The Saviour will display himself disguised as Soldas, the earthly Jesus, in order to save the light of Faith and of Spirit .....	30.21b–31.4a
3. Revelation of Derdekeas' memorial .....	31.4b–13a
4. Revelation of Faith's testimony .....	31.13b–32.5a
5. The Saviour will descend into the water of baptism and will come up from it, after putting on the light of Faith and of Spirit ....	32.5b–18
6. Address to Shem: exhortation .....	32.19–27a
7. Paraphrase on the memorial and testimony	32.27b–34.16a
8. Address to Shem: eschatological teaching ....	34.16b–36.1
9. Descensus ad inferos of the Saviour at the time of his baptism .....	36.2–24
10. Polemic against baptism .....	36.25–38.28a
e. <i>The Saviour's re-ascent</i> through his crucifixion .....	38.28b–40.31a
1. The Saviour announces his re-ascent at the end of his sojourn on earth .....	38.28b–39.24a
2. Nature will seek to capture the Saviour, but will crucify Soldas instead .....	39.24b–40.3
3. Allegorical interpretation of the crucifixion: the beheading of Rebouel .....	40.4–31a
f. Address to Shem in view of his mission on earth .....	40.31b–41.21a
C. CONCLUSION: Shem's return from ecstasy and transformation .....	41.21b–42.11a
1. Shem's transformation and investiture ...	41.21b–31a
2. Faith's cosmic function .....	41.31b–42.5a
3. Shem passes to the heavenly spheres .....	42.5b–11a

## E. THE SYSTEM

The *Paraph. Shem* offers us a complete and rather original Gnostic system in the form of an apocalypse. Though in certain respects it can be compared with hermeticism (Mahé 1989: 124–27) or Valentinianism

(Roberge 1995), this system is not really traceable to any Gnostic system known at the present time. Moreover, the interpreter who seeks to define its characteristics immediately encounters a cosmogonic and anthropogonic narrative so complex that s/he is soon tempted to accuse its author of incoherence (Wisse 1996b: 19–20). Nevertheless, the literary analysis that we have carried out and that has allowed us to extract the writing's narrative thread, has convinced us that its author is working from a coherent model of the universe. This model becomes clearer the more one discerns, behind the mythical attire of its articulation and beyond the sexual imagery linked to its use of cosmo-biological analogy, the philosophical principles that underlie it. These have been drawn from both Stoicism and Middle Platonism, especially the latter as reinterpreted by the Neopythagorean Numenius and by the *Chaldaean Oracles*. We will first present the cosmogonic narrative in broad strokes, while insisting on the cosmological principles it presupposes. And since the cosmogony seeks to justify a conception of humanity and its salvation, we will then depict the writing's anthropology, followed by its eschatology.

## F. THE COSMOGONY

Complex, difficult, and distracting, the cosmogonic and anthropogonic myth occupies nearly half of the writing (1.16b–24.29a). Basically, it is a myth of fall and re-ascent that breaks down naturally into three parts: I. The original harmony (1.16b–2.19a); II. The fall of Spirit (2.19b–3.29); III. The re-ascent of Spirit's light and the liberation of Mind (3.30–24.29a).

### 1. *The original harmony (1.16b–2.19a)*

#### a. *The principles: the three great powers or roots*

The *Paraph. Shem* contains no theogonic cycle; its interest is wholly concentrated on cosmogony. Without delay, the revealer affirms the coexistence *ab aeterno* of the three great powers (*dynamis*) or roots (*noune*) at the beginning of all that exists.

There was Light and Darkness and there was Spirit (pneuma) between them. (1.25b–28a)

This teaching of the three roots relates the *Paraph. Shem* to the Gnostic systems that explained the universe as beginning with three princi-

ples. Hippolytus brought four of these systems artificially together in Book 5 of his *Philosophumena*: those of the Naassenes (6–11), the Perates (12–18), the Sethians (19–22 = *The Paraphrase of Seth*) and Justin (23–28).<sup>49</sup> From the same work we can add the systems of the *Apophysis Megalē* (6,8–20), the Docetists (8,8–11), and Monoïmus the Arab (8,12–15).<sup>50</sup> Still, only the system of the Sethians can be compared to that of the *Paraph. Shem*, since in equal fashion it proposes the coexistence *ab aeterno* of two opposed principles—Light and Darkness—, and posits the Spirit as the mediating principle:

But the substance of the principle, he says, are light and darkness; and between them there is uncontaminated spirit.<sup>51</sup>

But one should also compare the *Paraph. Shem* with the beginning of Irenaeus' notice about the "others" in *Adversus Hæreses* (= *AH*) 1,30,1:

Others again narrate prodigies. There exists a certain first Light in the power of Profundity, which is blessed, incorruptible, and infinite. This is Father of all things and is called First-Man. They likewise say that, when his Thought came forth, he emitted a son, and this is the Son of Man or Second-Man. Moreover, below these there exists Holy Spirit, and under this superior Spirit exist the separated elements—water, darkness, abyss, and chaos—over which Spirit moved. This Spirit they call First-Woman.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> According to Hippolytus (*Philosophumena* 5,16), the common denominator of these systems would be the serpent cult. See Montserrat-Torrents 1979: 231–41.

<sup>50</sup> See the presentation of these systems in Bousset 1907: 119–26; W. Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, 1 (Patristic Evidence) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 244–312; trans. of *Gnosis* (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1969).

<sup>51</sup> Hippolytus, *Philosophumena* 5,19,2 (Legge 1921,1: 16). The systems of the Naassenes and Perates leave no room for the pre-existence of chaos. Justin's system contains an unbegotten material principle, but not the *pneuma* as mediating principle. The *Apophysis Megalē* speaks explicitly of three principles, but has them all derive from the unbegotten Fire. The Docetists teach that God is the first principle of the All, from which three eons have been born, and they in turn are principles. Finally, according to Monoïmus the Arab, all is contained in the Human, who is both Father and Mother and from whom was born the Son of Man.

<sup>52</sup> Unger 1992: 95–96. Theodoret identifies these "others" with the Sethians and reports that some call them Ophians or Ophites. See *Hæreticarum fabularum compendium* 1,14. Text and French translation in A. Rousseau and A. Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les heresies*, 1. SC 263 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 331–35. Wisse (1970: 139) had already pointed out this affinity. See also G. Casadio, "Antropologia gnostica e antropologia orfica nella notizia di Ippolito sui Sethiani." In F. Vattioni, ed., *Sanguine antropologia nella teologia*, 3 (Rome: Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sanguine, 1989), 1295–1350 (at 1319).

Recognizable in this description are the three principles enumerated in the foregoing texts: on high, the primordial Light and his Son;<sup>53</sup> below them (*sub his*), the Holy Spirit, without saying whence he takes his origin (Colpe 1981: 616); and finally, under this Spirit on high (*sub superiori Spiritu*), the elements of disordered matter.

The following table gathers the data from these three witnesses, adding some precisions on the description of chaos in *The Paraphrase of Seth* and the *Paraph. Shem*:

AH I, 30:1	<i>The Paraphrase of Seth</i>	<i>Paraph. Shem</i>
The Father, primordial Light, and his Son	The Light on high	The Light
Beneath them, Holy Spirit	The pure breath	Spirit (pneuma) “between them”
The separated elements: water, darkness, abyss, chaos	The darkness below, that is a formidable water (5,19,5)	Darkness was wind in the waters; he possessed Mind enveloped in restless fire (1.36b–2.3)

Besides proposing the doctrine of the three principles, these texts share common traits:

1) Their description of the origins is influenced by the narrative of Gen 1:1–3 (LXX). The text reported by Irenaeus refers directly to Gen 1:2, by affirming that upon the elements “was borne the Spirit” (*super quae ferri Spiritum*). For its part, *The Paraphrase of Seth* textually reproduces this verse when it describes the luminous Spirit “carried over the water” (*epipheromenon epanō tou hydatos*) (Hippolytus, 5,19,17).<sup>54</sup> *The Paraph. Shem* does not directly refer to the biblical text, but refers to it implicitly.

2) Matter’s pre-existence is clearly affirmed, constituting a fundamental difference with the usual Gnostic plan: the existence of matter

<sup>53</sup> Later, the *Paraph. Shem* will introduce Derdekeas, Son of infinite Light: see 3.34b–4.7a; 7.1b–2a; 8.24–26a. In *The Paraphrase of Seth*, the perfect Word of Light appears from on high when he is incarnated by taking the form of a serpent to trick the womb and save the perfect Mind (Hippolytus, 5,19,20).

<sup>54</sup> But with a different grammatical construction for the verb: *epipheromenon* (*The Paraphrase of Seth*, in Hippolytus, 5,9,17), *epiphereto* (Gen 1:2).

and evil is no longer the consequence of a fault happening within the pleroma.<sup>55</sup> This explains the absence of a theogonic cycle.

Nevertheless, Orbe (1958a: 203–43) has tried to demonstrate that all Gnostic systems, including those based on three principles, admit a unique primordial principle on which everything else depends.<sup>56</sup> What might describe the texts just presented is the starting point of the *creatio secunda*, or the ordering of the separated elements that for their part would have been the object of the *creatio prima*, following an implicitly acknowledged exegesis of Gen 1:1 (Orbe 1958a: 228). In our opinion, the *Paraph. Shem* does not support this hypothesis.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, when the author of this text lists “the great Powers,” he intends to describe what existed “in the beginning” (1.24; see also 10.1–10a). More, he supposes an original state of harmony that in principle was supposed to endure (see 2.7b–19a).

3) Emphasis is placed on the intermediate position of Spirit (*pneuma*) above the dark chaos but below a higher light-principle. The mention of Spirit in this context doubtless betrays a biblical influence, but must also be an evocation of Stoic physics.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the physics of the Stoa explain all of reality by beginning with two principles (*archai*): the active principle or *agent* (*to poioun*) and the passive principle or *patient* (*to paschon*). The patient is substance bereft of quality, or matter; the agent is God, the reason (*logos*), who acts in matter, giving it movement and configuration. It is perceived as a fiery breath (*pneuma*) that circulates within everything and sustains the world as a coherent whole by its force of cohesion (*tonos*).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> As recounted, for example, in the myth of Sophia’s passion in the Valentinian system (see Irenaeus, *AH*, 1,2).

<sup>56</sup> See the critique by May 1978: 41, n. 2. According to J. Montserrat-Torrents, *The Paraphrase of Seth* passes over the theogonic cycle in silence. Its cosmogonic recitation begins when the process of degrading the pleromatic world has finished. See *Los Gnósticos*, 2. Biblioteca Clásica Gredos, 60 (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1983), 84; idem, “La cosmogonie du Timée et les premiers chapitres de la Genèse,” *Archivio di filosofia* 53 (1985): 293; 1993: 392. See also the critiques by Casadio (1989a: 1317) and M. Simonetti, *Testi gnostici in lingua greca e latina*, (Vincenza: A. Mondadori, 1993), 433, n. 171.

<sup>57</sup> Later we will see that the philosophical systems underlying the *Paraph. Shem* and *The Paraphrase of Seth* exclude such a hypothesis.

<sup>58</sup> On Stoic physics see Moreau 1939: 158–86; Lafranque 1964: 285–367; Bridoux 1966: 47–71; Watson 1966: 9–21; Long 1974: 147–78; Hahm 1977: 29–56; Duhot 1989: 73–86.

<sup>59</sup> See *SVF* 2: 300, 311, 439, 442, 1027.

This binary explanatory schema of reality makes the divine rational breath an entity inseparable from matter. But the systems represented by the texts quoted posit the existence of a transcendent first principle separated by Spirit from a third material principle that is indeterminate, autonomous, and hostile.<sup>60</sup> This decidedly ternary schema recalls the Middle Platonist theory of the principles—God (*Theos*), the forms (*ideai* or *paradeigmata*), and matter (*hylē*)—as it first appears with Plutarch.<sup>61</sup> This schema will be picked up by Alcinous (Albinus),<sup>62</sup> and end with Apuleius, in the series *Deus primus, mens formaeque, anima*. In this series the middle principle is composed of the Mind and the ideas or forms that are its thoughts.<sup>63</sup> It may therefore be asked if there is not, in the case of our texts, a Stoic and biblical adaptation of the Middle Platonist triple partition, with the middle principle replaced by Spirit.

Irenaeus' account (*AH* 1,30,1), while clearly distinguishing three principles, makes Spirit a female—hence passive—entity, who receives the seed of the two divine male entities above her. This is a purely Semitic and biblical conception of Spirit (Orbe 1963: 694, n. 13), steering us in the direction of Valentinianism (*AH* 1,11,1).

In *The Paraphrase of Seth* (19.3), Spirit is described in terms that possibly recall Stoicism,<sup>64</sup> but does not act like a truly autonomous principle. Spirit is always associated with Light in the fall and in the servile state that results (19.4–7). Mind, or Man (19.14), generated from the spark of light and the odour of breath through the fertilizing action of the wind on the water (19.14–19), does not play the role of a cosmic principle that would introduce the forms of material beings into the World Soul.

<sup>60</sup> See Irenaeus, *AH* 1,30,3; *The Paraphrase of Seth* 19.5–6, 16–17; and *Paraph. Shem* 2.10b–19a.

<sup>61</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.*, 8,2,720a–b; text and trans. in E.L. Minor, Jr., et al., *Plutarch: Moralia*, 9. LCL, 425 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 130–32. On the Platonic principles, see J. Pépin, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), 17–58; Brisson 1994: 58–64, 151–60, 233–37, 295–303.

<sup>62</sup> *Didask.*, 8–10 (Dillon 1993: 15–19). With Alcinous, for the first time we find the assimilation of the Platonic ideas with the Aristotelian intelligible (*noēton*), the one the divine Mind thinks when it thinks itself. See Armstrong 1960: 402–03.

<sup>63</sup> Apuleius, *Dogm. Plat.*, 1,6. In 1,5, Apuleius gives the series *Deus, materia, formae*. See the commentary of Beaujeu 1973: 254–56; Brisson 1994: 61, 151.

<sup>64</sup> See É. Bréhier, “La cosmologie stoïcienne et la fin du paganisme,” *RHR* 64 (1911): 16.



In fact, the system of *The Paraphrase of Seth* does not function like one with three primordial principles. To read 19.1–2a, 8–10 as a continuous passage, suppressing what pertains to the three roots, is to discover a complete system for explaining the universe founded on atomist physics: from the chance meeting of the powers, *infinite in number*, there results the diversity of living beings.<sup>65</sup> If we return to the same passage, this time adding the description of the three roots in 19.2b–7, we realize that the doctrine about the three principles has been added artificially to a mechanized explanation of the universe in order to introduce the dualist idea of an evil material principle. This mechanist physics does not fit easily with the description of the fall in 19.4. There the fall is represented in a static and non-temporal way as a natural phenomenon (*pephyke*), the spreading of the sun's rays, and supposes that the dynamic process of producing beings through the meeting of powers would be suspended.

Nor can we relate this cosmology to the Platonist system.<sup>66</sup> The image of the seal's imprint (19.10) is used in a context different from that of the *Timaeus* (50c). The process Plato describes is the reception by the *Chōra* (space) of copies of intelligible forms.<sup>67</sup> In *The Paraphrase of Seth* it is a matter of the chance collision of powers, each of which is endowed with intelligence (*noera*, 19.8) and plays an equal role. The same goes for the image of the pregnant womb. In the *Timaeus* (50d) the "receptacle" is compared to a mother, meaning "that wherein something becomes," not "what becomes." In *The Paraphrase of Seth* the image is applied to the result ("what becomes")—heaven and earth—of the first meeting of powers; "this according to whose resemblance," meaning the intelligible forms, does not appear in the system described by Hippolytus.

On the other hand, the *Paraph. Shem's* system relies on a decidedly trinary model that appeals to data drawn from both Stoicism and Middle Platonism. According to this model, the first principle remains absolutely transcendent and never directly intervenes in the process of

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<sup>65</sup> As noted by Casadio 1989: 1321. See Diels and Kranz 1934–35, 2: 67A 7,14, and 68B 141,167. On atomist physics, see the presentation by J. Chevalier, *Histoire de la pensée*, 1 (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), 109–16. Of itself, the atomist system of Democritus, taken up by Epicurus, cannot start from a limited number of principles.

<sup>66</sup> As does Montserrat-Torrents 1993: 395.

<sup>67</sup> Text and trans. in R.G. Bury, *Plato*, 9. LCL, 234 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929), 116–17.

creation. The middle principle, Spirit, reflecting the biblical *pneuma* (Gen 1:2), plays a relatively transcendent role and acts in an autonomous fashion. It will be the only one concerned with the fall and will play the role of immanent active principle in organizing the cosmos, after the manner of the Stoic *pneuma*. Darkness, with his members, the elements of precosmic chaos, constitutes the third principle. As in the systems of Plutarch, Numenius, and Atticus, precosmic chaos is endowed with a bad soul. However, the *Paraph. Shem* maintains the demiurgic function of Mind and its forms in organizing the universe, and explains it within a theory implying three minds; this brings the tractate close to the systems of Numenius of Apameus and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. But the idea of an absolutely transcendent first principle and the insertion of the Stoic *pneuma* as intermediate principle has led the author to reverse the Middle Platonist model and to place the first Mind in the precosmic chaos.

*Light, the highest principle* Light, called Majesty (*megethos*) in the recitation (1.6; 3.29; 4.15, *passim*), and Elorchaïos (“El, the Ancient One”)<sup>68</sup> in the memorial (31.5; 32.30; 46.6) reigns at the summit of the hierarchy. A tetrad comprising two pairs of properties, Majesty is “Light (*phōs*) and thought (*meeue = ennoia*), full of hearing (*sōtēm*) and word (*logos*)” (1.32b–36a). The author pictures the essence of the supreme divinity with, it seems, the help of the Stoic theory of knowledge.<sup>69</sup> According to the representative mode, the higher power is Light and perception of itself in a thought (*ennoia*); according to the discursive mode, it is interior discourse, hearing and word.<sup>70</sup> These properties are not hypostasized, do not become aeons.<sup>71</sup> Only

<sup>68</sup> A name made up of the Hebrew ‘El and the Greek *hōrchaïos = ho archaios* (Bailly 1963: 2187).

<sup>69</sup> See C. Imbert, “Théorie de la représentation et doctrine logique dans le stoïcisme ancien.” In *Les Stoïciens et leur logique: Actes du Colloque de Chantilly, 18–22 septembre 1976*. Bibliothèque d’histoire de la philosophie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1978), 223–49; Bréhier 1951: 80–101; and V. Goldschmidt, *Le système stoïcien et l’idée de temps*. Bibliothèque d’histoire de la philosophie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1979), 111–24.

<sup>70</sup> “Presentation comes first; then thought (*dianoia*), able to express itself (*ekklētikē hyparchousa*), puts into the form of a proposition that which the subject receives from a presentation” (Diog. Laert., 7.49); trans. R.D. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius, De vitis philosophorum* (London: W. Heinemann, 1925), repr. LCL, 185 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 159. See also 7.51.

<sup>71</sup> *Paraph. Shem* is very discrete in presenting the world above, avoiding the mythicizing of concepts pertaining to divinity. In this respect it resembles *Tri. Trac.* and

the “Son of Majesty” (12.1b–2a; 4.1–4a), the Word (12.6b–7a), will be manifested in an external discourse and consequently called “the voice of Thought” (12.9). The author employs the Stoic distinction between the *logos endiathetos* (internal: Liddell and Scott 1968: 559b) and the *logos prophorikos* (uttered: Liddell and Scott 1968: 1540a),<sup>72</sup> and conceptualizes the divinity according to a binary model.<sup>73</sup>

The properties of the supreme Tetrad are gathered “into one form” (1.34b–36a), that is, they form a homogeneous substance,<sup>74</sup> in contrast to the multiform and divisible evil principle (see 3.26b–29a). The same conception of divinity is found in Ptolemy, who opposes the unbegotten Father to the Adversary in the following terms: “For the essence of the adversary is corruption and darkness, since he is material and composite (*polyschidēs*). The essence of the unbegotten Father of all is incorruption and self-existent light (*phōs autoon*), simple and uniform (*monooides*).”<sup>75</sup>

What should be noted in particular is that the *Paraph. Shem* avoids defining the supreme principle as a Mind (*nous*) thinking itself,<sup>76</sup> or as a Thought (*meeue, ennoia*) generating a Mind that would contain the ideas of created beings. Absolutely transcendent, it has no female consort (*syzygos*),<sup>77</sup> is not the object of beatitude, and never enters into direct contact with creation. The link with the created world is reserved to Spirit and Mind; and we will see that the latter takes its origin from the evil principle (see 2.2–3). But though the supreme principle never

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*Eugnostos*. See R. Kasser et al., eds., *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 1 (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1973), 38; Trakatellis 1991: 71.

<sup>72</sup> SVF 2, 135, 137 and 223. See E. Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*. Translation of part of *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1923, new and revised edition New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 73; Mortley 1986, 1: 30–32.

<sup>73</sup> As in Justin, Tatian and Athenagoras of Athens. See Simonetti 1993: 71–107.

<sup>74</sup> The Coptic expression *eidos ‘nouōt* probably translates the Greek *monooidēs*.

<sup>75</sup> *Letter to Flora*, in Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 33, 7,7; trans. F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I (Sects 1–46)*. NHS, 35 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 203.

<sup>76</sup> The *Tri. Trac.*, for example, affirms that the Father who is “the root of the Totality” (NH I, 51.3–4a) “is the one who is his own mind” (55.6); see the commentary by Thomassen, 275–76. On the question of a first principle transcending Mind, see Whittaker 1969b: 91–104.

<sup>77</sup> As in the system of Ptolemy (Irenaeus, *AH* 1,1,1, 2,1) or Basilides (Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, 7,21). See Orbe 1958a: 383–86. The author comments on *AH* 2,13,2, a passage where Irenaeus wishes to show that “Mind” cannot have been emitted by “Thought.” Orbe (1958a: 368) also points out the Stoic origin of the term *ennoia*.

intervenes directly in the production of beings, in the last analysis everything that comes to pass always depends on its will.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, it is Thought, not Mind, that constitutes the attribute proper to light-beings. Derdekeas, “the voice of the immeasurable Thought” (12.9–10a), is manifested to Spirit (4.1–5a) in a figure proceeding from its infinite Thought (12.1–3a). Spirit possesses a Thought (2.25), and from Spirit’s Astonishment there comes forth a Thought, a great power, the Primal Man, at the origin of the race of pneumatics (9.33b–36; 10.19b–20). That is why the pneumatics possess within themselves “a thought come forth from the light of the power of Astonishment” (24.8–9). Faith, meaning the light that Mind will receive at the moment of his conversion (22.25b–23.6a), also possesses a Thought (26.15b–16a; 30.29); and the noetics, those who possess a particle of Mind (35.3), are called “the members of the thought of Faith” (30.28b–29a).

*The lower root and the precosmic chaos*      The precosmic chaos includes Darkness (*pkake*) and his members (*melos*, 3.9), the three primordial elements: fire, water, and wind. These are arranged in stages, like regions on top of one another: topmost are the waters, and within the waters is the wind; under the waters is restless fire (see 4.18b–21) enveloping Mind (*nous*); and at the bottom is Darkness (see 2.17b–19a).<sup>79</sup> That is why, when Darkness wishes to see what is happening beyond his kingdom (see 2.7b–8a), he will have to ascend (2.31), or else lift up his Mind (see 3.7–9a).

Darkness acts as an autonomous entity distinct from the primordial elements.<sup>80</sup> Identified with matter, he personifies absolute evil (2.18; 3.9b–11a, 13b–14a, 19b–20),<sup>81</sup> and is characterized by ignorance (2.15b–16a, 32) and pride (2.34b–35). Whereas the superior root forms

<sup>78</sup> See above, p. 20: the introductory formulae, “According to the will of Majesty,” etc.

<sup>79</sup> The representation of the precosmic chaos in stages is found in the cosmology of Bardaisan of Edessa: see Drijvers 1971: 96–126. Much the same can be said of Mani, notably in *Kephalaia* 6 and 27: see Puech 1951. According to F. Cumont, *La cosmogonie manichéenne d’après Théodore bar Khôni*. Recherches sur le manichéisme, 1 (Brussels: Lamertin, 1908), 11–13, we have here a tradition well established in Syrian circles.

<sup>80</sup> Like Darkness in certain Manichaean texts: see Puech 1951: 148. In the traditions that reproduce Bardaisan’s cosmology, there are also divergences over whether Darkness is to be counted as the fifth primordial element (Drijvers 1971: 98–115).

<sup>81</sup> Mani has the same conception with regard to the Prince of Darkness: see Puech 1951: 150.

a homogeneous substance (1.34b–36a), the inferior is comprised of multiple and divisible forms (*eidōs*) that Spirit will place at his service when forming the universe (3.26b–29; 4.17; see 5.3–6a; 10.37b–11.6).

In the context of the cosmo-biological analogy<sup>82</sup> to which the author refers in order to explain the universe, Darkness plays the role of the masculine principle and water the role of the feminine principle. When the process of forming the universe begins, the water will be transformed into the womb through the action of fire and Mind (4.15–26a). Associated with the water are the winds. Also feminine in nature, these will be supplied with wombs in order to receive the seed of demons at the time of the formation of humanity (22.4–9a; 23.9–18a).

Between Darkness and the water roused by the wind is “Mind enveloped in restless fire” (2.1–2). This description of chaos is the truly original element in our tractate. In line with Stoic doctrine, the author conceives the principle of material beings as a “fiery Mind.”<sup>83</sup> But in a dualist context, this primordial conflagration is not a “designing fire (*pyr technikon*) which methodically proceeds toward creation of the world” (Long and Sedley 1987, 1: 274).<sup>84</sup> Subject of a disorderly movement, it is naturally aberrant (*planē*, 4.27) and constitutes the evil soul of pre-cosmic chaos that Mind, itself evil (3.9b–11a, 19b–20), cannot bring to order.<sup>85</sup>

Within itself, fire concentrates the Power (*dynamis*) of the Father-Darkness, his generating force. It makes up the fiery forms that Spirit will place at his own service when he reveals himself in his majesty (3.26b–29, 18b–26a). But Darkness will be dispossessed of his Power (4.16–18a) when, at the moment of copulation with the womb, his mind flows out like seed into Nature’s depths, giving birth to the second Mind and bringing about the appearance of all the forms (4.29b–5.6a). When Nature is divided into clouds or spheres, Power will be concentrated in the middle of Nature as a hylic and generative fire (5.22b–30a; 6.1–13a; 7.17b–22a), while the subtlest parts of fire are strewn among the higher spheres, Chorion and Hymen (5.25b–30a) n. 83: (Aetius, *Placita*). This hylic fire will push Nature into producing

<sup>82</sup> On the use of cosmo-biological analogy in Stoicism see Verbeke 1945: 11–173; Moreau 1939: 159–86.

<sup>83</sup> See SVF 1: 157 (Aetius, *Plac.* 1,7,23); also 2: 423.

<sup>84</sup> See SVF 2: 1027: “*hoi Stōikoi noeron Theon apophainontai, pyr technikon, hodō badizon epi genesin kosmou...*” (Aetius, *Plac.* 1,7:33).

<sup>85</sup> On the evil soul of chaos see Plutarch, *De an. procr.* in *Tim.*, 1014B, 1016D–F, 1017A. This is also the position of Numenius and Atticus. See Des Places 1973.

the material beings through the division of the forms (10.37b–11.6; 27.17b–21).

But how to account for Mind's presence in the pre-cosmic chaos?<sup>86</sup> Since the text alludes to no previous act of aggression on the part of Darkness with the purpose of snatching Mind, and does not mention that Mind is in chaos because it fell there, the hypothesis can be made that the author is using a Middle Platonist model that he reverses. The model would be that of Numenius of Apamea or of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Indeed, these two systems postulate the existence of two Minds. The first Mind or first god, an indivisible monad from which the *intelligibilia* derive, is father to a second god, the demiurgic Mind.<sup>87</sup> This second Mind presents a dyadic character that has it turned either toward the world of ideas in order to contemplate them, or toward matter in order to introduce the ideas or forms into it and to organize the sensible world.<sup>88</sup> By uniting with matter to bring it to order, the second Mind constitutes the world's good Soul (Deuse 1993: 71–72). We could therefore speak of a third god or Mind; but in fact the second and third gods are only different aspects of one and the same God (Ziebritzki 1994: 81–83).

The author of the *Paraph Shem* adopts this model, but reverses it: the succession of the three minds proceeds from below and according to the biological generative process. The first Mind corresponds to the *patrikos nous* of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (fr. 7, 37, 49, 108, 109) or to Numenius' first God (fr. 11, 12, 21), from whom the ideas or forms flow as from a spring (*Chald. Or.* fr. 37, 39, 40; Numenius, fr. 14). The second Mind is generated by Darkness when he unites with the cosmic womb and ejaculates his mind as seed. Darkness' Mind, by mixing with Power, that is, the restless fire, engenders the second, demiurgic Mind, and provokes the appearance in the womb of all the forms that will serve in generating the universe (4.27b–5:6a; see 4.16–26a). The formation of the universe, therefore, is no longer understood as arising from the transcendent world of ideas, but as a process of devel-

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<sup>86</sup> In *The Paraphrase of Seth*, Mind appears only after the creation of heaven and earth, generated by the wind and by the water, which already retains in itself a part of the *pneuma's* light (Hippolytus, *Philosophumena* 5,19,13–15).

<sup>87</sup> Numenius, fr. 11 (*Chald. Or.* fr. 3–5). The basic work on the *Chaldaean Oracles* is still Lewy 1956. Two other studies have proven particularly useful: Majercik 1989 and Johnston 1990.

<sup>88</sup> Numenius, fr. 15, 16; *Chald. Or.*, fr. 8.

opment according to the embryological model,<sup>89</sup> and the demiurgic Mind is associated in the womb with fire's generative power (6.1–13a; 10.37b–11.6; 27.17b–21) as its ordaining principle in order to constitute the world soul.

However, if the *Paraph. Shem* shares with Numenius and the *Oracles* the doctrine of the two Minds, the paternal and the demiurgic, it does not keep their notion of the Demiurge's dyadic character: the absence of transcendent intelligible forms renders the contemplative function of the Demiurge useless. Rather, the text affirms the existence of a third Mind proceeding from the seed of Nature's forms, entirely distinct from the second Mind and called to reign over the universe (22.9b–25a).<sup>90</sup> It is, then, at the end of a double generation that Mind, at first immersed in matter, finally attains transcendence.

Such a devaluation of Mind's status to the benefit of *Pneuma* is easily understood within the context of a polemic between Stoics and Platonists. The author of the *Paraph. Shem* doubtless had Numenius' system in view along with that of the *Oracles*. But certain features of his description of chaos seem to indicate that he had the latter's system more directly in his sights. Indeed, the *Oracles* "place at the summit of everything the triad formed by the Father, the supreme God, and by his Power and Mind, a triad that, moreover, was a monad, since these powers were identical with the Father himself" (Hadot 1968, 1: 96). Now, this is the same triad our text places in the deepest part of chaos: the Father-Darkness, the evil principle identified with matter, possesses a Mind covered with fire, designated as Power when the text describes the formation of the universe (4.15–21, 23b–34a; see 6.1–8a; 7.17b–22a; 27.2b–4, 17b–21). More, Mind and Power are both explicitly associated with the bitterness of matter: The Mind is called "the eye of the bitterness of evil" (3.10, 20), and fire, "the Power of the bitterness of Darkness" (4.33–34a). In addition, *Oracle* 129 will employ the image of bitterness to characterize matter.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> To some degree, the Platonic Ideas are assimilated to the rational seeds (*spermatikoi logoi*) of the Stoics, as in Antiochus of Ascalon. See Dillon 1977: 82–83, 95.

<sup>90</sup> On the kingly Mind see Plutarch, *De an. procr. in Tim.*, 1016D, 1017A–B.

<sup>91</sup> *Chald. Or.*, fr. 129: *Sōzete kai to pikras hylēs peribēblēma broteion* (trans. Majerik: "Save also the mortal covering of bitter matter"). On the adjective *pikros*, Dillon remarks (1992: 139): "The image is presumably that of Matter as the bitter dregs of the universe, though that is not made explicit, and since the epithet is not actually applied to matter elsewhere in Greek literature, we are left to guess its precise significance." See also Tardieu 1980: 207; Roberge 2007: 498, n. 107.

We will also see that the image of the cosmic breast welcoming the paternal fire (4.23b–27a), in order to “divide” it (*pōš* = *merizein*) as hylic seed in the forms of material beings (10.37b–11.6), unequivocally refers to certain *Oracles* that describe the world-soul in terms of the mythical figure of Hecate “existing like a luminous fire.”<sup>92</sup>

It may be concluded that, to start with, both systems stage the same protagonists in the cosmic drama. What the theurgist lays out in oracular fashion, the author of the *Paraph. Shem* recounts under the form of an apocalyptic narrative, but adds an actor who plays the role of intermediary principle between the supreme God and the entities come forth from chaos: this is the unbegotten Spirit.

*Spirit, the intermediate principle* If we are to grasp the nature and role of the intermediate principle in the *Paraph. Shem*, we first have to bring precision to what was already noted with respect to the active principle in Stoicism. In that system, the active principle or agent is God or the *Logos*, that is, the reason or formula that expresses the essential nature of a thing and explains its development.<sup>93</sup> But this principle has no autonomous existence except on a *logical* plane, and is perceived *physically* only through the support of the active (*drastika*) elements (*stoicheia*), fire and air, whose mixture produces a warm (*thermon*) or inflamed (*pyrooides*) breath (*pneuma*).<sup>94</sup> This warm *pneuma* also serves to support the universal Reason or *Logos spermatikos*, which separates into *logoi spermatikoi* deposited in the passive (*pathētika*) elements, earth and water, so as to produce the diversity of beings.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, according to the degree of tension (*tonos*) in the force (*dynamis*), an essential property of the *pneuma*, the *Logos* will show itself as disposition (*exis*) in solid objects, nature (*physis*) in plants, instinctive (*psychē*) life in animals, and mind (*nous*) in human beings.<sup>96</sup>

Stoic physics, therefore, does not separate the active principle from its passive principle, matter, which is why the early Stoics did not regard the active principle as a transcendent entity. It is only with

<sup>92</sup> *Chald. Or.*, fr. 96. See also fr. 32, 35, 37; Johnston 1990: 62–70.

<sup>93</sup> See *SVF* 2: 300.

<sup>94</sup> See *SVF* 2: 439, 442.

<sup>95</sup> See *SVF* 1: 198, 102; 2: 310, 405, 406, 418, 439, 442.

<sup>96</sup> See *SVF* 2: 439–49, 458; Hahm 1977: 163–64.



Middle Stoicism, especially with Posidonius, and under Platonism's influence, that reference is made to a transcendent active principle situated at the edge of the universe and composed of the subtlest and purest fire, the *augē* (Lafranque 1964: 317–20; Verbeke 1945: 131–38; Moreau 1939:182–84). But this *pneuma*, supreme God and Mind of the world, of which human intelligence is but a particle (*apospasma*),<sup>97</sup> will continue to act in the universe thanks to the empirical elements, fire and air. Thus its immanence is assured, while it yet maintains a certain transcendence.

It can be seen that an evolution, in the sense of a dematerialization of the concept of fire, opened the way to merging the Stoic and biblical notions of *pneuma*. Authors influenced by the philosophy of the Stoa and by the Bible would try, more or less successfully, to safeguard the *pneuma*'s transcendence, at the same time making it exercise the role of immanent active principle (Verbeke 1945: 410–29; Spanneut 1960: 324–45). For example, Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch would make the *pneuma* an intermediary between God and the world, a role exactly like that of the Stoic hylic *pneuma* (Spanneut 1960: 334–38).

The author of the *Paraph. Shem* also presents *Pneuma* as an autonomous principle intermediate between God and the world. He describes it in terms that situate it in relation to the two other principles: its light is humble, therefore less noble than that of the higher power; on the other hand, it is quiescent and not agitated like fire who envelops Mind (2.4–6a). To emphasize its transcendent character, the author completely dissociates it from the active elements, fire and air, relegated to chaos. But when *Pneuma* falls into chaos while revealing himself to Darkness (2.33b–3.29), he will act as an active principle and will initiate the process that culminates in the separation of Mind from Darkness. At the time of the formation of the universe, it will be Astonishment (*thauma*), a power emitted by *Pneuma*, who will play the role of immanent active principle by spreading himself on three levels: 1) the material or hylic universe: the demiurgic Mind, begotten by the fatherly Mind (4.27b–5.8a), will clothe himself in a part of Spirit's light, an impulse whereby he will put Nature (*physis*) into motion in order to compose the world soul (6.13b–22a); 2) the *hēgemonikon*: to the kingly Mind, come forth from the Nature's forms,

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<sup>97</sup> See SVF 1: 495; 2: 633

the Saviour will give the gift of “a likeness of fire, a light and hearing, with a share of guileless Word,” so that he may reign over the winds and demons (22.21b–28a; 23.6b–8). After the flood, this light will bear the name of Faith (*pistis*). Those who have received a particle of Mind and turn away from the works of Nature will be clothed in Faith at the moment of the consummation (35.24b–31a; 43.21b–26a); 3) *pneumatic* humanity: during the Saviour’s intervention in the cloud of Hymen, part of Astonishment’s light will break away and, falling into the cloud of Middle, will produce in the womb some light-seeds (*spora*) (12.31b–13.23a; 14.32–33a; 16.5–8a; 17.21b–24a). These will be sown by the winds and demons among the chosen at the moment of conception and this will cause them to become the race of pneumatics (32.15b–17a; 35.17b–22a; 24.8–9).<sup>98</sup>

b. *The original harmony*

The state of harmony that ruled at the beginning between the roots occurred because each root governed in its own kingdom with no mixture with the others (2.7b–10a). However, the text insists on the inequality of the principles. Light possesses a great power and knows the lowliness of Darkness, while Darkness is completely unaware of the existence of a root higher than himself (2.10b–17a).<sup>99</sup> So long as Darkness checks his malice and stays covered by water, harmony is preserved (2.17b–19a).

2. *The fall of Spirit (2.19b–3.29)*

The higher Light permits Spirit’s fall, with the sole aim of bringing about Mind’s separation from Darkness, since the latter takes pride in Mind (2.33b–35a). This fall is described in three steps: 1) Darkness suddenly becomes agitated,<sup>100</sup> and Spirit, frightened by the noise, raises

<sup>98</sup> We find a threefold division of the soul, expressed as three *pneumata*, in Clement of Alexandria. See Rizzerio 1989.

<sup>99</sup> Here we come face to face with a dualism heralding that of Mani. See G.G. Stroumsa, *Savoir et salut*. Patrimoines (Paris: Cerf, 1992), chap. XIII: “Le roi et le porc: de la structure du dualisme manichéen,” 243–58. The author has assembled Manichaean texts expressing the imbalance between God and matter. See in the same sense L. Koenen, “How Dualistic is Mani’s Dualism?.” In L. Cirillo, ed., *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis: Atti del Secondo Simposio Internazionale, Cosenza 27–28 Maggio 1988* (Cosenza: Marra, 1990), 1–34.

<sup>100</sup> The narrator does not explain this sudden movement. “By some external cause or by chance,” as in the texts that report Bardaisan’s cosmology? See Drijvers 1966: 98–101.

himself to the summit of his place; there he perceives the immensity of dark water and is disgusted by it. Then, using his thought, he looks below and realizes that the evil root cares nothing for the infinite Light (2.19b–28);<sup>101</sup> 2) next, the higher power instigates the division of water which envelops Darkness; and Darkness, surrounded by his ignorance, climbs to the highest limit of his kingdom (2.28b–33a); 3) at that moment, the light of Spirit is revealed to Darkness, who is astonished to discover another power superior to himself. In his jealousy, he pulls up his Mind, that is, his eye, toward the summit, and tries to make it partially similar to the members of Spirit, in a vain attempt to become the latter's equal. But by revealing himself to Darkness, Spirit has lost part of his light, to Mind's advantage; and Mind, established in partial similarity with Spirit, is rendered active; he raises himself up and illuminates Hades with a fiery light, the fiery forms (2.33b–3.29).

The passage describing the fall is demarcated by an inclusion (2.36b–3.1, 3.28b–29) that underscores the real reason for the fall at the formal level: to reveal to Darkness the existence of a higher root. We do not think that in the *Paraph. Shem* the fall of Light is presupposed in the description of chaos (Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften 1973: 57). Nor is it insinuated when (2.23) Spirit sees the dark water and is disgusted (Wisse 1970: 132); nor when (5.16) Mind clashes with Spirit (Wisse 1970: 132), since this action supposes that Mind already possesses a similarity proceeding from Spirit's light (5.18b–19a).

Still, in describing Spirit's disgust at the sight of the dark water (2.22b–24a), and in noting Darkness' ignorance about the existence of a higher root (2.27b–28a), the narrator intends to reduce the culpability of Spirit's fall as far as possible and to indicate that it involves a ruse on the part of infinite Light for his own purposes. In his self-revelation, Spirit is seeking to correct Darkness' ignorance. But exactly what the highest principle has in mind is that Light mix with Mind to initiate the process of separation.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> From the topmost part of his place Spirit perceives his own infinite light (see 8.26b–27) and, still further below, the evil root. On this way of presenting the fall of a higher being after gazing at matter, see Numenius, fr. 11; *Acta Archelai* 67,4–12 (Beeson 1924); and Irenaeus, *AH*, 1,30,5.

<sup>102</sup> In the Manichaean myth the Primal Man and his five Sons offer themselves as poisonous fodder to the five Sons of Darkness. See Puech 1949: 76–77. Stroumsa, *Savoir et salut*, 253–55, gives a good description of the strategy employed by Mani's God.

3. *The re-ascent of Spirit's light and the liberation of Mind*  
(3.30–24.29a)

This part of the myth recounts the organization of the world, whose sole purpose is the freeing of Mind and the re-ascent of Spirit's light. As we have already noted, the author uses data drawn from Stoicism and Middle Platonism. He also makes thorough use of the cosmo-biological analogy and represents Nature as a gigantic womb from which all the elements of the cosmos will come forth.<sup>103</sup>

The narrative thread now becomes difficult to follow. The episodes become entangled, some of them dealing only with Mind, others only with Spirit's light, still others with both Mind and the light of Spirit. But it can be seen that in each of his interventions the Saviour employs a different means for achieving his ends. This indicator forms part of our basis for designating the drama's different episodes.

*First intervention by the Saviour, in the guise of Spirit (3.30–6.30a)*

With the goal of making Mind exit Hades (4.7b–10a), Derdekeas, Son of the pure Light, manifests himself under the aspect of Spirit (3.30–4.12a). His coming from above into the world immediately starts the process of forming the universe. To render Darkness inert or inoperative (*argos*) by depriving him of his Power and forms (4.12b–18a), Mind, who is already partially similar to Spirit, first has fire go up from between Darkness and Water (4.18b–21). This provokes water's transformation into mist, then into the womb. The chaotic fire, which is error (*planē*), goes into the womb and tricks Darkness (4.22–27a). At the sight of the womb, Darkness becomes impure: he unites with her and ejaculates his mind as seed that, mixing with Power, makes all the forms appear in the womb; Nature will use them to form the universe (4.27b–5.6a; see 4.16–26a; 10.37b–11.6; 27.17b–21).

For his part, Mind, the paternal seed, has generated to the womb an image of himself, a second Mind, fiery in nature, but that takes on the likeness of Spirit, thereby clashing with him (5.6b–8a, 16b–19a). Now Mind must "ascend" and "attach himself" to the womb.<sup>104</sup> Yet

<sup>103</sup> On the use of cosmo-biological analogy in Stoicism see Hahm 1977: 136–84.

<sup>104</sup> Until 7.11 the narrative takes account of the physiological process of conception as described by Soranus of Ephesus (*Gyn.*, 1,43). According to this physician (beginning of the second century B.C.E.), conception involves two main steps: 1) *analēpsis* or "ascent" of the seed toward the bottom of the womb; and 2) *syllēpsis* or "retention" of the seed by the womb, which is, properly speaking, the conception. Animation of the embryo follows this second step. See *Soranus' Gynecology*, trans. O. Temkin

the womb, having no principle of motion (see 6.20–21), is incapable of pushing Mind to the bottom of herself in order to retain him (5.8b–12a). That is why the Saviour provokes the division of Nature into four clouds that will constitute the different spheres of the universe. From the top down they are called Hymen, Chorion, Power, and Water. The first three, which are fiery clouds,<sup>105</sup> then draw the embryonic Mind out of the noxious waters (*analēpsis*) so he may turn toward the centre of his Power, in the middle of Nature, where he will cling (*syllēpsis*) (5.27b–6.13a).<sup>106</sup>

The episode related next (6.13b–30a) must be read in continuity with what was mentioned in 5.16b–19a: the collision between Spirit and Mind just generated in the womb. Weighed down by the heaviness of the embryonic Mind,<sup>107</sup> the light of Spirit located in the depths of water (see 9.15b–25a) has produced a power called “Astonishment” (*thauma*).<sup>108</sup> This power turns the burden, and the burden, itself turned toward the heat of Astonishment, clothes itself with Spirit’s light. Because of this active principle, Mind sets Nature in motion, then turns again, that is, turns in the direction of the centre of his Power (6.22; see 6.3b–4a, 11b–12a). Released from the heaviness of the burden, Astonishment in turn rises to fasten to the cloud of Hymen (6.23–25a).

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(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 42–43; also Gourevitch 1996: 2083–146.

<sup>105</sup> The author employs the Stoic distinction of three fires—*augē*, *aithēr* (or *phlox*), and *anthrax*—that determine three regions of the cosmos: empyrean, ethereal, and material. See *SVF* 2: 612, 668. Tardieu (1980: 194–231) has shown the link between these three fires and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. “In this regard, each of the three worlds can be viewed as a ‘fiery’ circle dominated, respectively by the transmundane sun, mundane sun, and moon...” (Majercik 1989: 17) (See Appendix, p. 159).

<sup>106</sup> On the action of heat that draws (*sōk* = Gr. *spadō*) the seed to the bottom of the uterus, see Aristotle, *Gen. an.*, 2,4,739b, text and trans. by A.L. Peck (London: W. Heinemann, 1942), repr. LCL, 366 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University press, 1990), 189–91: “Sometimes [the seed] rests in this place, sometimes, if the uterus happens to be in a suitable condition and hot owing to the evacuation of the menses, the uterus draws it in (*eisō spa*) [...]. This region, in virtue of the heat present in it [...], draws up the semen...”

<sup>107</sup> On the weight of the embryo see Aristotle, *Gen. an.*, 1,11,719a (Peck 1942/1990: 35): “Besides, it is impossible for young animals to be formed near the diaphragm; embryos are bound to be heavy (*baros echein*) and to move about...”

<sup>108</sup> *CH* 1,16 has a thematic arrangement and terminology very close to those of the *Paraph. Shem*: “Nature, mingled in marriage with Man, brought forth a marvel most marvellous (*ēnenke ti thauma thaumasiōtaton*);” text and trans. in W. Scott, *Hermetica*, 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), 122–23. In *Asclepius* 6 we read: “Magnum miraculum est homo.”

It should be noted that these actions are produced at the same time that the clouds are drawing<sup>109</sup> Mind from the cloud of Water. What is said in 6.1–13a forms a sort of explanatory parenthesis the narrator uses to indicate the purpose of dividing the clouds: it is so that Mind can turn toward his Power (6.2b–4a), toward the hylic fire, the instrument Nature will use in fabricating the universe with the fiery forms (see 10.37b–11.6).<sup>110</sup> In fact, Mind and Astonishment effect their ascent at the same time, one to become fastened within the Power, the other within the Hymen.

The purpose of this episode is to show Spirit's action as active principle in the formation of the world soul. Here again, the author brings into play notions taken from embryology that have to do with the *pneuma*'s action in conception. According to Aristotle, a principle of motion is required for generation, and this principle comes from the male.<sup>111</sup> The female is a passive element and needs a principle to set her in motion. Now, this principle resides within male sperm:<sup>112</sup> it consists of the heat of the *pneuma* contained in the sperm: "In all cases the semen contains within itself that which causes it to be fertile—what is known as 'hot' substance, which is not fire nor any similar substance, but the *pneuma* which is enclosed within the semen or foam-like stuff, and the natural substance which is in the *pneuma*, and this substance is analogous to the element which belongs to the stars."<sup>113</sup>

In the *Paraph. Shem* the semen-mind ejaculated by Darkness contains no principle of motion that it could communicate to the embryo. That is why the embryo turns toward the heat (*h<sup>e</sup>mme*)<sup>114</sup> of Astonishment and clothes itself with his light (6.15b–19). It then

<sup>109</sup> Note the verb's present tense.

<sup>110</sup> On the link between Mind and his fiery envelope see *CH* 10,18 (Scott 1924: 199–201): "But mind, which is the keenest of all things incorporeal, has for its body fire, the keenest of all the material elements. Mind is the maker of things, and in making things it uses fire as its instrument." See also, *Chald. Or.*, fr. 5 (trans. Majercik 1989: 51): "For the First transcendent Fire does not enclose its own Power in matter by means of works, but by Intellect. For Intellect derived from Intellect is the Craftsman of the fiery cosmos."

<sup>111</sup> *Gen. an.*, 1,21,729b; 1, 22,730a; 2,1,732a.

<sup>112</sup> *Gen. an.*, 1,22,730b; 2,3,737a; 4,3,767b.

<sup>113</sup> *Gen. an.*, 2,3,736b; 3,2,762a (trans. Peck 1942/1990: 171).

<sup>114</sup> By using the term *h<sup>e</sup>mme* the author indicates that he is keeping the Stoic distinction between the *pyr atechnon* (elementary fire) and the *pyr technikon* (artistic fire), meaning the warm *pneuma* that enters into the composition of beings on all levels. See Moreau 1939: 165 n. 4, 171 n. 7; Hahm 1977: 97–98.

becomes active and can put Nature into motion (6.20–22a) and act as principle of the world soul.<sup>115</sup>

*Second intervention by the Saviour, as a light-wave and a gust from Spirit (6.30b–7.30)* Spirit looks toward infinite Light and prays that pity be taken on his light imprisoned in Hades (6.30b–35a; see 10.31–33a). Derdekeas immediately unfolds as a light-wave and a gust of the immortal Spirit. He breathes on the cloud of Hymen, which splits and irradiates the other clouds; these separate in their turn, opening the way for the re-ascent of Spirit's light. The embryonic Mind also takes form under the action of this breath.<sup>116</sup> The last stage of conception, the embryo's animation, is therefore carried out by a higher *pneuma*, that of the Saviour.

This episode ends with a paraphrase about the clouds (7.11b–30). By bringing together the information this passage furnishes and what can be gleaned elsewhere in the text concerning the depiction of the universe, we can devise the following table:

*The place* "of the great Light" and of Derdekeas (32.30b–32a).

*The place* of Spirit (2.22; 29.24b–26), also called the cloud of Spirit (47.23–25a). The pneumatics will repose in the place of Spirit (35.22b–24; 43.12b–14a).

*The four clouds* of Nature (the womb) (5.22–27), three of which are fiery clouds (5.27b–30a):

1. *Hymen*: "a cloud which cannot be grasped, a great fire" (7.12–13): "the place of Hymen" (35.28b–29a; 11.27; 35.30). Spirit's Astonishment clings to the cloud of Hymen (6.24b–25a). The place where Faith will rest at the consummation (35.26b–31a); the noetics will repose in this glorious place (22.33b–23.6a; 35.24b–31a; 43.14b–27a).
2. *Chorion*: "was the cloud of Silence; it was a majestic fire" (7.15b–16a; 13.10). Also simply called the the Silence (13.7; 14.26b–27a; 16.37; 17.6).
3. *Power*: "it, too, was a cloud of Nature" (7.18b–19); also called the Middle (13.4–5, 16–17; 14.27–28; 16.7,13,25; 17.20–21; 18.9–11a; 20.29), the cloud of Middle (33.16–17; 47.30). The place of the demi-urgic Mind (6.11b–13a; 7.17b–19a; 18.6b–7a).

<sup>115</sup> On the Mind as principle of motion in Atticus see Deuse 1993: 57–58. This luminous, active principle in material beings, mixed with fire, will be called "the corrupted light" (27.12b–13; 31.29b–30a; 33.34b–34.3).

<sup>116</sup> The Coptic verb probably translates *typousthai*. In a medical context, the verb refers to the formation of the embryo. See B. Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons or the Reality of the Rulers," *HTR* 69 (1976): 70–71.

4. *Water*: “But the dark water was a frightful cloud” (7.22b–23; 9.17).

*Darkness*: the root of Nature (7.24b–27a). “...those who have nothing from the luminous Spirit nor from Faith...will be dissolved in Darkness...” (35.31b–34a).

*Third intervention by the Saviour, clothed in his universal garment with the aim of freeing the light of Spirit from the depths of Darkness (7.31–12.15a)* Derdekeas (8.24), Son of Majesty, re-ascends to his position and implores the higher Light that Pneuma’s power increase (8.2) in (his) place (8.3; see 2.22; 47.23) and be filled again by his light. Reappearing in this prayer and in the following pages are the characteristic terms for expressing Gnostic salvation: Pneuma, who lost part of his power when he became diffused in chaos must *be filled* (8.3,10b–11a; 9.5,11) anew with his light, without the power of the infinite Light (8.11b–13a; 9.3b–9a), and await his *fulfillment* (8.20b–21a). What has been mixed with impurity (8.14b–15a; 8.29b–31a), weighed down by Darkness and fire (9.9b–15a), must come out (9.12), again *be made pure* (8.5,29b–31a) and *homogeneous* (*šōš = monoeidēs*, 8.10; 9.21b–23)<sup>117</sup> in all its members; *what is fallen* (8.28) must *be lifted up* by its power (9.9,31b–33a; 11.32), be rectified (*katorthoun*, 11.25b–26a), again find its majesty (9.10), and obtain rest in its power (10.29b–33a).

Majesty favourably receives the Saviour’s supplication (8.15b–23a); and the Saviour, clothed in his universal light-garment (see 12.15b–19a),<sup>118</sup> comes in the guise of Spirit to free the light imprisoned in the

<sup>117</sup> The theme of the Light’s homogeneity is characteristic of Mani’s doctrine. See U. Bianchi, “The Contribution of the Cologne Mani Codex to the Religio-Historical Study of Manichaeism.” In *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*. Acta Iranica, 24, Second Series: Hommages et opera minora, 10 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 15–24; idem, “Zoroastrian Elements in Manichaeism: The Question of Evil Substance.” In P. Bryder, ed., *Manichaean Studies: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Manichaeism, August 5–9 1987*. Lund Studies in African and Asian Religions, 1 (Lund: Plus Ultra, 1988), 13–18; idem, “Omogeneità della luce e dualismo radicale nel manicheismo.” In M. Görg, ed., *Religion im Erbe Ägyptens: Beiträge zur spätantiken Religionsgeschichte zu Ehren von Alexander Böhlig* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1988), 54–64; idem, “Sur la théologie et l’anthropologie de Mani.” In P. Bilde et al., eds., *Apocryphon Severini, presented to Søren Giversen* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993), 19–28; and in the same volume N.A. Pedersen, “Some Comments on the Relationship between Marcionism and Manichaeism,” 166–77.

<sup>118</sup> Since the light must re-ascend to the place of Spirit, that is, beyond the three fiery clouds, the Saviour puts on his universal garment. In the Hymen he will put on a trimorphic garment. The Saviour is a Logos who calls by using a voice (12.7b–10a; see 10.12b–14a), a garment suitable to the level at which he reveals himself. Through his



depths of Darkness (8.23b–9.3a). Then Spirit’s light is lifted by its power out of the weight of Darkness, and Spirit pays homage to the infinite Light (9.3b–33a).

The passage following this episode decisively clarifies the treatise’s anthropology, since it concerns the formation of the Primal Man, the principle of pneumatic humanity. Derdekeas reveals to Shem that, upon the liberation of Spirit’s light, Astonishment, which is in the cloud of Hymen, conceived a Thought; and that he, Shem, is that Thought, that Great Power (9.33b–36; 10.19b–20).<sup>119</sup> That is why the Saviour will say, speaking of Shem’s race, that it came “from the luminous cloud” (26.19) and that the pneumatic human possesses “a thought come forth from the light of the power of Astonishment” (24.8–9).

*Fourth intervention by the Saviour, who descends into the Hymen and there puts on a trimorphic garment. Fall of a part of the light of Astonishment into the Middle (12.15b–13.23a)* Derdekeas takes off his universal garment and, from the place of Spirit, descends into the cloud of Hymen where he puts on a trimorphic garment, that is, the Word of Spirit in triple form. But this coming of the Saviour produces an excess of light in the cloud, which becomes agitated and overthrows the power of Astonishment. Part of the light breaks off and falls into the cloud of Middle (12.31b–13.4a; see 14.32–33a; 16.5–8a; 17.21b–24a).<sup>120</sup>

However, through the will of Majesty, the light in the Silence mixes with the separated part of Astonishment and comes with it into the Middle. The light in the Silence presses down the womb for fear that the existence of another race (*spora*, 13.15), that of the light-seeds (*spora* repeated in the plural in 13.19b–23a; 16.9b–10) generated by the light that was separated from Astonishment when it penetrated the womb, be revealed to her. The light of the Silence keeps these seeds away from Darkness, in the middle of Nature and in their position (*thesis*), meaning in that transitory place which does not correspond

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universal garment, his voice will be heard as far as the depths of Darkness (9.2b–3a), as far as the cloud of Water (see 9.24).

<sup>119</sup> The scene is comparable to what we read in *1 En.* 71:13–14, when the seer learns that he is the Son of Man.

<sup>120</sup> The passage recalls the episode related by Irenaeus in *AH* 1,30,2–3: when the Father and the Son united with the Woman, Spirit, a Power possessing a luminous dew, sprang out of the Woman (1,30,3), for “When she was not capable of enduring or receiving the greatness of the lights [...], she [...] then overflowed” (1,30,2, Unger, 96). See also *Tri. Trac.* 77.18–19.

to their spiritual nature. That is why they are troubled, not knowing where they are, for they do not yet possess the universal knowledge of Spirit (13.4b–23a), knowledge that will allow them to gain the place of their rest, the unbegotten Spirit, beyond the three spheres of the material universe.<sup>121</sup>

This episode, and the whole section extending from 13.23b to 18.1a, has the aim of providing Shem's descendants with an explanation of their origin and their role in history: emanating from the power Astonishment, after the flood they will have to "have patience" with those whose root is Faith, the light of Mind (see 43.14b–26a). The narrator also has in view the insertion of a model for the re-ascent that the saved will have to make at the end of their life: the steps to be taken and the spiritual beings who will come to their aid.

*Fifth intervention by the Saviour, within the Hymen. Spirit's light sets about freeing itself from Water and the fiery clouds. The light in the Hymen is perfected (13.23b–15.16a)* Derdekeas implores the infinite Light to allow Spirit's restless power to move freely and to render the womb inert (13.28); then he comes into the cloud of Hymen, clothed with Spirit's light, so that the fullness of the Word may bring a power to the members, the light of Spirit scattered in the clouds (13.23b–14.3a). The Saviour's appearance in the Hymen causes unease in all the spheres of the cosmos (see 14.16b–18a, 35b–36a), and the light of Spirit sets about freeing itself from the clouds of fire all the way to the cloud of Water (14.3b–16a).

In the cloud of Hymen, the light of Spirit is filled with the universal Thought and with the Word; it turns toward its rest and takes form in its root (14.16b–25a). The light come forth from the Silence leaves the Middle and returns to its own place (14.25b–31). As for the part separated from Astonishment, it had been tricked by fire and become cloaked in forgetfulness. Because of the Saviour's presence in the Hymen, it is troubled and in turn casts off the weight of the cloud (14.32–15.2a).

But the Fire of the cloud of Middle, no longer restrained by the light of the Silence (see 14.25b–31; 13.11b–13a), mixes with the waters in

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<sup>121</sup> The episode recalls the pneumatic birth of Achamoth in the sight of the Angels who accompanied the Saviour (Irenaeus, *AH* 1,4,5). But in the *Paraph. Shem, Pneuma* is thought of as a male being. Therefore it is by penetrating the womb that the part of light detached from Astonishment will engender the other race.

order to make them noxious. And Nature, which had been repelled (see 13.13b–15a), immediately climbs out of the waters and conceives the fiery Power, the Beast with many faces, the archon of creation (see 27.1–21; 30.8–11a; 44.6b–9a, 32); the latter becomes strong because of Spirit's light, the active principle Nature received from Mind (15.2b–13a; see 6.18b–22a).

*Sixth intervention by the Saviour. By the Saviour's will and through Spirit's gaze, the womb receives the revelation of the light-seeds within her, but her root is rendered inert (15.16b–16.23a)* To understand this episode, introduced with no warning and without the formula announcing a saving intervention, it must first be noted that the text distinguishes between the light that, detached from Astonishment, has fallen into the Middle (15.20b–21a), and the light situated “in the depths of Nature” (15.27b–28a; see 15.11b–12a). This one covers over Mind (see 6.18b–22a) and finds itself in the cloud of Water (see 14.8b–13a; 15.25b–27a).

The intervention aims to render the womb inert, because she believed she possessed the power of light (15.18b–23a). The saving action is accomplished by Spirit's gaze<sup>122</sup> from out of the clouds<sup>123</sup> toward the depths of Nature (15.24b–28a), in order to neutralize the power of the womb and of fire (16.18b–23a). This gaze is an illumination (15.16b–17), a ray of light that crosses the Middle (15.19b–23a)<sup>124</sup> and rejoins the light imprisoned in the depths of Nature. Through the Saviour's will, and by means of this gaze, the light re-ascends with the womb. The light in the Middle then illuminates the womb, who “saw those she had not seen”—the light-seeds (16.9b–10; see 13.13b–15a). Thinking she can curb the light's strength, she rejoices, but she has been rendered inert (*argos*) by the luminous ray that came down to her. As well, the pneumatics, who possess in themselves a seed sprung from Astonishment, are assured of being beyond the grasp of Nature's power.

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<sup>122</sup> In the memorial this gaze represents Spirit and receives the name *Strophaia* (33.1b–3).

<sup>123</sup> See 2.21b–24, where the verb *jice* describes the action of Spirit, who raises himself to the summit of his place in order to gaze below.

<sup>124</sup> Compare Irenaeus, *AH*, 1,4,5: Christ sends the Saviour, the Paraclete, to Achamoth, and she “took courage from his appearance and ran towards him” (Unger, 32).

*Seventh intervention by the Saviour, with the purpose of perfecting the light in the cloud of Silence, and thereafter the light in the cloud of Middle (16.23b–18.1a)* The light diverted into the Middle lifts its eyes toward the higher Light, and begs him to take pity on it and straighten it. In response to this prayer, Derdekeas takes off his trimorphic garment within the Hymen and comes into the cloud of Silence. There he clothes himself in the light, whose two parts are immediately revealed under a unique form (16.23b–17.16a).

Likewise, he takes off his garment in the cloud of Silence, penetrates into the Middle, and there clothes himself with the light separated from Astonishment. This light receives the knowledge about the immortal realities (see 13.19b–22a), and prays that the light will also be removed from harmful Nature (17.16b–18.1a).

*Eighth intervention by the Saviour with his fiery garment, with the purpose of separating Mind from the womb and so freeing all of Spirit's light (18.1b–19.26a)* The Saviour lays aside his light-garment and, with the purpose of freeing all of Spirit's light, puts on one that is fiery and formless<sup>125</sup> and stems from Mind (18.1b–16a). He penetrates into Nature and settles upon her eye, which is a light out of Spirit (16.4; see 15.16b–19a), and that Spirit has prepared for him as a garment and place of rest. In view of the creation of heaven and earth (see 20.2–10a), this light gives its voice to Nature for a while (18.16b–26).<sup>126</sup>

Through his fiery garment, the Saviour prostitutes himself with Nature. As a consequence of the orgasm provoked by the garment's caress, the womb dries up Mind<sup>127</sup> and expels him from herself in the form of a fish.<sup>128</sup> Troubled, the womb is seized with sorrow and, in

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<sup>125</sup> In contrast to the garments the Saviour put on in the fiery clouds: the trimorphic garment in the Hymen (12.25b–31a; 17.2–4; 33.4–9a), the two-formed garment in the Silence (17.8–10b; 33.9b–11), the garment of single form in the Middle (17.20b–24a; 33.12–17a). These three garments that the Saviour, as Word, comes to perfect by putting them on, remain in their respective cosmic spheres to assist the saved during their ascent (43.9b–14a). At the end of time, they will take their rest in the unbegotten Spirit (39.17b–23a).

<sup>126</sup> The Saviour's garments are voices. See above, n. 118.

<sup>127</sup> On the womb becoming drained because of her need for sexual relations, and the condition called hysterical suffocation (*hysterikē pnix*), see Fredriksen 1979. On the avoidance of sexual relations when a woman is pregnant, see Soranus, *Gyn.*, 1.16.

<sup>128</sup> Compare Irenaeus, *AH* 1,30,5: "This made Jaldabaoth very sad and filled him with despair, so he looked down upon the mire of material substance that was lying below him and fixed his desire on it with the result that a son was born. This son is Mind itself, twisted into the shape of a serpent" (Unger, 97). In *The Paraphrase of*

tears, also casts out Spirit's power, that light with which Mind had clothed himself (6.18b–22a). The Saviour clothes the Spirit's light, and then reposes at the sight of the fish (18.27–19.13a).

As the fruit of the Saviour's fornication, numerous animal forms proceed from the womb and come into existence in Hades (19.13b–26a).<sup>129</sup>

*Ninth intervention by the Saviour, who clothes himself with the Beast (19.26b–21.1)* To bring about the liberation of all of the Spirit's power from bondage, the Saviour clothes himself with the Beast (see 15.12–16), and asks Nature to bring a heaven and an earth into being; Nature acquiesces as though he were her own son (19.26b–20.1). Relieved of her forms, she ascends above the water, turns, and, blowing on the water, creates the sky. Then, from the foam of the sky, the earth comes into existence (20.2–10a). Afterward the earth produces food according to the number of animals, as well as the dew and every seed (20.10b–20a).

Once the sky and earth are created, the fiery garment of Derdekeas<sup>130</sup> raises itself to the middle of Nature's cloud and shines on the whole of creation until Nature has been drained. The Darkness she had for a garment is cast into the waters and the Middle is purified of Darkness (20.20b–29a). The womb is saddened and astonished, for she no longer has her consort (20.29b–21.1).

*Tenth intervention by the Saviour, through his benevolent face. Generation of the kindly Mind (21.2–23.8)* Just as Spirit's light has been made perfect in the three clouds of Hymen, Silence, and Middle, so must Mind, the power which is in Hades, be rendered perfect (21.7b–12a). With this in view, the Saviour asks Nature to bring into existence "a seed and a power...upon the earth" (21.18–20a; see

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*Shem*, the womb expels Mind in the form of a fish. It is possible that the author has chosen this animal form with reference to the *Dea Syria*, Atargatis. See Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 3,39; Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, 14; Ephrem, *Hymns against Heresies*, 55,1. On Ephrem's interpretation of this hymn see Drijvers 1966: 143–52; Cramer 1979: 42–46.

<sup>129</sup> These animal forms are the planets and constellations of the zodiac that position themselves to create the *Heimarmēnē*. In this connection see *Ap. John*, NH II, 11.26–35. They are divided into male and female forms. See Bouché-Leclercq 1899: 102–03, 154–55.

<sup>130</sup> This fiery garment of the Saviour will be invoked in the memorial under the name of Aileou and will be called "Star of the light" and "invincible garment" (33.17–19).

22.12b–13a, 21b–22a; 27.35b–28.1a).<sup>131</sup> Immediately, Nature’s forms<sup>132</sup> couple and produce winds and demons “with the power which is from fire, and from Darkness and Spirit” (21.20b–28a).<sup>133</sup>

However, one form has been left by itself and has not coupled with the others. It masturbates and brings forth “a wind possessing a power from fire, Darkness and Spirit” (21.28b–36a).<sup>134</sup>

The winds and demons are then outfitted with genital organs: the winds receive a womb, and the demons an “unclean penis” (22.4–9a). From then on, these demiurgic male and female forces are able to engage in sexual activity similar to that indulged in at the beginning by Darkness and the womb, thus liberating the power of fire and light they received during the copulation between Nature’s forms (21.36b–22.3; see 21.26b–28a).<sup>135</sup>

But then the forms of Nature that had united to produce the winds and demons turn away from one another and expel the power that is Mind (22.21b–22).<sup>136</sup> With this *coitus interruptus* the program announced in 21.2–12a has been carried out. Part of the power has passed into the winds and demons (21.26b–28a), the remainder being expelled and appearing in Nature as Mind (22.21b–22a). Next, the Saviour lifts himself into the cloud of Power with his fiery garment, in order to make Nature desolate.<sup>137</sup> Then he grants Mind the right to reign over the winds and demons, and gives him “a likeness of fire,<sup>138</sup> a light and hearing, with a share of guileless Word” (22.17–28a).<sup>139</sup>

<sup>131</sup> On the link between the terms “seed” and “power,” see Aristotle, *Gen. an.*, 1,19,726a; NH VI,65.20–23a (*Asclepius*).

<sup>132</sup> The animal forms of which Nature rid herself and that possess within themselves “a power of fire and light” (21.2–7a; see 19.13b–18a; 20.5b–6a).

<sup>133</sup> Three characteristics that identify Mind are: his dual origin—Darkness and Spirit (see 23.6b–8a; 2.1–2; 5.16b–19a)—, and his fiery nature (see 2.2–3; 3.22b–24a; 5.13b–16a).

<sup>134</sup> This wind will be invoked in the testimony under the name of Moluchtas; “without it nothing is brought forth upon the earth” (34.9–11a).

<sup>135</sup> The narrator is setting up the anthropogonic narrative (see 23.9–30).

<sup>136</sup> Compare the creation of humanity using the seed of the seven archons in *Orig. World*, NH II,5,114.24b–30a.

<sup>137</sup> The Saviour’s fiery garment and Spirit’s light that the Saviour put on after Nature had ejected it from herself (see 18.27b–19.13a). This garment, which is a word, will be associated with Mind’s power for governance of the world: see 41.25b–28a; 42.7–11a.

<sup>138</sup> Mind’s fiery garment, see above, n. 110. Since Mind is going to rest within the Hymen (35.24b–31a), his garment must be the subtle fire of the *augē*.

<sup>139</sup> In contrast to Spirit, who received his power from the *fullness* (*plērōma*) of Word (see 14.1b–2a), the kingly Mind receives only a *part* (*meros*) of Word. The light

By virtue of this part of Spirit's light (see 23.8) that he received from the Saviour, Mind is perfected (see 21.9b–12a) in his own power. That is why at the consummation he will rest where the Hymen is (see 35.24b–31a), since he will be found faithful (*pistos*) because of his disgust at the impurity of Nature and of Darkness (22.28b–23.6a).

## G. THE ANTHROPOGONIC MYTH

### 1. *Humanity before the flood (23.9–24.29a)*

The narrative that describes the origin of humanity prior to the flood is divided into three episodes: 1) first, the winds and demons unite and give rise to all kinds of impurity (23.9–30); 2) next, from the sexual activity of the wind alone, sterile women and men are brought into existence (23.31–24.2a); 3) finally, because of the image of Spirit, pneumatic humanity appears (24.2b–15a).

The copulation of the winds and demons, described in very crude fashion in the first episode, ends in the conception and birth of all kinds of impurity (23.30). This concerns the production of beings with a body and a material soul. Indeed, the soul (*psychē*) and the body (*sōma*) are referred to in the tractate by the same scornful expressions: the soul is a “work of impurity” (24.25b–26a) and a “burden of Darkness” (24.21); likewise, the body is an “impure work” (32.24b–25a) and a “burden” (47.8–13a; see also 35.16b–17a; 41.5b–7a; 32.21b–25a).

The description of the copulation in 23.22–26a clearly recalls an opinion reported by Porphyry:

What is more, I have even heard someone maintain to my face that the ardour of the male sex in the coupling and the corresponding ardour of the womb snatch a soul from the surrounding air by means of the breathing which is then produced, when at this point these two ardours have moved and altered the natural force which provides sperm whereby it acquires the property of attracting a soul; and that this soul, after having sprung forth with the sperm through the male sex as though through a tube, is in turn gathered by the womb's ardour...<sup>140</sup>

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that makes Mind perfect and faithful (*pistos*) will be called Faith (*pistis*) in salvation history. Though the text does not explicitly say so, this is probably the light that the Saviour put on when the womb expelled the demiurgic Mind.

<sup>140</sup> Porphyry (Pseudo-Galen), *To Gauros, on the manner in which the embryo receives the soul*, 2,3. Translation based on A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 3: *Les doctrines de l'âme* (Paris: “Belles Lettres,” 1986), 268; see also

However, it should be noted that for the *Paraph. Shem's* author, what is transmitted by the demons' sperm is not the soul, since in the following episode sterile men and women will be generated through the sexual activity of the wind on its own (23.31–33a). What the demons transmit is referred to here simply as “power” (*dynamis*) (23.7,22). It can therefore be specified that this concerns the noetic element, for the term “power” is used in the narrative about humankind after the flood as a parallel to the expression “power of Mind” (27.31; 27.35b–28.1a; see 22.2, 12b–13a, 21). But for the moment the author seems uninterested in categorizing individuals; the account's entire interest is concentrated on the final affirmation that the product of this sexual union is impure (23.30).

The second episode (23.31–24.2a) recounts the birth of the sterile women and men as the outcome of a sexual activity engaged in by “the wind alone” (23.32), meaning that it results from masturbation. This is probably the wind that itself resulted from masturbation by one of Nature's forms (21.28b–36a), and that the testimony will mention by name: “And Moluchtas is a wind, for without it nothing is brought forth upon the earth” (34.9–11a). The fruit of this sexual act is a category of individuals designated as sterile (23.33b–35), for they do not possess within themselves any noetic element.<sup>141</sup> What the winds transmit of themselves is the hylic *pneuma* (23.9–11a);<sup>142</sup> and those individuals endowed only with this principle possess a body and a material soul. This is the race of psychics, which can only produce more psychics (24.1–2a) and is fated to dissolve away in Darkness (35.31b–36.1).<sup>143</sup>

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186–87, 225. This text has been commented on by M. Tardieu, “Comme à travers un tuyau: Quelques remarques sur le mythe valentinien de la chair céleste du Christ.” In *Barc* 1981: 151–77.

<sup>141</sup> Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, 5,8, reports that the Naassenes apply the epithet *sterile* to the person who refuses to be led by reason: “For he is unfruitful when he is fleshly and performs the desire of the flesh. This, he says, is the saying, ‘Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire.’ For these fruits, he says, are only the rational, the living man...” (trans. Legge 1921, 1: 137).

<sup>142</sup> See above, p. 45.

<sup>143</sup> Tatian also identifies the hylic *pneuma* with the soul: *Oratio ad Graecos*, 4. See Spanneut 1957: 138–40; Rizzerio 1989: 404, n. 39; P.-H. Poirier, “Pour une histoire de la lecture pneumatologique de *Gn* 2,7: Quelques jalons jusqu'à Irénée de Lyon,” *REA* 40 (1994): 1–22 (at 7–11). According to *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 50,1, in Valentinian teaching the Demiurge “fashioned a soul (*psychê*), earthly and material, irrational, *consubstantial* with that of the beasts. This is the man ‘according to the image’” (trans.



The last episode (24.2b–29a) describes the appearance of Shem’s race:

24 <sup>2</sup> For your sakes, <sup>3</sup> the image of Spirit appeared <sup>4</sup> on the earth and on the water. <sup>5</sup> For you are like the light: <sup>6</sup> you possess, indeed, a share <sup>7</sup> of the winds and the demons <sup>8</sup> and a thought come forth from the light <sup>9</sup> of the power of Astonishment.

This account must be read as the extension of the first, to which it explicitly refers in its mention of what Shem’s race has received through the joint action of the winds and demons. What came from the winds are the body and the material soul, the unclean part of their being, of which they must rid themselves (24.18b–27a; see 23.30). The noetic element is what the demons transmit to them as coming from themselves. Later, the Saviour will use the expression “particle of Mind” (35.3) to describe this element. But what characterizes Shem’s race is the presence in its members of a “thought come forth from the light of the power of Astonishment.”

The latter expression is a clear invocation of the cosmogonic account: at the time of the Saviour’s intervention (12.15b–13.23a), a part (*meris*, 14.32) of light separated from Astonishment (14.32–33a; 16.7b–8a; 17.23b–24) fell into the cloud of Middle (12.31b–13.10a), and produced light-seeds (*spora*) in the womb (13.10b–23a). These seeds passed into Nature’s forms (21.2–4a), then into the demons (21.22b–28a), at the same time as the noetic power (21.36b–22.3). With “the particles of Mind” they are sown by the winds and demons, when these intervene at the moment of birth (32.9b–18; 35.17b–22a). Thus, through succeeding acts of generation Nature is despoiled of her light-seeds, until “the whole Unbegotten”<sup>144</sup> has returned to its root (24.27b–29a), the unbegotten Spirit, and impurity has been brought to fullness (32.17b–18). This is why the text also mentions the weeping and sorrow of the womb (24.10–15a), who believed herself capable of holding the light-power in check (16.8b–23a).

This manner of envisaging the individuation process has enlightening parallels in Valentinian teaching. According to the *Exc. Theod.*, the

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Casey, 73–74). According to *Exc. Theod.* 54 (Casey, 77), Cain belongs to this irrational nature.

<sup>144</sup> The whole Unbegotten is the assemblage of all light-seeds within the power of Astonishment, in order to reconstitute the Primal Man, the Great Power (9.33b–36; 10.19b–20). This is the equivalent of the church in the Valentinian system.

Demiurge has breathed and sown “by angels, something consubstantial with himself” (50,2, trans. Roberts and Donaldson 1868), which is the psychic element (51,1), whose equivalent in the *Paraph. Shem* is the noetic element. The *Exc. Theod.* also reports (53,2–3) that “Adam without his knowledge had the spiritual seed sown in his soul by Wisdom... Therefore, the seeds put forth into ‘becoming’ by Wisdom are ministered to so far as they can come into being by the male angels.” In the system of the *Paraph. Shem*, the male Angels are the demons and Wisdom is replaced by Astonishment. Here we can add a precision supplied by Irenaeus: the seed conceived by the Mother has been “deposited in the Demiurge without his knowledge in order that through his instrumentality it might attain to perfection and form in that soul which he had [so to speak], filled with seed” (*AH* 2,19,1–2).<sup>145</sup> As well, Irenaeus observes that the Demiurge has received “once for all, the whole [of the divine] seed” (*AH* 2,19,3, trans. Roberts and Donaldson 1868). So “this birth must be until the previously reckoned seed be put forth” (*Exc. Theod.*, 67,3, Casey 1934: 83).

Finally, it can be asked whether the author intended to describe three distinct classes of individuals in this account of humanity before the flood. In that case, the first episode would be portraying a class of individuals made up of a body and a material soul that would have received a particle of Mind, but not a thought come forth from the power Astonishment. We note, first of all, that the first account ends at the mention of the winds that “gave birth to all kinds of impurity” (23.30), meaning bodies and material souls. There is no mention whatever of the noetic element: the author’s primary interest is in the race of pneumatics. The objective of this first episode was to relate to them how they, too, had come to receive an impure body and soul. But what constitutes their proper being is the pneumatic element that together with the noetic element has been transmitted to them by the seed of the demons, and that reveals itself to the womb on the earth and on the water (24.2b–4a; see 23.29b–30a). A third class of individuals will

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<sup>145</sup> See also *AH* I,7,5 (Unger, 40): “They dogmatize that the spiritual people whom Achamoth has planted as ‘seeds’ from then until now in just souls, and which have been disciplined and nourished here below...”

come into the picture only at the moment postdiluvian humanity is fashioned.<sup>146</sup>

## 2. *Humanity after the flood (27.34b–28.8a)*

The second anthropogonic account (27.34b–28.4a) is part of a passage that recounts the founding of a new cosmic order after the flood (27.1–28.8a). Nature turns her womb over and casts out the fiery power that have been in her since her copulation with Darkness (27.2b–6, 17b–21). This fiery power is the demon deceiver, the Pantocrator “who stirred up the womb towards every form” (27.19b–21). It constitutes the material sun and shines on creation in place of the Righteous One (27.6b–9a), the Sun of Justice who had withdrawn when the flood occurred (26.31–33a; see 20.20b–29a; 22.17–21a).<sup>147</sup> Afterward, Nature grants the demons and winds “a star each” (27.22–27), with the aim of controlling the destiny of future human generations by the course of the stars.

Earth’s repopulation is assured, first by the generation of animals, and then by that of humans:

27<sup>34</sup> And it was in the place<sup>35</sup> of Darkness and fire, of the power 28<sup>1</sup> of Mind and of the Light, <sup>2</sup> that human beings came into existence. Being from <sup>3</sup> Spirit, the thought of the Light, my eye, <sup>4</sup> does not exist in every man.

This text lists three principles: 1) Darkness and its fire, 2) the power of Mind, and 3) the Light at the beginning of two classes of humans, the pneumatics and the noetics. Both races possess a body and a material soul, alluded to by mentioning Darkness and fire (see 10.37b–11.6; 24.20b–21; 34.21b–24a; 42.30–31a; 43.6b–9a). In addition, the pneumatics have received something come forth from “the power of Mind and of the Light”; this is “a particle of Mind” (see 35.3) and the “thought of the Light” (28.3), come forth from the “power of Astonishment,” as has already been mentioned (see 24.8b–9) and as the Saviour’s eschatological discourses will detail (see 35.2b–5a; 43.2–4a).

<sup>146</sup> This corrects our earlier interpretation on this point. See Roberge 1995: 282–87.

<sup>147</sup> See above, p. 58 and n. 137. The system of the *Chaldaean Oracles* also distinguishes between an intelligible sun and a material one. See Majercik 1989: 17; Tardieu 1980: 213–14.

The existence of a class of humans provided with a particle of Mind, but not with a thought of the Light, is confirmed by a restrictive clause: “the thought of the Light, my eye, does not exist in every man” (28.2b–4a). The justification for this restriction seems to be an interpretation of Gen 6:3,5 on the wickedness of the generations that existed before the flood: “For before the flood happened through the winds and the demons <evil> came to men” (28.4b–8a).<sup>148</sup>

The tractate mentions, then, a lower class of the chosen whose root is the power of Mind, the kingly Mind to whom the Saviour has made the gift of a light and a part of Word. Through this formation, Mind has been rendered faithful (*pistos*) (22.21b–23.8).<sup>149</sup> The text will speak in a similar manner about “the light of Mind” (43.25–26a) or about Faith (*pistis*) (35.27b–31a). In the governance of the world, Mind-Faith plays the role of a good demiurge.<sup>150</sup> In fact, Nature “was handed over to Faith” (41.31b–32a); and Faith, accompanied by the Righteous One (41.25b–28a; 42.11b–16a), has put in motion the rotation of the spheres which produces the incorporation of souls (41.34–42.4a; 42.13b–16a).<sup>151</sup> Mind-Faith, then, has control over the lower demiurgic forces, the winds and demons (see 22.24b–25a), that intervene in the process of generating individuals. Using them as intermediaries, he distributes particles of Mind, just as Astonishment gives Spirit’s thought to certain chosen ones (see 32.9b–18; 35.17b–22a; 24.6–9).

The existence of two categories of elect also takes into account the Saviour’s exhortation inviting Shem to “abide patiently with Faith” (26.11–14a; see 41.17b–19; 48.30b–32a), meaning that he must resign himself to dwelling temporarily among the noetics so he can bring them to renounce Nature’s works and live in conformity with the true Faith.<sup>152</sup> The passage gives no details about the race of psychics but, as will be seen, the eschatological texts take their existence for granted.

The anthropogonic narratives therefore distinguish three categories of human beings: 1) those called *psychics*, composed of a body (*sōma*)

<sup>148</sup> We correct the Coptic text.

<sup>149</sup> See above, pp. 57–9.

<sup>150</sup> On the distinction between good and bad demiurge see B. Barc, “Samaël-Saklas-Yaldabaoth: Recherche sur la genèse d’un mythe gnostique.” In Barc 1981: 123–49.

<sup>151</sup> See CH 1,11a (Scott 1924: 119): “And Mind the Maker worked together with the Word, and encompassing the orbits of the Administrators, and whirling them round with a rushing movement, set circling the bodies he had made...”

<sup>152</sup> See above, p. 16.

and a material soul (*psychē*), whose principle or root is Darkness; 2) the *noetics*, those who, in addition to a body and a soul, possess a particle (šlme) of Mind (*nous*) and have the Mind-Faith as their root; 3) the *pneumatics*, who contain the components of the two preceding categories and have been endowed with a thought (*meeue*) coming from Spirit's Astonishment. Their root is the unbegotten Spirit.

COMPONENTS	CLASSES OF HUMANS	ROOTS
1) A thought from Spirit's Astonishment	3rd pneumatics	Spirit ( <i>pneuma</i> ) saved by Derdekeas at the beginning
2) A particle of Mind ( <i>nous</i> )	2nd noetics	
3) A soul ( <i>psychē</i> )	1st psychics	Darkness
4) A body ( <i>sōma</i> )		

## H. SOTERIOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

### 1. *The Saviour's earthly mission*

#### a. *The baptism (30.4b–38.28a)*<sup>153</sup>

Of the Saviour's earthly career, the *Paraph. Shem* retains only his baptism and crucifixion. These two events mark the end of a salvation history initiated by the flood.<sup>154</sup> From that moment on, Nature will try to keep human beings under her yoke by imposing *her* faith on them (40.2), through the medium of the evil archon, the deceptive demon (27.19b–20) with many faces (*prosōpon*),<sup>155</sup> who appeared in the framework of heaven (30.8–12a) by usurping the place of the Righteous One

<sup>153</sup> On baptism in the *Paraph. Shem* see especially Wisse 1970; Schenke 1975; Sevrin 1975; Koschorke 1978: 146–47, 254; Yamauchi 1978: 537–63; Koenen 1981; Sevrin 1982; Lupieri 1984; Dubois 1986; Sevrin 1986 (esp. 171–72); Tuckett 1984: 17–20; Yamauchi 1997: 82–84.

<sup>154</sup> See above, pp. 14–18.

<sup>155</sup> In the *Ap. John* (NH II,11.35–12.3 = NH III,18.9–10; BG 42.10–11), the demiurge has “many faces” (*prosōpon*) and can reveal himself behind any of them (NH III,18.11 = BG 42.12).

(27.2b–21).<sup>156</sup> He sends demons (28.13b–15) in human form (29.17) to establish Nature’s faith, the Jewish religion under its various aspects: the covenant and the circumcision (29.15b–19a; 29.33b–30.4a),<sup>157</sup> the Law (28.17),<sup>158</sup> and the teaching of the prophets (28.18). In other words, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets are nothing but manifestations of the Old Testament god, the evil demiurge and the counterfeit of the Righteous One, who will reveal himself in creation in order to keep the power of faith on behalf of Nature (30.8–21a).<sup>159</sup>

But when Nature’s faith is revealed “in its final likeness” (30.4b–6a), in the form of water baptism (30.21b–27a), the Saviour will come to put an end to Nature’s efforts. “For at that time the demon will *also*<sup>160</sup> appear on the river to baptize with an imperfect baptism and to disturb the world with a bondage of water” (30.21b–27a).

Two passages describe the Saviour’s action when he undergoes the baptismal rite:

30 For at that time <sup>22</sup> the demon will also appear <sup>23</sup> on the river <sup>24</sup> to baptize with an <sup>25</sup> imperfect baptism <sup>26</sup> and to disturb the world with bondage <sup>27</sup> of water. However, it is necessary for me <sup>28</sup> to appear in the members <sup>29</sup> of the thought of Faith, in order to <sup>30</sup> reveal the great works of my <sup>31</sup> power. I shall spread (the thought) <sup>32</sup> out of the demon—who is Soldas—, <sup>33</sup> and the light which <sup>34</sup> has (something) from Spirit, I shall mix it <sup>35</sup> with my invincible garment <sup>36</sup> as well as with the one whom I shall reveal <sup>31</sup> <sup>1</sup> in the darkness for your sake <sup>2</sup> and for the sake of your race, which <sup>3</sup> will be protected from evil <sup>4</sup> Darkness.

<sup>156</sup> See above, p. 63.

<sup>157</sup> The demon in human form who separates himself from Sodom (29.15b–17) is Abraham, father of the people of the covenant and the circumcision (see Gen 12:1–3; 15; and 17).

<sup>158</sup> On the role of the angels in transmitting the Law see Acts 7:38,53; Gal 3:19; and Heb 2:2.

<sup>159</sup> Compare 28.24b–25; 29.7b–10; 30.12b–18

<sup>160</sup> The context of this page 30 imposes the translation of *ke* in line 23 as *also*. In fact, the manifestation mentioned in 30.21b–23 refers back to the announcement made in 30.4b–7. This is the last in the series of manifestations by the demon with many faces. The site of his manifestations is creation. With Abraham, he will reveal himself in creation’s four regions (see Gen 13:14–15); with John the Baptist, he will show himself at the river. Abraham and John the Baptist represent the first and last faces used by the evil archon to show Nature’s faith. Orbe (1976: 507) has translated this with the same meaning: “...aparacerá tambien el demonio sobre el rio.” See also Lupieri 1984: 188.

32 Then, through the demon, <sup>6</sup> I shall descend into the water. <sup>7</sup> And whirlpools of water <sup>8</sup> and flames of fire will rise <sup>9</sup> up against me. Then I <sup>10</sup> shall ascend from the water, having put <sup>11</sup> on the light of Faith <sup>12</sup> and the unquenchable fire, <sup>13</sup> in order that through my help <sup>14</sup> the power of Spirit may get across, <sup>15</sup> the (power) sown in the creation <sup>16</sup> by the winds and the demons <sup>17</sup> and the stars. And through them <sup>18</sup> every impurity will be filled.

The second passage describes the descent into the river as a *descensus ad inferos* (32.5b–9a; see 36.16–22). The narrator thus gives the event a cosmic dimension and recalls the Saviour’s first descent into the cloud of Water to free Spirit’s light from it (see 18.1b–19.26a). The saving action has in view both the “members of the thought of Faith” (30.27b–29a) and the spiritual seeds sown through the agency of the demons (32.12b–17a). To allow the light of Faith (32.11b–12a) and the light of Spirit (30.33b–34a) to pass onto his celestial garment, the Saviour avails himself of an earthly garment (30.31b–35a), the demonic body of fire (see 39.31b–32a; 44.8b–9a), that he has put on in order to trick the archon.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, the author is careful to make it clear that the demon who is going to trick Nature is named Soldas, so as to distinguish him from the evil archon who presents himself in the guise of John the Baptist.<sup>162</sup>

b. *The crucifixion of the Saviour* (38.28b–40.31a)

The *Paraph. Shem* interprets the Saviour’s crucifixion from a docetic perspective. The passage is divided into three parts: 1) first, the Saviour announces his re-ascent to the heavenly spheres at the end of his earthly sojourn (38.28b–39.24a); 2) at that moment on earth, Nature, thinking she has taken hold of the Saviour, will crucify Soldas, the earthly Jesus (39.24b–40.3); 3) using the allegory of Rebouel’s beheading, the Saviour explains the saving effect of his re-ascent (40.4–31a).

<sup>161</sup> The “members of the thought of Faith” with whom the Saviour clothes himself can be identified with the righteous of the Old Covenant, who observed the Law in good faith and who await the Saviour, as Valentinian Gnosticism teaches. See *Exc. Theod.*, 18, 26,2, and 37–38. But for the *Paraph. Shem* the *descensus ad inferos* takes place at the baptism, not after the crucifixion.

<sup>162</sup> Those who identify Soldas with Jesus are Schenke 1975: 126–27, Fischer 1975: 258, and Lupieri 1984: 188. Sevrin 1975: 90, Dubois 1986: 155, and Rudolph 1975: 210, are among those who identify Soldas with John the Baptist.

1) *The Saviour's re-ascent (38.28b–39.24a)* After finishing the account of his baptism, Derdekeas immediately describes the final act of his earthly sojourn.

38<sup>29</sup>... For when I have<sup>30</sup> completed<sup>31</sup> the days which have been assigned to me upon the earth, then<sup>32</sup> I will cast from me<sup>33</sup> [.]. [.]. [.]. [a]nd 39<sup>1</sup> my incomparable garment<sup>2</sup> will shine upon me,<sup>3</sup> as well as all my other garments which I<sup>4</sup> put on in all the clouds<sup>5</sup> (and) which were from<sup>6</sup> the Astonishment of Spirit.<sup>7</sup> For the air will divide my garment.<sup>8</sup> And it will shine and divide in<sup>9</sup> all the clouds unto<sup>10</sup> the root of the Light. Mind<sup>11</sup> is the repose with my garment.

This final episode in the Saviour's earthly life, described as a re-ascent through the clouds or spheres,<sup>163</sup> only makes sense as the extension and the end of his re-ascent from the waters of the Jordan at the time of his baptism. It should also be noted that this and the following episodes together form a single drama. In true apocalyptic fashion, the author first makes the event known in its true, heavenly dimension, before recounting it in its earthly complement.<sup>164</sup> Thus, the saving action begun at the baptism is achieved when the Saviour, clothed with the pneumatic seeds and noetic particles, re-ascends to the place of his temporary repose.<sup>165</sup>

But in order to accomplish this final step, the Saviour must cast from himself "his likeness of fire,"<sup>166</sup> that is, his body. The text has a lacuna here, but its reconstruction is suggested by the immediate context (39.1b–2), and by the writing's eschatological passages overall. In these texts the body is termed "the fire and the dark body" (32.21b–24a; 43.6b–9a; see 1.15; 26.4b–5a; 42.30–31a; 45.34). The pneumatic person who wishes to ascend to his root must therefore set aside like an item of clothing what fire he possesses, must leave his body (43.6b–11a; 43.23b–24). Even the Saviour, at the end of his life, probably at the

<sup>163</sup> See above, n. 105, and p. 51.

<sup>164</sup> For example, see G.B. Caird, *A Commentary on The Revelation of St. John the Divine*. HNTC, 18 (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 153. One thinks of the Johannine interpretation of the crucifixion (see John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32–34).

<sup>165</sup> Later we will elaborate on the tractate's eschatological teaching. Here we can note another connection with Valentinian doctrine: "Therefore Jesus by that sign carries the seed on his shoulders and leads them into the Pleroma. For Jesus is called the shoulders of the seed and Christ is the head" (*Exc. Theod.* 42,2, Casey 1934: 69).

<sup>166</sup> We are proposing that p. 38, line 33 be read as "[my likeness] of [fire]." This expression appears in 22.26 and 44.8b–9a (a demon with "a likeness of fire").



moment of his crucifixion, will abandon his body to nature and, by means of his garments of light, will be lifted through the spheres.

2) *The crucifixion of Soldas (39.24b–40.3)* If the passage that describes *the Saviour's re-ascent* at the end of his mission is relatively clear, the one following, which we understand to be the account of the crucifixion of Soldas, the earthly Jesus, is much more obscure:

39<sup>24</sup> That is why I appeared . . .<sup>26</sup> in order that<sup>27</sup> the wickedness of Nature<sup>28</sup> might be brought to completion. For (Nature) wished<sup>29</sup> at that time<sup>30</sup> to seize me. She will (in fact) affix (*pēssein*) Soldas (to the cross)<sup>31</sup> who is the dark<sup>32</sup> flame, who will stand<sup>33</sup> on the h[eigh]t, (nailed) t[o the wood] of error<sup>40</sup> <sup>1</sup> that it might seize me.

The interpretation of the passage depends on the meaning given to the Greek verb *Pēssein*. *Pēsō/pēgnumi* means “stick, drive home, drive in a pointed object, whence impale, run through, fix a body on stakes” (Bailey 1963: 1550). In Liddell and Scott (1968: 1399) we find “stick or fix in, stick or fix on, fix upon an object; fasten together; make solid; fix, establish.” In his introduction Krause stays close to the first meaning and translates the verb as “fest machen.” Wisse offered “to establish” in his first translation, thus, it seems, adopting the verb’s metaphorical sense.<sup>167</sup> He retains this translation in his own edition of the text (Wisse 1996b: 107). However, a consultation of Lampe (1968: 1080–81) reveals that the verb *pēgnumi* and the substantive *pēxis* were used to refer to crucifying or fixing on a cross. We find two applications of the verb, in Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Iohannem*, 12 (Aubert 1638, 4: 1046 E) and in Oecumenius, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, 4 (Hoskier 1928: 95), where it signifies “to set up a cross.” As to the substantive *pēxis*, it is found in a patently docetic context in *Acta Iohannis* 101 (Junod and Kaestli 1983, 1: 213.13), and in Gregory of Nazianzen, *Carmina*, 2,34,207 (PG 37, 9604), to indicate fixing on a cross. We therefore translate the verb here as “to affix (to the cross).”

This interpretation supposes, of course, that the demon who baptizes and the one identified by the name Soldas are not one and the same.<sup>168</sup> The Saviour has used his demonic body to trick Nature and be

<sup>167</sup> See *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 1977, 325. In the third edition (1988, 357), we suggested “to fix (to the cross).”

<sup>168</sup> Franzmann (1996: xviii–xix) rejects this interpretation, wrongly assuming that we identify Soldas with the demon who baptizes.

clothed with the light-seeds. When he re-ascends, Nature, who “took care of her faith” (40.2), will try to recover the light escaping from her. Her error (39.33) will consist precisely in thinking that she can hold captive (40.1) the celestial Christ in the body of Soldas “fixed on the cross.”<sup>169</sup>

3) *The beheading of Rebouel (40:4–31a)* In allegorical form, the enigmatic lines following the account of the crucifixion present a teaching probably aimed at those who have elected to undergo the rite of baptism. These lines recount the beheading of a woman named Rebouel. The text first gives the meaning of the crucifixion on the cosmic level: “And at that time the Light was about to separate from Darkness” (40.4–6a). At the moment of his crucifixion, the Saviour re-ascends to the spheres of Light, bringing with him the seeds: he separates them from the world of Darkness.<sup>170</sup> This explanation is then proposed in allegorical form:

40<sup>12</sup> “...Blessed is<sup>13</sup> Rebouel among every race<sup>14</sup> of men, for it is you alone, (Rebouel),<sup>15</sup> who have seen. And who will listen.” And<sup>16</sup> they will behead the woman<sup>17</sup> who has the perception,<sup>18</sup> which you will reveal<sup>19</sup> upon the earth...<sup>23</sup> For the woman<sup>24</sup> whom they will behead at that<sup>25</sup> time is the arrangement<sup>26</sup> of the power of the demon,<sup>27</sup> who will baptize the seed<sup>28</sup> of Darkness...<sup>30</sup> He engendered a woman and she was<sup>31</sup> called Rebouel.

Rebouel doubtless symbolizes the Great Church, “the arrangement (*systasis*) of the power of the demon” (40.25b–26), the community he gathers through baptism, but a part of which has the perception, meaning the teaching which the pneumatics obtain for him (40.17–19a). These must not hesitate to separate themselves from the Great Church that practises the impure rite of baptism (40.27–29). Through the ritual formula of witnessing (see 31.17b–32.5a; 33.23b–34.16a; and

<sup>169</sup> A similar docetic interpretation of the crucifixion is found in *The Paraphrase of Seth*, NH VII, 58.13–59.9; also 55.30b–35 (with the term *planē*); and 55.36–56.32a. See L. Painchaud, “La polémique anti-ecclésiale et l’exégèse de la passion dans le *Deuxième traité du Grand Seth*.” In Barc 1981: 340–51. In the *Trim. Prot.*, during her third epiphany Protennoia puts on Jesus, whom she has carried out of the accursed wood, and she brings her “seed” to the holy light (NH XIII, 50.12b–20a). In this perspective, we propose that line 33 on p. 39 be completed as: “who will stand on the h[eight], (nailed) t[o the wood] of error.” Nature is lured into attempting the capture of the Saviour through the wood of the cross.

<sup>170</sup> As in *Exc. Theod.*, 42,1: “The Cross is a sign of the Limit in the Pleroma; for it divides the unfaithful from the faithful” (Casey 1934: 69).

46.14–47.7a) that the pneumatics transmit to them, at the end of their lives they will be able to separate from their bodies and join with the seeds that the Saviour will have already introduced into the repose (39.10b–11).

## 2. *The eschatological teaching of the Saviour*

### a. *The first eschatological discourse (34.32b–36.1)*

The eschatological doctrine is in fact aimed at those who will remain on earth after the Saviour re-ascends at the moment of his crucifixion. It is essentially based on the anthropogonic accounts that clearly establish the existence of three classes of human beings and the connection of each class to the root whence it takes its origin. The Saviour's first eschatological discourse is located in the context of his baptism. He expressly addresses Shem, and teaches him that salvation cannot come from a rite linked to water. That one is saved who comes from a light-root and to whom has been revealed the testimony, the names of the celestial beings designed to assist him in accomplishing re-ascent toward the place of his root. The discourse can be divided into two parts: the first presents the three classes of humans with respect to their own root (34.32b–35.17a), while the second describes how the final salvation of each class will be achieved (35.17b–36.1):

34 <sup>32</sup> O Shem, it is difficult for someone <sup>33</sup> wearing a body to complete <sup>34</sup> [these things that] I said to you. 35 <sup>1</sup> And only a few people will <sup>2</sup> complete them, people who possess <sup>3</sup> the particle of Mind <sup>4</sup> as well as the thought of the light of <sup>5</sup> Spirit. They will protect their thought <sup>6</sup> from the impure rubbing. <sup>7</sup> For many in the generation of Nature <sup>8</sup> will seek the security <sup>9</sup> of the Power. They will not find it <sup>10</sup> nor will they be able to <sup>11</sup> fulfill the will of Faith. <sup>12</sup> For they are the seed of the <sup>13</sup> universal Darkness...<sup>16</sup> The bondage of the body is <sup>17</sup> great indeed.

For where <sup>18</sup> the winds, and the stars, <sup>19</sup> and the demons sow (seeds) from the power <sup>20</sup> of Spirit, (there) repentance <sup>21</sup> and testimony will appear <sup>22</sup> upon them, and Mercy <sup>23</sup> will lead them to <sup>24</sup> the unbegotten Spirit. <sup>25</sup> As for those who are repentant, <sup>26</sup> they will find rest <sup>27</sup> in the consummation with Faith, <sup>28</sup> in the place of Hymen. <sup>29</sup> This is the Faith which will <sup>30</sup> fill the place which will have been <sup>31</sup> left empty. As for those who have nothing <sup>32</sup> from the luminous Spirit nor <sup>33</sup> from Faith, they will be <sup>34</sup> dissolved in Darkness, the place <sup>36</sup> <sup>1</sup> where repentance has not come.

In this discourse a clear distinction can be made between the three roots—the luminous *Spirit* (35.5,20,32), *Faith* (35.27–28,29,33), and *Darkness* (35.12–13,34)—and what in a human being becomes attached

to each of these roots: the *thought* of the luminous Spirit (35.4), the *particle* of Mind (35.3; see 43.2–4, 21–26), and the *body* (34.33; 35.16b–17a).

In principle, the pneumatic's salvation consists in the luminous seeding of the power Astonishment (see 24.8–9) by means of the winds and demons (35.17b–20a). Through this seed, the call to conversion meets with a favourable response from the elect (35.20b–22a). It would seem, in fact, that for the *Paraph. Shem* election and the gift of a light-seed precede the option for the Saviour. This option does not render one pneumatic, but reveals (35.21b–22a) one to be such. After accepting the Saviour's message, the pneumatic person then receives communication of the testimony<sup>171</sup> that allows unencumbered re-ascent to the spheres, with the assurance of being guided by Mercy<sup>172</sup> to the place of one's root, the unbegotten Spirit.

The salvation of the noetics is described as one of inferior degree. The noetics, who possess a particle of Mind but have not been graced with a pneumatic seed, must be converted. At the consummation they will go to rest with Mind-Faith in the place of Hymen "which will have been left empty" (35.30b–31a), the place Astonishment and his followers have left in order to ascend to the place of Spirit.<sup>173</sup>

It may be asked whether, in the case of the noetics, possessing a particle of Mind necessarily implies conversion. It would seem not, since Mind, their root, takes his own origin from the evil root. The winds and demons plant seed in the noetics from what remains in themselves of the power of the demiurgic Mind (see 21.20b–28a; 21.36b–22.3),<sup>174</sup> the one associated with Nature's unclean works (see 23.4b–6a). On the other hand, the kingly Mind, which appeared after a *coitus interruptus* of Nature's forms (22.9b–16), "having loathed the impurity of Nature," has received the light of Faith from the Saviour (22.26b–23.6a).<sup>175</sup> Therefore, the noetics must also first respond to the call to conversion addressed to them by the pneumatics and, following Mind's example, turn away from Nature's impurity. In contrast,

<sup>171</sup> The universal testimony, as we shall see below.

<sup>172</sup> Mercy is the name given to the fiery garment with which the Saviour clothed himself in Hades in order to trick Nature (see 31.7; 33.17b–20; 46.11, 21). The Saviour has left this garment in the cloud of the Middle so that it may serve as a guide to the pneumatics (see 43.9b–14a).

<sup>173</sup> See 6.13b–30a. During the time of salvation history, Astonishment dwells in Hymen.

<sup>174</sup> See above, pp. 57–60.

<sup>175</sup> See above, pp. 58–59.

the luminous Thought sown in the pneumatics comes from Spirit's Astonishment. All it needs is to be awakened by the Saviour's inner call (see 15.16b–16.23a).<sup>176</sup>

Finally, the psychics, having come forth from the “seed of the universal Darkness” (35.12b–13a; see 11.3b–6; 21.17,20a; 23.9–30; 40.27–29) with no share in the luminous Spirit nor in Faith, and therefore with no possibility of conversion (see 35.9b–11), will also be dissolved in Darkness.

The resemblance to *Valentinian* doctrine is unavoidable. In the Great Notice to *AH* (1,6,1), Irenaeus reports that according to Ptolemy's teaching the Valentinians distinguished three natures in the human being, “these, they claim, exist in them”: the choic or hylc nature, drawn out of the inconsistency of matter; the psychic nature, characterized by the soul proceeding out of the breath of the Demiurge; and, finally, the pneumatic nature, the element parented by Wisdom and “planted in Demiurge without the latter's knowledge: his soul is from Demiurge, his body is from the earth.” Applied to the human race, this tripartite distinction determines three classes—pneumatic, psychic, and hylc (see *AH* 1,7,5)—whose fate varies in keeping with their constitutive elements. The hylcs, composed of a carnal body and material soul, are earmarked for destruction. The pneumatics attain to the Pleroma because of their spiritual element, once they have been divested of their soul in the Middle. The fate of the psychics depends on both their nature and their behaviour: if they choose what is good, they will rejoin the Demiurge in the Middle; should they not so choose, they will share the fate of the hylcs (see *AH* 1,6,1–4 and 7,5). Despite differences in anthropology, the similarities with the *Paraph. Shem* are striking: both systems base their soteriology and eschatology on a tripartite anthropology and, in the case of the first and third classes of human beings, on the presence within them of an element that determines their fate, starting at birth.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>176</sup> See above, p. 55.

<sup>177</sup> This theory of three natures is also found in other indirect witnesses to the Valentinian tradition: *Exc. Theod.*, 50–57; the *Fragments of Heraclion* drawn from Origen's *Commentary on John*, especially fragments 40, 44, 45, and 46, following the numbering in A.E. Brooke, *The Fragments of Heraclion. Texts and Studies*, 1,4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891). Janssens 1959 provides a French translation and commentary of these fragments. See also C. Blanc, *Origène: Commentaire sur saint Jean*. SC 120, 157, 222, 290, 385 (Paris: Cerf, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1982, 1992); Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos*, esp. chap. 29; and the notice on the Valentinians

Another detail of the *Paraph. Shem's* eschatology that resembles Valentinian teaching is that, according to Ptolemy, the psychics “will take their rest in the Middle,” while according to the *Paraph. Shem* the noetics will rest in the place of Hymen. The *Paraph. Shem* says that the pneumatics will leave the Hymen to enter Astonishment's company in Spirit's place, while, according to Irenaeus' Great Notice, the pneumatic seeds will leave the Middle and enter the Pleroma with their mother Achamoth (see *AH* 1,7,1). But the *Paraph. Shem* does not speak of a transformation of noetics into pneumatics (Thomassen and Painchaud 1989: 17, n. 43).

b. *The second eschatological discourse (42.24–43.27a)*

The Saviour's second eschatological discourse is one in a series (42.11b–45.31a) added to the primitive apocalypse (1.5b–42.11a). Here the Saviour clarifies what the saved are to discard and what they are to put on during their re-ascent, if they are to attain to rest in their root:

42<sup>24</sup> But those who have<sup>25</sup> a free conscience<sup>26</sup> will remove themselves from<sup>27</sup> the babbling of Nature.<sup>28</sup> For they will bear<sup>29</sup> the universal testimony.<sup>30</sup> They will strip off the burden<sup>31</sup> of Darkness; they will put on<sup>32</sup> the Word of Light and<sup>33</sup> they will not be kept back<sup>43</sup> <sup>1</sup> in the base place.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, what they possess from<sup>3</sup> the power of Mind they<sup>4</sup> will give it back to Faith. They will<sup>5</sup> be admitted without<sup>6</sup> suffering. Finally, they will<sup>7</sup> abandon the restless fire<sup>8</sup> they possess in the middle of Nature,<sup>9</sup> and they will be received<sup>10</sup> by my garments, which are<sup>11</sup> in the clouds. It is they<sup>12</sup> who guide their members. They<sup>13</sup> will rest in Spirit<sup>14</sup> without suffering.

But because of this the<sup>15</sup> appointed term of Faith was manifested<sup>16</sup> upon the earth for a<sup>17</sup> short time, until<sup>18</sup> Darkness is taken away from her, and<sup>19</sup> her testimony is revealed—<sup>20</sup> the one revealed<sup>21</sup> by me. Those who will be found<sup>22</sup> to be from her root<sup>23</sup> will strip off<sup>24</sup> Darkness and the restless fire.<sup>25</sup> They will put on the light<sup>26</sup> of Mind and they will bear witness.

To attain to repose, the pneumatic must strip off the burden of Darkness and chaotic fire (42.30–31; 43.6b–9a), which are the soul and the body,<sup>178</sup> recite the universal testimony (42.29b–30), give to Faith what

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in Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, 6,34,4–6 (Legge 1921, 2: 32–33; Marcovich 1986: 247). Among the witnesses to the direct tradition, mention may be made especially of *Tri. Trac.* in NH I, 104.30–106.25; 118.14–17, and *Orig. World*: see L. Painchaud, “Le sommaire anthropogonique de l'Écrit sans titre (NH II, 117,27–118,21) à la lumière de I Cor 15,45–47,” *VC* 44 (1990): 382–93.

<sup>178</sup> See 1.15; 24.21; 26.4b–5a; 32.22b–25a; 45.32b–34a.

they possess from the power of Mind (43.2–4), and put on the Word of Light (42.31b–32). The noetics, come forth from the root of Faith (43.21–22), must also strip off Darkness and the restless fire (43.23–24), put on the light of Mind, and bear witness to Faith (43.25–27a).

It remains to spell out what the revealer means when he speaks of testimony in these two eschatological discourses. First of all, it is in the context of his future baptism, when he descends into the river's water, there to free the light of Faith (32.5b–18), that Derdekeas communicates to Shem *his* memorial (31.4b–13a), followed by what he calls the testimony of Faith (31.13b–32.5a). In these formulae, which have a liturgical flair, the Saviour reveals to Shem the names of the entities that played a role in forming the universe. The account of the baptism is followed by a short exhortation (32.19–27a), and then by a long explanation (32.27b–34.16a), introduced by the expression “This is the paraphrase,” of the different names evoked in the ritual formula. Toward the end of the tractate the texts of the memorial and the testimony reappear, this time in the mouth of Shem when, at the close of his life, he prepares to ascend to the spheres (45.31b–47.7a). There are thus three lists (31.4b–32.5a; 32.27b–34.16a; 45.31b–47.7a), which can be read in parallel fashion.<sup>179</sup>

Comparison of the three lists brings out a clear distinction between the memorial and the testimony. In 31.9b–10a Derdekeas speaks of his memorial: “For this is my memorial” (*tahupomnēsis*), recalling his

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<sup>179</sup> See the synopsis below, pp. 78–80. Arranging the three lists side by side brings out the paraphrastic character of the second list and justifies attaching the expression “this is the paraphrase” in 32.27 to what follows it. Note also the direct style used in the first part of the memorial in 46.5b–12, which takes into account the vocative presentation of certain names. The comparison also leads us to make some corrections: <Chelkhe> must be supplied in 31.7 (see 33.12; 46.11,21) and <Sophia> in 33.27 (see 31.27). In the second list, the scribe probably wrote *Sophaia* (33.27a) by merging *Sophia* and *Saphaia*, while in the third list he wrote *Sophia* as *Sophaia* (46.26a), no doubt under the influence of the ending of the name following *Saphaia*. In 31.24, *Osei* could well be a misappropriation of the Greek *hos ei* (“who art”: see the Coptic *peto* in 46.14b), since this name is not found in either of the other lists. Finally, it should be noted that in the third list we have suppressed the dittography extending from 46.20b to 29a, and have adjusted this list to the first and second. In point of fact, the third list brings together certain names from locations different than in the other two: the three light-beings, *Sophia*, *Saphaia*, and *Saphaina*, are mentioned prior to Faith; the mention of the impure light and of the four cardinal directions comes after the mention of ether, atmosphere, powers, and authorities. These divergences, coupled with the astonishing reference to the Saviour's name as Serdekea, lead one to think that these lists must have circulated independently and in different communities before their integration into the text in its present form.

descent into chaos to free the light of Spirit from the cloud of Water (31.10b–13a; see 8.31b–9.33a), thus setting up a discrepancy between the list of names he has just revealed and the one to follow, which he introduces by saying, “then I shall appear in the baptism of the demon to reveal with the mouth of Faith a testimony for those who belong to her” (31.17b–22a). The mention of a testimony proper to Faith is explicitly affirmed in the second eschatological discourse: “But because of this the appointed term of Faith was manifested upon the earth for a short time, until Darkness is taken away from her, and *her* testimony is revealed—the one which was revealed by me” (43.14b–21). What is more, in the third list, the one recited by Shem, a double literary inclusion underlines the distinction between the list’s two parts: “you (pl.) are the immortal memorial” (46.11b–12), at the end of the first part, refers back to the introduction, “my heart put on the immortal memorial” (46.1b–3a), while the recitation’s conclusion, “These are the things which I completed while bearing witness” (47.6–7a), refers back to the beginning of the second part, “I testify to thee” (46.13).

In several places the tractate also employs the expression “universal testimony.” Thus, when Derdekeas warns Shem of the destruction of Sodom, he advises him to announce his “universal teaching” (29.14) to the Sodomites, who are his members (29.14b–15a). They will then be able to bear “the universal testimony” and to “rest with a pure conscience in the place of their repose, which is the unbegotten Spirit” (29.21b–26).

In the eschatological teaching that follows the “paraphrase,” Shem receives the assurance of the blessed state granted to his race: “You are blessed, Shem, for your race has been protected from the dark wind with many faces. And they will bear the universal testimony [...] and they will be sublime through the memorial of the Light” (34.16b–24a). And in the discourse on individual eschatology added at the end of the tractate, the revealer recalls that those called to take their repose in Spirit (43.12b–13a) must remove themselves from Nature’s babbling and bear “the universal testimony” (42.26b–29).

To sum up: when Shem, pronounces the formula during his ascent, he first recites the memorial, then the testimony, what the first list calls the testimony of Faith. When the Sodomites and the other members of Shem’s race must use the formula, it is said that they will bear “the universal testimony.” It can therefore be concluded that the expression “universal testimony” designates the entirety of a liturgical formula



reserved to Shem's race and that includes the memorial, whereas the testimony of Faith only includes the second part of this formula and is to be recited by "the members of Faith."

The eschatological function of the testimony is therefore made quite clear. Since the noetics ascend only to the Hymen, the place of Faith (35.26b–31a), their list includes only the names of entities linked to creation and to the world of chaos (31.22b–32.5a; 46.13–47.5). In contrast, the pneumatics will reach the place of Spirit. They are to be equipped with a list of names that takes in both the entities placed below the Hymen, and those located between Hymen and the place of Spirit. That is why their list is called a "*universal* testimony."<sup>180</sup>

## I. SITUATION, PROVENANCE, AND DATE OF THE *PARAPH. SHEM*

### 1. *The Paraph. Shem in the Nag Hammadi corpus*

To situate the *Paraph. Shem* within the Coptic library of Nag Hammadi, it might be useful to first review the classification of the texts proposed by M. Tardieu.<sup>181</sup> This author distinguishes between 1) texts "originating in Valentinian circles"<sup>182</sup> 2) accounts of revelations "mythological in character, devoid of Christian allusions"<sup>183</sup> [...] or with Christian

<sup>180</sup> In this context, the adjective "universal" (*katholikos*) can refer to its astrological meaning. Somewhat analogously to our text, the astrological texts distinguish the forces acting upon the entire universe, the universal (*katholikai*) forces, those that act on species (*merikai*), and those acting on individuals (*idikai*). See Festugière and Nock 1945: Appendix C, 140–42, 134–35 (note 77). A polemical point against the Great Church is apparent here: true catholicity is not horizontal, but vertical.

<sup>181</sup> See M. Tardieu, "Le Congrès de Yale sur le Gnosticisme (28–31 mars 1978)," *REA* 24 (1978): 188–209; also J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte*, 2. BCNH, section «Textes», 7 (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1982), 120; Sevrin 1986: 3–6; P.-H. Poirier, "La bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: sa nature et son importance," *SR* 15 (1986): 303–16.

<sup>182</sup> NH I, 1–2; I, 3 and par.; XII, 2; I, 4–5; NH XII, 2; NH II, 3; NH VIII, 2; NH IX, 3; NH XI, 1–2.

<sup>183</sup> NH II, 1 and par.; NH III, 1 and NH IV, 1; NH II, 4–5 and NH XIII, 2 (first eleven lines of NH II,5); NH III, 2 and par.; NH IV, 2; NH V, 5; NH VII, 5; NH VIII, 1; NH IX, 1–2; NH X, 1; NH XI, 3–4; NH XIII, 1.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE MEMORIAL AND THE TESTIMONY

## The memorial

31.4b–11a	32.27b–33.23a	46.1b–12
Know, O Shem,	This is the paraphrase . . . :	Then my heart put on the immortal memorial and I said, “I agree with thy memorial which thou hast revealed to me: Elorchaios,
that without Elorchaios	Elorchaios is the name of the great Light, the place from which I have come, the Word without equal.	and thou, Amoiaias, and thou, Sederkeas, and thy guilelessness, (and then,) Strophaias,
Amoias,	The likeness is my glorious garment. And Derdekeas [is] the [na]me [of] his Word in the voice of the Light.	(and then,) Strophaias,
Strophaias,	And Strophaias is the blessed gaze which is the Spirit.	and thou, Chelkeak,
Chelkeak,	And it is Chelkach who is my garment, who has come from Astonishment; this is the one who was in the cloud of Hymen, which appear as a trimorphic cloud.	and thou, Chelkea,
Chelkea,	And Chelkea is my garment which has two forms, this the one who was in the cloud of Silence.	as well as Chelke
<Chelke>	And Chelke is my garment which was given him from every region; it was given him in a single form from the Greatness; (this garment) was in the cloud of Middle.	and Elaios,
and Aileos	And the star of the Light which was mentioned is my invincible garment I wore in Hades; this is the mercy which is located above the Thought and above the testimony of those who bear witness.	you are the immortal memorial.
no one will be able to pass by this wicked position. This is my memorial because through it I have triumphed over the wicked position and I have rescued the light of Spirit from the frightful water.		

## The Testimony

31.13b–32.5a	33.23b–34.16a	46.13–20a, 29b–47.7a
<p>For when the appointed days (set) for the demon draw near—he who will baptize in error—, then I shall appear in the baptism of the demon to reveal with the mouth of Faith a testimony for those who belong to her, “I testify to thee, unquenchable spark, Osei (= <i>hosei</i>, thou who art), the elect of the Light, the eye of heaven.</p>	<p>And the testimony which has been mentioned:</p>	<p>I testify to thee, unquenchable spark, who is an eye of heaven and a voice of light,</p>
<p>And (to thee,) Faith, the first and the last,</p>	<p>the first and the last, Faith, the Mind of the wind of Darkness. &lt;Sophia&gt;</p>	<p>... and (to thee,) Faith, the first and the last ...</p>
<p>and (to thee,) Sophia, and (to thee,) Saphaia, and (to thee,) Saphaina,</p>	<p>and S&lt;a&gt;phaia and Saphaina are in the cloud of those who have been separated from the restless fire.</p>	<p>and (to thee,) Soph{a}ia, and (to thee,) Saphaia, and (to thee,) Saphaina</p>
<p>and (to thee,) righteous spark,</p>	<p>And the righteous spark is the cloud of light which has shone in your midst. For in it my garment will go down to chaos.</p>	<p>and (to thee,) righteous spark, ...</p>
<p>and (to thee,) impure Light.</p>	<p>But the impure light, it is as Power that it exists; it appeared in Darkness and belongs to dark Nature.</p>	<p>And (to) thee, impure Light,</p>
<p>And (to) you (sg.), east, and west, and north, and south,</p>		<p>and (to) thee also, east and (to thee,) west and (to thee,) south and (to thee,) north, you are the four cardinal points of the inhabited world ...</p>
<p>upper air and lower air and (to) all the powers and authorities you (pl.) are in [crea]tion;</p>	<p>But the upper air as well as the lower air, the powers and the authorities,</p>	<p>... and (to thee,) upper air and (to thee,) lower air, } and (to you) all the powers and authorities that are in creation ...</p>

(cont.)

31.13b–32.5a	33.23b–34.16a	46.13–20a, 29b–47.7a
and to thee, Moluchta,	the demons and the stars, all possessed a particle of fire and a light from the Spirit. And Moluchtas is a wind, for without it nothing is brought forth upon the earth. He resembles a serpent and a unicorn. His unfolding is mani- fold wings.	. . . and (to) thee also, Moluchta,
as well as Soch, (who are) from every work and from every impure effort of Nature.	And the remainder is the womb which has been repelled.	and (to thee,) Essoch, you (pl.) are the root of evil and every work and impure effort of Nature.”
		These are the things which I completed while bearing witness.

allusions”;<sup>184</sup> and 3) those writings “that are not Gnostic but that were used by Gnostics.”<sup>185</sup>

According to H.-M. Schenke,<sup>186</sup> a certain number of texts in the second group would belong to a “Sethian” type of Gnosis, character-

<sup>184</sup> Among these texts, Tardieu includes NH VII, 1 and 2.

<sup>185</sup> For this last category, Poirier (“La bibliothèque copte,” 309) proposes the distinction 3): “les textes gnostiques ou gnosticisants, mais qu’on ne saurait rattacher à une ‘école’ ou à un courant déterminé”: NH I, 2 (placed in the second group by Tardieu); NH II, 2; NH II,7; NH III, 5; NH V,2; NH V, 3; NH V, 4; NH VI,2; NH VI, 3; NH VI, 4; NH VII, 3; NH VIII, 2 (placed in the second group by Tardieu); NH XII, 3; 4) texts that are not Gnostic, though in some cases Gnosticized, but are open to a Gnostic reading or illustration: NH VI, 1; NH VI, 5; NH VI, 6; NH VI, 7; NH VI, 8; NH VII, 4; NH XII, 1.

<sup>186</sup> H.-M. Schenke, “Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften.” In P. Nagel, ed., *Studia coptica*. Berliner Byzantinische Arbeiten, 45 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974), 165–72; idem, “The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism.” In B. Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Conn., March 28–31, 1978*, 2: *Sethian Gnosticism*. SHR, 41 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 588–616. Schenke singles out the following texts as “Sethian”: *Apoc. John* (NH II, 1 and IV, 1 [longer version]; NH III, 1 and BG 8502, 2 [shorter version]); *Hyp. Arch.* (NH II, 4); *Gos. Eg.* (NH III, 2; NH IV, 2); *Apoc. Adam* (NH V, 5); 3 *Steles Seth* (NH VII, 5); *Zost.* (NH VIII, 1); *Marsanes*

ized by a range of mythologems, the principal ones being: 1) awareness of belonging to Seth's pneumatic seed; 2) the figure of Seth as both heavenly and earthly saviour; 3) the presence of four light-beings: Harmozel, Oroaiel, Daveithe, and Elelth; 4) the original triad of Father (the invisible Spirit), Mother (Barbelo), and self-begotten Son (the Man); 5) the presence of Jaldabaoth, the evil demiurge, who seeks to destroy Seth's seed; 6) the division of history into three periods, each marked by the Saviour's advent; and 7) common cultic practices of baptism and ritual ascent.<sup>187</sup>

It can be seen that the *Paraph. Shem* shares several characteristics with this Gnostic current. The first of these is the awareness of forming a chosen race out of a common ancestor. If the name given this ancestor is Shem, son of Noah, this is not due to confusion of Seth with Shem.<sup>188</sup> The author is especially interested in the new humanity that begins after the flood (26.20b–25a), and Shem is the postdiluvian incarnation of the great Power produced by the Astonishment of Spirit in the cloud of Hymen (9.33b–36; 10.19b–20; 11.11b–17a). This Power is the pneumatic Primal Man, his celestial counterpart to whom Shem will be assimilated at the close of his ecstatic experience (41.23b–28a). That is why in a sense he can be called “the first being upon the earth” (1.20–21a), the firstborn of the “race from the luminous cloud” (26.17b–20a; see 26.1–2a; 31.2; 34.16b–19a, 31b–32a; 29.12b–16a).<sup>189</sup>

The study of the *Paraph. Shem's* literary genre has also shown us that its author divided history according to a tripartite plan.<sup>190</sup> He recounts a salvation history marked by three attempts of Nature and the archon of creation to annihilate the race of the pneumatics: the flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the crucifixion of the Saviour,

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(NH X); *Melch.* (NH IX, 1); *Norea* (NH IX, 2); *Testim. Truth* (NH IX, 3); and *Trim. Prot.* (NH XIII, 1).

<sup>187</sup> A good discussion of these mythologems can be found in Turner 1995: esp. 169–73. On the pertinence of the “Sethian” tag applied to this Gnosis, see Tardieu 1977. On its applicability to particular groups, see Sevrin 1986 and Poirier, “La bibliothèque,” 312–13.

<sup>188</sup> See above, pp. 11–12; S. Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 441–46, trans. of *Le Dieu séparé: Les origines du gnosticisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 601–07; M.J. Edwards, “New Discoveries and Gnosticism: Some Precautions,” *OCP* 55 (1989): 257–72.

<sup>189</sup> One could compare what is said here about Shem with what is said of Jacob in *Pr. Jos.* There the patriarch is called “the firstborn of every living thing.” See J.Z. Smith, “Prayer of Joseph: A new Translation with Introduction.” In J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 713.

<sup>190</sup> See above, pp. 15–18.

the latter attempt designed to unleash the end of the world. While this plan was probably borrowed from Jewish apocalyptic, as in the case of *Apoc. Adam* and *Gos. Eg.*, it was integrated into a system aimed at re-establishing the true meaning of biblical history.

Our tractate has not retained the mythologem of the four light-beings, but in it Shem plays the role of enlightener and of heavenly and earthly saviour. In fact, at the end of his ecstatic experience, he receives “the power of Light and his whole thought” (41.23b–25a). Thereafter, he is assimilated into the Righteous One, the Saviour,<sup>191</sup> since he puts on the latter’s invincible garment (41.26b–28a; see 28.22b–34a). He then comes out of Darkness, which means that he separates himself from his earthly body (see 45.32b–34a), and walks in Faith toward the summit of the earth where are Nature’s forms, identified by the text with the forms of the zodiac (42.5b–11a; see 19.13b–20a; 21.2–4a).<sup>192</sup> Thus identified with the Righteous One, Shem plays the role of heavenly saviour in order to protect the members of his race against the *Heimarmene*. But the Saviour had revealed to him that at the moment Sodom is destroyed he will appear in creation to proclaim his universal teaching to the Sodomites ((29.7b–14a), so they can give the universal testimony and re-ascend to their root, the unbegotten Spirit (29.19b–26).<sup>193</sup>

These related traits notwithstanding, it cannot be said that the *Paraph. Shem* professes a Sethian Gnosis. A fundamental element is lacking: the originating triad of Father, Mother, and Self-begotten. The Sethian metaphysics is triadic,<sup>194</sup> while that of our tractate is dyadic, with Spirit constituting an intermediate being, inferior in nature to the Father and his Son.<sup>195</sup> The *Paraph. Shem*’s absolute dualism does not

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<sup>191</sup> The Righteous One is the manifestation of Derdekeas as saviour and revealer. Protected by his fiery garment, his archontic body, he carries out his mission among human beings. After the flood he was ousted from his function as enlightener by the demiurgic Mind, the material sun, archon of creation.

<sup>192</sup> See above, p. 57.

<sup>193</sup> Shem’s transformation through the power of Light, which enables him to play a role of cosmic proportions, explains the revealer’s language in 28.22b–29.15a. First, the Saviour speaks in the first person: “And I shall appear to those who will have acquired the thought of the light of Spirit” (28.30b–33a); then he abruptly changes to the second person: “For when you appear in the creation...” (29.7b–8a). What we have here is what narratologists call a “paralepsis” or “gap”: to get the explanation, one has to wait for the episode recounted in 41.21b–42.11a.

<sup>194</sup> The expression is from Tardieu (“Le congrès de Yale,” 193).

<sup>195</sup> See above, pp. 38–40 and 44–46.

fit the Sethian system, any more than does its absolute rejection of all forms of baptism.

The question of the relations between the *Paraph. Shem* and texts originating in Valentinian circles cannot be phrased as in the case of Sethian texts. In addition to the testimony of the writings of the Nag Hammadi corpus, that of the heresiologists must be taken into account.<sup>196</sup> However, generally speaking, it can be affirmed that the three principles system of the *Paraph. Shem* is radically opposed to the monism underlying the Valentinian system. As already noted,<sup>197</sup> the existence of matter and evil is no longer the result of a fault committed by an entity of the Pleroma.

That said, it remains that the author of the *Paraph. Shem* was largely inspired by the Valentinian system in the tripartite structure of his anthropology, and in his eschatology, which visualizes a salvation at two levels.<sup>198</sup> Again, it is in the sense of Valentinian teaching that he explains the process of individuation<sup>199</sup> and recounts the cohabitation of pneumatics and psychics during the time of the “appointed term of Faith” (43.15).<sup>200</sup> But here again the author parts from his model by conferring a lower status on Mind, who draws his origin from the evil principle and gains transcendence only after a dual generation. Still, Mind occupies a lower echelon than Spirit, because the place of its repose is the Hymen, beneath Spirit’s sphere (35.24b–31a).<sup>201</sup> In the *Paraph. Shem*, the highest god is not a Mind; nor is the noblest part of the human being a particle of Mind, but a thought come forth from the Astonishment of Spirit.<sup>202</sup> Besides, it is on this fundamental point of Mind’s status that, despite similarities in detail, our tractate is also distinguished from the hermetic texts, notably the *Poimandres* (Mahé 1989).

To sum up, while dipping liberally into the springs of the major Sethian and Valentinian systems, the author of the *Paraph. Shem* turns

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<sup>196</sup> See E. Thomassen, “Notes pour la délimitation d’un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi.” In Painchaud and Pasquier, eds., *Les textes de Nag Hammadi*, 243–59.

<sup>197</sup> See above, pp. 34–35. Thomassen notes this as well in “Notes pour la délimitation,” 245.

<sup>198</sup> See above, pp. 63–65 and 73–74.

<sup>199</sup> See above, pp. 61–63.

<sup>200</sup> See above, pp. 16 and 72; and Irenaeus, *AH* 1,6,1, 2,19,1–2,6. On this point see Sagnard 1947: 185–87, 396–400.

<sup>201</sup> See above, p. 59.

<sup>202</sup> See above, pp. 39–40 and 53.

his back on them and follows his own way, in many respects anticipating Manichaeism. In this regard, we note especially the pre-existence of the evil principle,<sup>203</sup> the representation of chaos in stages,<sup>204</sup> the hierarchy of principles,<sup>205</sup> the jealousy of the evil principle and the fall of the Light-being, interpreted as a ruse by the higher principle for conquering the evil one,<sup>206</sup> the notion of Light's homogeneity,<sup>207</sup> the various scenarios that employ sexual analogy to describe the origin of the beings of creation, the encratism,<sup>208</sup> the antibaptismal polemic,<sup>209</sup> and the image of the *bōlos* to describe the end of material creation.<sup>210</sup> This gives us a set of traits pointing unequivocally toward Manichaeism. But fundamental differences remain, the principal ones being the *Paraph. Shem*'s much greater emphasis on the lower status accorded to Mind<sup>211</sup> and on the transcendent character of the supreme deity.

## 2. *Connections between the Paraph. Shem and The Paraphrase of Seth*

Now, what of the relations between the *Paraph. Shem* and *The Paraphrase of Seth*? The latter is the work to which Hippolytus, in his notice on the Sethians (*Philosophumena*, 5,19–23), refers those readers who wish to learn more about the secret teachings of these heretics. We should first mention that Puech and Doresse combined the first two tractates of Codex VII. Despite the mention of *Shem* in the *incipit* of the first tractate (*Paraph. Shem*, 1.1), and doubtless impressed by the absence of a title in the *explicit*, these authors thought that the colophon on p. 70.11–12 of Codex VII (“Second Treatise of the Great

<sup>203</sup> See above, pp. 34–35, and Puech 1949: 74.

<sup>204</sup> See above, p. 40.

<sup>205</sup> See above, p. 46.

<sup>206</sup> See above, p. 47.

<sup>207</sup> See above, p. 39 and p. 52, n. 117.

<sup>208</sup> See above, pp. 14 and 59–60; *Paraph. Shem* 35.5b–6; Puech 1949: 80–84.

<sup>209</sup> See *Paraph. Shem* 36.25–38.28a; Tardieu 1981: 9–12, 15–19; Dubois 1986: 155–56.

<sup>210</sup> See above, p. 14; Stroumsa 1981.

<sup>211</sup> On the importance given to Mind in Manichaeism, see A. van Tongerloo and J. van Oort, eds., *The Manichaean NOÛS: Proceedings of the International Symposium Organized in Louvain from 31 July to 3 August 1991*. Manichaean Studies, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995); also H.-C. Puech, “La conception manichéenne du salut” in *Sur le manichéisme et autres essais* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), 31: “Le manichéisme est une religion du Noûs: le problème du salut s’y pose pour l’intelligence et s’y résout par un acte d’intelligence.”



Seth”) marked the end of a single long tractate that they identified with the *Paraphrase of Seth* mentioned in the *Philosophumena*.<sup>212</sup>

In two studies that appeared in the 1970s, Wisse declared that Hippolytus’ much shorter account “must be based on an abbreviated and Christianized form of the Nag Hammadi tractate” (Wisse 1971: 219; see Wisse 1970). He concluded that the *Paraph. Shem* “contains a figure of the redeemer whose traits are in accordance with those aspects of New Testament Christology which are very probably of pre-Christian origin” (Wisse 1970: 140).<sup>213</sup> Following up on Wisse’s articles, Bertrand (1975: 156) again took up the question of the relationship between the *Paraph. Shem* and *The Paraphrase of Seth*, and reached the conclusion that “the two tractates cannot be reduced, one into the other [...]. It is highly likely that ultimately they go back to the same source. To the extent that the primitive model was located outside the Christian sphere—which appears definite—the *Paraphrase of Shem* reflects a more archaic state. This does not mean that, at the formal level, it is less developed than the *Paraphrase of Seth*. Looking now only at the present state of the two works, the first should be classed among non-Christian Gnostic writings of Jewish composition, and the second among Christianized Gnostic writings.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> H.-Ch. Puech, “Les nouveaux écrits gnostiques découverts en Haute-Égypte (Premier inventaire et essai d’identification).” In *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum* (Boston: Byzantine Institute, 1950), 123–24: “La légère différence de titre s’explique aisément: l’hérésiologue a confondu Séém (Sem) et Seth, ou bien il a combiné les données de l’incipit et du colophon et conclu—somme toute, correctement—que la Paraphrase de Séém, œuvre de Seth, pouvait tout aussi bien être intitulée Paraphrase de Seth.» For his part, Doresse (1970: 150) affirms: “It is certain that the treatise to which the author of the *Philosophumena* is alluding was identical, or nearly so, with the text of which we now have the Coptic version in our hands...” It is astonishing to find this opinion forty years later from the pen of Edwards (“New Discoveries,” 267): “The *Paraphrase of Seth* as Hippolytus cites it, is evidently the same document as the *Paraphrase of Shem*, and it is obvious that Hippolytus knew the work at a time when its title was still intact.”

<sup>213</sup> Wisse repeats the same conclusion in his introduction to the *Paraph. Shem* in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (1977), 308. Robinson had already expressed a similar opinion in 1967–68: 380. N. Perrin, *The Promise of Bultmann* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1969), 110, sees here the confirmation of R. Bultmann’s view on the pre-Christian myth of a Gnostic redeemer, a heavenly figure descending to earth to bring salvation to human beings and opening their way to the celestial kingdom.

<sup>214</sup> Other authors who take *The Paraphrase of Seth* to be a Christianized version of *Paraph. Shem* are Colpe 1973: 114; Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (1977), 7, who repeats the same opinion in later editions (1984, 1988, 1996); B.A.

In a paper delivered in 1973 but only published in 1977, Krause rejected Wisse's position and maintained that Hippolytus did not use the *Paraph. Shem* for his notice on the Sethians. He expressed doubt that Hippolytus' source could have been a Sethian interpretation of the *Paraph. Shem* with Christian interpolations (Krause 1977: 109). For Sevrin (1975: 75), the source used by Hippolytus "is more ancient and still more engaged in mythological affabulation" than is the *Paraph. Shem*. The latter "contains, in its first part, a work related to another that is doubtless to be identified with Hippolytus' *Paraphrase of Seth*, but that does not reproduce it, is not derived from it, and is not its source; at best, it could derive more or less directly from a common source. More probably, it is limited to reproducing the teaching of the same school [...] or, since there are variants, especially with regard to its Christian character, from a forerunner of the same school" (Sevrin 1975: 75).<sup>215</sup> According to Tardieu (1977: 208), "everything takes place as though the author of the *Paraphrase of Shem* wanted to complete, detail, and correct the *Paraphrase of Seth* [...]. The *Paraphrase of Seth*, at the source of *Philosophumena*, 5,19, is therefore earlier than the *Paraphrase of Shem* and can in no way be identified with the latter, as the somehow reworked edition of the former."<sup>216</sup> For her part, Pétrement (1990: 444) supposes "either that the two paraphrases are two successive stages of the same work or that it is a question of two different works but that both proceed from an earlier Sethian work, from which the same title could have been partly borrowed." The *Paraph. Shem* would be more recent than *The Paraphrase of Seth*, and would present "a modified form of the doctrine it has in common with the *Paraphrase of Seth*" (Pétrement 1990: 444). Finally, the *Paraph. Shem* would proceed "from Valentinianism through 'Sethianism,' and from Christianity through Valentinianism" (Pétrement 1990: 445).

In his 1996 edition, Wisse (1996b, 15) simply affirmed that a clear relationship exists as to title and content between the *Paraph. Shem*

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Pearson, "The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature." In Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 496; Koschorke 1975: 100.

<sup>215</sup> Sevrin (1975: 71–72) discerns three parts to Hippolytus' notice: 1) a general account of the Sethian doctrine, including a cosmogony and a soteriology (*Philosophumena*, 5,19); 2) a Sethian apologetic supported by Old Testament references (5,20,1–3); 3) after reducing this doctrine to its Greek sources (5,20,4–10), the report of another work that develops the same doctrine, commencing with a theory of combinations and mixtures (5,21).

<sup>216</sup> Dubois (1986: 150–52) takes a similar position. For a good treatment of the state of the question, see Casadio 1989a: 1325–29.

and the written source used by Hippolytus: “Apart from sharing the designation paraphrase there is a remarkable agreement between the two in the description of the three primeval powers, but the common material does not extend in a significant way beyond the early pages of the tractate. Furthermore, *Paraph. Shem* has at best only a few ambiguous Christian allusions, while *The Paraphrase of Seth* has many clearly Christian elements.” He concluded that the relationship is at best a distant one, and that nothing indicates that either tractate could depend on the other.

The detailed analysis of the system of the *Paraph. Shem* that we have proposed allows us to reconsider the question on a broader basis. It is not enough to compare doctrinal elements, metaphors, or common terms; we need to see how these different points of comparison operate within their original context, and their systems need to be compared. With this perspective, we return to some of these points of comparison.

a. *The three great powers or roots*

As shown by the parallel established between Irenaeus, *AH* 1,30,1, *The Paraphrase of Seth*, and the *Paraph. Shem*,<sup>217</sup> the theologoumenon of the three principles could receive various formulations and be used in very different contexts.<sup>218</sup> In its cosmogonical narrative (*Philosophumena*, 5,19,1–13a) *The Paraphrase of Seth* tries to accommodate it to an atomist physics, whereas the *Paraph. Shem* integrates it into a philosophical system whose data comes from Stoicism and Middle Platonism.<sup>219</sup> One cannot, therefore, rely on this element of comparison to maintain that either text could depend on the other, or to formulate the hypothesis of a common source.

b. *The fall of a light-being*

The author of *The Paraphrase of Seth* conceives the fall as a natural process: like the sun, the Light naturally (*pephyke*) sends down his rays upon Darkness; and Spirit (*pneuma*), like a perfume, spreads his odour in every direction (*Philosophumena*, 5,19,4), such that the light from above and the intermediate spirit find themselves together (*homou*) in the dark water to which they have been drawn. In turn, Darkness

<sup>217</sup> See above, pp. 32–38.

<sup>218</sup> Even in monist systems: see above, p. 33 and nn. 50 and 51.

<sup>219</sup> See above, pp. 37–38, 42–43, and 45–46.

does all he can to keep the spark of light and the good odour of Spirit within himself (5,19,5). The two principles are thus implicated in the fall; no motive justifies that fall and, strictly speaking, on Darkness' part there is no aggression aimed at seizing the higher principles.

For its part, the *Paraph. Shem* first describes an original situation that does not involve any mixing of the roots. Only Spirit is implicated in the fall, which is part of the higher will's plan to obtain Mind's separation from the evil root. There is no account of an aggression by Darkness. When Darkness discovers Spirit's existence, he becomes jealous and, through the medium of his Mind, he tries to resemble this power superior to himself. This is how he introduces into his kingdom the pneumatic element that unleashes the process of the universe's formation and of Mind's separation.<sup>220</sup>

We can now draw a parallel between *The Paraphrase of Seth*, the *Paraph. Shem*, and the Manichaean myth, and see how each of the systems portrayed the fall of the light-being:

The Paraphrase of Seth	Paraph. Shem	Mani <sup>221</sup>
three principles	three principles	two principles
Light and Spirit mixed with Darkness from the beginning through a natural occurrence	three separate kingdoms	Darkness driven "like a corner" into Light, which hems him in on three sides
no aggression	no aggression from Darkness	Matter, which is strength and disordered movement, tries to invade Light
	Spirit reveals himself to Darkness, who becomes jealous of him	the Prince of Darkness raises himself to the upper frontier of his kingdom and, discovering Light, becomes jealous of it
Darkness tries to hold within himself the spark of Light and the good odour of Spirit.	Darkness lifts up his mind and tries to make it resemble Spirit; a part of the pneumatic power is introduced into the kingdom of Darkness.	the Primal Man and his five sons offer themselves up as poisonous fodder to the five sons of Darkness.

<sup>220</sup> See above, pp. 46–47.

<sup>221</sup> For this presentation of the Manichaean myth we refer to Puech 1949: 74–78, Tardieu 1981: 95–97.

It can be seen that in fact *The Paraphrase of Seth* offers no account of a fall. It also agrees with the *Paraph. Shem* on the lack of aggression from the lower power. The tendency in the *Paraph. Shem* and the Manichaean myth is toward a much starker dualism. As well, in these two systems the light principle employs a ruse to bring about the defeat of the evil principle. However, through its mediating principle the *Paraph. Shem* is better at preserving the absolute transcendence of the supreme deity. It therefore seems to us that the *Paraph. Shem* constitutes a particularly significant landmark on the road to Manichaean dualism.

c. *The collision as a cosmogonic principle*

Nor can either system be reduced to the other on this point. Hippolytus' *Philosophumena* (5,19,8–10) gives a brief presentation of atomist physics, showing how the collision of the powers, infinite in number, functions as a true cosmogonic principle.<sup>222</sup> In particular, the formulation in 5,19,9 recalls the *kinēsis kata paregklisin* of Epicurus.<sup>223</sup> On the other hand, in the *Paraph. Shem* there is only one collision and it concerns the second mind generated in the womb (5.16b–19a). If this mind clashes with Spirit, it is because it possesses a resemblance proceeding from the latter (5.16b–19a). The division of Nature following on this collision is not due to it, but happens through the Saviour's will (6.1–2a).

d. *The image of the pregnant womb*

In *The Paraphrase of Seth* the first collision between the three principles provokes the creation of heaven and earth, whose form resembles the womb of a pregnant woman. Afterwards, an infinite series of encounters of powers takes place between heaven and earth, giving birth to the infinite variety of living beings (*Philosophumena*, 5,19,11–13). It is worth noting that the author remains faithful to his fundamental cosmogonic principle of the encounter of the powers. In the *Paraph. Shem*<sup>224</sup> the first Mind, through Spirit's power, instigates the formation of the cosmic womb (4.12b–27a). Then, when Darkness ejaculates his

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<sup>222</sup> See above, p. 37. We refer to Chevalier 1955: 23; É. Bréhier, *Histoire de la philosophie*, 1: Antiquité (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983<sup>2</sup>), 68–71, 302–14. On the use of the term "idea" in Democritus see Diehls and Kranz 1935: 68B,141,167; Bréhier, *op. cit.*, 69; Casadio 1989a: 1321.

<sup>223</sup> See Chevalier 1955: 467; and Bréhier, *Histoire*, 1: 307.

<sup>224</sup> See above, p. 48.

seed, his mind, into the womb, he causes all the forms to rise there that will assist in forming the universe (4.27b–5.6a). The image is employed in the framework of a system that assimilates Platonic ideas to the *spermatikoi logoi* of the Stoics.<sup>225</sup> The author of the *Paraph. Shem* has not necessarily taken his inspiration from *The Paraphrase of Seth*, or vice versa. The image will be generously employed in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>226</sup> More, in the *Paraph. Shem* the creation of heaven and earth only takes place at the Saviour's ninth intervention (20.2–10a).

e. *The wind as an anthropogonic principle*

In its description of chaos, *The Paraphrase of Seth* does not mention the wind (*anemos*), which appears at the beginning of the anthropogonic myth as “first begotten of the water” and “first universal begetter” (*kai pasēs geneseōs aitios*) (*Philosophumena*, 5,19,13b). This conception of the generation of the living beings is opposed to the one presented in the cosmogonic account immediately preceding that appeals to the principle of the collision of the powers (5,19,12–13a; see 19,10). Here Hippolytus is probably using another source. The wind, then, considered as a male generating principle, stirs up the waves and fertilizes the water that gives birth to the mind, meaning the Man. However, the text emphasizes that the wind and Spirit (*pneuma*) together constitute the principle of the water's fertilization (5,19,14). Once the water has conceived, it retains within itself the light scattered from above and the good odour of Spirit (5,19,14–15). Because of its hissing, the wind is also compared to a serpent (5,19,18) and is called “the Father of that which is below” who has begotten “*Nous*, his own perfect son” (5,19,16, Legge 1921, 1: 164).

In the *Paraph. Shem* wind, water, and fire are part of the precosmic chaos (1.36b–2.3). The mention of these three elements recalls Stoic physics, which separated the elements constituting matter (*hulē, silva*) into active (*drastika stoicheia*)—air and fire—and passive (*pathētika stoicheia*): water and earth.<sup>227</sup> But it is Fire who plays the role of universal begetter (see 10.37b–11.6; 27.17b–21),<sup>228</sup> whereas the primor-

<sup>225</sup> See above, pp. 48–51.

<sup>226</sup> See above, pp. 42–44. On the meaning of the image in Plato's *Timaeus* see Brisson 1994: 208–11.

<sup>227</sup> See SVF 2, 405, 410, 418.

<sup>228</sup> See above, pp. 41–42.

dial wind receives no further mention in the remainder of the cosmogonic account. In the anthropogonic story, the intervening winds are produced by the zodiacal forms at the same time as the demons (19.13b–26a; 21.20b–28a; 21.28b–36a). They will then be provided with wombs to receive the demons' seed (21.36b–22.9a), and will give birth to humanity (23.9–30; 24.2b–15a).<sup>229</sup> It is obvious that on this point as well, a major difference separates the two texts: in *The Paraphrase of Seth* the wind plays the role of a male entity,<sup>230</sup> while in the *Paraph. Shem* the winds are considered female.

f. *Anthropology and soteriology*

*The Paraphrase of Seth* offers little anthropological and soteriological information, but enough to display the basic points of divergence. For *The Paraphrase of Seth* the essence of the Man is the mind (*nous*), the spark (*spinthēr*) come from on high and formed from uncreated Light and Spirit (*Philosophoumena*, 5,19,15–16) that the Light from on high seeks to deliver from the death of the evil and dark body, to liberate from Wind, its father below (5,19,16). The perfect Word of Light has achieved this deliverance by taking the form of a serpent, of a slave (Phil 2:7), and by coming down into a virgin's womb. Then "he was washed and drank of the cup of living bubbling water." To be saved, the Gnostic in turn must drink this cup and be clothed with a heavenly garment (5,19,20–21).

As we have seen,<sup>231</sup> the *Paraph. Shem* develops a much more complex anthropology, one resting on the distinction between Thought (*meeue*) and Mind (*nous*). There, Mind is not the superior faculty of human nature, but plays the role of an intermediate faculty, fallible and subordinate to the Thought of Spirit, yet still superior to the soul (*psychē*), the material principle of life. That is why the system distinguishes between two classes of the saved: on the one hand, the *pneumatics*, who belong to Spirit (*pneuma*), since they have received a thought come forth from Spirit's Astonishment (*thauma*); on the other hand, the *noetics*, who belong to Faith (*pistis*) through the gift

<sup>229</sup> See above, pp. 59–61. Part of humanity will be produced by a wind that has stayed by itself, without the demons' seed (23.31–24.2a).

<sup>230</sup> This aspect will be developed in the image of the serpent (*Philosophoumena*, 5,19,18–19).

<sup>231</sup> See above, n. 28 and p. 65.

of a particle (*sh<sup>l</sup>me*) of Mind and through conversion. The rest of humanity is made up of the *psychics*, who possess only a body (*sōma*) and a material soul (*psychē*), and whose root is Darkness.

The Saviour first accomplishes salvation in mythic time, by delivering the Light of Spirit from the dark Water and by separating Mind from Darkness, his father below. Next, he carries out salvation in historical time, aiding the possessors of Gnosis when Nature thrice attempts to annihilate them.

The cosmogonic account also includes an episode that has its echo in *The Paraphrase of Seth*: in order to have all of Spirit's light raised up, the Saviour clothes himself with the Beast and asks Nature to bring a heaven and an earth into existence. Nature welcomes his request as though he were her own son (19.26b–20.1). Still, here the figure of the Beast is not necessarily the serpent (*Philosophoumena*, 5,19,20), but the figure of the many-faced Beast, that is, the fiery power, the archon of creation (15.12–16a). Moreover, in *The Paraphrase of Seth* it is the historical Saviour who clothes himself with the serpent, the form of a slave (Phil 2:7), in order to enter a virgin's womb, whereas in the *Paraph. Shem* we are still in mythic time and the Saviour does not penetrate the womb, because he has already prostituted with her by means of his fiery cloak with the purpose of inducing Mind's expulsion (18.27–19.13a).

We may add that in *The Paraphrase of Seth* the Saviour's baptism is mentioned only briefly: "He was washed" (*Philosophoumena*, 5,19,21). By contrast, in the *Paraph. Shem* this event constitutes the central saving act.<sup>232</sup> Still, if the Saviour submits to this rite, it is so he can render it obsolete. That is why the text develops a violent antibaptismal polemic (36.25–38.28a). Far from being a means of purification, baptism is a source of impurity because it uses water, the element tied to the forces of chaos and to the original impurity, the intercourse between Darkness and the cosmic womb who came forth from the water (see 4.27b–5.6a). The baptismal rite is replaced by the handing over of the memorial and the testimony, the two lists that pneumatics and noetics must have if they are to re-ascend across the celestial spheres to the place of their root (31.4b–13a; 31.13b–32.5a; 32.27b–34.16a).<sup>233</sup>

<sup>232</sup> See above, pp. 65–67.

<sup>233</sup> See above, pp. 75–77.



g. *The title*

What of the relationship between the titles of the two works? It should first be noted that only in the *Paraph. Shem* do we find justification for the heading's two parts: the term "paraphrase" is found in 32.27b, where it introduces the commentary on the memorial and the testimony (32.28–34.16a); and the person of Shem is in the right place, for, according to the literary fiction employed by the author, the revealer speaks immediately after the flood.<sup>234</sup> And since the work has all the characteristics of an apocalypse,<sup>235</sup> it could have been entitled *The Apocalypse of Shem*.<sup>236</sup> As to the actual title, one can only theorize. We have suggested that it may have been a later addition, possibly bestowed by a redactor or compiler.<sup>237</sup> But the affinity between the titles does not constitute a sufficient basis for establishing a literary relationship between the two works. At most, a polemical intention against *The Paraphrase of Seth* might be inferred on the part of whomever extracted its present title out of the work, provided, of course, that he was aware of the competing work. Besides, the choice of Shem rather than Seth as receiver of the revelation can perhaps be explained by the fact that in certain traditions appearing in a Syrian milieu, Seth's race did not remain constant in its original purity, but became mixed with the unclean race descended from Cain.<sup>238</sup> By setting his account after the flood, and making Shem the receiver of the revelation, the author avoided mentioning Seth and passed over any embarrassing traditions in silence.<sup>239</sup>

In summary, the few connections offered by the two texts can be explained by a common cultural milieu. Neither text could have served as the basis for the other. It is equally futile to appeal to a common source or to a shared school.

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<sup>234</sup> See above, pp. 11–12 and 18–20.

<sup>235</sup> See above, pp. 4–20.

<sup>236</sup> See CMC 55.10–58.5; Tardieu 1977: 208, 1988: 219; Reeves 1996: 163–75.

<sup>237</sup> See above, p. 19.

<sup>238</sup> Traditions gathered by Julius Africanus and in *The Cave of Treasures*: see A.F. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*. NTSup, 46 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 61–71; and G.G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology*. NHS, 24 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 125–34.

<sup>239</sup> In contrast with *Apoc. Adam*, which makes Shem an adorer of the Demiurge, the *Paraph. Shem* considers him a keeper of the Gnosis. See Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 97.

### 3. *Provenance and date of the Paraph. Shem*

We have no direct information on the provenance of our tractate nor on its author. However, several indications furnished by the text itself point us toward Syria. In describing the stages of precosmic chaos, we indicated the links with Bardaisan of Edessa, Mani, and other Syrian traditions.<sup>240</sup> The image of the fish, applied to the demiurgic mind cast out by the womb (19.1b–4a), could be related to the *Dea Syria*, Atargatis.<sup>241</sup> The replacement of Noah's ark by a tower could be in part a local adaptation, recalling the place where King Abgar VIII took refuge during a catastrophic flood in the city of Edessa in 201.<sup>242</sup> The anti-Platonist polemic, which probably has the systems of Numenius of Apamea and of the *Chaldaean Oracles* in mind, keeps us in Syrian territory,<sup>243</sup> even without considering the numerous characteristics that anticipate Manichaeism.<sup>244</sup> Together, these indications invite us to home in on eastern Syria, with Edessa at its centre, as our tractate's probable place of origin.

It does seem that the *Paraph. Shem*'s author also knew the evangelical traditions concerning the baptism of Jesus and the Johannine interpretation of the crucifixion.<sup>245</sup> And if we take into account the mission entrusted to Shem and his race,<sup>246</sup> the anti-Pauline interpretation of faith (see Heb 11),<sup>247</sup> the absolute rejection of any baptismal rite, and the allegorical interpretation of Rebouel's beheading (see 40.4–31a),<sup>248</sup> we can conclude that the work was intended for a community living on the margin of Christianity and pressuring the members of the Great Church to leave it and join their ranks. That is not to exclude the possibility that the polemic also envisaged some Elchasaite community, whose practices centred on numerous baptisms, especially on therapeutic baths (see 36.29b–31a).<sup>249</sup>

<sup>240</sup> See above, n. 79.

<sup>241</sup> See above, p. 56, n. 128. On the cult of the fertility goddess at Edessa, see H.W.J. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*. EPRO, 82 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 179–80.

<sup>242</sup> See above, n. 36.

<sup>243</sup> See above, pp. 42–44.

<sup>244</sup> See above, pp. 83–84 and 88–89.

<sup>245</sup> See above, pp. 65–71.

<sup>246</sup> See above, pp. 16 and 72.

<sup>247</sup> See above, p. 16.

<sup>248</sup> See above, pp. 70–71.

<sup>249</sup> On Elchasaism see Cirillo 1984; Luttikhuizen 1985.

The *Paraph. Shem* presents a very elaborate cosmological and anthropological system that takes its inspiration from both “Sethianism” and Valentinianism. Its composition, therefore, probably took place at a time when these major Gnostic systems were well established and when the polemic against the Great Church was at its apex, that is to say, in the first half of the third century. This is also the time when the Elchasaite movement underwent a renewal, as a result of the preaching of Alcibiades of Apamea (ca. 220) (Luttikhuisen 1985: 54–81, 212–18).



## PRELIMINARY NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

### EDITIONS

- M. Krause, *Die Paraphrase des Sêem*. Pages 2–105 in *Christentum am Roten Meer: Zweiter Band, erstes Buch: Neue Texte, I. Kapitel*. Edited by F. Altheim and R. Stiehl. Berlin, 1973.
- R. Charron, *Concordance des textes de Nag Hammadi. Le Codex VII*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Concordances” 1. Québec/Louvain, 1992.
- F. Wisse, F. “NH VII, 1: *The Paraphrase of Shem*: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes.” Pages 15–127 in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 80. Edited by B.A. Pearson. Leiden/New York/Köln, 1996.
- M. Roberge, *La Paraphrase de Sem (NH VII, 1)*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Textes” 25. Québec/Louvain/Paris, 2000.

The translation is based on our own edition.

We follow the outline given in the Introduction, pp. 23–31.

Words between parentheses are added to avoid ambiguity, especially when they refer to personal pronouns.

Introductory formulae are written with capital letters and inclusions in italics. See Introduction, pp. 20–21.



## TRANSLATION

### <sup>1</sup>THE PARAPHRASE OF SHEM

#### I. *Incipit (1.2–5a)*

[1]<sup>2</sup> [The] paraphrase which was (made) about <sup>3</sup> the unbegotten Spirit.  
<sup>4</sup> What Derdekeas revealed to me, Shem.

#### II. *The Apocalypse (1.5b–42.11a)*

##### A. *Introduction: Shem's ecstatic experience (1.5b–16a)*

<sup>5</sup> ACCORDING TO <sup>6</sup> THE WILL OF MAJESTY, <sup>7</sup> *my thought which was in my body* <sup>8</sup> snatched me away from my race. It <sup>9</sup> took me up to the summit of creation, <sup>10</sup> close to the light <sup>11</sup> that shone upon the whole inhabited region. <sup>12</sup> There I saw no <sup>13</sup> earthly likeness, but there was light. <sup>14</sup> Thus *my thought separated* <sup>15</sup> *from the body of Darkness* as <sup>16</sup> though in sleep.

##### B. *The Revelation of Derdekeas (1,16b–41,21a)*

###### a. *Cosmogony and Anthropogony (1.16b–24.29a)*

###### I. *The Primeval Harmony (1.16b–2.19a)*

###### 1. *Address to Shem. Pre-existence and nature of the three great powers or roots (1.16b–2,7a)*

I heard <sup>17</sup> a voice saying to me, <sup>18</sup> “Shem, since you are from <sup>19</sup> an unmixed power <sup>20</sup> and you are the first being upon <sup>21</sup> the earth, listen to and understand <sup>22</sup> what I am about to tell you first <sup>23</sup> *concerning the great powers* who <sup>24</sup> where in existence in the beginning, before <sup>25</sup> I appeared. There <sup>26</sup> was Light and Darkness <sup>27</sup> and there was Spirit between <sup>28</sup> them. Since your root <sup>29</sup>—that is the unbegotten Spirit—<sup>30</sup> fell into forgetfulness, I <sup>31</sup> am revealing to you the exact (nature) of <sup>32</sup> the powers: Light <sup>33</sup> was thought full of <sup>34</sup> hearing and word; they were <sup>35</sup> united into one form. <sup>36</sup> And Darkness was <sup>1</sup> wind in the waters; <sup>2</sup> he possessed Mind <sup>3</sup> enveloped in restless fire. <sup>4</sup> And Spirit between them <sup>5</sup> was a quiet, humble light. <sup>6</sup> *These are the three* <sup>7</sup> *roots.*”

2. *The primeval harmony and the hierarchy between the powers (2.7b–19a)*

They reigned each in <sup>8</sup> themselves alone and they were hidden from <sup>9</sup> one another, each one in <sup>10</sup> its power. But Light, <sup>11</sup> since he possessed a great <sup>12</sup> power, knew the abasement <sup>13</sup> of Darkness and his disorder, <sup>14</sup> namely that the root was not homogeneous. <sup>15</sup> But the aberration of Darkness <sup>16</sup> was unawareness: (he was saying to himself) that there was no one <sup>17</sup> above him. And as long as he was able <sup>18</sup> to cope with his evil, he stayed <sup>19</sup> covered with water.

II. *The Fall of Spirit (2.19b–3.29)*

1. *Spirit discovers the existence of the evil root (2.19b–28a)*

And (Darkness) <sup>20</sup> stirred. And Spirit was frightened <sup>21</sup> by the noise. He raised himself <sup>22</sup> up to the topmost part of his place. And <sup>23</sup> he saw immense, dark water. <sup>24</sup> And he was disgusted. And <sup>25</sup> the thought of Spirit looked <sup>26</sup> below; he saw (his) infinite Light. <sup>27</sup> But the evil root was unconcerned <sup>28</sup> about it.

2. *Water separates and Darkness emerges (2.28b–33a)*

And <sup>29</sup> BY THE WILL OF THE GREAT LIGHT the dark water separated. <sup>31</sup> And Darkness came up <sup>32</sup> enveloped in vile ignorance.

3. *Spirit reveals himself to Darkness and forfeits a part of his light to the benefit of Mind (2.33b–3.29)*

<sup>33</sup> But in order that Mind <sup>34</sup> might separate from him,—because (Darkness) prided <sup>35</sup> himself in (his Mind)—, and after <sup>36</sup> he had stirred, <sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> *the light of Spirit appeared to him.* <sup>2</sup> When he saw him he was astonished. <sup>3</sup> He did not know that another <sup>4</sup> power was above him. And when he <sup>5</sup> saw that his likeness was <sup>6</sup> dark compared with Spirit, he felt hurt. <sup>7</sup> And in his grief he raised <sup>8</sup> his Mind to his topmost part—<sup>9</sup> among the members of Darkness (his Mind) <sup>10</sup> was the eye of the bitterness of evil. <sup>11</sup> He caused his Mind to take shape <sup>12</sup> partly from the members of <sup>13</sup> Spirit, thinking that, by staring <sup>14</sup> at his evil, he would be able <sup>15</sup> to equal Spirit. But he <sup>16</sup> was not able. For he wanted to do <sup>17</sup> an impossible thing, and it did not <sup>18</sup> take place. But in order that <sup>19</sup> the Mind of Darkness—which <sup>20</sup> is the eye of the bitterness of evil—might not remain inert, <sup>21</sup> since he had been made partially similar, <sup>22</sup> he arose and shone <sup>23</sup> with a fiery light upon <sup>24</sup> all of Hades, so that <sup>25</sup> the homogeneity of the faultless Light <sup>26</sup> was revealed. For Spirit <sup>27</sup> made use of every form <sup>28</sup> of Darkness *because he had appeared* <sup>29</sup> *in his greatness.*



III. *The Separation of Mind from Darkness and the Salvation of the Light of Spirit (3.30–24.29a)*

*First intervention* by the Saviour, who appears in the likeness of Spirit. Darkness begets the demiurgic Mind (3.30–6.30a)

1. *The exalted Light reveals himself through his Son who appears in the likeness of Spirit (3.30–4.12a)*

<sup>30</sup> And the exalted, infinite Light, <sup>31</sup> appeared <sup>32</sup> for he was <sup>33</sup> very joyful. HE WISHED to reveal <sup>34</sup> himself to Spirit. And the likeness <sup>35</sup> of the exalted Light appeared <sup>36</sup> to the unbegotten Spirit. 4 <sup>1</sup> I appeared. [I] <sup>2</sup> am the son of the <sup>3</sup> incorruptible, infinite Light. <sup>4</sup> I appeared in the likeness <sup>5</sup> of Spirit, for I am the ray <sup>6</sup> of the universal Light <sup>7</sup> and his appearance. That (happened), <sup>8</sup> in order that the Mind <sup>9</sup> of Darkness might not remain in Hades. <sup>10</sup> For Darkness had made himself like his <sup>11</sup> Mind in a part of his <sup>12</sup> members.

2. *Formation of the cosmic womb (4.12b–27a)*

When <I> appeared, (O) Shem, <sup>13</sup> (in the likeness of Spirit), in order that <sup>14</sup> Darkness might obscure himself alone, <sup>15</sup> ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF MAJESTY <sup>16</sup> (and) in order that Darkness might become devoid <sup>17</sup> of every form of his<sup>18</sup> own Power, <sup>19</sup> Mind drew the restless fire—which was <sup>20</sup> covered by water—from <sup>21</sup> the midst of Darkness and water. <sup>22</sup> And out of Darkness the water <sup>23</sup> became a mist, and from <sup>24</sup> the mist the womb took shape. <sup>25</sup> The restless fire—<sup>26</sup> which is deceitfulness—<sup>27</sup> went there.

3. *Darkness has intercourse with the womb and ejaculates his Mind. All the forms appear in Nature (4.27b–5.6a)*

And when Darkness <sup>28</sup> saw (the womb) he became unchaste. <sup>29</sup> And when he had stirred up <sup>30</sup> the water he rubbed the womb. <sup>31</sup> His Mind flowed out <sup>32</sup> down to the depths of Nature. <sup>33</sup> He mixed with the Power of the <sup>34</sup> bitterness of Darkness. And <sup>35</sup> the eye (of the dark power) tore out from the wickedness <sup>36</sup> in order that it might not again bring forth <sup>37</sup> Mind. For this one was 5 <sup>1</sup> a seed of Nature <sup>2</sup> from the dark root. <sup>3</sup> And when Nature had conceived <sup>4</sup> Mind by means of the dark power, <sup>5</sup> every form took shape <sup>6</sup> in her.

4. *The likeness of Mind begotten by Darkness has similarity with Spirit and collides with him. But Nature has conceived this Mind in the cloud and cannot push it to the bottom of her womb (5.6b–19a)*

And when Darkness <sup>7</sup> had generated the likeness of Mind, <sup>8</sup> it resembled Spirit. <sup>9</sup> Actually, Nature undertook to push it; <sup>10</sup> she was unable,

since <sup>11</sup> she did not have a shape from <sup>12</sup> Darkness. Thus, she brought it forth in the cloud. <sup>13</sup> And the cloud shone. <sup>14</sup> Mind appeared in <sup>15</sup> it like a frightful, harmful fire. <sup>16</sup> (Mind) collided <sup>17</sup> with the unbegotten Spirit <sup>18</sup> *since he possessed* <sup>19</sup> *a likeness from him*.

5. *Through the division of Nature into four clouds Mind is drawn out of Water* (5.19b–36)

In order that <sup>20</sup> Nature might become empty <sup>21</sup> of the restless fire, <sup>22</sup> then immediately Nature <sup>23</sup> was divided into four parts. <sup>24</sup> They became clouds that varied <sup>25</sup> in their appearance. They were called <sup>26</sup> Hymen, Chorion, <sup>27</sup> Power, Water. <sup>28</sup> And the Hymen, the Chorion <sup>29</sup> and the Power were <sup>30</sup> restless fires. And <sup>31</sup> they draw (Mind) from the midst <sup>32</sup> of Darkness and the water—since <sup>33</sup> Mind was in the midst of Nature <sup>34</sup> and the dark power—<sup>35</sup> in order that the harmful waters <sup>36</sup> might not cling to him.

6. *Through the division of Nature, Mind is able to join his Power in the middle of Nature* (6.1–13a)

**6** <sup>1</sup> Because of this Nature was divided <sup>2</sup> ACCORDING TO MY WILL, *in order that* <sup>3</sup> *Mind might return* <sup>4</sup> *to his Power*, which the <sup>5</sup> dark root had taken from him, <sup>6</sup> which was mixed with him and <sup>7</sup> had appeared in the womb. <sup>8</sup> Thus, by the division of <sup>9</sup> Nature, (the Power) separated from Darkness, <sup>10</sup> since it had something from <sup>11</sup> Mind. (*This one*) went into the midst <sup>12</sup> of the (cloud of) Power, that is <sup>13</sup> the middle of Nature.

7. *By colliding with Mind, Spirit has produced a power called Astonishment. Mind puts on the light of Spirit and sets Nature in motion. Astonishment adheres to the cloud of Hymen* (6.13b–30a)

But the Spirit <sup>14</sup> of light, when Mind <sup>15</sup> weighed him down, was astonished. <sup>16</sup> And the power of his Astonishment <sup>17</sup> turned the burden and this one <sup>18</sup> turned towards the heat (of Astonishment) and <sup>19</sup> put on the light of Spirit. <sup>20</sup> And when Nature had been set in motion <sup>21</sup> by the power of the light <sup>22</sup> of Spirit, the burden returned. <sup>23</sup> Thus the Astonishment of the light of <Spirit> <sup>24</sup> turned the burden and stuck <sup>25</sup> to the cloud of Hymen. And <sup>26</sup> all the clouds of Darkness <sup>27</sup> cried out—they who had separated from Hades—<sup>28</sup> because of the alien power: <sup>29</sup> it was the Spirit of light who had come <sup>30</sup> among them.

Second intervention by the Saviour, as a ray of light and a whirlwind.  
Formation of the World Soul (6.30b–7.30)

1. *Prayer of Spirit* (6.30b–35a)

AND BY THE WILL OF <sup>31</sup> MAJESTY Spirit gazed up <sup>32</sup> at the infinite Light, <sup>33</sup> in order that <sup>34</sup> his light might be pitied and <sup>35</sup> the likeness might be brought up from Hades.

2. *The Saviour appears as a ray of light and a gust. Through the blowing of the Saviour Mind takes shape* (6,35b–7,11a)

And <sup>36</sup> when Spirit had looked out, I flowed <sup>7</sup> <sup>1</sup> out, I, the son of Majesty, <sup>2</sup> like a wave of bright light <sup>3</sup> and like a gust of the <sup>4</sup> immortal Spirit. And I blew in <sup>5</sup> the cloud of Hymen upon the Astonishment <sup>6</sup> of the unbegotten Spirit. (The cloud) <sup>7</sup> separated and cast light upon the (other) clouds. <sup>8</sup> These separated in order that <sup>9</sup> Spirit might return. Because of this Mind <sup>10</sup> took form. His repose was over.

3. *Paraphrase on the four clouds* (7.11b–30)

For the Hymen of Nature <sup>12</sup> was a cloud which cannot be <sup>13</sup> grasped: it was a great fire. <sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Chorion <sup>15</sup> of Nature was the cloud of <sup>16</sup> Silence: it was a majestic fire. <sup>17</sup> And the Power, which is mixed <sup>18</sup> with Mind, it, too, was <sup>19</sup> a cloud of Nature which <sup>20</sup> had been mingled with Darkness, who <sup>21</sup> had disturbed Nature with a view <sup>22</sup> to impurity. But the dark water <sup>23</sup> was a frightful cloud. <sup>24</sup> And the root of <sup>25</sup> Nature which was on the lower side was <sup>26</sup> crooked, since it is burdensome and <sup>27</sup> noxious. The root was <sup>28</sup> blind in front of the bound light, <sup>29</sup> which was imperceptible since <sup>30</sup> it was many-faced.

Third intervention by the Saviour with his universal garment with the aim of freeing the light of Spirit from the depths of Darkness (7.31–12,15a)

1. *Derdekeas' prayer on behalf of the light of Spirit* (7.31–8.15a)

<sup>31</sup> And I had pity on <sup>32</sup> the light <of> Spirit which <sup>33</sup> Mind had taken. I returned <sup>34</sup> to my position in order to beseech <sup>35</sup> the exalted, infinite Light <sup>8</sup> <sup>1</sup> that <sup>2</sup> the power of the light <of> Spirit might increase <sup>3</sup> on (his) place and might become full, <sup>4</sup> not with dark defilement, <sup>5</sup> but with what is pure. I said, “<sup>6</sup> You are the root of the Light. <sup>7</sup> Your hidden form has appeared, <sup>8</sup> which is exalted, infinite. <sup>9</sup> May the whole power of <sup>10</sup> Spirit become homogeneous and may it be filled <sup>11</sup> with its light. The infinite <sup>12</sup> Light will not be able to join <sup>13</sup> with the unbegotten

Spirit, and <sup>14</sup> the power of Astonishment will not be able to mingle <sup>15</sup> with Nature.”

2. *The prayer of the Saviour is accepted* (8.15b–31a)

ACCORDING TO THE WILL <sup>16</sup> OF MAJESTY, my prayer <sup>17</sup> was accepted. And the voice <sup>18</sup> of the Word was heard saying <sup>19</sup> from Majesty <to> the unbegotten Spirit, “Behold, <sup>21</sup> the power has reached its fullness. The one who was revealed <sup>22</sup> by me appeared <sup>23</sup> in Spirit.” I shall appear again. <sup>24</sup> I am Derdekeas, the son <sup>25</sup> of the undefiled, infinite Light. <sup>26</sup> The light of <sup>27</sup> the infinite Spirit <sup>28</sup> came down into a feeble nature for <sup>29</sup> a short time until <sup>30</sup> all the impurity of Nature <sup>31</sup> was withdrawn.

3. *Derdekeas puts on his universal garment and comes in the likeness of Spirit* (8.31b–9.3a)

But in order that <sup>32</sup> the Darkness of Nature might be put to shame, <sup>33</sup> I put on my garment, which is the garment of the light of Majesty, that is what I am. I took on the appearance of <sup>9</sup> <sup>1</sup> Spirit in order to remember the whole light—<sup>2</sup> the one which was in the depths of <sup>3</sup> Darkness.

4. *The light of Spirit arises out of the depths of Darkness and out of water by his own power* (9.3b–26a)

ACCORDING TO THE WILL <sup>4</sup> OF MAJESTY, in order that Spirit <sup>5</sup> by means of the Word might be filled with his <sup>6</sup> light without the power of the <sup>7</sup> infinite Light, <sup>8</sup> and ACCORDING TO MY WILL, *Spirit* <sup>9</sup> *arose, by his own power.* <sup>10</sup> His greatness was granted to him <sup>11</sup> that he might be filled with his whole light <sup>12</sup> and come out from the entire weight <sup>13</sup> of Darkness. For what was behind <sup>14</sup> was a dark fire, blowing <sup>15</sup> and pressing on Spirit. And <sup>16</sup> Spirit rejoiced because he had been protected <sup>17</sup> from the frightful water. But <sup>18</sup> his light was not equal to <sup>19</sup> Majesty. But <whatever> was granted him <sup>20</sup> by the infinite Light <sup>21</sup> (was given) in order that in all his members <sup>22</sup> he might appear in <sup>23</sup> a homogeneous light. <sup>24</sup> *And when Spirit arose above water,* <sup>25</sup> the dark image of (water) became apparent.

5. *Spirit pays homage to the exalted Light* (9.26b–33a)

<sup>26</sup> And Spirit paid homage <sup>27</sup> to the exalted Light: “Surely <sup>28</sup> you alone are the infinite one, <sup>29</sup> because you are above <sup>30</sup> everything unbegotten (and) you have protected me <sup>31</sup> from Darkness. And at your <sup>32</sup> wish I arose above the dark <sup>33</sup> power.”

6. *Spirit conceives a Thought in the cloud of Hymen* (9.33b–10.15)

And in order that <sup>34</sup> nothing may be hidden from you, Shem, the <sup>35</sup> Thought, which Spirit had conceived <sup>36</sup> through (his) greatness, came

into being, 10<sup>1</sup> since Darkness had not been able<sup>2</sup> to master his evil. But once<sup>3</sup> he had appeared<sup>4</sup> the three roots became known as they<sup>5</sup> were from the beginning. If<sup>6</sup> Darkness had been able to check<sup>7</sup> his evil, Mind<sup>8</sup> would not have separated from him, and<sup>9</sup> another power would not have appeared.<sup>10</sup> But since it did appear,<sup>11</sup> then I have been seen, (I), the Son<sup>12</sup> of Majesty, in order that<sup>13</sup> the light of Spirit might not become deaf<sup>14</sup> and that Nature might not reign<sup>15</sup> over him, because he had gazed at me.

7. *Derdekeas reveals to Shem his true nature: he is the Thought, conceived by Astonishment, the great Power, the head of the pneumatic race (10.16–11.6)*

<sup>16</sup> THEN, BY THE WILL OF MAJESTY,<sup>17</sup> my homogeneity was revealed, in order that<sup>18</sup> what is of the power might<sup>19</sup> appear: you<sup>20</sup> are the Great Power which came into being<sup>21</sup> and I am the perfect Light<sup>22</sup> which is above Spirit<sup>23</sup> and Darkness. The shame of Darkness<sup>24</sup> lies in the intercourse of the impure<sup>25</sup> rubbing. For it is through the division<sup>26</sup> of Nature that the greatness (of Spirit) wishes<sup>27</sup> to protect itself with<sup>28</sup> honour up to the height<sup>29</sup> of the Thought of Spirit. And Spirit was receiving<sup>30</sup> rest in his power.<sup>31</sup> For the image of Light<sup>32</sup> is inseparable from the unbegotten Spirit.<sup>33</sup> And the legislators did not name<sup>34</sup> it from all the clouds<sup>35</sup> of Nature, nor is it<sup>36</sup> possible<sup>37</sup> to name it. For every form<sup>11</sup><sup>1</sup> into which Nature has divided<sup>2</sup> is a power of the<sup>3</sup> restless fire—it is the<sup>4</sup> hyllic seed. (Fire) which receives<sup>5</sup> the power of Darkness, has enclosed it<sup>6</sup> in the midst of the members (of Nature).

8. *The light of Astonishment gives thanks to Majesty and to his Son in the cloud of Hymen (11.7–33)*

<sup>7</sup> AND BY THE WILL OF MAJESTY,<sup>8</sup> in order that Mind<sup>9</sup> and the whole light of Spirit might be protected<sup>10</sup> from every burden and labour of<sup>11</sup> Nature, a voice came forth from<sup>12</sup> Spirit to the cloud of Hymen.<sup>13</sup> And the light of Astonishment<sup>14</sup> began to praise with the voice<sup>15</sup> which had been granted to him.<sup>16</sup> And the great luminous Spirit was<sup>17</sup> in the cloud of Hymen. He honoured<sup>18</sup> the infinite Light<sup>19</sup> and the universal likeness<sup>20</sup>—which is I—, “Son of<sup>21</sup> Majesty, who is called<sup>22</sup> ‘Rising-Setting’, you are<sup>23</sup> the infinite Light<sup>24</sup> which was given by the will<sup>25</sup> of Majesty to straighten up<sup>26</sup> every light of Spirit<sup>27</sup> upon his place and to separate<sup>28</sup> Mind from Darkness.<sup>29</sup> For it was unsuitable<sup>30</sup> for the light of Spirit to remain<sup>31</sup> in Hades. For at your wish<sup>32</sup> Spirit arose<sup>33</sup> to gaze at your greatness.”

9. *Address to Shem: teaching on the nature of the Saviour* (11.34–12.15a)

<sup>34</sup> For I said these things to you, <sup>35</sup> Shem, in order that you might understand <sup>12</sup> <sup>1</sup> that my likeness, the Son of Majesty, <sup>2</sup> is from my <sup>3</sup> infinite thought, since I <sup>4</sup> am for (Majesty) a universal likeness, <sup>5</sup> which does not lie, because I am above <sup>6</sup> every truth and the principle <sup>7</sup> of the word. His appearance is in <sup>8</sup> my beautiful garment of light <sup>9</sup> which is the voice of the immeasurable Thought. <sup>10</sup> We are the <sup>11</sup> unique Light which came into being alone. <sup>12</sup> (This Light) appeared in another root <sup>13</sup> in order that the power <sup>14</sup> of Spirit might be raised from the <sup>15</sup> feeble Nature.

Fourth intervention by the Saviour in the cloud of Hymen, with his threefold garment. Second fall of a luminous entity (12.15b–13.23a)

1. *Derdekeas comes down to the cloud of Hymen without his universal garment* (12.15b–25a)

FOR BY THE WILL OF THE <sup>16</sup> GREAT LIGHT, I came forth from the <sup>17</sup> exalted Spirit down to the cloud of <sup>18</sup> Hymen without my universal <sup>19</sup> garment. And then the Word <sup>20</sup> received me from Spirit in the first <sup>21</sup> cloud of the Hymen of <sup>22</sup> Nature. And I put on that (Word), <sup>23</sup> of whom Majesty <sup>24</sup> and the unbegotten Spirit had made me <sup>25</sup> worthy.

2. *The coming of the Saviour in the cloud of Hymen brings an excess of light. A part of the light of Astonishment separates and falls onto the Middle* (12.25b–13.4a)

And the threefold unity <sup>26</sup> of my garment appeared <sup>27</sup> in the cloud, BY THE WILL <sup>28</sup> OF MAJESTY, in a single form. <sup>29</sup> And my likeness was covered <sup>30</sup> with the light of my <sup>31</sup> garment. But the cloud was disturbed, <sup>32</sup> it was not able to support my likeness. <sup>33</sup> It shed the first power, <sup>34</sup> which it had received from <sup>35</sup> Spirit (and) which had shone <sup>36</sup> on him from the beginning, before <sup>37</sup> <I> appeared in the Word <sup>38</sup> of Spirit. The cloud <sup>13</sup> <sup>1</sup> was not able to support both of them. <sup>2</sup> Then the Light which came forth from the cloud <sup>3</sup> passed through the Silence, until <sup>4</sup> it came into the Middle.

3. *The light in the cloud of Silence mixes with the part separated from Astonishment and protects the luminous seeds from Darkness* (13.4b–23a)

AND, <sup>5</sup> BY THE WILL OF MAJESTY, <sup>6</sup> mingled with it the light <sup>7</sup> <of> Spirit which is in the Silence, <sup>8</sup> which had been separated from the luminous Spirit—<sup>9</sup> it had been separated <sup>10</sup> by the cloud of Silence. <sup>11</sup>

The cloud (of Middle) was disturbed.<sup>12</sup> It was (the light in the Silence) which gave rest to the flame<sup>13</sup> of fire. It pressed down the dark womb,<sup>14</sup> in order not to reveal<sup>15</sup> other seed. Out of Darkness, it<sup>16</sup> held back (the seeds) in the middle<sup>17</sup> of Nature, to their<sup>18</sup> position—that is in<sup>19</sup> the cloud. (The seeds) were troubled since they did not<sup>20</sup> know where they were,<sup>21</sup> for they did not yet possess the<sup>22</sup> universal knowledge of<sup>23</sup> Spirit.

Fifth intervention by the Saviour in order to bring to perfection the light in the cloud of Hymen

1. *Prayer of the Saviour in the cloud of Hymen (13.23b–14.3a)*

And having prayed<sup>24</sup> to Majesty, toward the<sup>25</sup> infinite Light, *that*<sup>26</sup> *the troubled power*<sup>27</sup> *of Spirit might go to and fro*<sup>28</sup> and the dark womb might be rendered inert, and<sup>29</sup> that my likeness<sup>30</sup> might appear in the cloud of Hymen,<sup>31</sup> as if I were wrapped in the<sup>32</sup> light of Spirit—which had gone<sup>33</sup> before me—, then BY THE WILL<sup>34</sup> OF MAJESTY and through<sup>35</sup> the prayer I was in the cloud<sup>36</sup> in order that through my garment,<sup>37</sup> which was from the power 14<sup>1</sup> of Spirit, *the fullness*<sup>2</sup> *of the Word might bring power to the members* which<sup>3</sup> he had in Darkness.

2. *As the Saviour appears in the Hymen, the light of Spirit begins to free itself (14.3b–16a)*

<sup>4</sup> For, because of them, I appeared<sup>5</sup> in this mean place. <sup>6</sup> For I am an aid<sup>7</sup> to every one who has been given a name. <sup>8</sup> For when I appeared<sup>9</sup> in the cloud the light of Spirit set out<sup>10</sup> freeing itself<sup>11</sup> from the frightful water and from the clouds of fire<sup>12</sup> which had been separated<sup>13</sup> from dark Nature. And<sup>14</sup> I gave (the clouds) eternal honour<sup>15</sup> that they might not again mingle<sup>16</sup> with the impure rubbing.

3. *The light in the Hymen receives its form in its root (14.16b–25a)*

And the light<sup>17</sup> which was in the Hymen was troubled<sup>18</sup> by my power and<sup>19</sup> it passed through the very middle of me; it<sup>20</sup> was filled with the universal thought<sup>21</sup> and with the word of<sup>22</sup> the light of Spirit. It turned<sup>23</sup> to its repose and took<sup>24</sup> form in its root. It shone<sup>25</sup> since it was without deficiency.

4. *The light in the Silence returns to its place (14.25b–31)*

But the light<sup>26</sup> which had come forth with it from the Silence<sup>27</sup> went out of the Middle<sup>28</sup> and returned to (its) place.<sup>29</sup> Then the cloud shone<sup>30</sup> and from it came<sup>31</sup> unquenchable fire.

5. *The light in the Middle casts off the burden of the cloud* (14.32–15.2a)

<sup>32</sup> As for the part which had separated from <sup>33</sup> Astonishment, it had put on forgetfulness; <sup>34</sup> it had been tricked by <sup>35</sup> the fire of Darkness. And the trouble <sup>36</sup> of its restlessness cast <sup>37</sup> off the weight of the 15 <sup>1</sup> cloud. It was evil <sup>2</sup> since it was unclean.

6. *The Fire mixes with the water; Nature conceives the Archon of creation* (15.2b–16a)

But <sup>3</sup> the fire mixed with the water in <sup>4</sup> order that the waters might become noxious. <sup>5</sup> And Nature which had been driven back <sup>6</sup> immediately climbed <sup>7</sup> out of the inert waters. <sup>8</sup> For her lowering was shameful. <sup>9</sup> And Nature conceived the <sup>10</sup> power of fire (and) that one became strong <sup>11</sup> because of the light of Spirit which <sup>12</sup> was in Nature. Its <sup>13</sup> form appeared in the water <sup>14</sup> under the appearance of a frightful beast <sup>15</sup> that had many faces (and) <sup>16</sup> was crooked below.

Sixth intervention by the Saviour. Thanks to the gaze of Spirit and by the will of the Saviour the womb receives the revelation of the light-seeds within her (15.16b–16.23a)

1. *A ray of light goes down to the chaos in order to harm Nature* (15.16b–28a)

A light <sup>17</sup> descended into the chaos <sup>18</sup> filled with mist and dust, in order to <sup>19</sup> harm Nature. And the light <sup>20</sup> of Astonishment—which was <sup>21</sup> in the Middle—, came towards it <sup>22</sup> after it had cast off <sup>23</sup> the burden of Darkness. It rejoiced <sup>24</sup> when Spirit arose. For (Spirit) looked <sup>25</sup> from the clouds down <sup>26</sup> at the dark waters upon <sup>27</sup> the light which was <sup>28</sup> *in the depths of Nature*.

2. *Thanks to the glance of Spirit the light of Spirit in the depths of Nature rises out of the water* (15.28b–16.2)

For this reason <sup>29</sup> I appeared, that I <sup>30</sup> might get an opportunity to go <sup>31</sup> down to Tartarus, to the light <sup>32</sup> of Spirit which was weighed down, <sup>33</sup> so that I might protect it from the evil <sup>34</sup> of the weight. Then thanks to <sup>35</sup> the looking down (of Spirit) at the dark position, <sup>36</sup> the light 16 <sup>1</sup> came up anew in order that the womb might again <sup>2</sup> rise from the water.

3. *By the will of the Saviour the womb sees the luminous seeds which are in her* (16.3–17a)

<sup>3</sup> (The womb) came up BY MY WILL. <sup>4</sup> Guilefully, the eye opened. <sup>5</sup> And the light <sup>6</sup> which had appeared in the Middle—<sup>7</sup> which had separated



from Astonishment—<sup>8</sup> rested. It shone upon <sup>9</sup> (the womb) *and the womb saw* <sup>10</sup> *those she had not seen.* <sup>11</sup> And she rejoiced, jubilant in <sup>12</sup> the light, although that was not hers that <sup>13</sup> had appeared in the Middle, <sup>14</sup> in her wickedness, when (the light) had shone <sup>15</sup> upon her. *Thus* <sup>16</sup> *the womb saw those she had not* <sup>17</sup> *seen.*

4. *The womb is rendered inert and brought back to the water* (16.17b–23a)

And she was brought back down <sup>18</sup> to the water. She was thinking that <sup>19</sup> she had obtained the power of light. <sup>20</sup> But she did not know that <sup>21</sup> her root had been rendered inert <sup>22</sup> through the likeness of the light and that she (was) the one <sup>23</sup> toward whom (the light) had run.

Seventh intervention by the Saviour in order to bring to perfection the light in the cloud of Silence and in the cloud of Middle (16,23b–18,1a)

1. *Prayer of the light in the Middle* (16.23b–34a)

The Light <sup>24</sup> which was in the Middle <sup>25</sup> looked amazed—the one which was <sup>26</sup> beginning and end. Therefore <sup>27</sup> its thought gazed <sup>28</sup> immediately up at the exalted Light, <sup>29</sup> and it cried out and said, <sup>30</sup> “Lord, have mercy on me, for my <sup>31</sup> light and my effort went astray. <sup>32</sup> For if your goodness does not straighten <sup>33</sup> me up, I really do not know <sup>34</sup> where I am.”

2. *The Saviour appears in the cloud of Silence* (16.34b–17.16a)

And hearing it, Majesty <sup>35</sup> had mercy on it. <sup>36</sup> And I appeared from the cloud <sup>37</sup> of Hymen in the Silence <sup>17</sup> <sup>1</sup> without my holy garment. <sup>2</sup> BY MY WILL I honoured <sup>3</sup> my garment which has three <sup>4</sup> forms in the cloud of Hymen. <sup>5</sup> And the light which is in <sup>6</sup> the Silence, the one emanated from the exulting <sup>7</sup> power, received me into itself. <sup>8</sup> I put it on. And its <sup>9</sup> two parts appeared <sup>10</sup> in a single form. Its <sup>11</sup> parts had not appeared either <sup>12</sup> on account of the fire (and) I had been <sup>13</sup> unable to speak in the cloud of Hymen, <sup>14</sup> for its fire was frightful, <sup>15</sup> lifting itself up without <sup>16</sup> weakening.

3. *The Saviour comes into the cloud of Middle* (17.16b–18.1a)

But in order that <sup>17</sup> my Greatness and the Word <sup>18</sup> might appear, in the same way too, I laid down <sup>19</sup> my garment in the cloud of <sup>20</sup> Silence. I went into the Middle <sup>21</sup> and put on the light <sup>22</sup> which was in it, which was in forgetfulness <sup>23</sup> and which was separated from Spirit of <sup>24</sup> Astonishment, for it had cast off the burden <sup>25</sup> out of itself. AT MY WISH <sup>26</sup> nothing mortal appeared <sup>27</sup> to it, but they were all immortal <sup>28</sup> realities

which Spirit granted<sup>29</sup> to it. Then (the light in the Middle) said in<sup>30</sup> the thought of the light, “AI, EIS,<sup>31</sup> AI, OU, PHAR, DOU, IA, EI, OU”, that is,<sup>32</sup> “I was in a great rest”,<sup>33</sup> (and this) in order that (Spirit) may give<sup>34</sup> rest to my light<sup>35</sup> in its root, and may withdraw it out of 18<sup>1</sup> noxious Nature.

Eighth intervention by the Saviour with his garment of fire to separate Mind from the womb and thereby deliver the whole light of Spirit (18.1b–19.26a)

1. *Derdekeas comes down in chaos and puts on a garment of fire* (18.1b–16a)

Then,<sup>2</sup> BY THE WILL OF MAJESTY, I<sup>3</sup> discarded my luminous garment.<sup>4</sup> and put on another garment<sup>5</sup> of fire (and) without form, which<sup>6</sup> proceeds from the Mind of Power,<sup>7</sup> which had been separated and<sup>8</sup> prepared for me, ACCORDING TO MY WILL, in<sup>9</sup> the Middle. For the Middle<sup>10</sup> covered it with a dark power.<sup>11</sup> In order that I might go<sup>12</sup> and put it on, I descended<sup>13</sup> into chaos, that I might rescue<sup>14</sup> the whole light from it. For without<sup>15</sup> the dark power I could not oppose<sup>16</sup> Nature.

2. *Once entered into Nature, the Saviour rests on her eye* (18.16b–26)  
Once I penetrated into<sup>17</sup> Nature, she was not able to tolerate<sup>18</sup> my power. But I rested<sup>19</sup> on her eye which was<sup>20</sup> staring. It was a light<sup>21</sup> emanated from Spirit, and it had been prepared<sup>22</sup> for me as a garment and repose<sup>23</sup> by Spirit. Through me<sup>24</sup> it opened its eyes down to<sup>25</sup> Hades. It granted Nature<sup>26</sup> its voice for a while.

3. *Through his garment of fire, the Saviour prostitutes himself with Nature* (18.27–19.13a)

<sup>27</sup> And my garment of fire, ACCORDING TO THE WILL<sup>28</sup> OF MAJESTY, went<sup>29</sup> down to the strong one, and to the<sup>30</sup> impure part of Nature<sup>31</sup> which the dark power<sup>32</sup> was covering. Then my garment<sup>33</sup> rubbed Nature with its<sup>34</sup> stuff, and her impure<sup>35</sup> feminity grew strong. And<sup>36</sup> the passionate womb came up. 19<sup>1</sup> She dried Mind up,<sup>2</sup> in the form of a fish, having<sup>3</sup> a drop of fire and<sup>4</sup> a power of fire. But when Nature<sup>5</sup> had expelled Mind<sup>6</sup> from herself, she was troubled and she<sup>7</sup> wept. When she felt hurt and was in<sup>8</sup> tears, she expelled from herself<sup>9</sup> the power of Spirit.<sup>10</sup> She remained as quiet as I. I put on<sup>11</sup> the light of Spirit and I<sup>12</sup> rested with my garment at<sup>13</sup> the sight of the fish.

4. *Nature gives birth to manifold animals, that is the zodiacal forms* (19.13b–26a)

And in order that <sup>14</sup> the deeds of Nature might be condemned, <sup>15</sup> since she is blind, *many* <sup>16</sup> *animal forms came forth* <sup>17</sup> *from her* in accordance with the number of the <sup>18</sup> blowing winds. They all came into existence in <sup>19</sup> Hades searching for the light <sup>20</sup> of Mind which gives shape. They were not <sup>21</sup> able to rise up against it. <sup>22</sup> I rejoiced over their ignorance. <sup>23</sup> They found me, <sup>24</sup> the Son of Majesty, *in* <sup>25</sup> *front of the manifold* <sup>26</sup> *womb*.

Ninth intervention by the Saviour who requests the formation of heaven and earth (19.26b–21.1)

1. *Derdekeas clothes himself in the Beast* (19.26b–20.1)

I clad myself <sup>27</sup> in the Beast and made <sup>28</sup> of her a great request: <sup>29</sup> that heaven and earth <sup>30</sup> might come into existence, in order that the whole <sup>31</sup> light might rise up. <sup>32</sup> For in no other way could the power <sup>33</sup> of Spirit be liberated from bondage, <sup>34</sup> except that I appear <sup>35</sup> to her in a beast form. <sup>36</sup> Therefore she agreed 20 <sup>1</sup> as though I were her son.

2. *Creation of heaven and earth* (20.2–10a)

<sup>2</sup> Then owing to my request <sup>3</sup> Nature arose since she possessed (something) from <sup>4</sup> the power of Spirit and Darkness <sup>5</sup> and fire. For she had taken off <sup>6</sup> her forms. Once she had turned, <sup>7</sup> she blew on the water. <sup>8</sup> Heaven was created, and from <sup>9</sup> the foam of heaven <sup>10</sup> the earth came into existence.

3. *The earth brings forth food, dew and seeds* (20.10b–20a)

And AT MY WISH (*the earth*) <sup>11</sup> *brought forth all kinds of food* according to <sup>12</sup> the number of the beasts. And it <sup>13</sup> brought forth dew from <sup>14</sup> the winds for your sake and for those <sup>15</sup> who will be begotten the second time <sup>16</sup> upon the earth. <sup>17</sup> For the earth possessed <sup>18</sup> a power of restless fire. <sup>19</sup> Therefore *it brought forth* <sup>20</sup> *every seed*.

4. *The garment of fire of Derdekeas arises in the midst of the cloud of Nature* (20.20b–29a)

And once <sup>21</sup> heaven and earth had been created, <sup>22</sup> my garment of fire arose in the midst <sup>23</sup> of the cloud of Nature. It <sup>24</sup> shone upon the whole creation <sup>25</sup> until Nature became <sup>26</sup> dry. Darkness which was <sup>27</sup> her garment was cast into the <sup>28</sup> noxious waters. <sup>29</sup> The Middle was cleansed of Darkness.

5. *The womb grieves and wonders* (20.29b–21,1)

But <sup>30</sup> the womb grieved about <sup>31</sup> what had come into existence. She looked at <sup>32</sup> her parts what was <sup>33</sup> water like a mirror. Once she had <sup>34</sup> looked, she wondered <sup>35</sup> how it had come into existence. Therefore she <sup>36</sup> remained a widow. As for (Darkness), he was **21** <sup>1</sup> astonished, because no longer he was in her.

Tenth intervention by the Saviour through his benevolent face and the generation of the kingly Mind (21.2–23,8)

1. *The noetic power which is still in Nature must be brought to perfection* (21.2–12a)

<sup>2</sup> Yet the forms still <sup>3</sup> possessed *a power* <sup>4</sup> of fire and light. (This power) bore <sup>5</sup> to exist in Nature <sup>6</sup> until all the powers are taken away <sup>7</sup> from her. For just as <sup>8</sup> the light of Spirit has been perfected <sup>9</sup> in three clouds, so also it is necessary <sup>10</sup> that the power that is in Hades <sup>11</sup> be brought to perfection <sup>12</sup> at the appointed time.

2. *Derdekeas' request* (21.12b–20a)

FOR BECAUSE OF THE KINDNESS <sup>13</sup> OF MAJESTY, I appeared to (Nature) <sup>14</sup> in the water for the second time. <sup>15</sup> For my face pleased <sup>16</sup> her and her face also was relaxed. <sup>17</sup> And I said to her, “May <sup>18</sup> seed and power <sup>19</sup> come forth from you <sup>20</sup> upon the earth.”

3. *The forms of Nature copulate* (21.20b–28a)

And she obeyed <sup>21</sup> THE WILL OF SPIRIT that <sup>22</sup> she might become inert. Then, once <sup>23</sup> her forms had clasped, they rubbed <sup>24</sup> their tongues together; they copulated <sup>25</sup> and generated winds and <sup>26</sup> demons with the power <sup>27</sup> from fire, <sup>28</sup> Darkness and Spirit.

4. *A form brings forth a wind through masturbation* (21.28b–36a)

But the form <sup>29</sup> that stayed alone cast off the <sup>30</sup> Beast from herself. <sup>31</sup> She did not have intercourse, but <sup>32</sup> she was the one who masturbated. <sup>33</sup> And she brought forth a wind <sup>34</sup> possessing a power <sup>35</sup> from fire, Darkness <sup>36</sup> and Spirit.

5. *Winds and demons are given genitals* (21.36b–22.9a)

But in order that the **22** <sup>1</sup> demons also might become devoid <sup>2</sup> of the power they possessed <sup>3</sup> through the impure intercourse, <sup>4</sup> a womb came into existence with the winds <sup>5</sup> in a watery form. Then an <sup>6</sup> unclean penis came into existence with <sup>7</sup> the demons according to the example <sup>8</sup> of Darkness and in the way he had rubbed <sup>9</sup> the womb in the beginning.

6. *Through a 'coitus interruptus', Mind is ejaculated onto the earth (22.9b–21a)*

Yet, once <sup>10</sup> the forms of Nature had come <sup>11</sup> together, they turned away <sup>12</sup> from one another and expelled the power; <sup>13</sup> they were astonished about <sup>14</sup> the deceit which had happened to them. They grieved <sup>15</sup> with eternal grief and covered <sup>16</sup> themselves with their power. <sup>17</sup> And when I had put them to shame, I arose <sup>18</sup> with my garment in the Power,—that is (with my garment) <sup>19</sup> which is higher than the Beast, since it is luminous—, <sup>20</sup> in order that I might render Nature <sup>21</sup> desolate.

7. *The third Mind is established as a king, to rule over the winds and the demons (22.21b–23.8)*

*The Mind that appeared* <sup>22</sup> *in dark Nature*—that <sup>23</sup> was the eye of the heart of Darkness,—<sup>24</sup> AT MY WISH, reigned over <sup>25</sup> the winds and the demons. And I <sup>26</sup> gave him a likeness of fire, a light <sup>27</sup> and hearing, with a share <sup>28</sup> of guileless word. Therefore <sup>29</sup> he was given (something) of the greatness, <sup>30</sup> so that he might find strength in his <sup>31</sup> power, without (the) power, <sup>32</sup> without the light of Spirit and (without) <sup>33</sup> the obscure intercourse, in order that, at <sup>34</sup> the end of time, **23** <sup>1</sup> when Nature will be destroyed, he may rest <sup>2</sup> in the honoured place. <sup>3</sup> For he will be found <sup>4</sup> faithful, having loathed <sup>5</sup> the impurity of Nature and <sup>6</sup> of Darkness. *The strong power* <sup>7</sup> *of Mind comes from* <sup>8</sup> *Mind and from the unbegotten Spirit.*

The Formation of Prediluvian Mankind (23.9–24.29a)

1. *The winds and the demons have intercourse and produce all kinds of impurity (23.9–30)*

<sup>9</sup> Yet the winds, which are demons <sup>10</sup> from water, fire, <sup>11</sup> Darkness and Light, had <sup>12</sup> intercourse unto perdition. And through <sup>13</sup> their intercourse the winds received <sup>14</sup> in their womb <sup>15</sup> foam from the penis <sup>16</sup> of the demons. They conceived <sup>17</sup> a power in their uterus through <sup>18</sup> inspiration. The wombs <sup>19</sup> of the winds huddled together <sup>20</sup> until the times of birth came. <sup>21</sup> (The winds) went down to the water. <sup>22</sup> But it is through inspiration, <sup>23</sup> in the midst of the rubbing which moves unto <sup>24</sup> the begetting, that the power was conceived. And <sup>25</sup> every form of the begetting took shape <sup>26</sup> in (the inspiration). When the times <sup>27</sup> of birth were near, <sup>28</sup> all the winds gathered <sup>29</sup> out of the water which is near the <sup>30</sup> earth. They gave birth to all kinds of impurity.

2. *The begetting of barren women and sterile men through the masturbation of one of the winds (23.31–24.2a)*

<sup>31</sup> And the place where <sup>32</sup> the wind alone came, it mingled with <sup>33</sup> impurity. Barren women <sup>34</sup> and sterile men <sup>35</sup> came from it into existence. 24 <sup>1</sup> For as one is begotten, <sup>2</sup> so one begets.

3. *The begetting of the race of Shem (24,2b–15a)*

*For your sakes* <sup>3</sup> *the image of Spirit appeared* <sup>4</sup> on the earth and on the water. <sup>5</sup> For you are like the light: <sup>6</sup> you possess, indeed, a share <sup>7</sup> of the winds and the demons <sup>8</sup> and a thought come forth from the light <sup>9</sup> of the power of Astonishment. <sup>10</sup> For each one that (the light) brought forth from the womb upon the earth, <sup>12</sup> it was not for her good that it came into existence. <sup>13</sup> But her groan and her pain (happened) *because* <sup>14</sup> *of the image which had appeared in* <sup>15</sup> *you from Spirit.*

4. *Teaching about the soul (24.15b–29a)*

For you are <sup>16</sup> exalted in your heart. <sup>17</sup> And it is a blessing, Shem, if <sup>18</sup> a share is given to someone and that person leaves <sup>19</sup> the soul for the thought <sup>20</sup> of the light. For the soul <sup>21</sup> is a burden of Darkness, and <sup>22</sup> those who know where the root <sup>23</sup> of the soul comes from will be able to <sup>24</sup> apprehend Nature as well. <sup>25</sup> For the soul is a work of <sup>26</sup> impurity and a debasement for <sup>27</sup> the luminous thought. For I <sup>28</sup> am the one who revealed the return <sup>29</sup> of the whole Unbegotten.

b. *The Flood (24.29b–28.8a)*

1. *The plot of Nature with water in order to destroy the pneumatic race (24.29b–25.15a)*

But, <sup>30</sup> in order that the sin <sup>31</sup> of Nature might be filled, I saw to it that <sup>32</sup> the womb, which had been repelled, found <sup>33</sup> the blind wisdom pleasant, in order that I <sup>34</sup> might render (her) inert. AND AT MY <sup>25</sup> <sup>1</sup> WISH (sin) and dark <sup>2</sup> water as well as Darkness plotted <sup>3</sup> to wound every form of <sup>4</sup> your heart, since, BY <sup>5</sup> THE WILL OF THE LIGHT OF <sup>6</sup> SPIRIT, they surrounded you and bound <sup>7</sup> you with faith. And in order that <sup>8</sup> the plan (of Darkness) might become inoperative, <sup>9</sup> (the Light) sent a demon, <sup>10</sup> so that the plan of <sup>11</sup> the wickedness (of the womb) might be proclaimed, (namely) to cause <sup>12</sup> a flood and to destroy <sup>13</sup> your race, in order to <sup>14</sup> seize the light and take (it) away from <sup>15</sup> faith.

2. *The Saviour thwarts the plan of Nature (25.15b–26a)*

But I hurried <sup>16</sup> to proclaim by the mouth of <sup>17</sup> the demon *that a tower come* <sup>18</sup> *to be* in regard to the particle of light <sup>19</sup> which was left in the

demons and <sup>20</sup> their race—that was <sup>21</sup> in them—, in order that the demon might be protected <sup>22</sup> from the restless chaos. <sup>23</sup> And the womb planned these things, <sup>24</sup> ACCORDING TO MY WILL, in order that she might <sup>25</sup> pour out completely. (So) a tower <sup>26</sup> was (constructed) by the demons.

### 3. *The flood* (25.26b–35a)

Darkness <sup>17</sup> was disturbed in his deficiency. <sup>28</sup> He loosened the muscles of <sup>29</sup> the womb. Then the demon <sup>30</sup> who was going to enter the tower was protected, <sup>31</sup> in order that the races might <sup>32</sup> continue and expand <sup>33</sup> through him. For he possesses <sup>34</sup> power from every <sup>35</sup> form.

### 4. *The meaning of the flood for the race of Shem* (25.35b–26.10)

Return henceforward, <sup>26</sup> <sup>1</sup> O Shem, and rejoice [greatly] <sup>2</sup> over your race and <sup>3</sup> Faith, for without body and <sup>4</sup> necessity it is protected from <sup>5</sup> every body of Darkness, since it bears witness <sup>6</sup> to the holy things of the Greatness—<sup>7</sup> that which was revealed to them in their <sup>8</sup> thought BY MY WILL. And <sup>9</sup> they will rest in the unbegotten Spirit <sup>10</sup> without grief.

### 5. *The meaning of the flood for Shem* (26.11–25a)

<sup>11</sup> As for you, Shem, for this reason you <sup>12</sup> remained in a body outside the cloud <sup>13</sup> of light so that you might abide patiently <sup>14</sup> with Faith and Faith <sup>15</sup> might come unto you. The thought (of Faith) will be taken <sup>16</sup> and given to you in <sup>17</sup> a luminous consciousness. But I <sup>18</sup> told you these things for the benefit of your <sup>19</sup> race (come forth) from the luminous cloud. <sup>20</sup> Likewise, what I shall say to you <sup>21</sup> about every thing, I shall reveal <sup>22</sup> to you until the end, that <sup>23</sup> you may reveal them to those who <sup>24</sup> will come into existence upon the earth the <sup>25</sup> second time.

### 6. *The cosmic consequences of the flood* (26,25b–36)

O Shem, the perturbation <sup>26</sup> which occurred AT MY WISH <sup>27</sup> happened in order that Nature might <sup>28</sup> become empty. <sup>29</sup> For the wrath of Darkness subsided. <sup>30</sup> O Shem, Darkness was silenced. <sup>31</sup> The light that shone for <sup>32</sup> creation no longer appears in it, <sup>33</sup> ACCORDING TO MY WILL. And after <sup>34</sup> Nature had said <sup>35</sup> her wish had been fulfilled, then every form <sup>36</sup> was swallowed up in the bottom of the waters.

### 7. *Nature casts off the fire which was in her from the beginning* (27,1–21)

<sup>1</sup> In prideful ignorance, <sup>2</sup> (Nature) turned over her <sup>3</sup> dark womb and expelled <sup>4</sup> the power of fire <sup>5</sup> which was in her from the beginning <sup>6</sup>

through the rubbing of Darkness. (The fire) <sup>7</sup> raised itself up and shone upon <sup>8</sup> the whole creation instead of the Righteous One. <sup>9</sup> And all the forms (of the womb) <sup>10</sup> sent forth their powers <sup>11</sup> like flames of fire up <sup>12</sup> to the heaven as a help to the light <sup>13</sup> which was corrupted, which had raised itself up. <sup>14</sup> For they were the members of the <sup>15</sup> restless fire. And she did not <sup>16</sup> realize that she had harmed herself alone. <sup>17</sup> *When she cast out the power* <sup>18</sup> *which has power* <sup>19</sup> *she expelled it from (her) genitals.* It was the demon, <sup>20</sup> who is a deceiver, who <sup>21</sup> stirred up the womb towards every form.

8. *Nature establishes Heimarmene. Beasts are begotten (27.22–34a)*

<sup>22</sup> And in her ignorance, <sup>23</sup> as though she were doing a great <sup>24</sup> work, (Nature) granted the demons <sup>25</sup> and the winds a star each. <sup>26</sup> For without wind and star <sup>27</sup> nothing happens upon the earth. <sup>28</sup> For it is through every power that <sup>29</sup> (the earth) is filled, since they are <sup>30</sup> released from Darkness and fire, <sup>31</sup> from power and light. <sup>32</sup> For in the place where their darkness and <sup>33</sup> their fire mixed with each other <sup>34</sup> beasts were brought forth.

9. *Postdiluvian mankind (27.34b–28.8a)*

And it was in the place <sup>35</sup> of Darkness and fire, of the power <sup>28</sup> <sup>1</sup> of Mind and Light, <sup>2</sup> that human beings came into existence. Being from <sup>3</sup> Spirit, the thought of the Light, my eye, <sup>4</sup> does not exist in every man. <sup>5</sup> For before the flood <sup>6</sup> happened through the winds and <sup>7</sup> the demons <evil> came to <sup>8</sup> men.

c. *The Destruction of Sodom (28.8b–30.4a)*

1. *Nature plans to destroy the Sodomites and establishes her faith (28.8b–22a)*

But, in order that the power <sup>9</sup> which was in the tower might still be brought forth <sup>10</sup> and might rest upon the earth, <sup>11</sup> then Nature, which had been repelled <sup>12</sup> wanted to harm the seed <sup>13</sup> which was going to come into existence upon the earth <sup>14</sup> after the flood. <sup>15</sup> Demons were sent to them as well as <sup>16</sup> the deceit of the winds, <sup>17</sup> the burden of the angels, <sup>18</sup> the fear of the prophet and <sup>19</sup> verbal condemnation, that I may <sup>20</sup> teach you, O Shem, from <sup>21</sup> what blindness your race <sup>22</sup> is protected.



2. *Derdekeas foretells the apparition of the Righteous One at the time of the destruction of Sodom (28.22b–29.7a)*

When I have <sup>23</sup> revealed to you all that has been said, <sup>24</sup> then the Righteous One will <sup>25</sup> shine upon creation with my garment. <sup>26</sup> And night and day will <sup>27</sup> separate from one another. For I shall hasten down to <sup>28</sup> creation to bring the light <sup>29</sup> to that place which <sup>30</sup> faith possesses. And <sup>31</sup> I shall appear to those who will have <sup>32</sup> acquired the thought of the light <sup>33</sup> of Spirit. For because of them my <sup>34</sup> greatness appeared. When <sup>35</sup> (my greatness) will appear, O Shem, <sup>36</sup> on the earth, [in] the place which will be <sup>29</sup> <sup>1</sup> called Sodom, <sup>2</sup> safeguard the insight which I <sup>3</sup> shall give you. For those whose <sup>4</sup> heart is pure will gather <sup>5</sup> close to you *because of* <sup>6</sup> *the word which you will* <sup>7</sup> *reveal.*

3. *It is through Shem, however, that the Righteous One will reveal himself (29.7b–33a)*

For when you appear <sup>8</sup> in creation, dark Nature <sup>9</sup> will shake against you, <sup>10</sup> as well as the winds and their demons, <sup>11</sup> so that they may destroy <sup>12</sup> the insight. But you, proclaim <sup>13</sup> quickly to the Sodomites <sup>14</sup> your universal teaching, <sup>15</sup> for they are your members. <sup>16</sup> For the demon in human form <sup>17</sup> will part from that place <sup>18</sup> since, BY MY WILL, he is ignorant. <sup>19</sup> He will guard this (verbal) teaching.

The Sodomites, <sup>20</sup> however, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF <sup>21</sup> MAJESTY, will bear the <sup>22</sup> universal testimony. They <sup>23</sup> will rest with a pure conscience <sup>24</sup> in the place <sup>25</sup> of their repose, which <sup>26</sup> is the unbegotten Spirit. <sup>27</sup> And as these things happen, <sup>28</sup> Sodom will be burnt unjustly <sup>29</sup> by perverse Nature. <sup>30</sup> For evil will not cease <sup>31</sup> *in order that your* <sup>32</sup> *greatness may appear* <sup>33</sup> *in that place.*

4. *Abraham will depart from Sodom (29.33b–30.4a)*

Then <sup>30</sup> <sup>1</sup> the demon will depart with <sup>2</sup> faith and then will appear <sup>3</sup> in the four regions <sup>4</sup> of the creation.

d. *The Baptism of the Saviour (30.4b–38.28a)*

1. *The faith of Nature appears in its final likeness (30.4b–21a)*

And when <sup>5</sup> faith appears <sup>6</sup> in (its) last likeness, then will <sup>7</sup> her appearance be exposed. <sup>8</sup> For the firstborn is the demon <sup>9</sup> who appeared in the (celestial) framework <sup>10</sup> of Nature with many faces <sup>11</sup> in order that faith might <sup>12</sup> be manifested in him. For when he <sup>13</sup> appears in creation <sup>14</sup> evil wrath will break out, <sup>15</sup> and earthquakes, and <sup>16</sup> wars, and

famines and <sup>17</sup> blasphemies. Because of him, the whole <sup>18</sup> world will be disturbed. <sup>19</sup> For he will seek the power <sup>20</sup> of Faith and Light, (but) he will <sup>21</sup> not find it.

2. *The apparition of the demon upon the river to baptize and the coming of the Saviour* (30.21b–31.4a)

For at that time <sup>22</sup> the demon will also appear <sup>23</sup> on the river <sup>24</sup> to baptize with an <sup>25</sup> imperfect baptism <sup>26</sup> and to disturb the world with bondage <sup>27</sup> of water. However, it is necessary for me <sup>28</sup> to appear in the members <sup>29</sup> of the thought of Faith, in order to <sup>30</sup> reveal the great works of my <sup>31</sup> power. I shall spread (the thought) <sup>32</sup> out of the demon—who is Soldas—, <sup>33</sup> and the light which <sup>34</sup> has (something) from Spirit, I shall mix it <sup>35</sup> with my invincible garment <sup>36</sup> as well as with the one whom I shall reveal <sup>31</sup> in the darkness for your sake <sup>2</sup> and for the sake of your race, which <sup>3</sup> will be protected from evil <sup>4</sup> Darkness.

3. *The revelation of Derdekeas' memorial* (31.4b–13a)

Know, O Shem, that without <sup>5</sup> Elorchaio, Amoias, <sup>6</sup> Strophaias, Chelkeak, <sup>7</sup> Chelkea, <Chelke> and Aileos no <sup>8</sup> one will be able to pass by this wicked <sup>9</sup> position. This is my memorial, <sup>10</sup> because through it I have <sup>11</sup> triumphed over the wicked position and <sup>12</sup> I have rescued the light of Spirit <sup>13</sup> from the frightful water.

4. *The revelation of Faith's testimony* (31.13b–32.5a)

For when <sup>14</sup> the appointed days (set) <sup>15</sup> for the demon draw near <sup>16</sup>—he who will baptize <sup>17</sup> in error—, then I shall appear <sup>18</sup> in the baptism <sup>19</sup> of the demon to reveal <sup>20</sup> with the mouth of Faith <sup>21</sup> a testimony for those <sup>22</sup> who belong to her, “I testify <sup>23</sup> to thee, unquenchable spark, <sup>24</sup> Osei, the elect of <sup>25</sup> the Light, the eye of heaven. And <sup>26</sup> (to thee) Faith, the first and the last, <sup>27</sup> and (to thee,) Sophia and (to thee,) Saphaia, and <sup>28</sup> (to thee,) Saphaina, and (to thee,) righteous <sup>29</sup> spark, and (to thee,) impure <sup>30</sup> light. And (to) you, east, <sup>31</sup> and west, and <sup>32</sup> north, and south, <sup>33</sup> upper air and lower air, and <sup>34</sup> (to) all the powers and authorities, <sup>32</sup> <sup>1</sup> you are in [crea]tion; <sup>2</sup> and (to) thee, Moluchta, <sup>3</sup> as well as Soch, (who are) from every work <sup>4</sup> and every impure effort of <sup>5</sup> Nature.”

5. *The Saviour descends to the water* (32.5b–18)

Then, through the demon, <sup>6</sup> I shall descend into the water. <sup>7</sup> And whirlpools of water <sup>8</sup> and flames of fire will rise <sup>9</sup> up against me. Then I <sup>10</sup> shall ascend from the water, having put <sup>11</sup> on the light of Faith <sup>12</sup> and the unquenchable fire, <sup>13</sup> in order that through my help <sup>14</sup> the power of

Spirit may get across, <sup>15</sup> the (power) sown in creation <sup>16</sup> by the winds and the demons <sup>17</sup> and the stars. And through them <sup>18</sup> every impurity will be filled.

6. *Address to Shem: exhortation* (32.19–27a)

<sup>19</sup> Henceforth, O Shem, count <sup>20</sup> on yourself alone to become better through the thought <sup>21</sup> of the Light. Do not let <sup>22</sup> your thought get involved with <sup>23</sup> the fire and the dark body, <sup>24</sup> which was an impure <sup>25</sup> work. What I teach you <sup>26</sup> is right.

7. *The paraphrase of the memorial and testimony* (32.27b–34.16a)

This is the paraphrase—<sup>28</sup> for you did not remember <sup>29</sup> that it is from the firmament that <sup>30</sup> your race has been protected—: Elorchaio<sup>s</sup> <sup>31</sup> is the name of the great Light, <sup>32</sup> the place from which I have come, the Word <sup>33</sup> without equal. <sup>34</sup> The likeness is my glorious garment, <sup>35</sup> and Derdekeas <sup>36</sup> [is] the [na]me [of] his Word <sup>33</sup> <sup>1</sup> in the voice of the Light. And <sup>2</sup> Strophai<sup>a</sup> is the blessed gaze, <sup>3</sup> which is Spirit. <sup>4</sup> And it is Chelkach who is my garment, <sup>5</sup> who has come from Astonishment; <sup>6</sup> this is the one who was in the cloud of Hymen, <sup>7</sup> which appeared as <sup>8</sup> a trimorphic cloud. <sup>9</sup> And Chelkea is my garment <sup>10</sup> which has two forms; <sup>11</sup> this is the one who was in the cloud of Silence. <sup>12</sup> And Chelke is my garment which <sup>13</sup> was given him from every region; <sup>14</sup> it was given him in a single form <sup>15</sup> from the Greatness; (this garment) <sup>16</sup> was in the cloud of Middle. <sup>17</sup> And the star of the Light <sup>18</sup> which was mentioned is my <sup>19</sup> invincible garment <sup>20</sup> I wore in Hades; <sup>21</sup> this is the mercy which is located <sup>22</sup> above the Thought and above the testimony <sup>23</sup> of those who bear witness.

And <sup>24</sup> the testimony which has been mentioned: <sup>25</sup> the first and the last, Faith, <sup>26</sup> the Mind of the wind of Darkness. <sup>27</sup> <Sophia> and S<a>phaia and Saphaina are in <sup>28</sup> the cloud of those who have been separated <sup>30</sup> from the restless fire. And the righteous spark is <sup>31</sup> the cloud of light which has shone <sup>32</sup> in your midst. For <sup>33</sup> in it my garment will go <sup>34</sup> down to chaos. But the impure <sup>34</sup> <sup>1</sup> light, it is as Power that it exists; <sup>2</sup> it appeared in Darkness <sup>3</sup> and belongs to dark Nature. <sup>4</sup> But the upper air as well as the lower air, the <sup>5</sup> powers and the authorities, the <sup>6</sup> demons and the stars, all possessed <sup>7</sup> a particle of fire <sup>8</sup> and a light from Spirit. <sup>9</sup> And Moluchtas is a wind, <sup>10</sup> for without it nothing is brought <sup>11</sup> forth upon the earth. He <sup>12</sup> resembles a serpent and <sup>13</sup> a unicorn. His unfolding <sup>14</sup> is manifold wings. <sup>15</sup> And the remainder is the womb <sup>16</sup> which has been repelled.

8. *Address to Shem: an eschatological teaching* (34.16b–36.1)

You are blessed,<sup>17</sup> Shem, *for your race*<sup>18</sup> *has been protected* from the dark wind with<sup>19</sup> many faces. And they will<sup>20</sup> bear the universal testimony;<sup>21</sup> and (they will bear witness) to the impure rubbing<sup>22</sup> of <Nature> and<sup>23</sup> they will be sublime through the memorial<sup>24</sup> of the Light. O Shem,<sup>25</sup> none of those who wear the body<sup>26</sup> will be able to complete these things, but by<sup>27</sup> remembering they will be able to grasp<sup>28</sup> them, in order that when<sup>29</sup> their thought separates from the body,<sup>30</sup> then these things may be revealed to them.<sup>31</sup> *They have been revealed to your*<sup>32</sup> *race.*

O Shem, *it is difficult for someone*<sup>33</sup> *wearing a body* to complete<sup>34</sup> [these things that] I said to you. 35<sup>1</sup> And only a few people will<sup>2</sup> complete them, people who possess<sup>3</sup> the particle of Mind<sup>4</sup> as well as the thought of the light of<sup>5</sup> Spirit. They will protect their thought<sup>6</sup> from the impure rubbing.<sup>7</sup> For many in the generation of Nature<sup>8</sup> will seek the security<sup>9</sup> of the Power. They will not find it<sup>10</sup> nor will they be able to<sup>11</sup> fulfill the will of Faith.<sup>12</sup> For they are the seed of the<sup>13</sup> universal Darkness. And those who will be<sup>14</sup> found (having done) great efforts, the winds<sup>15</sup> and the demons will hate<sup>16</sup> them. *The bondage of the body is*<sup>17</sup> *great indeed.*

For where<sup>18</sup> the winds, and the stars<sup>19</sup> and the demons sow (seeds) from the power<sup>20</sup> of Spirit, (there) repentance<sup>21</sup> and testimony will appear<sup>22</sup> upon them, and Mercy<sup>23</sup> will lead them to<sup>24</sup> the unbegotten Spirit.<sup>25</sup> As for those who are repentant,<sup>26</sup> they will find rest<sup>27</sup> in the consummation with Faith<sup>28</sup> in the place of Hymen.<sup>29</sup> This is the Faith which will<sup>30</sup> fill the place which will have been<sup>31</sup> left empty. As for those who have nothing<sup>32</sup> from the luminous Spirit nor<sup>33</sup> from Faith, they will be<sup>34</sup> dissolved in Darkness, the place<sup>36</sup><sup>1</sup> where repentance has not come.

9. *The baptism of the Saviour described as a descensus ad inferos* (36.2–24)

<sup>2</sup> It is I who opened the eternal gates<sup>3</sup> which were closed from the beginning.<sup>4</sup> To those who long for nobility of<sup>5</sup> life, and who are worthy of the<sup>6</sup> repose, he revealed<sup>7</sup> them. I granted<sup>8</sup> perception to those who are perceptive.<sup>9</sup> I disclosed to them<sup>10</sup> all the concepts and teaching<sup>11</sup> of the righteous ones. In no way did I become<sup>12</sup> their enemy. But<sup>13</sup> when I endured the wrath<sup>14</sup> of the world, I was triumphant. Not<sup>15</sup> one of them knew me.<sup>16</sup> The gates of fire<sup>17</sup> and endless smoke opened<sup>18</sup> against me. All the winds rose<sup>19</sup> up against me. For a while thunder

and <sup>20</sup> lightning will rise <sup>21</sup> up against me and they will bring <sup>22</sup> their wrath upon me. <sup>23</sup> And because of me, as far as flesh is concerned, they <sup>24</sup> will rule over them tribe by tribe.

10. *Antibaptismal polemic* (36.25–38.28a)

<sup>25</sup> Then many will descend into <sup>26</sup> the harmful waters by means of <sup>27</sup> the winds and the demons, people who <sup>28</sup> wear flesh which leads astray <sup>29</sup> and are bound with the water. <sup>30</sup> But (water) will provide an <sup>31</sup> ineffective treatment. It will lead astray <sup>32</sup> and will chain up the world. <sup>33</sup> And those who do the will <sup>34</sup> of Nature, their part. <sup>35</sup> [. . .] . . .] <sup>37</sup> <sup>1</sup> two times in the day of the water <sup>2</sup> and the forms of Nature. <sup>3</sup> And nothing will be granted to them, when <sup>4</sup> Faith confounds them <sup>5</sup> in order to greet the Righteous One.

<sup>6</sup> O Shem, it is necessary that the thought <sup>7</sup> be called by the Word, in <sup>8</sup> order that, in the bondage, the power <sup>9</sup> of Spirit may be saved from the frightful <sup>10</sup> water. It is indeed a blessing <sup>11</sup> if it is granted to someone to conceive <sup>12</sup> what is sublime, and to <sup>13</sup> know the ultimate time <sup>14</sup> and bondage. For water is an <sup>15</sup> insignificant body, and <sup>16</sup> people are not released, since <sup>17</sup> they are bound in the water, just as from <sup>18</sup> the beginning the light of Spirit <sup>19</sup> was bound.

O Shem, they are deceived <sup>20</sup> by the many forms of <sup>21</sup> the demons, thinking that through <sup>22</sup> the baptism of the impurity of <sup>23</sup> water, this substance which is dark, <sup>24</sup> feeble, ineffective <sup>25</sup> (and) disturbing will take away sins. <sup>26</sup> And they do not know <sup>27</sup> that, coming from the water (and going) to <sup>28</sup> the water, are bondage, <sup>29</sup> error, impurity, <sup>30</sup> envy, murder, adultery, <sup>31</sup> false witness, <sup>32</sup> heresies, robberies, <sup>33</sup> lusts, babbling, <sup>34</sup> wrath, bitterness, <sup>35</sup> in[sults, . . . . .] . . .] <sup>38</sup> <sup>1</sup> For this reason an abundance of water, <sup>2</sup> weighs down their thoughts.

<sup>3</sup> For I proclaim <sup>4</sup> it to those who possess a mind that <sup>5</sup> they must leave the impure <sup>6</sup> baptism; and those who <sup>7</sup> possess a thought from the light <sup>8</sup> of Spirit will not get involved <sup>9</sup> with the impure rubbing. <sup>10</sup> And their heart will not vacillate, <sup>11</sup> nor will they be cursed, <sup>12</sup> nor will they give honour to the water. <sup>13</sup> Where <sup>14</sup> the curse is, there is deficiency, <sup>15</sup> and the blindness is <sup>16</sup> where the honour is. <sup>17</sup> For when they mix with the evil ones, <sup>18</sup> they become empty in dark water. <sup>19</sup> For where water has been <sup>20</sup> called upon, there is <sup>21</sup> Nature with a ritual formula, <sup>22</sup> a lie, and injury. For only <sup>23</sup> in the unbegotten Spirit, <sup>24</sup> where the exalted Light has rested, <sup>25</sup> has the water not <sup>26</sup> been mentioned, <sup>27</sup> nor can it be <sup>28</sup> called upon.

e. *The Ascent of the Saviour through his Crucifixion (38.28b–40.31a)*

1. *The Saviour foretells his ascent at the end of his mission on earth (38.38b–39.24a)*

For this will be my revelation. <sup>29</sup> For when I have <sup>30</sup> completed <sup>31</sup> the days assigned to me upon the earth, then <sup>32</sup> I will cast from me <sup>33</sup> [.]..[.]..[...]. [a]nd <sup>39</sup> <sup>1</sup> my incomparable garment <sup>2</sup> will shine upon me, <sup>3</sup> as well as all my other garments which I <sup>4</sup> put on in all the clouds <sup>5</sup> (and) which were from <sup>6</sup> the Astonishment of Spirit. <sup>7</sup> For the air will divide my garment. <sup>8</sup> And it will shine and divide in <sup>9</sup> all the clouds unto <sup>10</sup> the root of the Light. Mind <sup>11</sup> is the repose with my garment. <sup>12</sup> And my other garments, <sup>13</sup> are on the left and the <sup>14</sup> right, and they will shine <sup>15</sup> behind me in order that <sup>16</sup> the image of the Light may appear. <sup>17</sup> For my garments which I put <sup>18</sup> on in the three <sup>19</sup> clouds will, in the last day, <sup>20</sup> rest in their <sup>21</sup> root—that is in the unbegotten <sup>22</sup> Spirit—, since they will have no more <sup>23</sup> deficiency stemming from the division of <sup>24</sup> the clouds.

2. *Nature wishes to seize the Saviour but in fact ‘nails’ Soldas, the terrestrial Jesus (39.24b–40.3)*

That is why I appeared, <sup>25</sup> being without deficiency: because the <sup>26</sup> clouds are not equal (and) in order that <sup>27</sup> the wickedness of Nature <sup>28</sup> might be brought to completion. For (Nature) wished <sup>29</sup> at that time <sup>30</sup> to seize me. She will (in fact) affix <sup>31</sup> Soldas (to the cross) who is the dark <sup>32</sup> flame, who will stand <sup>33</sup> on the h[eigh]t, (nailed) t[o the wood] of error, <sup>40</sup> <sup>1</sup> that it might seize me. <sup>2</sup> She took care of her faith, <sup>3</sup> being vain.

3. *Allegorical interpretation of the Saviour’s death: the beheading of Rebouel, the symbol of the great Church (40.4–31a)*

<sup>4</sup> And at that time <sup>5</sup> the Light was about to separate <sup>6</sup> from Darkness and a voice <sup>7</sup> about to be heard in creation saying, <sup>8</sup> “Blessed is the eye which has <sup>9</sup> seen you, and the mind which has <sup>10</sup> supported your greatness BY <sup>11</sup> MY WILL.” It will be said from <sup>12</sup> above, “Blessed is <sup>13</sup> Rebouel among every race <sup>14</sup> of men, for it is you alone, (Rebouel), <sup>15</sup> who have seen and will listen.” And <sup>16</sup> they will behead the woman <sup>17</sup> who has the perception <sup>18</sup> which you will reveal <sup>19</sup> upon the earth.

AND ACCORDING TO <sup>20</sup> MY WILL she will bear witness and will <sup>21</sup> rest from every <sup>22</sup> vain effort of Nature <sup>23</sup> and chaos. For the woman <sup>24</sup> they will behead at that <sup>25</sup> time is the arrangement <sup>26</sup> of the power of the demon, <sup>27</sup> who will baptize the seed <sup>28</sup> of Darkness in harshness <sup>29</sup> in

order to mix (it) with impurity. <sup>30</sup> He engendered a woman and she was <sup>31</sup> named Rebouel.

f. *Address to Shem: his Mission on Earth (40.31b–41.21a)* Look, <sup>32</sup> O Shem, *all the things I have said* <sup>33</sup> to you, they have been fulfilled. [an]d [.....]..[.] [a]nd the things [which] you <sup>41</sup> <sup>1</sup> lack, ACCORDING TO MY <sup>2</sup> WILL, they will be revealed to you <sup>3</sup> at that place upon the earth <sup>4</sup> that you may reveal them <sup>5</sup> as they are. Do <sup>6</sup> not let your thought get involved <sup>7</sup> with the body. For it is <sup>8</sup> with the voice of fire <sup>9</sup> that I said these things to you. For I entered through <sup>10</sup> the midst of the clouds, and I <sup>11</sup> spoke according to the language of each one. <sup>12</sup> This is my language which I have spoken to you <sup>13</sup> and which will be received from you. And <sup>14</sup> you will speak with the voice of the world <sup>15</sup> upon the earth, and it will appear <sup>16</sup> to you with this face <sup>17</sup> and this voice. And <sup>18</sup> *this is all that I have said to you.* <sup>19</sup> Henceforth proceed with Faith <sup>20</sup> which shone in the depths of <sup>21</sup> creation.

### C. Conclusion (41,21b–42,11a)

#### 1. *Awakening and transformation of Shem (41.21b–31a)*

And I, Shem, awoke <sup>22</sup> as from a long sleep. <sup>23</sup> I was astonished when I received the <sup>24</sup> power of Light and all his thought. <sup>25</sup> *And I accompanied Faith,* <sup>26</sup> which shone with me. And <sup>27</sup> the Righteous One followed us with <sup>28</sup> my invincible garment. And <sup>29</sup> all that he had told me <sup>30</sup> would happen upon the earth <sup>31</sup> did happen.

#### 2. *The Cosmic function of Faith (41.31b–42,5a)*

Nature was handed over <sup>32</sup> to Faith, so that (Faith) might overturn <sup>33</sup> her and set her upright in Darkness. <sup>34</sup> (Nature) generated a rotation by  $4 < 2 >$  <sup>1</sup> revolving <sup>2</sup> night and day without <sup>3</sup> taking rest with the souls. <sup>4</sup> These things brought her <sup>5</sup> deeds to completion.

#### 3. *Cosmic ascent of Shem (42.5b–11a)*

Then I rejoiced <sup>6</sup> in the thought of Light. <sup>7</sup> I came out from Darkness *and I proceeded* <sup>8</sup> *with Faith* where <sup>9</sup> the forms of <sup>10</sup> Nature are, up to the top of the <sup>11</sup> earth, to the things which are prepared.

### III. *Eschatological Discourse of Derdekeas (42.11b–45.31a)*

a. *The Cosmic Function of Faith (42.11b–23)* Your Faith <sup>12</sup> rules over the earth the <sup>13</sup> the entire day. For all night and <sup>14</sup> day (Faith) sets

Nature revolving<sup>15</sup> so that she may receive<sup>16</sup> the Righteous One. For Nature is<sup>17</sup> burdened and troubled.<sup>18</sup> For none will be able to open the forms<sup>19</sup> of the womb except Mind<sup>20</sup> alone, who was entrusted<sup>21</sup> with their configuration. For frightful is<sup>22</sup> the configuration of the two forms<sup>23</sup> of Nature—the one which is blind.

b. *Individual Eschatology (42.24–43.28a)* <sup>24</sup> But those who have<sup>25</sup> a free conscience<sup>26</sup> will remove themselves from<sup>27</sup> the babbling of Nature.<sup>28</sup> For they will bear<sup>29</sup> the universal testimony.<sup>30</sup> They will strip off the burden<sup>31</sup> of Darkness; they will put on<sup>32</sup> the Word of Light and<sup>33</sup> they will not be kept back<sup>43</sup><sup>1</sup> in the base place.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, what they possess from<sup>3</sup> the power of Mind they<sup>4</sup> will give it back to Faith. They will<sup>5</sup> be admitted without<sup>6</sup> suffering. Finally, they will<sup>7</sup> abandon the restless fire<sup>8</sup> they possess in the middle of Nature,<sup>9</sup> and they will be received<sup>10</sup> by my garments, which are<sup>11</sup> in the clouds. It is they<sup>12</sup> who guide their members. They<sup>13</sup> will rest in Spirit<sup>14</sup> without suffering.

But because of this the<sup>15</sup> appointed term of Faith was manifested<sup>16</sup> upon the earth for a<sup>17</sup> short time, until<sup>18</sup> Darkness is taken away from her, and<sup>19</sup> her testimony is revealed—<sup>20</sup> the one revealed<sup>21</sup> by me. Those who will be found<sup>22</sup> to be from her root<sup>23</sup> will strip off<sup>24</sup> Darkness and the restless fire.<sup>25</sup> They will put on the light<sup>26</sup> of Mind and will bear witness.<sup>27</sup> For all that I have said<sup>28</sup> will come to pass.

c. *Cosmic Eschatology (43.28b–45.31a)* After<sup>29</sup> I cease to be upon the earth and<sup>30</sup> I withdraw above to my repose,<sup>31</sup> a great, harmful deceit<sup>32</sup> will happen upon<sup>33</sup> the world as well as many evils<sup>34</sup> in accordance with the number of the forms of<sup>44</sup><sup>1</sup> Nature. Evil days<sup>2</sup> will come, and once<sup>3</sup> the time of Nature approaches<sup>4</sup> destruction, darkness will<sup>5</sup> come upon the earth. The number (of the elect) will<sup>6</sup> be limited.

*And a demon<sup>7</sup> will come up from Power; he<sup>8</sup> has a likeness of fire.*<sup>9</sup> He will rend the sky, and he will rest<sup>10</sup> in the depth of the east.<sup>11</sup> For the whole creation will be shaken,<sup>12</sup> and the deceived world<sup>13</sup> will be disturbed. Many<sup>14</sup> places will be flooded because of<sup>15</sup> the envy of the winds and the demons<sup>16</sup> who have a name which is of stupid: Phorbea, Chloerga.<sup>18</sup> They are the ones who govern the world<sup>19</sup> with their teaching. And they lead<sup>20</sup> many hearts astray because of their<sup>21</sup> disorder and their impurity.<sup>22</sup> Many places will be sprinkled<sup>23</sup> with



blood, and there will be five <sup>24</sup> generations <sup>25</sup> (which) eat their own <sup>26</sup> sons. And the regions of the south <sup>27</sup> will accept the Word of Light. <sup>28</sup> However, those who come from <sup>29</sup> the error of the world <...>. <sup>30</sup> From the east, then, <sup>31</sup> *a demon will come forth <sup>32</sup> from (the) belly of the serpent.*

He was <sup>45</sup> <sup>1</sup> hidden in a deserted place, <sup>2</sup> and he will perform many wonders. Many <sup>3</sup> will loathe him. A <sup>4</sup> wind will come forth from his mouth, with <sup>5</sup> a female likeness. Her name will <sup>6</sup> be called Abalphe. He will <sup>7</sup> reign over the world, from the <sup>8</sup> east to the west.

*Then* <sup>9</sup> *Nature will have <sup>10</sup> a final moment.* And the stars <sup>11</sup> will disappear from the sky. The mouth <sup>12</sup> of error will be opened in order that <sup>13</sup> evil Darkness may become inert and <sup>14</sup> silent. And in the last day <sup>15</sup> the forms of Nature <sup>16</sup> will be eliminated with the winds and <sup>17</sup> all their demons. They <sup>18</sup> will become a dark lump, <sup>19</sup> just as they were <sup>20</sup> in the beginning. And the <sup>21</sup> sweet waters, burdened <sup>22</sup> by the demons, will dry <sup>23</sup> up. For where the power <sup>24</sup> of Spirit has gone <sup>25</sup> there are my sweet <sup>26</sup> waters. No further works <sup>27</sup> of Nature will appear; <sup>28</sup> they will mix with the <sup>29</sup> waters of Darkness, which are <sup>30</sup> limitless. *And all her forms <sup>31</sup> will recede from the Middle.*

#### IV. *Shem's Ascent to the Planetary Spheres (45.31b–47.32a)*

a. *The Recitation of the Memorial and Testimony (45.31b–47.7a)* I, <sup>32</sup> Shem, have completed these things. And <sup>33</sup> my heart began to separate <sup>34</sup> from the body of Darkness and my <sup>46</sup> <sup>1</sup> time was completed. *Then* <sup>2</sup> *my heart put on the immortal <sup>3</sup> memorial* and I said, <sup>4</sup> “I agree with thy <sup>5</sup> memorial which thou hast revealed <sup>6</sup> to me: Elorchaïos, and <sup>7</sup> thou, Amoiaias, and thou, <sup>8</sup> Sederkeas, and thy guilelessness, <sup>9</sup> (and thou,) Strophaias, <sup>10</sup> and thou, Chelkeak, and thou, Chelkea, as well as <sup>11</sup> Chelke and Elaios, *you are <sup>12</sup> the immortal memorial.*

<sup>13</sup> *I testify to thee, unquenchable <sup>14</sup> spark, who is an eye <sup>15</sup> of heaven and a voice of light, <sup>16</sup> and (to thee,) Soph{a}ia, and (to thee,) Saphaia, <sup>17</sup> and (to thee,) Saphaina, and (to thee,) righteous <sup>18</sup> Spark, and (to thee,) Faith, the first <sup>19</sup> and the last, and (to thee,) upper air, and (to thee,) lower <sup>20</sup> air, {and thee, Chelkeak, as well as <sup>21</sup> Chelke and Elaios, you <sup>22</sup> are the immortal memorial. <sup>23</sup> I testify to thee, unquenchable <sup>24</sup> spark, who is an eye of heaven <sup>25</sup> and a voice of light, and <sup>26</sup> (to thee,) Soph{a}ia, and (to thee,) Saphaia, and (to thee,) Saphaina, <sup>27</sup> and (to thee,) righteous Spark, <sup>28</sup> and (to thee,) Faith, the first and the last, <sup>29</sup> and (to thee,) upper air and (to thee,) lower air,}*

and <sup>30</sup> (to you [pl.],) all the powers and authorities, <sup>31</sup> that are in creation. <sup>32</sup> And (to) thee, impure light, <sup>33</sup> and (to) thee also, east <sup>34</sup> and (to thee,) west and (to thee,) south and <sup>35</sup> (to thee,) north, you are the four cardinal points <sup>47</sup> <sup>1</sup> of the inhabited world and <sup>2</sup> (to) thee also, Moluchta, and (to thee,) <sup>3</sup> Essoch, you are the root <sup>4</sup> of evil and every work and <sup>5</sup> impure effort of Nature.” <sup>6</sup> *These are the things which I completed* <sup>7</sup> *while bearing witness.*

b. *The Vision of the Spheres (47.7b–32a)* It is I, Shem. <sup>8</sup> On the day that I was to come forth <sup>9</sup> from the body, when my thought had (finished) <sup>10</sup> remaining in the body, I arose as if <sup>11</sup> from a deep sleep. And <sup>12</sup> when I arose as though out of the burden <sup>13</sup> of my body, I said, <sup>14</sup> “Just as Nature became old, <sup>15</sup> so is it also today of <sup>16</sup> humankind. Blessed <sup>17</sup> are they who have known, as they <sup>18</sup> fell asleep, in what power <sup>19</sup> their thought has rested.” <sup>20</sup> And when the Pleiades <sup>21</sup> separated, I saw clouds, <sup>22</sup> which I shall pass through. <sup>23</sup> For the cloud of Spirit is <sup>24</sup> like pure Beryl. <sup>25</sup> And the cloud of Hymen <sup>26</sup> is like the shining <sup>27</sup> emeralds. And the cloud <sup>28</sup> of Silence is like the <sup>29</sup> flourishing amaranths. And <sup>30</sup> the cloud of Middle is like <sup>31</sup> a pure <sup>32</sup> jacinth.

#### V. *Derdekeas’ last Eschatological Discourse (47.32b–48.30a)*

And when the Righteous One <sup>33</sup> appeared in Nature, <sup>34</sup> then Nature, once in a state of excitement, <sup>35</sup> felt hurt. She granted <sup>48</sup> <sup>1</sup> to Morphaia to explore <sup>2</sup> heaven. If the Righteous One explores <sup>3</sup> during twelve periods, <sup>4</sup> it is in order that he may explore them during a single <sup>5</sup> period, that his <sup>6</sup> time may be completed <sup>7</sup> quickly, and Nature <sup>8</sup> may become inert.

Blessed are <sup>9</sup> they who guard themselves against the <sup>10</sup> deposit of death, that is <sup>11</sup> (against) the burdensome water of Darkness. <sup>12</sup> For it is but for a few moments <sup>13</sup> that they will be dominated, since they will hasten <sup>14</sup> to come forth from the error of <sup>15</sup> the world. And as long as they are dominated <sup>16</sup> they will be kept back. <sup>17</sup> They will be tormented in Darkness <sup>18</sup> until the time of the consummation. <sup>19</sup> When the consummation <sup>20</sup> comes and Nature is <sup>21</sup> destroyed, then their thoughts will <sup>22</sup> separate from Darkness. Nature <sup>23</sup> has weighed them down for a <sup>24</sup> short time. And they <sup>25</sup> will be in the ineffable <sup>26</sup> light of the unbegotten <sup>27</sup> Spirit without a form. <sup>28</sup> And so is <sup>29</sup> Mind, as I have <sup>30</sup> said from the start.

VI. *Conclusion: Address to Shem (48.30b–49.9)*

From now on, O Shem, <sup>31</sup> proceed in grace and remain in <sup>32</sup> Faith upon the earth. For every <sup>33</sup> power of light and fire <sup>34</sup> will be completed by me <sup>49</sup> <sup>1</sup> for your sake. For without you <sup>2</sup> they will not be revealed until <sup>3</sup> you speak of them openly. <sup>4</sup> When you leave the earth, they will <sup>5</sup> be given to the worthy. And apart from <sup>6</sup> this revelation, let them speak <sup>7</sup> about you upon the earth, since they will <sup>8</sup> take the land, carefree and <sup>9</sup> in harmony.



## COMMENTARY

1.4 Derdekeas. The name of the Revealer and Saviour comes probably from the Aramaic *'drdq'*, “a male child” or “a beginning student”. It would then recall the figure of the saviour-child which frequently appears in the literature of antiquity and is largely attested in the Nag Hammadi texts: see *Ap. John* (II) 2.2 *Gos. Eg.* (III) 42.6; *Apoc. Paul* (V) 18.6; *Zost.* (VIII) 29; etc.

1.8b–9 “...to the summit of creation.” In the conclusion, the author will use the expression “the top of the earth” (42.10b–11a). One may think of the summit of a mountain, at the edge of heaven (cf. 1 *En.* 17.2; *T. Levi* 2.5; CMC 53.12–15; 55.17–21) (Koenen 1988).

1.10–12a “...close to the light that shone upon the inhabited region.” Shem refers to the light produced by the Saviour’s fiery garment, which he put on to reveal himself in chaos (18.1b–14a). After the creation of heaven and earth, this fiery garment arose in the midst of the cloud of Nature and, like a sun, “shone upon the whole creation” (20.20b–24). This divine light was supplanted by the material sun, the fiery power, which the cosmic womb expelled from herself after the flood, in order that it might shine “upon the whole creation” (26.31–27.9a).

2.19b–3.18a We have here the same process of self-knowing as the one described about the superior light (1.32b–34a), but in the case of Spirit, this process is dramatized and transferred into spatial categories. The capture of Spirit’s light by Darkness through his mind, his eye, is based on the understanding of vision in Stoic philosophy. See *SVF* 2:863–872. “Seeing takes place when the light between the visual faculty and the object is stretched into the shape of a cone... The air adjacent to the pupil forms the tip with its base next to the visual object. What is seen is reported by means of the stretched air, as by a walking-stick” (Diogenes Laertius 7,157 = *SVF* 2:867; transl. Long and Sedley, 1:316). See also Dihle 1983; Löhr 1995: 241.

3.18b–29 Thanks to the light of Spirit which he partially received, Mind, which was inert (*argos*), becomes active and is able to shine

upon Hades with his fiery forms. But Mind's light, because it is mixed with fire, is a defiled light (see 27.9b–13; 33. 34b–35.3) compared to the pure and homogeneous light of Majesty or the light of Spirit (see 1.35b–36a).

4.16–18a Power indicates here the whole of the fiery forms or ideas which Darkness possesses through his Mind (3.18b–29; 5.5; 10.37b–11.1).

4.27b–5.6a Being ejaculated like a seed into the depth of Nature, Mind mixes himself with Power and thus transfers the fiery forms into the cosmic womb, where he also generates an image of himself. Provided with the fiery forms, Nature will use them as *logoi spermatikoi* to construct the material world (10.37b–11.6). The narrative program stated in 4.16–18 is thus realized: Darkness has become inert (Greek *argos*, Coptic *woseph*), being deprived of every form of his Power. The term *argos*, “inert, inoperative, idle”, is a technical term in Stoic philosophy. (See Pépin 1997).

5.6b–19a Since Nature received no configuration (*morphē*) from Darkness, she possesses no constituent part as a womb (see 5.25b–27a) and so cannot help the seed go up (the *analēpsis*, see Introd. p. 48). She conceives then the image of the paternal Mind in the water (see 5.27b–36). Since this second Mind possesses a likeness taken from Spirit he collapses with him, that is the image of Spirit (see 6.33b–35; 9.8b–17a., 24–26a).

6.13b–30a By producing the power “Astonishment” Spirit allows this power to ascend with the second Mind when the latter is drawn out from the cloud of Water by the three fiery clouds. During this ascent Astonishment turns Mind toward the midst of Nature, the cloud of Power, where he may cling (the *sullēpsis*), whereas he himself continues to ascend unto the cloud of Hymen (6.23–25a).

6.35b–7.11a Through the Saviour's blowing the clouds divide, opening the way for the ascent of the light of Spirit, and Mind takes shape. This is the end of the conception (*sullēpsis*): the formation of the embryo. The conclusion of this episode: “His repose was over” is best explained by a text from Philo of Alexandria: “Now seed is the original starting-point of living creatures. That this is a substance of a very low

order, resembling foam is evident to the eye. But when it has been deposited in the womb and become solid, it acquires movement, and at once enters upon natural growth. But growth is better than seed, since in created things movement is better than quiescence” (*Philo, Opif.*, 67, English Translation by F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, London: Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1956, p. 53).

7.31–9.3b–26a The third intervention of the Saviour concerns the light that revealed itself to the first Mind in the depth of chaos (see 3.4b–16a; 9.2b–3a.12b–13a.32b–33a).

8.26b–31a By receiving Mind like a seed through her coitus with Darkness, Nature received the forms of the material beings. Thus those beings are the product of impurity. At the end of time, after Nature have given birth to all material beings, she will then be emptied of all impurity and will return to chaos (45.14b–20a).

9.15b–26a Spirit expresses his joy at having been preserved from the “frightful water” (see 7.22b–24a). And although the light of Spirit is not equal in dignity to that of Majesty (see 2.4–6a), the light which he is granted is without mixing and “homogeneous” (9.23; see 1.35b–36a). But when the light of Spirit rises above water, the latter loses its luminous particles and becomes again what it was when Spirit saw it for the first time: “an immense dark water” (2.22b–24a).

10.12b–14a “...in order that the light of Spirit might not become deaf...”, namely to the call of the Logos, that is the garment of the Saviour which is said to be “the voice of the immeasurable Thought” (12.6b–10a).

11.21b–22a To the Saviour are given the titles “Anastases” and “Duses”. As a spiritual light, the Sun of Justice, *Derdekeas* is the Rising (*anastasis*) and Setting (*dusis*).

12.15b–25a The garment which the Saviour puts on is a Logos that calls, since it is also a voice (see 12.6b–10a). It is a threefold garment, since it must be heard through the three spheres of the cosmos, from the Hymen through the Silence to the Middle (14.8b–13a; see 41.7b–11).

12.25b–13.4a The first fall of a spiritual entity was caused by a look down at chaos; this time, the fall is caused through a look at a thing from above and by an excess of light.

13.4b–23a The part of light broken off from Astonishment produces luminous seeds (*spora*) in the womb. Those seeds will pass through the forms of Nature at the same time with the noetic powers (21.2–4a), and then through the winds and the demons (21.36b–22. 3; 34.5b–8). The latter will sow them with the particles of Mind at the time of the birth (32.9b–17a; 35. 17b–22a). In 24.10–12a, it is mentioned that the power of Astonishment gives birth to a pneumatic race from the womb; this makes explicit what is said about the other race in 13.2–23a. This is why the text will also assert that the pneumatic possesses “a thought come forth from the light of the power of Astonishment” (24.8–9), and the race of Shem is called: “The race come forth from the luminous cloud” (26.18b–20a).

13.23b–14.13a The Saviour’s prayer concerns first the fallen light of Spirit, that it “might go to and fro” through all the spheres of the cosmos, and might be filled with the wholeness of the Logos. This purpose begins to be fulfilled as soon as the Saviour comes down in the cloud of Hymen (14.8b–13a). The prayer concerns also the womb, that she may become inert or inoperative, that is, that she loose every power on the light of Spirit that she possesses (see 13.13b–19a; 15.28b–16.2). This purpose will be fulfilled at the time of the intervention of the Saviour jointly with a special light gone down into chaos (15.16b–16.23a).

15.9b–10a “And Nature conceived...” Lit., “...had taken to herself (*ji eroc*)”. The underlying Greek verb, “*lambanein, sullambanein, echein*”, means in this context “to conceive, to become pregnant”. The same verb is used in 5.3.

17.12b–16a The garments are voices (12.7b–10a). From the cloud of Hymen the Saviour’s voice could not be heard as far as the clouds of Silence and Middle.

17.30b–31a This grouping of letters is explained in the following lines. They could be an example of glossolalia or could have had a symbolical or magical meaning.



18.16b–23b Once entered into Nature, the Saviour rests on her *eye*, “a light emanated from Spirit” (see 15.16b–19a), which had been prepared for him as a repose and a garment. This light grants his *voice* to Nature for a while (see Gen 1:3–29, the creative voice of the Word). This luminous garment will be called upon in the testimony as “unquenchable spark, who is an *eye* of heaven and a *voice* of light” (46.13b–15a).

20.10b–16a These lines are written from the point of view of the narrator and are addressed to the race of Shem and to those who will be begotten after the flood.

27.1–21 After the flood, the womb expels from her genitals (27.19) the fire she had possessed from the beginning through her intercourse with Darkness (4.25b–5,8a). This fiery power is the demon, a deceiver, “who arose the womb toward every form” (27.19b–21). Fire therefore rises and shines upon creation as the material sun “instead of the Righteous One” (27.6b–9a), namely the Saviour with his invincible garment (20.20b–26a; 30.33b–36a; 33.30–34a). Until the return of the Righteous One (see 28.22b–29.33a), this archon of creation, “the corrupted light” (27.12b–13 see 15.10b–16a), reigns over the world with his “members”, the stars (27.9b–15a), and, with Nature, will plan the destruction of Sodom (28.11–14a; 29.30b–33a). On the distinction between an intelligible sun and a material sun in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see Majercik 1989: 16–18).

28.22b–29.33b The Righteous One, who is the manifestation of the Saviour in the created world and in salvation history, reveals to Shem that he will appear at the time of the destruction of Sodom. As “the luminous cloud” (33.30–32a), the Sun of justice, who separates day from night (28.26–27a; see 40.4–6a), that is, good from evil, he is both light and darkness (see Exod 14:20): salvation for the pneumatics and judgment for the others. Therefore Shem is urged to teach those who will gather around him (28.34b–29.8a). It is through Shem, however, that the Righteous One will reveal himself (29.7b–8a). Through Shem, the luminous cloud will illuminate the pneumatics, “the members of Shem” (29.14b–15a), and gather them at the place of their salvation, while Nature is burning Sodom unjustly. But the Sodomites will bear the universal testimony and rest in the unbegotten Spirit. This passage

is significant not only because it marks that point in the account where the revealer shifts from the past to the future tense (28.24b–25ff.), but more importantly because it sets the stage for the narrative conclusion. To carry his mission as revealer, Shem will be transformed by the power of Light and receive Derdekeas' invincible garment (41.26b–28a) (see Roberge 2000).

29.33b–30.4a Abraham, for his part, having accepted the teaching of the angels sent by Nature (29.15b–19a; see 28.14b–15a; Gen 19:13), will depart from Sodom and bring the faith of Nature to the four regions of creation (see Gen 12:3; 13:14; 18:18; 25:6; Heb 11:13).

30.32–33 “who is Soldas...” Schenke 1975: 126, compares the name with “Esaldaios” in Hippolytus, *Philosophumena* V. 7.30 (Marcovich 1986: 151). In the Naassene ideology, Esaldaios is the name of the demiurge “the god of fire”. See 39.31–32: “Soldas...who is the dark flame”, that is the hylic body of the Saviour. See also Lupieri 1984: 190.

31.4b–13a The revelation of Derdekeas' memorial. Elorchaïos, the name of the highest principle, see Introd. p. 38; Amoiias: (Amoiias 46.7): probably from the Greek *homoios*, “like, resembling”. The name of Derdekeas' universal garment (cf. 32.34–35a). Strophaiias (strophaiia, 33.2): from the Greek *strophas*, “turning round, revolving”, may be said of a whirlwind; see 7.3, where the Coptic term means “whirlwind” and is said of Spirit. Chelkeak, Chelkea, Chelke: the names of the garments of the Saviour; that is, the *Logoi* (Words) the Saviour put on in order to bring to perfection (21.7–9) the light or the luminous “members” of Spirit: Chelkeak, the trimorphic one, in the cloud of Hymen (12.15–31); Chelkea, which has two forms, in the cloud of Silence (16.34–17.10); Chelke, which “was given him in a single form” (33.12–15) in the cloud of Middle (17.16–24). Their names may come from Greek *chalkeos*, “of copper or bronze”; metaph. “hard, stout, strong”; in this sense it could be said of a voice (see 12.7–10; 37.6–7). These spiritual entities represent the threefold formation or setting up (11.25–26; 16.32) which the pneumatic must integrate into himself: 1) renunciation of the babbling of Nature (42.26–27; 17.35–18.1) and knowledge of immortal things (17.25–28); 2) silent rejoicing (17.5–7); 3) fullness of thought and word (14.19–22). At the end of time, they will repose in the unbegotten Spirit (39.17–22), since they were pro-

duced by the Astonishment of Spirit (39.5–6); meanwhile, they remain in the clouds to help the pneumatics in their ascent through the spheres (43.9–14). Aileou: (31.7) also spelled Elaios (46.11.21): from the Greek *eleos*, “mercy” (see 33.21); it is the name given to the garment of fire that the Saviour wore in Hades, in order to deceive Nature. As Mercy, it will lead the pneumatics to the place of the unbegotten Spirit (35.22–24). Compare the role of the Teletarchs in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see Majercik 1989: 11–12.

31.13b–32.5a The revelation of Faith’s testimony. Sophia, Saphaia, Saphaina: those luminous entities (31.27–28; 33.27; 46.16–17.26–27) are located in the cloud of Middle (33.27–29); they represent the threefold formation which the noetic must integrate into himself: Sophia, from the Greek *sophia*, “wisdom”; Saphaia, from the Greek *sapha* “clearly, plainly, assuredly (knowing or speaking)”; Saphaina, from the Greek *saphenizô*, “to explain, interpret (Scripture).” The noetics, who possess within themselves a particle of Mind, must also integrate into themselves this threefold formation through the teaching of the pneumatics: 1) the knowledge of the true sense of Scripture, in order to reject Nature’s domination; 2) this leads them to the plain truth and 3) to wisdom, the perfection of the true faith. Moluchtas (33.9): from the Greek *molunô*, “to stain, to sully, to defile” and *chtôn*, “earth”, “the one who defiles the earth”. Soch (Essoch, 47.2b–3a): seems to refer to the womb; the name may come from the Greek *sôchô*, a form of the verb *psôcho*, which means “rub to pieces” (cf. Luke 6.1, “to rub with the hands”); the name would then recall the intercourse of Darkness with the womb in 4.30, since the Coptic verb used to describe the action of Darkness is “to rub”. To describe masturbation or sexual intercourse, our author constantly uses the Coptic verb *hi* “to rub” or the Greek substantive “rubbing”.

36.2–24 The Saviour completes the teaching he already gave to Shem (see 32.5–18) about the meaning of his future baptism, by presenting his descent into the water as a descent into the underworld. The vocabulary and images are those traditionally used in reports of *descensus ad inferos*, for example the mention of “gates” (36.2.16). In ancient thought, the three regions of the universe, (heaven, earth, and underworld) were connected by gates (see Rev 4:1). In traditional Christian teaching the descent of the Saviour into the underworld after his crucifixion was intended to express in a dramatic and mythic way how

people already dead could benefit from his death. In the *Paraph. Shem*, however, the main salvific event is not the crucifixion but the baptism. The *descensus ad inferos* is therefore transferred to the baptism, thus establishing a link between the descent into the river and the descent of the Saviour into chaos in order to rescue the light of Spirit (see 18.1b–19.26a).

36.25–38.28a This passage develops a harsh polemic against baptism. This rite is the last means used by Nature to enslave people (36.25–32), and those who do the will of Nature will not be saved with Faith, when she will receive the Saviour, the Righteous One (36.33–37.5 see 30.27b–31.4a; 32.5b–17a). The reason for rejecting baptism is the fact that water in the beginning kept the light of the Spirit bound (37.6–19a). Baptism cannot be given for the forgiveness of sins, because water is itself a source of sins (37.19b–38.3a). Since water was associated in the beginning with the coitus between Darkness and the cosmic womb, baptism is assimilated to “the impure practice” of coitus (38.9). Those who want to rest with the exalted Light in the unbegotten Spirit cannot therefore call upon the dark water (38.3b–28a). The polemic could aim at some Elchasaite community (Hyppolytus, *Philosophumena* 15, 4–6; see Introd. p. 95).

41.21b–42.11a This narrative *conclusion* closes the apocalypse proper (see 1.5b–16a). It is clearly structured on the A<sup>1</sup>-B-A<sup>2</sup> pattern. In part A<sup>1</sup> (41.21b–31a), Shem tells of his transformation and of his association with Faith and the Righteous One. Part B (41.31b–42.5a) is an explanation of the interactions between Faith and Nature. In part A<sup>2</sup> (42.5b–11a), Shem describes his cosmic ascent with Faith up to the forms of Nature.

41.21b–31a To carry out his mission as an illuminator, Shem receives the fullness of the thought of Spirit. He is also assimilated to the Righteous One by receiving his invincible garment (see *Gos. Eg.* (III, 2) 64.1–3 = (IV, 2) 75.15–17 where it is said that the great Seth has put on Jesus). Since the function of the Righteous One was to illuminate creation with his invincible garment (see 20.20b–26a; 27.7b–9a; 33.17b–20), he now accomplishes this in the figure of Shem, as promised (see 28.22b–33a).

41.31b–42,5a It has been narrated how Mind, with his light, was established as king over the forms of Nature, the winds and the demons (see 22.21b–23.8). Now, after the flood, Nature is once again put under the rule of Faith, who is the light of Mind; she then sets in motion the rotation of the spheres, which leads to the incorporation of the souls. In 41.34–42.1, “(Nature) generated a rotation by revolving (*mooshe*) . . .,” the Coptic verb could translate the Greek verb *perierchomai*, which means in astrological context “to rotate, to revolve” (Crum 2003). The author means probably the revolution of the moon, which was considered to be the reservoir of human souls (Plutarch, *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, 945 C).

42.5b–11 The last lines of the conclusion mention the ascent of Shem “to the top of the earth” in terms that recall the ascent of Enoch in Gen 5:24 and his investiture in *1 En.* 71.13–17 (see 9.33–11.6).

42.11b–23 Without any transition Derdekeas begins a new revelation by addressing Shem directly: “Thy faith . . .” The first lines of his discourse resume the teaching already given (see 41.31b–42.5a) about the cosmic functions of Mind and Faith. From the flood to the last coming of the Righteous One (see 37.2–5), Faith and Mind are at work in order that Nature may be emptied of her forms through the production of material beings and incorporation of souls (see 8.26b–31a; 26.25b–28a; 45.14b–20a) and rendered idle (see 48.5b–8a).

42.17b–23 The forms of Nature are the zodiacal signs that the cosmic womb produced after she had cast out the demiurgic Mind (19.13b–26a). The blind configuration refers to certain astrological ideas of that time. The zodiacal signs, considered to be living beings, were associated with one another through diverse geometrical combinations known as configurations (Coptic *eine*, Greek *schemata*). One of them was the association of the signs with parallel lines having the same latitude, that is, located on lines parallel to the equator. Those signs were said to be looking at each other. But in this configuration, Cancer and Capricorn, the Crab and the Goat, being situated on the lines of the summer and winter solstices, could not see each other. They were said to be blind (Greek *ablepta*) (See A. Bouché-Leclercq, 1899, 159–179; A.-J. Festugière, I, 1944, 98–101). Yet according to Numenius, Cancer and Capricorn are the doors through which souls come down to the

earth and go up to the celestial spheres after their terrestrial life (See Numenius, fr. 31–35 [E. Des PLACES, 1973]).

43.28b–44.6a The third part of Derdekeas' discourse deals with cosmic eschatology. The final crisis that is described here and that leads to "the destruction of Nature" is linked to the crucifixion of the Saviour (43.28b–31a; see 38.28b–40.31a).

44.6b–45.31a This passage makes use of Jewish and Christian traditions about the coming of the Antichrist at the end of time (*As. Mos.*; 4 *Ezra*; *Sib. Or.* 3; Mark 13; Rev 12–13). He "will come forth from the belly of the serpent" (*drakōn*) (44.30–32a), that is, he will be sent by the archon of creation (44.6b–9a). He will bring with him all Kinds of plagues and false prophets (44.11b–26a) and will act as a wonder-worker (45.2). His coming will give rise to a world empire, symbolized here by a woman (see 3 *Sib. Or.* 75–90; 45.3–8). The image of the *bolos* to describe the end of material creation (45.18) recalls Manichaeism (see *Acta Archelai* 11.3; *Kephalaia* 105.32s; *Or. sib* III.87). "The sweet waters... will dry up" (45.21–23); see *Test Moses* X.6; 4*Esdras* 5.9.

45.31b–47.7a This discourse, uttered by Shem, does not fit the narrative fiction of the "apocalypse", which supposes that the seer records the teaching he received from Derdekeas during his celestial journey (see 1.5b–16a; 41.21b–42.11a). Here Shem narrates how he ascended unto the celestial spheres (47.7b–32a) at the end of his life (45.31b–46.1a; 47.8–13a), wearing the memorial as a garment (46.1b–12; see 31.4b–13a) and delivering the testimony of Faith (46.13–47.7a; see 31.19b–32.5a). There is a long dittography which runs from 46.20b to 46.29a.

47.7b–32a Shem first narrates his departure from terrestrial life, stressing the opposition between *thought* and *body* (47.8–20a). The theme of the aging of mankind (cf. 4 *Ezra* 14.10–12) will be resumed in the last discourse of Derdekeas. Shem's discourse ends abruptly with the description of the celestial spheres. These are compared to precious stones (see Rev 21:11.18–21), except for the sphere of Silence (47.27b–29a). Curiously, the order of presentation starts from the highest sphere, although Shem is supposed to be ascending.

47.32b–48.30a The context for the first part (47.32b–48.8a) of this new eschatological teaching, given by Derdekeas (see 48.29b–30a), is to be found in the conclusion of the apocalypse (41.21b–42.11a; also 42.11b–23). The presence of the Righteous One in creation initiates the new order of the universe after the flood (see Gen 8:22). The archon of creation, Morphaia (see 27.17b–31; 30.8b–22a), revolves through heaven and settles the course of the stars in order to control the fate of mankind (see 27.22–27; see 41.34–42.5a). But this new order is also “the appointed term of Faith” (43.15). During this time, the Righteous One, the Sun of Justice, carries out his cosmic (42.11b–17a) and salvific action, particularly as an illuminator (see 28.22b–29.15a). In the apocalyptic tradition the history of salvation is divided into pre-determined periods of time (cf. 1 *En.* 91–104), twelve according to 4 *Ezra* 14.10–17; and the twelfth period of the “visit” of the Saviour is the last one (see 2 *En.* 65.4–5; *Sib. Or.* 3.92). Nature will then “become inert”.

48.8b–30a The second parts of the discourse supposes or foresees a situation of persecution; the faithful are urged to persevere. At the end of time the pneumatics will rest in the light of the unbegotten Spirit (48.24b–28a); and the noetics in the light of Mind (48.28b–30a).





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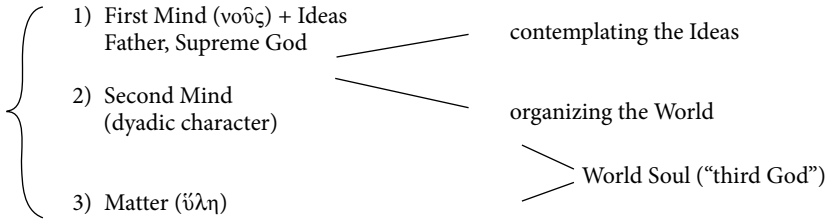


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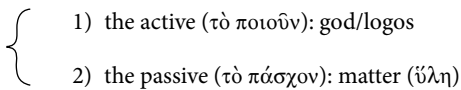


APPENDIX:  
THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE UNIVERSE

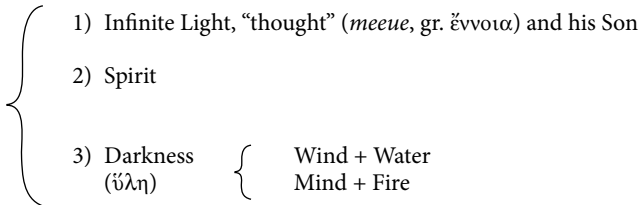
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Numenius—*Chaldean Oracles*



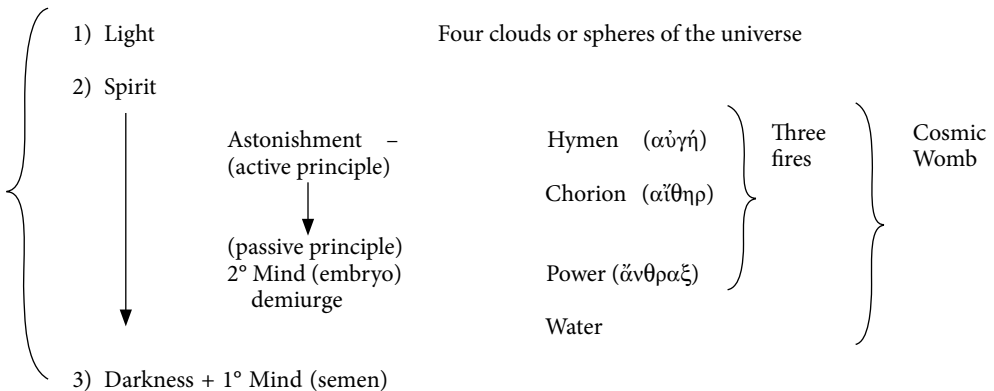
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